



**MADAME BLAVATSKY**  
*Personal Memoirs*

**MARY K. NEFF**

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# INTRODUCTION

# Helena Petrovna Blavatsky

—by Vera Petrovna de Zhelibovsky, H.P.B.'s sister  
London, Nov. 15, 1894 — April 15, 1895.

My sister, Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, *née* de Hahn, better known in our country under the *nom de plume* of Radha-Bai, which she adopted for her writings in Russia, was a sufficiently remarkable person, even in these days, when striking personalities abound. Although her works are but little known to the general public, nevertheless they have given birth to a spiritual movement, to an organization founded on the theories therein contained which it pleases her disciples to allude to as “revelations” — I speak of the Theosophical Society, so well known and widely spread throughout America, England, India, and in a lesser degree throughout Europe.

This Society was planned and founded by Madame Blavatsky, in the year 1875, at New York, in which city she had established herself — why she herself hardly knew, except that thither she was drawn by an irresistible attraction, inexplicable at that time to her, as we shall see by her letters.

Without money, without any kind of influence or protection, with nothing to rely on but her indomitable courage and untiring energy, this truly extraordinary woman in less than four years succeeded in attaching to herself devoted proselytes, who were ready to follow her to India and to cheerfully expatriate themselves; and in less than fifteen years she had thousands of disciples, who not only professed her doctrines, but who also proclaimed her “the most eminent teacher of our times, the sphinx of the century,” the only person in Europe initiated into the occult sciences of the east — they were, indeed, with few exceptions, ready to canonize her memory, had the philosophy she taught them permitted any such thing.

There was hardly a country in which the death of H. P. Blavatsky did not produce a most profound impression. All quarters of the globe responded, in one fashion or another, when the news reached them of the death of this poor Russian woman, whose only claim to such celebrity lay in her personal genius. For a time her name rang throughout the press of the entire world. Doubtless it is true that more bad than good was spoken of her, but none the less they spoke of her, some abusing her up hill and down dale and loudly complaining of the injuries wrought by her; and on the other side twenty or so theosophical journals proclaiming her “illuminated” prophetess and saviour of humanity — humanity which, without the revelations which she had given out in her works, above all in *The Secret Doctrine*, would — so they affirmed — be dragged to its doom by the materialistic spirit of the time.

It is not my business to decide as to whether the truth lay with her friends and enthusiastic disciples or with her bitter enemies. My intention is simply to offer to the public some impartial family reminiscences and to lay before them some letters of undoubted interest.

It would be easy for me to fill many volumes from the mass of materials which I have at my disposal; I will, however, merely select that which is most remarkable and weave it together with my personal recollections.

Our mother, Mdme Hélène de Hahn, *née* Fadeew, died when she was twenty-seven. Notwithstanding her premature death, however, such was the literary reputation she had already acquired, that she had earned for herself the name of the “Russian George Sand” — a name which was given her by Belinsky, the best of our critics. At sixteen years of age she was married to Pierre de Hahn, captain of artillery, and soon her time was fully occupied in superintending the education of her three children. Hélène, her eldest daughter, was a precocious child, and from her earliest youth attracted the attention of all with whom she came in contact. Her nature was quite intractable to the routine demanded by her instructors, she rebelled against all discipline, recognized no master but her own good will and her personal tastes. She was exclusive, original, and at times bold even to roughness.

When, at the death of our mother, we went to live with her relations, all our teachers had exhausted their patience with Hélène, who would never conform to fixed hours for lessons, but who, notwithstanding, astonished them by the brilliancy of her abilities, especially by the ease with which she



mastered foreign languages and by her musical talent. She had the character and all the good and bad qualities of an energetic boy ; she loved travels and adventures and despised dangers and cared little for remonstrances.

When her mother was dying, although her eldest daughter was only eleven years old, she was filled with well-founded apprehensions for her future, and said :

“Ah, well ! perhaps it is best that I am dying, so at least I shall be spared seeing what befalls Hélène ! Of one thing I am certain, her life will not be as that of other women, and that she will have much to suffer.”

Truly a prophecy!

At the age of seventeen, H. P. Blavatsky married a man thrice her age, and some months later she left her husband in the same headstrong and impetuous manner in which she had married him. She left him under the pretext of going to live with her father, but before she got there she disappeared, and so successful was she in this that for years no one knew where she was, and we gave her up for dead. Her husband was the vice-governor of the province of Erivan, in Transcaucasia. He was in all respects an excellent man, with but one fault, namely, marrying a young girl who treated him without the least respect, and who told him quite openly beforehand that the only reason she had selected him from among the others who sought to marry her was that she would mind less making him miserable than anyone else.

“You make a great mistake in marrying me,” she said to him before their marriage. “You know perfectly well that you are old enough to be my grandfather. You will make somebody unhappy, but it won’t be me. As for me, I am not afraid of you, but I warn you that it is not you who will gain anything from our union.”

He never could say that he did not get what he had bargained for.

H. P. Blavatsky passed the greater part of her youth, in fact almost her entire life, out of Europe. In later years she claimed to have lived many years in Tibet, in the Himalayas and extreme north of India, where she studied the Sanskrit language and literature together with the occult sciences, so well known by the adepts, wise men, or Mahatmas, for whom later she had to suffer so much. Such, at least, is the account of her doings that she gave to us, her relations, as also to her English biographer, Mr. Sinnett, the author of the work entitled, *Incidents in the Life of Madame H. P. Blavatsky*. For

eight years we were without any news of her. It was only at the expiration of ten years, the period necessary to render legal the separation from her husband, that Madame Blavatsky returned to Russia.

After her return to Russia, she first came and settled herself in the Government of Pskoff, where at that time I was living with our father. We were not expecting her to arrive for some weeks to come, but, curiously enough, no sooner did I hear her ring at the door-bell than I jumped up, knowing that she had arrived. As it happened there was a party going on that evening in my father-in-law's house, in which I was living. His daughter was to be married that very evening, the guests were seated at table and the ringing of the door-bell was incessant. Nevertheless I was so sure it was she who had arrived that, to the astonishment of everyone, I hurriedly rose from the wedding feast and ran to open the door, not wishing the servants to do so.

We embraced each other, overcome with joy, forgetting for the moment the strangeness of the event. I took her at once to my room, and that very evening I was convinced that my sister had acquired strange powers. She was constantly surrounded, awake or asleep, with mysterious movements, strange sounds, little taps which came from all sides — from the furniture, from the windowpanes, from the ceiling, from the floor, and from the walls. They were very distinct and seemed intelligent into the bargain ; they tapped once, and three times for “yes,” twice for “no.”

My sister asked me to ask them a mental question. This I did, selecting a question as to a fact only known to myself. I recited the alphabet, and the reply I received was so true and so precise that I was positively astounded. I had often heard talk of spirit-rappings, but never before had I had an opportunity of testing their knowledge.

Before long the whole town was talking of the “miracles” which surrounded Madame Blavatsky. The not only intelligent, but even clairvoyant answers given by these invisible forces, which operated night and day, without any apparent intervention on her part, all round her, struck more astonishment and wonder into the minds of the curious than even the movement of inanimate objects, which apparently gained or lost their weight, which phenomena she directly produced by merely fixing her eyes on the object selected.

All these phenomena were, at the time, fully described in the Russian newspapers. There was no longer any peace for us, even in the country,

where we shortly went to live, on a property which belonged to me ; we were pursued by letters and visits. Matters became insupportable when, by the intervention of “ messieurs les esprits,” as our father laughingly called them, was discovered the perpetrator of a murder committed in the neighbourhood, and the officers of the law became convinced believers, clamouring for miracles. It was still worse when, one fine day, Hélène began describing “ those whom she alone saw as having formerly occupied the house,” and who were afterwards recognized from her descriptions by the old people and natives of the place as having been former lords of the manor and their servants, all long since dead, but of whom they still preserved the memory. I may as well remark that this property had only been mine for a few months. I had bought it in a district completely unknown to me, and none of us had ever before heard these people she described spoken of.

My father, a man of vast intellectual power, and most learned, had all his life been a sceptic, a “ Voltairien,” as we say in Russian. He was compelled by the force of circumstances to change his convictions, and before long passed days and nights writing, under the dictation of “ messieurs les esprits,” the genealogy of his ancestors the “ gallant knights of Hahn-Hahn von Rotterhahn.”

Ever since her return to Russian, H. P. Blavatsky was at a loss to explain her mediumistic condition, but at that time she by no means expressed the disdain and dislike for mediumship that she did later on. Ten or twelve years later she spoke of the mediumistic performances of her younger days with much repugnance — in those days the forces at work in the phenomena were unknown and almost independent of her will, when once she had succeeded in obtaining entire mastery over them she no longer cared to recall the memory. But at the age of twenty-eight she had not the power of controlling them.

With reference to this the following is of interest :

In the summer of 1860 we left the Government of Pskoff, for the Caucasus, to pay a visit to our grandparents the Fadeews and Madame Witte, our aunt, my mother’s sister, who had not seen Hélène for more than eleven years. On our way there at the town of Zadonsk, in the Government of Voronege, we learnt that the Metropolitan of Kieff, the Venerable Isidore, whom we had known well when we were children at Tiflis, where he had been the head of the exarchate of St. George, happened to be in the town,

passing through on his way to St. Petersburg, and was for the moment officiating in the monastery. We were most eager to see him ; he remembered us, and sent us word to say that he would be very pleased to see us after mass. We made our way to the arch-episcopal church, but not without misgivings on my part. As we were on our way there, I said to my sister :

“Do please take care that your little devils keep themselves quiet while we are with the Metropolitan.”

She began laughing and saying that she would like nothing better, but that she could not answer for them.

Alas ! I knew it but too well. And so I was not astonished, but all the same suffered agonies when I heard the tapping begin as soon as ever the venerable old man began to question my sister about her travels.... One ! two ! ... one ! two ! three ! Surely he could not but notice these importunate individuals who seemed determined to join the party and take part in the conversation ; in order to interrupt us they made the furniture, the looking-glasses, our cups of tea, even the rosary of amber beads, which the saintly old man was holding in his hand, move and vibrate.

He saw our dismay at once, and taking in the situation at a glance, enquired which of us was the medium. Like a true egotist, I hastened to fit the cap on my sister's head. He talked to us for more than an hour, asking my sister question after question out loud, and asking them mentally of her attendants, and seemed profoundly astonished and well pleased to have seen the phenomena.

On taking leave of us, he blessed my sister and myself and told us that we had no cause to fear the phenomena.

“There is no force,” he said, “that both in its essence and in its manifestation does not proceed from the Creator. So long as you do not abuse the gifts given you, have no uneasiness. We are by no means forbidden to investigate the hidden forces of nature. One day they will be understood and utilized by man, though that is not yet. May the blessing of God rest on you, my child !”

He again blessed Hélène and made the sign of the cross.

How often must these kindly words of one of the chief heads of the Orthodox Greek Church have been recalled to the memory of H. P. Blavatsky in later years, and she ever felt gratefully towards him.

• • • • •

Helena Petrovna for the next four years continued to live in the Caucasus. Ever in search of occupation, always active and full of enterprise, she established herself for some time in Imeretia, then at Mingrelia, on the shores of the Black Sea, where she connected herself with the trade in the high-class woods with which that region abounds. Later on she moved southwards, to Odessa, where our aunts had gone to live after the death of our grandparent. There she placed herself at the head of an artificial flower factory, but soon left that for other enterprises, which in turn she quickly abandoned, notwithstanding the fact that they generally turned out well.

She was never troubled by any dread of doing anything derogatory to her position, all honest trades seemed to her equally good. It is curious to note, however, that she did not light on some occupation which would have better suited her talents than these commercial enterprises; that, for instance, she did not take instead to literature or to music, which would have better served to display her grand intellectual powers, especially as in her younger days she had never had anything to do with commerce.

Two years later she left again for foreign parts, first for Greece and then for Egypt. All her life was passed in restlessness and in travelling; she was ever, as it were, seeking some unknown goal, some task which it was her duty to discover and to fulfil. Her wandering life and unsettled ways did not end until she found herself face to face with the scientific, the humanitarian and spiritual problems presented by Theosophy; then she stopped short, like a ship which after years of wanderings finds itself safe in port, the sails are furled and for the last time the anchor is let go.

Mr. Sinnett, her biographer, alleges that for many years ere she left definitely for America, Madame Blavatsky had had spiritual relations with those strange beings, whom she later called her Masters, the Mahatmas of Ceylon and Tibet, and that it was only in direct obedience to their commands that she travelled from place to place, from one country to another. How that may be, I do not know. We, her nearest relations, for the first time heard her mention these enigmatic beings in 1873-4, when she was established in New York.

The fact is that her departure from Paris for America was as sudden as it was inexplicable, and she would never give us the explanation of what led

her to do so until many years later ; she then told us that these same Masters had ordered her to do so, without at the time giving any reason. She gave as her reason for not having spoken of them to us that we should not have understood, that we should have refused to believe, and very naturally so.

From that moment all else was put on one side, and never from that moment forward did her thoughts for one moment deviate from the goal which had been suddenly revealed to her, namely, the publishing abroad in the world that most ancient of philosophies which bears witness to the supreme importance of things spiritual as compared with things material, to the psychic forces both of nature and of man, to the immortality of the human soul and spirit. Thus she writes to me :

“Humanity has lost its faith and its higher ideals ; materialism and pseudo-science have slain them. The children of this age have no longer faith ; they demand proof, proof founded on a scientific basis — and they shall have it. Theosophy, the source of all human religions, will give it to them.”

Soon all her letters were full of arguments against the abuse of spiritism, that which she termed spiritual materialism, of indignation against mediumistic *seances*, where the dead were evoked — “the materializations of the dear departed,” the dwellers in the land of eternal spring (the summerland) — who in her opinion were nothing more than shades, elves and lying elementaries, often dangerous, and, above all, evil in their effects on the health of the unfortunate mediums, their passive victims.

Her visit to the brothers Eddy, the well-known mediums of Vermont, was the last drop which made her cup run over. She became from thenceforward the deadly enemy of all demonstrative spiritualism.

It was at the Eddy homestead that Madame Blavatsky made the acquaintance of Col. H. S. Olcott, her first disciple, her devoted friend and future President of the Theosophical Society, the child of their creation, and on which all their thought was thenceforward centred. He had come there as a keen observer of spiritualistic phenomena, in order to investigate and write about the materializations caused through the agency of the two brothers, of which all America was talking. He wrote a book on this subject, a study called *People from the Other World* — that was the last service done by him for the cause of the propaganda of modern spiritualism. He accepted the views of Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, which the American papers readily published. Being both of them deadly enemies of materialism, they

considered that spiritualism had rendered a great service to humanity, in demonstrating the errors of the materialistic creed ; but that now that once spiritualism had proved the existence of invisible and immaterial forces in nature, its mission was fulfilled ; it must not be permitted to drag society to the other error, namely, to superstition and black magic.

As we could not understand this sudden change of front in one whom we knew to be a powerful medium, and who quite recently had been the vice-president of the Spiritualistic Society of Cairo, she wrote to us beginning us to forget the past, her unhappy mediumship to which she had lent herself, as she explained, simply through ignorance of the truth.

“If I have attached myself to a certain group of Theosophists, a branch of the Indo-Aryan Brotherhood, which has been formed here,” she wrote to us from New York, “it is precisely because they fight against all the excesses, the superstitions, the abuses of the false prophets of the dead letter — against the numberless Calchases of all the exoteric religions, as well as against the maunderings of spirits. We are spiritualists, if you choose so to call us, but not after the American manner, but after the ancient rites of Alexandria.”

At the same time she sent us cuttings from the American newspapers publishing her articles, as well as the comments on what she had written, from which it was evident that her opinions met with much sympathy. Her brilliant powers as a critic revealed themselves, above all, in a number of articles treating of Professor Huxley’s meetings at Boston and at New York — articles which attracted considerable attention. That which astonished us extremely was the profound learning, the deep knowledge, which became suddenly evident in all she wrote. Whence could she have gained this varied and abstruse learning, of which until that time she had given no sign ? She herself did not know ! Then it was that for the first time she spoke to us of her Masters, or rather of her Master, but in a most vague manner, speaking of him sometimes as “the voice,” sometimes as Sahib (meaning Master), sometimes as “he who inspires me” — as if the source of these mental suggestions was unknown at that time ; it did not assist us towards understanding her, and we began to fear for her reason.

“I am embarked on a great work treating of theology, ancient beliefs and the secrets of the occult sciences,” thus she wrote to me in 1874 : “but fear nothing for me ; I am sure of my facts, more or less. I should not, perhaps,



know well how to talk of these abstract things, but all essential matter is dictated to me.... All that I shall write will not be my own; I shall be nothing more than the pen, the head which will think for me will be that of one who knows all....”

Again Helena Petrovna writes to our aunt, N. A. Fadeew:

“Tell me, dearest friend, are you interested in the secrets of psychic physiology? ... That which I am about to relate to you offers a sufficiently interesting problem for the students of physiology. We have, among the members of our small society, lately formed of those who desire to study the languages of the east, the abstract nature of things, as well as the spiritual powers of man, some who are well learned. As, for example, Professor Wilder, archaeological orientalist, and many others who come to me with scientific questions, and who assure me that I am better versed than they themselves are in abstract and positive sciences, and that I am better acquainted with the old languages. It is an inexplicable fact, but one none the less true! ... Well! what do you make of it, old companion of my studies? ... Explain to me, if you please, how it comes about that I, who, as you are well aware, was, up to the age of forty, in a state of crass ignorance, have suddenly become a *savant*, a model of learning in the opinions of real *savants*? It is an insoluble mystery. In truth I am a psychological enigma, a sphinx, and a problem for future generations as much as I am for myself.

“Imagine, dear friends, that poor ‘*me*,’ who never would learn anything; who had no knowledge either of chemistry, of zoology, of physics, and very little of history and geography; this same ‘*me*’ holding my own in discussions on learned subjects with professors and doctors of sciences of the first rank, and not only criticizing them but even convincing them! I give you my word I am not joking when I tell you I am frightened. Yes, I am frightened, for I do not understand it! ... Understand that all I now read seems to me as if I had known it long ago? I perceive errors in the articles by such masters of science as Tyndall, Herbert Spencer, Huxley and others. I speak with conviction concerning the views held by learned theologians and it is found that I am right.... Whence comes this learning? ... I don’t know, and sometimes I am tempted to think that my spirit, my own soul, no longer is mine....”

While her book, *Isis Unveiled*, was appearing in numbers, it was read and commented on in the newspapers. She sent us the criticisms; they



were most flattering, and reassured us as to her literary reputation; but they contained, nevertheless, such strange revelations that we continued to feel anxiety. The statements of Olcott, of Judge (President of the American Section of the Theosophical Society), of numbers of reporters of the *Herald* and *Times* of New York, and other newspapers, spoke of remarkable phenomena. Of these we will speak later on. I will close this chapter by saying that, notwithstanding the poor opinion Madame Blavatsky herself had of her first great work, which she regarded as badly written, obscure and without definite sequence, she esteemed highly the truly exceptional triumphs and honours which it brought her. Leaving on one side the numberless articles which appeared dealing with this book, she had the honour to receive forthwith two diplomas and many letters from scientific men as eminent, for example, as Layman, John Draper and Alfred Russel Wallace. This latter, among others, wrote to her as follows: "I am truly struck, Madame, by your profound erudition. I have to thank you for opening my eyes to a world of things of which, previously, I had no idea from the point of view which you indicate to science, and which explains problems which seemed to be insoluble...."

The diplomas were sent by Masonic Lodges of England and Benares (Society of Svat-Bai), which recognized her rights to the superior grades of their brotherhoods. The first was accompanied by a cross of the rose in rubies, and the second with a most valuable and ancient copy of the *Bhagavad Gita*, the bible of India. But that which is more remarkable still is the fact that the Reverend Doctor of the Episcopal Church of the University of New York, took this book, *Isis Unveiled*, as a text for his sermons. For a series of Sundays he occupied his pulpit, and the Rev. McKerty, taking his themes from the third chapter of Vol. I., edified his parishioners by hurling thunderbolts and opprobrium on the materialist disciples of the Auguste Comte and such like.

H. P. Blavatsky, to the day of her death, remained Russian and a good patriot; the goodwill and approval of her compatriots were always the laurel she most coveted and most valued. Her works, prohibited in Russia by the censorship (notwithstanding their being incomprehensible to the majority of the people owing to the fact that they were in English, a language little known in Russia), had few readers. The honour, therefore, was the greater if those who had read them in speaking of them, quite independently, used

terms almost similar to those of the Rev. Archbishop Aivasovsky (brother of our well-known painter), and the son of our celebrated historian Serge Solovioff, the well-known novelist Vsevolod Solovioff.

Aivasovsky asked me to lend him *Isis Unveiled*, also Olcott's *People from the Other World*. After reading the two, he wrote to me that in his opinion "there never had been and there never could be any phenomenon more wonderful than this writing of a book, such as *Isis*, by a woman in the space of a few months, when ten years would, in the ordinary course of things, hardly suffice a scientific man to complete such a work."

The following is the opinion of M. Vs. Solovioff, contained in a letter from him dated July 7th, 1884, after reading, in manuscript, the French translation of the same work.

"I have read the second part of *Isis Unveiled*, and am now entirely convinced that it is a true prodigy."

So they agreed! M. Solovioff and the Archbishop Aivasovsky have both often said to me, that it seemed to them to be unnecessary to speak of other of my sister's miracles, after that which she had accomplished in writing that book.

In regard to the phenomena, called natural, psychological tricks, as they were termed by H. P. Blavatsky, who always spoke of them with indifference and disdain, it would have been better both for her and for her Society if they had been less spoken about or not at all. Her too ardent friends, in publishing books like the *Occult World* of Mr. Sinnett, rendered her a bad service. Instead of adding to her renown, as they believed, the stories of the wonders worked by the Founders of the Theosophical Society did her a great deal of harm, making not only sceptics, but all sensible folks call it a falsehood and accuse her of charlatanism.

• • • • •

All these stories by Olcott, by Judge, by Sinnett and by many others, of objects created from nothing, of drawings which she caused to appear by merely placing her hands on a sheet of white paper, of apparitions of persons who were dead or absent, or of numbers of objects which had been lost for many years being found in flower-beds or in cushions, added nothing to the reputation of Madame Blavatsky and her Society; on the contrary,

they gave a handle to her enemies, as proofs of bad faith and error. The world at large is alive with more or less convincing phenomena, but there will always be more people incredulous than believing, and more traitors than men of good faith. The number of ardent members of the Theosophical Society and zealous friends of Madame Blavatsky, who became her bitter enemies in consequence of the failure of their mercenary hopes, proves this once again....

Always indifferent as to incredulity regarding startling phenomena — material phenomena — H. P. Blavatsky profoundly resented want of confidence in her psychic faculties, in her powers of clairvoyance and in that quality of mental intuition which manifested in her when she either wrote or discussed serious matters. In 1875 she thus wrote to us, speaking of this invasion of her moral being by an outside force :

“It is evident that it is difficult for you to comprehend this psychic phenomenon, notwithstanding that there are precedents of which history speaks. If you will allow that the human soul, the vital soul, the pure spirit, is composed of a substance which is independent of the organism and that it is not inseparably linked with our interior organs ; that this soul, which belongs to all that lives, to the infusoria as well as to the elephant and to each one of us, is not to be distinguished (from our shadow, which forms the almost always invisible base of its fleshly envelope) except in so far as it is more or less illumined by the divine essence of our Immortal Spirit, you will then admit that it is capable of acting independently of our body. Try and realize that — and many things hitherto incomprehensible will become clear. As a matter of fact, this was well recognized in antiquity. The human soul, the fifth principle of the being, recovers some portion of its independence in the body of one profane during the period of sleep ; in the case of an initiated Adept it enjoys that state constantly. St. Paul, the only one of the apostles initiated into the esoteric mysteries of Greece — does he not say in speaking of his ascension to the third heaven ‘in the body or out of the body’ he cannot tell ; ‘God knoweth.’ In the same sense the servant Rhoda says when she sees St. Peter, ‘It is not him, it is his “angel,” that is to say, his double, his shade. Again in the *Acts of the Apostles* (viii. 39), when the Spirit — the divine force — seizes and carries off St. Philip, is it in truth he himself bodily and living, that is transported to a distance ? It was his soul and his double — his true ‘ego.’ Read Plutarch, Apuleius, Jamblichus.

You will find in them many allusions to these facts if not assertions which the initiated have not the right to make.... That which mediums produce unconsciously under the influence of outside forces evoked during their sleep, the Adepts do consciously, working by understood methods.... *Voilà tout!*

Thus it was that my sister explained to us the visits of her Master, who not only instructed and made suggestions to her by means of her intuition, from his own vast wisdom, but even came in his astral body to see them — her and Colonel Olcott and many others besides.

In the year 1885, for example, Mahatma Morya appeared to M. Vsevolod Solovioff, with whom he had a conversation, and who has described what took place to many people, with his usual eloquence. As for myself, however, I have never seen them, nevertheless I have no right to doubt their existence, testified to by persons whose truthfulness cannot be questioned. All the same these apparitions have always seemed to me to be very problematical, and this opinion I have never hesitated to express to my sister, on which she would reply:

“As you like, my dear.... I wish you a better understanding.”

During the war between Russia and Turkey, Helena Petrovna had not a moment's peace. All her letters written during 1876-1877 are full of alarm for her compatriots, of fears for the safety of those members of her family who were actively engaged in it. She forgot her anti-materialist and anti-spiritualist articles in order to breathe forth fire and flame against the enemies of the Russian nation; not against our enemies themselves who were also to be pitied, but against the evil-minded hypocrites, against their simulated sympathies for Turkey, their jesuitical policy which was an offense to all Christian peoples. When she heard of the famous discourse of Pius IX, in which he taught the faithful that “the hand of God could direct the scimitar of the Bashi-bazouk towards the uprooting of schism,” in which he gave his blessing to Mohammedan arms as used against the infidel Orthodox Greek Church, she fell ill. Then she exploded in a series of satires so envenomed and so clever that the whole American press and all the anti-popish journals called attention to them, and the Papal Nuncio at New York, the Scotch Cardinal MacKlosky, thought advisable to send a priest to parley with her. He gained little from that, however, for Madame Blavatsky made a point of relating the occurrence in her next article, saying

that she had begged the prelate to be so good as to talk with her through the press and then she would most certainly reply to him.

We sent her a poem of Turgenyeff's, called "Croquet at Windsor," which represented Queen Victoria and her Court playing croquet with the bleeding heads of Slavs for balls. She quickly translated it, and it was in *The New York Herald*, if I mistake not, that it first saw publicity.

In October, 1876, H. P. Blavatsky gave fresh proof of her powers of clairvoyance. She had a vision of what was happening in the Caucasus, on the frontier of Turkey, where her cousin Alexander Witte, Major of the Nijni-Novgorod Dragoons, narrowly escaped death. She mentioned the fact in one of her letters to her relations; as, often before, she had described to us apparitions of persons who warned her of their death weeks before the news could be received by ordinary means, we were not greatly astonished.

All that she made in the way of money, during the war, from her articles in the Russian newspapers, together with the first payments she received from her publisher, were sent to Odessa and to Tiflis for the benefit of the wounded soldiers or their families or to the Red Cross Society.

In the spring of 1878 a strange thing happened to Madame Blavatsky. Having got up and set to work one morning as usual, she suddenly lost consciousness, and never regained it again until five days later. So deep was her state of lethargy that she would have been buried had not a telegram been received by Colonel Olcott and his sister, who were with her at the time, emanating from him she called her Master. The message ran, "Fear nothing, she is neither dead nor ill, but she has need of repose; she has overworked herself.... She will recover." As a matter of fact she recovered and found herself so well that she would not believe that she had slept for five days. Soon after this sleep, H. P. Blavatsky formed the project of going to India.

The Theosophical Society was thenceforth duly organized at New York. The three principal objects were then as they are to-day: (1) the organization of an universal brotherhood, without distinction of race, creed or social position, in which the members pledged themselves to strive for the moral improvement both of themselves and others; (2) for the common study of the oriental sciences, languages and literature; (3) the investigation into the hidden laws of nature and the psychological powers of man, as yet unknown to science — this last clause being optional; in fact, it is only the first which is considered binding on all the members of the Society, the

other two are not insisted on.

The work of Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott was, in America, confided to the care of the most zealous and devoted of their disciples, Mr. William Q. Judge, who is at the present time Vice-President of the Theosophical Society. As for the Founders, they left in the autumn of 1878 for India.

They were ordered, so they stated, by their Masters, the guides and protectors of the theosophical movement, to work on the spot and in concert with a certain Dayanand Sarasvati, a Hindu preacher who taught monotheism and who has been called the Luther of India.

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On the 17th of February, 1879, after a long stay in London, where they formed the first nucleus of their brotherhood, which for the time prospered, Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott arrived at Bombay.

There the Arya Somaj Society, of which Swami Dyanand was the spiritual head, organized, in their honour, a welcome, which was reported in the Anglo-Indian newspapers, and which was described by H. P. Blavatsky herself in her book, *In the Caves and Jungles of Hindustan*, as well as in her letters written at the time; the following humorous extract is from one of the latter:

“Imagine the deputies of the Society coming out to greet us in boats, decorated with garlands of flowers, accompanied by an orchestra of musicians, blowing on trumpets and horns; no sooner had they got on board our vessel than we were surrounded. I raged and laughed at the same time, at the spectacle we presented to the eyes of all the loafers assembled on the bridge and on the quay. The Colonel appeared like a ‘fatted ox’ at an Italian carnival, and my ungraceful figure looked more like a balloon decked with roses and lilies than anything else. Thus adorned, we were conducted, band of music and all, towards the landing place. Then, behold, a new surprise! a ballet of native dancers, attired almost in the costume of the Queen Pomare, which is chiefly remarkable by its absence; ... they at once commenced to dance around us, enveloping us in a circle of nudities and flowers which they threw beneath our feet, all the time leading us towards — carriages, think you? ... Alas! towards a white elephant! Gods of Olympus! what it

cost me to climb on to the back of this kneeling colossus, making use of the shoulders and naked backs of the coolies as a sort of living ladder. I clung to the columns of the howdah to save myself from falling out when the huge beast got on his legs. Our companions — more lucky than we — got into palanquins, and were carried by these same coolies, the human beasts of burden of the country ; thus, accompanied by flourishes and drums, and a curious and laughing crowd, we were led, like ‘learned monkeys,’ or acrobats at a fair, towards the house prepared for our humble selves by the *too* hospitable members of the Arya Somaj.”

Notwithstanding this grand demonstration on arrival, their life was a hard one at first. They worked eighteen hours a day ; Olcott travelled the greater part of the year, forming branches of the Theosophical Society, which at once took root in the congenial soil of Oriental belief, and Madame Blavatsky hardly quitted her table, writing night and day, preparing material for their projected journal, *The Theosophist*, which was started that same year, and also in writing articles in the English, American and Russian newspapers to help their common resources. From their very first start they were harassed by the Anglo-Indian administration, which took a dislike to Theosophists and put them on their black books, treating them as spies and propagandists of the Russian Government.

It must be borne in mind that just at that time there was considerable excitement in England as to the fate of Afghanistan, on account of the success which had attended the Russian arms in the Transcaspian regions. The English had become more mistrustful and more full of Russophobia than ever. In vain the poor Theosophists protested and represented to the authorities that their mission was entirely concerned with philosophy and had nothing on earth to do with politics. They were put under police surveillance, their movements were watched and their correspondence opened.... So much the worse for the government of Queen Victoria, for H. P. Blavatsky added fuel to the flames, put no restraint upon her feelings in her letters, and doubtless the officials had often the pleasure of reading therein many home truths, which must have been somewhat trying to their vanity.... At last friends in London and the press took the matter up, and the police surveillance was removed — thanks, however, principally to a letter which Lord Lindsay, a Fellow of the Royal Society and President of the Astronomical Society in London, wrote to Lord Lytton, the Viceroy of



India, and which made him ashamed of any longer persecuting a woman and other persons engaged in abstract studies of a moral character.

Notwithstanding the prejudice against her among the members of Anglo-Indian society, Madame Blavatsky was able to make friends with some individuals amongst them, especially with those who were engaged in literary pursuits, and who were capable of being interested in the problems which occupied her. Soon she was in request in the highest social circles, especially after the *Pioneer* and *Indian Mirror* (the first-named being a Government organ) had made public the speech that the Viceroy, Lord Lytton, had made about her at a state dinner, after reading her works — it was as follows :

“I know but one person in the world who in the abstract sciences can compare with the author of *Zanoni* [Lord Lytton’s own father], and that is Madame Blavatsky.”

The visits, the dinners and the balls, and all the exigencies of society, were exceedingly irksome to Helena Petrovna, but she did her best to comply with them for the sake of her Society. She passed the hot weather in the hills, sometimes taking part in the Colonel’s travels, but more often staying with friends, and always occupied, without intermission, on her writing.

She passed one summer at Simla, having accepted the invitation of one of her new friends, Mr. Sinnett, editor of the *Pioneer*, and his wife. Here it was that Madame Blavatsky made the great mistake of producing certain phenomena, in the presence of several persons who begged her to do so, and Mr. Sinnett had the imprudence to relate these phenomena in his newspaper, before publishing all those “facts,” in which he most sincerely believed, in his well-known book, *The Occult World*. This led to endless debates. The clergy protested, not without reason, against “this anti-Christian propaganda, founded on jugglery.” The calumnies against the founders of the Theosophical Society grew apace. They even went so far as to assert that not only was she a spy, but even an impostor — “a servant of the late Madame Blavatsky, who was dead and buried, whose papers she had seized and whose name she made use of.”

All these slanders served to aggravate the maladies from which she suffered most terribly. She was obliged to have recourse to the authority of her relations and of her friends in Russia to prove her identity. Prince A. M. Dondoukoff-Korsakoff, at that time Commander-in-Chief of the



Caucasus, wrote her a most kind letter, describing himself as a friend who had known her from her youth, and enclosed a certificate of identity, which was published in nearly all the Anglo-Indian papers, to the great delight of her friends.

But, alas! she had more influential enemies than she had friends.

The Theosophical Society at that time numbered its recruits by the thousand among the natives, among those who held no official position, but had made very few converts among the leading classes in India. The English, bound by their official ties, or their social position, contented themselves for the most part with taking a general interest in the movement, and in the teachings in particular, but would have nothing to do with diplomas, and so forth, and, not being members of the Society, they lost no time in disowning it when it got into low water. Those who wish to acquaint themselves with the details of what occurred during the sojourn of H. P. Blavatsky in India can do so by reading the accounts written by Olcott and by Sinnett and by other eye-witnesses.

At length the adhesion of rich and influential natives, given to fraternity which reaffirmed the truth underlying their faiths, whether Hindu or Buddhist, irritated the missionaries to such an extent that they seemed to forget Christian charity. They saw already clearly enough that Madame Blavatsky, whether sincere or hypocrite, magician or conjurer, was the strength and the soul of the Theosophical Society, and they directed their attacks against her in consequence. She had not openly embraced Buddhism as had the President of the Society, but she proclaimed the equality and unity of all religious systems. For this very reason she was more dangerous than the Colonel, who was the author of a Buddhist catechism, approved by Sumangala, the High Priest of Ceylon. From thenceforward, therefore, she became the point of attack for the enemies of Theosophy and the scapegoat of the Society.

What with eighteen hours' work out of the twenty-four, the abuse and the constant worry, the mental strain added to her chronic bodily disease, which was aggravated by the bad climatic conditions, she at length came within an ace of death. During the five years H. P. Blavatsky passed in India she had no less than four attacks of illness of so serious a nature that the best doctors of Bombay and of Madras in each instance decided that she could not possibly live; but at the last moment some unlooked-for and at times

unusual aid always came to her. On one occasion it was a native doctor, on another a Brahmin Yogi, or a poor “pariah,” shrunk by fasting and austerities. They appeared unasked and offered their remedies, which proved to be efficacious. Then at the specified hour she fell into a deep sleep, from which, according to the European doctors, she should have passed into her last agony. Instead of which, she woke from this long sleep as if she had had nothing the matter with her. Twice, however, it fell out otherwise. Strange, unknown and unlooked-for visitors appeared, who took charge of her and carried her off no one knew whither.

Scores of witnesses testify to the fact, in addition to which her own letters prove it clearly. I have one before me, unluckily undated, as it was her habit in writing to us — her aunt and myself — not to trouble about the day of the month. In this letter she gives us news of a severe illness she was passing through; a “chela” (a disciple of the Masters and a student of the Occult sciences) had brought her an order from one of the Adepts for her to follow him, and she begged us not to be uneasy on account of her silence, which would necessarily be prolonged, as the place where she would be obliged to pass some time in order to recover was far removed from posts and telegraphs.

Here, again, is a letter addressed from Meerut, beyond Allahabad. This one was written in May, 1881, after a severe illness, of which those who were with H. P. Blavatsky had informed us, saying that we must be prepared for the worst. Her friends were taking Helena Petrovna into the country — she was convalescent, but still very weak — when she received the “order” to leave the main roads and to strike off into the mountains.

“There you will find certain individuals,” thus it was said to her, “who will guide you from the jungles into the sacred forests of the Deobend.” But, halfway, an accident befell her, which brought on another relapse. Here are a few lines from a letter which she wrote me three weeks later:

“I lost consciousness, and have no remembrance of the facts or the surroundings — all I do know was that I was carried in a palanquin, in which I lay at full length — to a great height. I only came to myself the following evening, so they told me, and then for a very short time only. I found myself lying in a large apartment, cut out of the solid rock and altogether empty, unless the statues of Buddha, which surrounded it, and the lighted braziers, which burnt around my bed, containing vases from which escaped

sweet-smelling vapours, can be reckoned as furniture. An old man, quite white, bent over me, making magnetic passes, which steeped my body in a condition of indescribable well-being. I had barely time to recognize Delo-Durgai, the old Lama of Tibet, whom I had met *en route* a few days previously, and who had told me we should meet again soon.”

This was an allusion to her previous letter, in which she had spoken of the fact of their meeting.

Having recognized the Tibetan Lama, my sister again relapsed into one of her strange sleeps and did not recover consciousness until she was again at the foot of the mountain, in the village where her European friends were waiting for her.

Never was it permitted, not only for the English but even for the natives themselves, to follow her on such secret expeditions, on which occasions it was presumed she went to see her Masters — notwithstanding this conviction, held by those who surrounded her, she never wrote to us of her visiting them; nevertheless, I have come across one of her first letters (written in 1879), in which she relates the participation of Mahatma Morya in one of her journeys with Colonel Olcott, amid the vaults and the ruins of ancient temples, which is of intense interest.

In the spring of 1881, H. P. Blavatsky fell seriously ill after receiving the fatal news of what had occurred in Russia on the 13th March in that year.

“Good God of mercy! what a bloody horror!” she wrote to us, “Are the last days of Russia come? ... Or is Satan himself incarnate in her children, in the miserable abortion of my poor country? After this unprecedented crime, what next? Where are the Russians of days gone by? Whither is my beloved Russia drifting? Yes, I am a renegade. Yes, I am a Buddhist, an atheist — according to you, a republican — but I am miserable, profoundly miserable, over this atrocious monstrosity! Oh! how I pity them all — our martyred Tsar, his unhappy family, and all Russia!

“Cursed be these monsters, these Nihilists, these reckless fools!

“How you will laugh at me — the republican citizen, the *esprit fort*, who has freed herself from the prejudices of her country; but in this moment of profound stupor I feel a shame so intense of my countrymen, a pity so deep for the victim of their cruel follies, a despair so true, that I defy the most faithful of the subjects of our Tsars, who have never left their native land, to suffer more than I do.”

And she proved it by falling ill.

Her journal, *The Theosophist*, appeared in black borders. This was a most kind attention on the part of the President of the Theosophical Society; for she herself was far from being in a condition to think of such things. Hardly had she recovered from her first stupor, when she set to work to write a beautiful article for *The Pioneer*, in which she recounted all the acts of bravery, of humanity and kindness done by Alexander II., and was delighted that all the Anglo-Indian press echoed what she said. As a reply to certain ill-disposed remarks in two clerical organs, alluding to “the American citizen and her journal dressed in mourning for the death of an autocrat,” H.P. Blavatsky sent a collective reply to the *Bombay Gazette*, whence the other papers reproduced it.

“My kind friends make a mistake,” so she wrote; “it is not as a subject of the ‘Tsar of all the Russias’ that I have put on mourning, but as a Russian by birth, as a unit among the thousands of my compatriots, whom this good and merciful man has covered with benefits, and who are all plunged in mourning. I desire, by so doing, to testify my sympathy, my respect, and my sincere grief for the death of the Tsar of my kindred, of my brothers and sisters in Russia, who will ever be dear to me, even to my last breath!”

In the winter of 1881-82 the Theosophical community transported its penates from Bombay to Adyar, a property in the neighbourhood of the city of Madras, bought by contributions from all the members of the Society, who desired to provide their founders and their staff with a permanent home. It is there that the President lives up to the present time, and it was here also that Madame Blavatsky passed the last two years of her life in India, and it was there that in that same year the seventh anniversary of the founding of the Society was celebrated with especial solemnity — I say “especial solemnity,” as the number seven is an important one in theosophic beliefs, and as these anniversaries are numerous at Adyar, at New York and at London, those which contain this number are double marked.

During their frequent travels Colonel Olcott and Madame Blavatsky were always received with great pomp by the natives of the country they passed through; for all the Hindus were devoted to them, partly because by their translations of the Sanskrit books of the ancient Aryan literature they had done much to popularize them, partly on account of the efforts they had made to lessen the barriers between the castes, and also for what they had

done in the way of modifying the unjust contempt with which the Anglo-Indians regarded the natives, even the learned Brahmius. In this work, according to the opinion of the natives, the Society had met with considerable success. Nowhere, however, were the Theosophists *feted* as they were in Ceylon. Each time they set foot there the Buddhist population were *en fete*, and led by their priests they organized a triumphal welcome.

It was in the interests of the Sinhalese that the President planned a journey to Europe and especially to London, in order to present a petition to Parliament in their favour.

It was towards the end of 1883 that H. P. Blavatsky found herself rather improved in health, thanks to a better climate and to the fact that she had a well-built house to live in. Nevertheless, her health left much to be desired, and all her doctors agreed that even a temporary change of climate would do her a great deal of good. It was therefore decided that she should accompany the President, and thenceforward Helena began to form projects of seeing once more her relatives. She immediately wrote to us ; then in the month of December they left Bombay.

Before leaving the shore of India, however, my sister had three successive visions which indicated to her the death of her uncle, General Rostislav Fadeew, who died at that very time at Odessa.

As we knew she was about to leave, and were too upset ourselves by this heavy blow, her aunt and I neglected to send her news of what had happened. She was unaware of the illness of her uncle, when he himself came and told her that his trials were over.

The two or three letters of Madame Blavatsky dated early in January, 1884 — General Fadeew having died on the 29th December — proved conclusively by the truth of these visions, whilst the words from beyond the tomb, which she heard pronounced by this man, one who was esteemed and honoured by all who ever knew him, had for her a singular significance.

She had implicit belief in the truth and the importance of visions of this nature — not sought for but proceeding from the initiative of him who was dead. She had experienced them all her life, and nearly all the members of our family were privileged in the same manner.

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Once in Europe, H. P. Blavatsky was besieged with invitations. All the Theosophists in London, in Paris, and her friends in all countries wanted to have her; but her idea was to see her own nearest relatives, and to this end, after resting at Nice at the house of the Duchesse de Pomar (Lady Caithness), President of the Eastern and Western Branch of the Theosophical Society in Paris, she settled down in Paris in a small flat, which she took in order to be able to receive my aunt and myself under her own roof, knowing that we should not care to accept any other hospitality. Harassed by the curious and by reporters, more than by friends or those seriously interested in her teachings, she went away and spent a fortnight in the country, accepting the invitation of M. and Mme. d'Adhemar, who owned a charming villa near Enghien. In *LUCIFER* (the magazine since founded by H. P. Blavatsky in London) for July, 1891, I find a delightful letter from Countess d'Adhemar, giving her reminiscences of the musical phenomena produced by Madame Blavatsky during this visit, in the presence of several persons.

I regret that the limits of this article preclude my quoting at length this letter, and also many others, which would doubtless be more convincing to my readers than the depositions of a sister. I hope, however, to be able to do so at some future date, if only in order to undeceive the public regarding the lying accusations brought against Madame Blavatsky by evilly disposed persons, old pupils for the most part, who, finding their hopes of some immediate miraculous results disappointed, became her bitter enemies.

There were always enough and to spare of foolish people, who expected to receive occult gifts for the asking, and of mercenary folk who were ready to lend their aid and encouragement to H. P. Blavatsky in exchange for larger or smaller sums of money. As soon as these saw that she had neither the means nor the desire to pay them, either in ready cash or in occult powers conferred on them, they lost no time in becoming her deadly and too often unprincipled opponents.

I passed six weeks, in the spring of 1884, at Paris with my sister. She was all that time surrounded with crowds of people; not only those who had come from America, from England and from Germany, expressly to see her and to talk with her business connected with Theosophy, but also with numbers of Parisians interested in the teachings and particularly in the phenomena, who constantly assailed her.

The Theosophical Society in Europe was then in its infancy. Even in

London there were not more than a score of sincere and working members devoted to the cause; in Germany there was not even one branch duly organised; in Paris, there were indeed two Lodges, but they did not between them comprise a membership of more than twenty or thirty, while the “mother branches of New York and of Adyar” were constantly being split up by dissensions among their members, which did not promise well for their future prosperity. Amongst those, however, who were constant visitors at our house, 46, Rue Notre-Dame-des-Champs, were several of eminence. I remember seeing there many *savants*, doctors of medicine, and of other sciences, magnetisers and clairvoyants, and a number of women more or less acquainted with literature and the abstract sciences, among these many of our compatriots of both sexes. Among those whose names I remember, were C. Flammarion, Leymarie, de Baissac, Richet, Evette the magnetiser, the pupil and friend of Baron Dupotet, and M. Vsevolod Solovioff, the Russian author, one of the most constant visitors and ever full of protestations of his devotion to the cause and person of Madame Blavatsky. Among the ladies were the Duchesse de Pomar, the Comtesse d’Adhemar, Madame de Barreau, Madame de Morsier, Mdle. de Glinka and many others, French, Russian, English and American.

Colonel Olcott and Mr. Judge, the latter having arrived from New York, told us endless stories of the most wonderful phenomena of which they had been witnesses; we, however, saw none except such as had to do with psychology, with the exception of, on one or two occasions, hearing harmonious sounds, produced at will by Helena Petrovna; again, on one occasion not only was a sealed letter psychometrically read, but, having drawn in red pencil an arrow and a theosophical star on a sheet of paper, she caused the same marks to appear on an indicated place of the sealed letter, which was contained in an envelope and folded in four. This was vouched for by the signature of six or seven witnesses, amongst them M. Solovioff, who described what happened in the Russian journal *Rebus*, under date of 1st July, 1884, and under the title of “Interesting Phenomena.” There was also another, which I myself described at the time. It was the sudden appearance and equally sudden disappearance — without the least trace being left of it — of a Russian newspaper article, published at Odessa, three days before it appeared in the scrap-book of my sister, in which it was her custom to insert all that was published referring to her. That same morning we had



all read this article with great astonishment (for the letters from Odessa to Paris took from four to five days to reach us) and that same evening not the smallest vestige of it remained in the book, which was a bound one and of which the pages were numbered. The disappearance of the article in question had not interrupted the series of consecutive numbers. With the exception of these two palpable facts, material phenomena, so to speak, I never — so far as my memory serves me — saw her produce any other than psychological phenomena, such as clairvoyance, psychometry and clairaudience. For my own part I never received any letters from the Adepts and I never perceived nor did I have the chance to see, as many others had, any apparition — neither lights nor letters falling from the skies. I do not contest their depositions — far from that! I am quite ready to believe them, for, so far as I see, no one has a right to contest the belief of others from the sole standpoint of ignorance or his want of perception; but I cannot put forward anything except what occurred in my own experience.

That, however, should not prevent my repeating the experiences of others, more fortunate or more endowed than myself, which they have related to me. It would be impossible, however, to relate all the stories told by the nearest disciples of my sister, and it is needless to do so, for all the Theosophical journals have told and retold those to which Messrs. Sinnett, Olcott, Judge, and many others bore witness; but I will quote the testimony of one who has not been hitherto reported in the English or French press. I allude to the remarkable phenomena which M. Vs. Solovioff has described in many letters.

After staying with my sister, in the month of September that same year, at Elberfeld, whither he went to see her, he wrote me a long letter about an interview which the Mahatma Morya had granted him, and also of the visions which he had experienced previous to the appearance of this great Adept. I will not describe what took place in detail, for he sent an account to the *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* in London; this, however, is what he wrote to me in reply to my questions as to the authenticity of this apparition, on November 21st, 1885.

“Here again is a fact. I received (at Wurtzbourg) at the same time, to the great jealousy of all the Theosophists, an autograph letter from Mahatma Koot-Hoomi, written in Russian. I was not the least astonished when I found this letter lying precisely in the book I held in my hand. I had a



presentiment it would be so. I knew it beforehand ! What did astonish me, however, was that in it he spoke clearly and shortly of the very things we were discussing at the moment. In it I found a precise reply to my question of the moment before, although I was standing apart, and no one had approached me. Even if anyone had been able to insert the letter in the book, the individual who did so must have been able to control my thoughts, and cause me to pronounce the words I had spoken, for me to have found in it an exact reply. I have often observed the same phenomena in my own case and in that of others.”

The occult powers of Madame Blavatsky were, without doubt, great. Nevertheless no one, so far as I know, has ever attributed her faculties to hypnotic suggestion, as M. Solovioff seems to imply. Besides which, his hypothesis will not stand criticism, for many times the letters from the Mahatmas and from Madame Blavatsky have been submitted to the inspection of experts, who have always pronounced the handwritings to be different. In addition to which, M. Solovioff has not been the only one to receive such letters under precisely similar conditions. Dr. Hubbe Schleiden, editor of *The Sphinx*, and many others who can prove it, have received their letters in the *absence* of Madame Blavatsky.

Returning to the testimony of M. Solovioff. He finishes his letter of 21st November with these words : “When her life ends, a life which, I am convinced, is only kept going by some magic power, I shall mourn all my life for this unhappy and remarkable woman.” Indeed he might well say so, he who more than any other had had proof of her remarkable powers ! Here are a few lines from another letter of his, written on December 22nd, 1884, at a time when my sister had been already in India for two months, and he was living in Paris.

“My dinner finished, I went to look for a cigar in my room. I went upstairs, opened my door, lit my candle . . . what did I see ? Your sister, Helena Petrovna, in her black morning gown. She made me a bow, smiled and said, ‘Here I am !’ and disappeared. What is the meaning of it ?”

As a matter of fact, it signified nothing at all serious. My sister merely wanted once for all to return, in her astral body, the frequent visits that M. Solovioff had at various times paid to her at Paris, Elberfeld, and at Wurtzbourg, in the flesh.

We left Paris on the same day in the month of June, I and my aunt N.

A. Fadeew for Odessa, Madame Blavatsky for London, whither she was urgently invited. She was there fully occupied in endeavouring to establish a permanent branch of the Society, under the presidency of Mr. Sinnett, and, although never out of pain, devoted much time to those who came to see her out of curiosity, and to social life. From the first she was feted and met with adulation. On her behalf they organised large meetings and conversaziones. At one of these, nearly one thousand persons were present at Princes' Hall, and more than three hundred persons were introduced to her. Among those who thus took notice of her were Professor Crookes, Lord Cross, Minister for India, and her friend and countrywoman Madame Olga Aleksevna Novikoff. Sinnett made a fine speech, in which he praised to the skies the energy and wisdom of Madame Blavatsky, the unceasing work of Colonel Olcott and the beautiful humanitarian and moral principles which formed the basis of their teachings. Unfortunately the health of H. P. Blavatsky was not equal to supporting the strain of her incessant work, together with the calls of society, coupled with the emotion caused by the receipt of bad news from Madras. I allude to the well-known conspiracy of her late servants, the carpenter Coulomb and his wife, who sold forged letters to the Journal of the Christian College of Madras, the sworn enemy of the T.S. and above all of its Foundress, and who, in the absence of the masters from Adyar, set to work to make, in Madame Blavatsky's room, hidden doors and cupboards with false backs, which she could never have ordered, for even if she had wished to deceive her visitors by such means, she would not have been so made as to have her secret arrangements carried out in her absence. All these made-up stories, well paid for by her adversaries, led to the sad history of the expose "of the frauds of Madame Blavatsky, the greatest impostor of the age," to quote the words of the report of the Psychical Society of London. This report has been over and over again shown to be false in its details, by many different individuals, who, being deeply versed in occultism and in the Theosophical teachings, went and diligently investigated the affair on the spot; but scandalous stories, especially those which are accusations, are very difficult to uproot. It is quite clear that the assertions of the Psychical Society — translated as they were into all languages — will serve, for a long time to come, as weapons in the hands of enemies of Madame Blavatsky, while the refutations of her devoted disciples, far better acquainted with all the details of the conspiracy, will remain

in a great measure powerless owing to their want of publicity, appearing as they did in Theosophical journals, very little read by the outside public.

I have, in my portfolio, a whole series of articles written by friends of Madame Blavatsky in her favour, which no Russian journal would publish, for fear of polemics. In reply to an allusion in the *Novoie Vremia* to this very report of the Psychical Research Society — a score of members of the Theosophical Society in London, who had got to the bottom of the whole intrigue, sent a collective address to the editor, but this address never saw the light of day, and the defamatory article continued to appear in the paper, all founded on the calumnies of the Psychical Society.

The malevolence of the “Christian College” went so far as to affirm that “H. P. Blavatsky would never dare to return to India, for not only had she extorted money from her dupes, but had also stolen the cash-box of her own Theosophical Society.” She! who had ruined her health in her efforts for the Society! She! who had given up all her fortune, her life, and her sole for it! This one statement alone from a so-called “Christian” journal proves the perfidy of her adversaries.

She hastened to leave for India, if only to give the lie to her persecutors. At Ceylon and even at Madras itself she met with a splendid reception. The students of the Madras Colleges presented her with a most flattering address, signed by eight hundred people. Certainly it was a most eloquent demonstration, and it consoled her not a little for her bitter vexations.

Still the storm grew. When Helena Petrovna took possession of her room at Adyar, she gave vent to cries of indignation, which caused her travelling companions, Mr. and Mrs. Cooper-Oakley, to hurry to the spot; it was the sight of the strange handiwork of the carpenter Coulomb which had struck her with stupefaction. (Mrs. Cooper-Oakley has described this scene and what followed, in her article, telling of their journey from London to Madras, in *LUCIFER*, of June, 1891). In a word, her enemies had done so much and so well that she fell ill and came near dying. This time her recovery was really miraculous, and all the witnesses have testified to it. In the evening her doctor left her dying, but when he returned in the morning, merely for the purpose of certifying to her death, he found her breakfasting on a cup of milk. The doctor could hardly believe his eyes. All she said to him was, “It is because you have no belief in the powers of our Masters.”

The immediate danger had passed, but, nevertheless, she was so weak that

they were obliged to carry her in an invalid chair and have her hoisted, almost unconscious, on board a steamer leaving for Italy, all the doctors being agreed that the approaching hot weather would be inevitably fatal to her.

• • • • •

The early months of the summer that Madame Blavatsky spent near Naples, at Torre del Greco, were months full of suffering. She felt ill, solitary, and deserted, and, what is more, she feared that the prosperity of the Theosophical Society was ruined by her unpopularity and by the calumnies at all times directed against her. But at the first suggestion of resignation she made, she raised a storm of unanimous protest from America, Europe, and above all, from India. The President was powerless to calm the malcontents, who urgently demanded the return of H. P. Blavatsky, and the resumption by her of the business of the Society and of Theosophical interests in general. In vain she tried to prove to them that she would really be of more use to the movement by devoting herself, in seclusion and uninterrupted by business affairs and troubles, to the writing of her new work, *The Secret Doctrine*. They replied with assurances of devotion to her and by asking her to come to London to Madras, and to New York; settle where she would, she would be welcomed, if only she would resume the leadership of the movement. As for leaving them, she must not for a moment think of it, for, according to the unanimous opinion, her leaving meant the dispersion of the Theosophical Society and its death!

As soon as it was known that one of the most foolish accusations against H. P. Blavatsky was that the Mahatmas did not exist, and that they were only the creation of her imagination, invented in order to deceive the credulous, hundreds of letters reached her from all parts of India, from persons who had knowledge of them before, they said, they had possessed the slightest acquaintance with Theosophy. Finally came a letter from Negapatam, the home of *pundits* bearing the signatures of seventy-seven of their learned men, emphatically affirming the existence of these superior beings, who were too well known and recognized in the history of the Aryan races for their descendants to be able to doubt their existence. (*Boston Courier*, July, 1886.)

Helena wrote to me from Wurzburg, where she had settled for the winter :

“I understand that the Psychical Research Society of London has suddenly perceived the possibility of making me pass for a charlatan. Above all things, they wish by any means to avoid differences with the orthodox science of Europe, and consequently it is impossible for them to recognize the occult phenomena as genuine and the result of forces unknown to the scientists. If they were to do this, they would at once have against them the whole clique of doctors of Science and Theology. Certainly their better plan is to trample on us Theosophists, who fear neither the clergy nor academic authorities, and who have the courage of our opinions. Well then ! rather than excite the anger of the shepherds of all the European sheep of Panurge, is it not better to excuse my disciples (for there are many among the number who have to be taken care of!) and condole with them as being my poor dupes, and to place me upon the stool of repentance, and accuse me of frauds, of spying, of thefts, and what not ? Ah ! I recognize my usual fate ; to have the reputation without having had the pleasure ! ... If only at least I could have been of real service to my beloved Russia ! But no ! The only service that I have had the chance of performing for her has been a very negative one ; the editors of certain newspapers in India being my personal friends, and knowing that every line written against Russia gave me pain, abstained from attack oftener than they otherwise would have done.... Behold all that I have been able to do for my country now lost for ever !”

Her great consolation in this exile of hers was the letters and the visits of her friends, who knew where to find her in the depths of Germany, where she had taken refuge for the sake of quiet and to be able to write her book in peace. The letters all displayed confidence and friendship ; of the visits, those of her Russian friends gave her the greatest pleasure. Amongst them were her aunt from Odessa and M. Solovioff from Paris. While there the latter had a letter from Mahatma Koot-Hoomi, and left again for Paris, enthusiastic over his visit and the extraordinary things which he had witnessed at Wurzburg, so much so that he wrote letter after letter, all in the style of the following extract :

“PARIS,  
“October 8th, 1885.

“MY DEAREST HELENA PETROVNA,

“I am in correspondence with Madame Adam. I have spoken to her much of you ; I have thoroughly interested her, and she tells me that her *Review*

will be forthwith opened not only to Theosophical articles, but to your own justification, if needs be. I have praised Madame de Morsier to her (this lady formerly professed much devotion to Madame Blavatsky and her teachings); as it happens, at this very time she has staying with her a visitor who joins with me and speaks to the same effect. All is going as well as possible. I spent the morning with Dr. Richet, and again I spoke with him about you, with regard to Myers and the Psychical Research Society. I can say that I have convinced Richet as to the reality of your personal powers, and the phenomena taking place through your agency. He asked me three categorical questions — to the two first I replied in the affirmative; as to the third, I told him that without doubt I should be able to give him an affirmative answer within the space of two or three months. I have no doubt that my answer will be in the affirmative, and then — you will see — there will be a triumph which will crush all the ‘psychists’ (of London). Yes, so it must be, must it not? For assuredly you will not deceive me!... I leave to-morrow for Petersburg. — Yours,

“V. S. SOLOVIOFF.”

All the winter, at Wurzburg, Madame Blavatsky was occupied in writing her *Secret Doctrine*. She wrote to Mr. Sinnett that never since the writing of *Isis Unveiled* had the psychometric visions appeared so clearly and plainly before her spiritual perception, and that she hoped that this work would revivify their cause. At the same time Countess Wachtmeister, who passed this winter with her (and thenceforward never wished to leave her) wrote letters full of admiration for the writings of Madame Blavatsky, and above all for “the surprising conditions under which H. P. Blavatsky worked at her great book.”

“We are surrounded daily with phenomena” — thus she wrote to me — “but we are so used to them that they seem quite in the ordinary course of things.”

Once again H. P. Blavatsky had a severe illness, from which she with difficulty recovered, thanks to the devotion of her friends, who never left her side for a moment. It was principally to Dr. Ashton Ellis, of London, Countess Wachtmeister, and the Gebhard family that she owed her recovery; but from this time forward her life was one of continuous suffering more or less acute.

In the month of April, 1887, her friends succeeded in removing her to England. The previous winter she had passed at Ostend, where she finished the first half of *The Secret Doctrine*, and here she was constantly surrounded with friends, especially with those who came to see her from London ; amongst these was the President of the British Theosophical Society, Mr. Sinnett, who had just published his book, *Incidents in the Life of Mme. H. P. Blavatsky*.

The last four years of her life, which Madame Blavatsky passed in London, were years of physical suffering, of incessant labour, of mental over-excitement, which completely undermined her health ; but these years were also years of success, of moral fruition, which fully compensated her for her sufferings, and gave her cause to hope that her book, the Theosophical Society, and her writings would remain as evidence in her favour after her death, and would serve to clear her name from the calumnies with which it had been covered.

Here is an extract from one of her letters, written in the autumn of 1887, excusing herself for her long silence.

“If you only knew, my friends, how busy I am ! Just imagine the number of my daily duties ; the editing of my new magazine, *LUCIFER*, rests entirely with me, and besides that I have to write for it each month from ten to fifteen pages. Then there are the articles from the other Theosophical magazines — the *Lotus* at Paris, the *Theosophist* at Madras, the *Path* at New York — my *Secret Doctrine*, of which I have to continue the second volume and correct the proofs of the first two or three times over. And then the visits ! .... Very often as many as thirty a day.... Impossible for me to get out of it ! .... There ought to be a hundred and twenty-four hours in each day. Have no fear ; no news is good news ! You will be written to if I become more ill than usual.... Have you noticed on the cover of the *Lotus* the sensational announcement of the Editor ? *Under the Inspiration of Madame Blavatsky*. Good Heavens, what ‘inspiration’ ! when I have not had time to write one word for it. Does it reach you ? I have taken three copies, two for you and one for Katkoff. I worship that man for his patriotism and the outspoken truth of his articles, which do honour to Russia....”

The activity of the Theosophical Society in London, its meetings, its monthly and weekly magazines, and, above all, the writings of its foundress, attracted the attention of the press and the reprisals of the clergy. But here



their representatives never gave way to such unjust and calumnious excesses as did the Jesuits of Madras. Most assuredly there were many stirring meetings, at which H. P. Blavatsky, to use her own expression, was “treated like *LUCIFER* — not in its true sense, as *bearer of the heavenly light* — but in the popular sense, that which is ascribed to him in Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. I was presented to the public as anti-Christ in petticoats.” Nevertheless, her fine letter, entitled “*LUCIFER* to the Archbishop of Canterbury,” made a great sensation at the time, and all but put an end to clerical hostilities.

In London there was no longer any question as to phenomena; Helena Petrovna took an aversion to them. Nevertheless, as Mr. Stead remarks with truth, in his article on Madame H.P. Blavatsky in *The Review of Reviews* for June, 1891, never before did she make so many distinguished converts or converts more devoted to her cause than during the last four years of her life. Her visions and her clairvoyance, however, never left her. In July, 1886, she told us of the death of her friend, Prof. Alexander Boutleroff, before it was mentioned in the Russian newspapers. In fact, she saw him at Ostend on the very day of his death. The same thing happened in the case of our celebrated politician, M. N. Katkoff, a patriot whom she cordially esteemed. She wrote to me (and the letter is fortunately still extant and precisely dated) one month before his end that he would be ill and would die. In July, 1888, when I was in London, she extricated me from serious perplexity, caused by a wrongly-interpreted telegram, and told me, after an instant’s meditation, what had happened at Moscow on that very day. When in the spring of 1890, the Headquarters of the Society in London was moved into a new house, better adapted to accommodate her increased staff, H. P. Blavatsky said, “I shall never move again, they will take me from this house to the crematorium.” When asked why she foretold this, she gave as a pretext that this house had not her lucky number; the number seven was lacking.

The health of Helena Petrovna continued to go from bad to worse with the increasing growth of her occupations. She formed around herself a group of ardent Theosophists who were anxious to study the occult sciences. With regard to this she wrote to me in 1889.

“You ask of me, what are my new occupations? None except the writing of fifty or so more pages each month, my *Esoteric Instructions*, which cannot be printed. Five or six unhappy voluntary martyrs, among my devoted



esotericists, copy out 300 copies, so as to send them to the absent members of my Esoteric Section, but I have to revise and correct them myself into the bargain! . . . And then our Thursday meetings, with the scientific questions of the *savants*, such as William Bennet or Kingsland, who writes on electricity; with stenographers in all the corners, and the assurance that my least word will be incorporated in our new journal of reports, *Transactions of the Blavatsky Lodge*, and that they will be read and commented on not only by my Theosophists, but by hundreds of the ill-disposed. My pupils in Occultism are overjoyed. They have sent out a circular through the Theosophical world, saying, 'H. P. B. is old and very ill; H. P. B. might die any day, and then from whom could we learn the things she can teach us. We must club together and record her teachings,' and so they pay for the stenographers and the printing, and it costs them much. . . . And their old H. P. B. *must* find time to teach them, although this cannot be done except at the cost of time which she formerly devoted to writing, in order to gain her daily bread, for foreign journals and newspapers. Well! H. P. B. will have her habits a little further upset — that is all! At the least word from me they would gladly indemnify me, but I won't accept one penny for such lessons. 'May thy money perish with thee, for thou hast thought to purchase the gifts of God for gold;' that is what I say to those who think they can buy the divine science of eternity for shillings and guineas."

Two years after she had settled in London, Madame Blavatsky made the acquaintance of a woman of extraordinary knowledge, merits, and talent.

I will let her speak herself.

"I fight more than ever with the materialists and atheists. The whole league of 'Freethinkers' is armed against me, because I have converted into a good Theosophist the best of their workers — Annie Besant — the famous woman author and orator, Bradlaugh's right hand and his tried friend. . . . Read her profession of faith, *Why I became a Theosophist* — a shorthand report of what she said in her public confession before a great meeting at the Hall of Science. The clergy are so well pleased with her conversion that at present they are full of praises of Theosophy. . . . What a noble and excellent woman she is! What a heart of gold! What sincerity, and how she speaks! A real Demosthenes. One never can tire of hearing her. . . . That is precisely what we have need of, for we have knowledge, but none of us — above all myself — know how to speak; whereas Annie Besant

is a finished orator. Oh! this woman will never betray, not only our cause, but even my poor person!”

My sister had good grounds for what she said. With the support of Theosophists such as Mrs. Besant, Countess Wachtmeister, Bertram Keightley, and such like, she could have rested in peace and devoted herself quietly to her literary works, had her days not been already numbered.

The winter of 1890 was, as we all know, very severe in London, and, from the spring of 1891, the influenza, this new scourge of humanity which has the gentlest appearance and does not show its claws until later on, joined issue with the inclemencies of the season and carried off a larger proportion of the world than all the other diseases — our old friends — who do not deceive people by their airs of innocence. The whole community at 19, Avenue Road, was taken ill with it during the months of March and April. The younger members recovered, H. P. Blavatsky succumbed.

Mrs. Annie Besant was away; she had gone to the Congress of American Theosophists, to represent there the Foundress of the Society, and had been entrusted by her with an address to “her fellow citizens and brothers and sisters in Theosophy.” The first successes of Helena Petrovna had their cradle in New York; the city of Boston had the privilege of giving her her last pleasure while on earth. The telegrams full of kind sentiments, of thanks and sincere good wishes for her, which reached her from America, after the reading of her letter, gave her real joy, at the very time she was confined to her bed and condemned.... Condemned? No. She who so often had been deceived herself and had so often proved false the sentence pronounced on her by the doctors, once again deceived them, but in another way. At eleven o'clock in the morning of May 8th, the doctors pronounced her out of danger, she got up and sat at her writing-table, without doubt wishing to die at her post, and at two o'clock she closed her eyes and — departed.

“She departed so quietly” — so wrote a witness of this unlooked-for death — “that we, who were near her, did not know even when she ceased to breathe. A supreme sensation of peace took possession of us, as we knelt there, knowing all was over.” (“How she left us,” by Miss L. Cooper, *LUCIFER*, June, 1891).

I had seen my sister for the last time in the summer of 1890. She had just been settling into her new house and was very busy and nearly always in pain. She was then forming a Home at the East End for working women.

“The Working Women’s Club,” founded at the cost of a wealthy Theosophist who wished to conceal his identity, prospered at this time under the protection of the lady patronesses belonging to the Theosophical Society. We passed the evenings talking of old days, of her beloved country; the injustice of the English Press and its calumnies against Russia seemed always to amount to injuries against herself. It is a great pity that her compatriots do not know all her articles on this subject. Many of them, those, above all, who formed their idea of her from the allegations of certain Russian newspapers, would have changed their opinions about her after reading, for instance, her article in *LUCIFER*, June, 1890, entitled, “The moat and the beam,” written in reply to the false accusations against the Government of Russia, carried at indignation meetings held with regard to “Russian Atrocities in Siberia,” which latter were, for the most part, invented by the too vivid imagination of George Kennan. And, curiously enough, the last words from her pen, which appeared on the same page of *LUCIFER* in which a hurried notice of her death was inserted, related to the Emperor of Russia. Therein she gave the Court of the Queen of England the good advice, that they should endeavour to follow the example offered by our Imperial family, in the practice of certain virtues, unknown to those devoid of “True Nobility,” that being the title of this article.

On a fine May day, the remains of the Foundress of the Theosophical Society were taken in a coffin, completely covered with flowers, to the Crematorium at Woking. There was no elaborate ceremony, neither was mourning worn, she herself having expressly forbidden it.

It was in India and, above all, at Ceylon, that her death was commemorated with much pomp, but in Europe the ceremony was of the simplest, only a few words were spoken of her “who had created the Theosophic movement, who had been the apostle of universal charity, the apostle of a life of purity and labour for the sake of others and for the progress of the human spirit and, above all, of the eternal and divine soul.” Then the body was committed to the flames and “three hours later, the ashes of her who had been Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, were brought back to her last home. Possibly some amongst her disciples were too fervent, but there were others who spoke nothing but the absolute truth concerning her. I quote, as a specimen, these words, which cannot fail to be approved by any impartial person.



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# MADAME BLAVATSKY

## *Personal Memoirs*

INTRODUCTION BY  
H. P. BLAVATSKY'S SISTER

For those interested in Occultism and its greatest modern exponent, this autobiography of Helena Petrovna Blavatsky brings together all the available events, experiences and relevant facts of that vigorous, brave, mysterious and wonderful life, arranged in their proper sequence.

The task has been somewhat similar to what H. P. B. describes as her method of writing *Isis Unveiled*: “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 colours in the game known as *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 comes out in the end something geometrically correct.”



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