

HISTORY OF THE (ADYAR) THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

THE C. W. LEADBEATER AFFAIR, 1906 - 1908

AN INTRODUCTION

By Alan Bain (c) 1996

PART 1

In 1906 a former Anglican Clergyman and member of the Society, later to become prominent in the Liberal Catholic Church, was called before a committee headed by the President-Founder of the day, Colonel H. S. Olcott, one of the co-founders of the Society together with Madame H. P. Blavatsky, W. Q. Judge and others.

The charge against him was twofold: firstly that he taught young boys to masturbate (then also called "self-abuse") on a regular, sometimes daily basis, as necessary to their development and to help avoid the temptations of the flesh in the future with women and "bad men." In today's world, such advice might not be regarded with as much horror, if any, as it was in late Victorian England, and there were those who, whilst embarrassed by such teaching, could see far enough ahead to understand that, in itself, such advice might not be necessarily a bad thing.

Among the grounds of complaint however was the fact that he was giving such teaching to boys placed into his care by a parent or parents with spiritual motives, but who were not informed of this aspect of his teaching, and only found out via their children or other informants.

The second and more serious charge was that he encouraged the practice by boys who had not yet reached an age where they would otherwise have thought of it for themselves, nor in whom a physical sexual attraction to girls, women, or "bad men" had begun to develop.

Even more serious was the charge that in the course of his "instruction," he handled the boys intimately himself.

Leadbeater denied none of the charges - he admitted them. The committee which sat to hear them had only, therefore, to decide which course of action would be best taken in the interest of the welfare and reputation of the Society. They could expel him, or in their wisdom, suggest to him that he resign. He willingly resigned his membership of the Society in the interest of the greater good, according to his own account, which was not disputed.

The affair was not made public at the time, for obvious reasons, and as the offender had resigned, there seemed little need to do so, not least perhaps because the more serious aspects of his behaviour would, in England and elsewhere, possibly or even probably have been grounds for criminal charges to be brought against him.

With some relief at the avoidance of a potential international scandal which would have harmed the Society enormously, the T.S. got on with its business without him.

The calm was to be short-lived, for in 1908, the International President, Annie Besant, sought his return to the theosophical fold, and encouraged by supporters of Leadbeater, issued a letter to members retracting her 1906 condemnation of his behaviour as part of this campaign, which would become successful. In the process, however, the very scandal which the Society had discreetly avoided in 1906, erupted into the international arena of the T. S., and damage was done which had lasting effects, many of which plague the Society to this day.

There were to be later scandals surrounding the name of Bishop Leadbeater, particularly in Australia, and some account of these is given in ["The Elder Brother," a biography of Leadbeater by Gregory Tillett](#), published in 1982.

I have chosen to begin this series of historical studies in the country from which CWL, as he is often referred to, began his career, and which is also my own homeland.

The article which follows is an account of the reaction to Annie Besant's actions by members of the British Section of the Theosophical Society, and is self-explanatory.

Some readers will wonder why I have not begun with the President's letter mentioned above. This will become clear in later documents, as there was also considerable dispute about the veracity and honesty of some of the claims made in the letter which resulted in the publication of a number of "open letters" and pamphlets, some of which have become very scarce.

In the interest of historical research, however, I intend to make Annie Besant's letter the next article in this series.

For a short time, in 1908, in Chicago, Illinois, a journal dealing primarily with the details and campaigns within the American Section was published under the banner of "The Theosophic Voice" which went to only three issues. The first of these is available as a 32 page reprint, and readers can contact me for further information. For members of Theosophy International, I will post brief details on theos-buds.

In the meantime, the result of "The Leadbeater Affair" in his own country can be revealed through the words, published in 1909, of those who initiated the protest within the British Section - including some important and respected theosophists of the time - and which now follows:

To the Members of the Theosophical Society

THE LEADBEATER CASE.

THE Protest Committee of the British Section appointed at the Caxton Hall meeting on December 19, 1908, having issued on February 20 last the following Final Protest Resolutions for signature by members of the British Section, have now to place on record the result of their appeal to the Section.

RESOLUTIONS.

THAT WHEREAS, at the last Convention of the British Section of the Theosophical Society, a Resolution was passed calling upon the President and General Council of the Society to take such action as would ensure "that the repudiation by the Society of this pernicious teaching (the teaching which determined the resignation of Mr. C. W. Leadbeater) may be unequivocal and final":

AND WHEREAS the President has replied to this Resolution in a printed Letter to the Members of the Theosophical Society, dated November, 1908, in which Letter she not merely declines to take any action to free the Society from any taint of participation in this scandal, but even seeks to condone Mr. Leadbeater's offence, thereby reversing her own previous judgment of the matter; and further announces her willingness to welcome Mr. Leadbeater back to membership in the Society without his repudiation of the teaching above referred to:

AND WHEREAS the General Council of the Society at its Annual Meeting at Adyar, in December, 1908, also refused to accept the appeal of the British Section, and not merely declined to take any action to repudiate, in the name of the Society, Mr. Leadbeater's teaching of self-abuse, or to prevent the identification of this teaching with the Society, but, on the contrary, has taken the very course which will ensure the opposite effect, and has passed a Resolution stating that, "there is no reason why Mr. C. W. Leadbeater should not return, if he wishes, to his place in the Society"; and has thereby reversed the wise judgment and action of the late President-Founder, Colonel H. S. Olcott:

AND WHEREAS this disastrous policy on the part of the President and General Council must inevitably result - and indeed, has already resulted - in the gravest public scandal, and in the association of Mr. Leadbeater's degrading teachings with the Society itself:

NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY AFFIRMED AND RESOLVED -

(1) That we, the undersigned Members of the Theosophical Society, desire to express, in the first instance, our deep regret that the President and General Council should not merely have refused to take any steps to free the Society from this grave scandal but should actually have taken the most effective means to identify it therewith.

(2) That we hereby desire to protest in the strongest possible manner against this disastrous policy, to which the Society has now been committed by its highest officials.

(3) That we hereby place on record our deep abhorrence of the gross sexual practice into which Mr. Leadbeater - on his own confession - was guilty of initiating certain boys.

(4) That we desire to express our conviction that the question at issue is simply one of morality, but that it has been largely obscured by a false glamour of so-called "occultism" and a specious appeal to so-called "liberty of opinion."

(5) That we do not feel called upon to judge Mr. Leadbeater's motives, nor do we condemn any who, in this matter, have honestly thought that his further identification with the Society was desirable; but we protest most strongly against the good name of the Society being sacrificed for any one individual.

Three hundred and twenty-four members have signed the above Resolutions. Of these members 206 have severed their connection with the Society, or have notified their intention of doing so, and have signified their willingness to have their names published in connection with this Protest.

Fifty-three other members have also signed the Protest and resigned, but do not wish to have their names published.

Thirty-five members have signed, but have not yet decided as to resignation.

Thirty members have signed, but have signified their intention of remaining in the Society, in the new International Section, or otherwise.

There have also been a very large number of resignations by members who have not signed this Protest, but who signed the first Resolutions sent out in November last with the Reply of the Protest Committee to the President's Letter.

The following members of the Executive Committee have resigned, and have left the Society:

HERBERT BURROWS.	G. R. S. MEAD.
A. M. GLASS.	A. P. SINNETT.
W. KINGSLAND.	EDITH WARD.

The following Lodges have severed their connection with the Society.

ADELPHI	President, J. M. Watkins.
BATTERSEA	" A. P. Cattnach.
BRISTOL	" Miss G. Platnauer.
DIDSBURY	" E. E. Marsden.
DUBLIN	" G. W. Russell.
EXETER	" Lt. Col. Montague.
HULL	" H. E. Nichol.
LONDON	" A. P. Sinnett.
MIDDLESBROUGH	" W. H. Thomas.

The following is an analysis of the signatures, and the names of the 206 members above referred to, who have resigned and consented to the publication of their names.

ADELPHI LODGE: - J. M. Watkins (President). - Mrs. Watkins. - H. J. Dyer. - Miss Saunders. - C. W. C. Barlow. - Miss Howsin. - A. F. Winckley.

BLAVATSKY LODGE: - G. R. S. Mead (President). - Mrs. Mead. - Miss Eardley-Wilmot. - C. J. Barker. - Mrs. Barker. - Miss Tisdale. - Miss M. Wolff van Sandau. - Mrs. E. Wood. - J. F. Tilly. - Mrs. Tilly. - Miss J. R. Willats. - Mrs. A. M. A. Rice. - G. A. Simmons. - Mrs. William Sharp. - J. R. Foster. - H. Burrows. - F. G. Castaneda. - V. C. Turnbull. - Miss S. B. Wilson. - Mrs. C. A. Baynes. - Miss A. Claxton. - Mrs. M. M. W. Kidston. - W. Theobald. - Mrs. Theobald. - Miss M. Theobald. - Miss A. G. Theobald. - B. G. Theobald. - Mrs. F. E. Marshall. - Miss C. E. Marshall. - W. T. Harrison. - Miss L. A. Peile. - Miss G. Linde. - P. Hookham. - Miss L. Henderson. - Mrs. C. Macrae. - Dr. C. G. Currie. - Mrs. Currie. - J. S. Brown. - Mrs. S. F. Dudley. - Miss S. E. Hall. - H. A. Colvile. - Miss A. L. Gaimes. - J. A. Kinnison. - Mrs. Kinnison. - H. R. Hogg. - Mrs. Hogg. - Mrs. Hoffmeister. - Mrs. M. H. Malan. - Miss T. J. O'Connell. - W. F. Kirby. - J. R. Acton. - Mrs. A. K. Ledger. - Miss J. Spence. - Miss E. M. L. Scull. - Col. R. H. Forman. - A. M. Glass. - H. E. Colbett. - H. L. Shindler. - Thirty-five other signatories.

BATH LODGE: - F. Bligh Bond.

BATTERSEA LODGE: - A. P. Cattanach (President). - Mrs. Cattanach. - Miss H. R. Gutteridge. - W. Hewett. - One other signatory.

BOURNEMOUTH LODGE: - E. H. Bellairs.

BRIGHTON LODGE: - Dr. Alfred King (President). - Mrs. King. - J. F. Bigwood. - Four other signatories.

BRISTOL LODGE: - Miss G. S. Platnauer (President). - T. R. Freeman. - Miss F. K. Simmons. - S. W. Smith. - F. H. Stevens. - Mrs. A. K. Furnival. - Miss A. Dobbie. - F. H. Palmer. - One other signatory.

DIDSBURY LODGE: - E. E. Marsden (President). - Mrs. Marsden. - Mrs. E. E. Worthington. - H. Levy. - Miss H. D. Mackie. - Miss F. Jackson. - F. H. Clarke. - Mrs. Clarke. - Mrs. E. Harrold. - W. G. Wilson. - Mrs. Wilson. - Miss K. Whitehead. - Miss E. Booth. - Miss L. Peck. - C. Midgley. - Mrs. Midgley. - Five other signatories.

DUBLIN LODGE: - Mrs. M.E. Greene. - Mrs. G. E. Jones. - Mrs. L. Robinson. - Miss M. Kelly. - Mrs. Kelly. - J. Tingly. - Mrs. E. S. Thornton.

EDINBURGH LODGE: - Mrs. Drummond (President). - Miss E. Drummond. - Mrs. M. H. Darlison. - Mrs. L. Handyside. - Mrs. M. H. Hebden. - J. J. Bell. - Miss Edith Grant. - Miss Cochrane. - Miss I. Cochrane. - Mrs. Frater. - Miss Raeburn. - Miss E. C. Raeburn. - Mrs. Cragie Proffit. - Miss White. - Five other signatories.

EXETER LODGE: - Lt. Col. L. A. D. Montague (President). - Miss Wheaton. - Miss Z. L. Montague. - Miss F. Lake. - Miss E. E. Snodgrass. - Five other signatories.

GLASGOW LODGE: - R. H. Andrews. - Miss M. S. Ferguson.

H.P.B. LODGE: - H. E. Parry. - Miss C. E. Woods. - Mrs. C. F. Buller. - S. A. Mappin. - Mrs. Mappin. - Mrs. C. B. Fernandez. - Five other signatories.

HARROGATE LODGE: - Mrs. B. Ringrose. - Miss A. B. Woodhead.

HULL LODGE: - H. E. Nichol (President). - Mrs. Nichol. - J. W. Burton. - Mrs. E. B. Burton. - Miss C. A. Eccles.

LONDON LODGE: - Lady Raines. - Mrs. B. H. M. Riddle. - Mrs. E. R. Cull. - Mrs. C. G. R. Smith. - Mrs. K. Baldwin. - Mrs. H. Huntly. - Mrs. N. Malan. - Mme. Gennadius. - C.B. Wheeler. - Mrs. J. M. S. Walker. - Mrs. V. B. Thompson. - Three other signatories.

LIVERPOOL LODGE: - Mrs. C. B. Avery. - Mrs. M. Fulton. - Mrs. L. M. Queen. - Miss M. Barber. - Miss B. M. Mylehreest. - Three other signatories.

LEEDS LODGE: - C. N. Goode. - Mrs. Goode. - A. W. Waddington.

MANCHESTER CITY LODGE: - J. Mayo. - Mrs. Hadfield. - Miss Hadfield. - Two other signatories.

MIDDLESBROUGH LODGE: - W. H. Thomas (President). - Miss M. E. Thomas. - Baker Hudson. - Mrs. M. G. Macfadzean. - J. A. Jones. - One other signatory.

NORTH LONDON LODGE: - V. Lewis. - Mrs. E. C. V. Worley. - One other signatory.

SHEFFIELD LODGE: - C. E. Young (President). - R. Cheatle. - R. Pexton. - Mrs. Pexton. - J. Abey. - J. Wood. - One other signatory.

WEST LONDON LODGE: - Miss E. Ward (President). - Mrs. F. Ozanne. - Mrs. G. B. O' Donnell. - Miss Fortescue. - Mrs. A. Mallalue. - W. A. Carson. - Mrs. Carson. - Mrs. E. J. Beatty. - Two other signatories.

UNATTACHED: - Mme. de Steiger. - E. de M. Malan. - G. H. Popplestone. - I. L. F. Paynter. - Mrs. M. C. Brown. - Mrs. E. Kilburn. - O. Firth. - W. H. Bean. - Miss H. K. Burke. - Miss H. Bloxam. - I. H. Mitchell. - Mrs. Mitchell. - E. Melland. - Miss G. H. Minet. - Miss H. G. Micklethwait. - Miss A. M. Bostock. - W. Kingsland. - J. Dowall. - Mrs. J. Dowall. - Mrs. E. Schaub. - G. Graham. - Miss M. Scott-Kerr. - Eighteen other signatories.

BRUSSELS: - Seventeen signatories.

OTHER BRITISH LODGES: - Ten signatories.

At the Caxton Hall Meeting above referred to, the Protest Committee were empowered to "receive, consider and report on any suggestion that may be made as to the best manner of keeping together those who feel compelled to withdraw from the Society."

No suggestions, however, have been received by the Committee; but the formation of a Society on the lines outlined by Mr. Mead at the above meeting is now an accomplished fact. The name which was then proposed for this Society was, "The Mystical Research Society." This, however, has since been changed to "THE QUEST SOCIETY." Full particulars of this Organisation can be obtained from the Hon. Secretary, THE QUEST SOCIETY, 16, Selwood Place, Onslow Gardens, S. W.

A Conference of members and ex-members of the Theosophical Society, living in the North of England, was held at Manchester on January 19, 1909; at which Mr. G. R. S. Mead was also present. The Conference resolved to form Local Societies on lines more or less similar to those of the Quest Society; and also to federate such Societies when constituted.

Mr. W. H. Thomas, The Ness, Linthorpe, Middlesbrough, consented to act as Hon. Secretary, pro tem., and will be pleased to supply all particulars to intending members.

It may also be mentioned that in most cases where Lodges have resigned their Charters they are continuing their work under some different name.

The work of the Protest Committee is now practically finished. The subscriptions which they received have been most generous and ample, and a small balance is still in hand. It is proposed to retain this for a short time, in view of any eventuality arising which might necessitate its being called upon; but in due course a balance sheet will be sent to each subscriber, and suggestions will be asked for as to how the balance should be disposed of.

THE PROTEST COMMITTEE.

16, SELWOOD PLACE, ONSLOW GARDENS,
LONDON, S.W.

May 1, 1909.

PART 2

Introduction

In my previous introduction to "The Leadbeater Affair" published as CWL01.TXT mention was necessarily made of a letter from Annie Besant to the members of the T.S. of November 1908.

This text reproduces that letter. It is an eminently reasonable plea for justice, eloquently worded by a skilled orator. It was not, however, accepted at face value by all of its readers for reasons which will become apparent.

Some members clearly saw, whether rightly or wrongly, that a skilled writer and speaker might also be a skilled manipulator, and in a reply dated the same month as this letter, G. R. S. Mead. Herbert Burrows, W. Kingsland and Edith Ward sought to show that this was indeed the case.

This will become [Part 3] as the next article in this study and research exercise.

Alan Bain, June 1996

A LETTER

TO THE MEMBERS OF

THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

FROM

ANNIE BESANT,

President of the Theosophical Society.

**PRINTED AND ISSUED TO THE MEMBERS OF THE THEOSOPHICAL
SOCIETY BY ANNIE BESANT, 31 ST. JAMES'S PLACE, LONDON, S.W.
NOVEMBER, 1908.**

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE T.S.

AN appeal has been made to the General Council and to myself, by the British Section in Convention assembled, to take action to put an end to the painful condition of affairs which

has arisen in consequence of certain "pernicious teaching" ascribed to Mr. C. W. Leadbeater. The General Council does not meet until December next, and will then take such action as it may deem right. The appeal to myself I answer, after such delay as has been imposed on me by the fact that I was in the Antipodes, on the Society's business, when the appeal was made, and could not complete my reply until I had verified certain data by reference to documents not then within my reach.

My wish is to lift the present controversy out of the turmoil of passion in which all sense of proportion has been lost, and to submit the whole case to the judgment of the Theosophical Society, free from the exaggerations and misunderstandings which have surrounded it.

I recognise fully that those who denounce Mr. Leadbeater are inspired, for the most part, by all intense desire to protect the purity of public morals and the good name of the Society, and are therefore worthy of respect. I ask them to believe that others may have an equal love of purity and of the Society's good name, while not accepting their view of Mr. Leadbeater's advice, and while considering that they have been misled by exaggerated and distorted statements, as I was myself.

I even ask them whether they seriously think that I, after nearly twenty years of unstinted labor for the Society, and of a life more ascetic than lax, am likely to be indifferent either to purity or to the Society's good name? I ask them to give credit to others for good intent, as they claim good intent for themselves.

From the occult standpoint, the duality of sex represents the fundamental duality of the universe, and in the individual human being the duality once existed, as it still exists in the universe and in some forms of vegetable and animal life. The separation of humanity into two sexes, in each of which one sex predominates and the other is rudimentary, is but a temporary device for the better development of complementary qualities, difficult of simultaneous evolution in the same person.

The separation being thus necessary, but the presence of both sex elements being essential to reproduction, the sex instinct, drawing the separated halves together, became a necessary factor in the preservation of the race. To subserve this purpose is its natural function, and any other use of it is unnatural and harmful. In the animal kingdom it has never gone astray from its due utility. In the human, owing to the activity of mind, with vividness of memory and of anticipation, it has become abnormally developed, and its true function has become subsidiary.

It should serve to draw one man and one woman together, for the creation of pure bodies fit for incoming souls, and thus aid in cementing an enduring union of two lives complementary to each other, a union also needed for the nurture and protection of the young ones within a settled home during their years of helplessness.

But by unbridled indulgence, both within and without marriage, it has developed into an overmastering passion, which seeks merely for gratification; its one rightful use, its only natural and legitimate function, is forgotten; the great creative power is prostituted to be an agent of pleasure, and this has brought an inevitable nemesis.

Society is honeycombed with diseases which, directly and indirectly, spring from the general abuse of the creative function; by an extraordinary reversal of facts, continence is regarded as unnatural instead of natural, and the demand of the sex instinct for constant gratification is looked on as normal instead of as abnormality evolved by habitual excess.

Doctors know the suffering and the misery wrought under marriage sanction by unbridled incontinence; faced by the sex passion in unmarried lads, they bid them resort to the women of the streets, and thus increase the evil heredity; statesmen vainly try by Contagious Diseases Acts to minimise the ruin both of men and women; solitary vice is becoming more widespread, and is the deadly peril which teachers in schools are forced continually to face, against which they ineffectually strive.

Such is the condition of humanity at the present time, and for this condition - at the root of most of the misery and crime in civilised life - Occultism has but one remedy - the restoration of the sex function to its one proper use by the gradual raising of the standard of sex morality, the declaration that its only legitimate use is the creative, that its abuse for sensual pleasure is immoral and unnatural, and that humanity can only be raised out of its present sensuality by self-control.

This view is not likely to be acceptable in a society hereditarily self-indulgent, but occult morality is higher and sterner than that of the world. Also it cares for realities not conventions, and regards unbridled indulgence within marriage as degrading both to mind and body, although, because monogamous, somewhat less ruinous to both than outside the marriage union.

Hence, Occultism condemns "neo-Malthusian practices," as tending to strengthen sex passion, it condemns the medical advice to young men to yield to their "natural passions"; it condemns solitary vice as only less harmful than prostitution; all these things are degrading, unmanly, unwomanly. [See my *Theosophy and the Law of Population*, 1891.] It exhorts man to remount by self-control the steep incline down which he has slipped by self-indulgence, until he becomes continent, not incontinent, by nature. On all this Mr. Leadbeater and myself are at one.

I do not seek to impose this view on the Theosophical Society, for every member is free to form his own judgment on the sexual problem, as on any other, and mutual respect, not wild abuse, is the rightful attitude of members in face of this, the most difficult problem which confronts humanity. I speak on this as Occultist. "He that is able to receive it, let him receive it."

I turn now to the accusations against Mr. Leadbeater, reminding the Society against whom these accusations are levelled. Mr. Leadbeater was a clergyman of the Church of England who in 1883 entered the Theosophical Society, and in 1884 threw up his career to devote his ripe manhood to its service. From that date until now he has served it with unwavering fidelity, through good and evil report, has travelled all over the world to spread its teachings, has contributed to its literature some of its most valued volumes, and thousands, both inside and outside the Society, owe to him the priceless knowledge of Theosophy.

During the last two and a half years, under a hurricane of attack as unexampled as his

services, he has remained silent, rather than that the Society should suffer his reproach. Because he loved the Society better than his own good name, I, at his wish, have also kept silence. But now that I am appealed to, I will speak, and the more gladly because I also wronged him, believing that he had admitted certain statements as true; I wrote in 1906: "June 7th, I received an account of the acceptance by Mr. Leadbeater before the Committee of the facts alleged in the evidence".

I thus accepted on what I believed to be his own word, that which, on the word of others, I had rejected as impossible, and that which I ought to have continued to reject even coming as from himself both he and I have suffered, by my blunder, for which I have apologised to him, to an extent which our unmerciful critics little imagine; but it is over, and never the shadow of a cloud can come between us again.

The so-called trial of Mr. Leadbeater was a travesty of justice. He came before judges, one of whom had declared beforehand that "he ought to be shot"; another, before hearing him, had written passionate denunciations of him; a third and fourth had accepted, on purely psychic testimony, unsupported by any evidence, the view that he was grossly immoral and a danger to the Society.

In the commonest justice, these persons ought not to have been allowed to sit in judgment. As to the "evidence," he stated at the time: "I have only just now seen anything at all of the documents, except the first letter"; on his hasty perusal of them, he stated that some of the points "are untrue, and others so distorted that they do not represent the facts"; yet it was on these points, unsifted and unproven, declared by him to be untrue and distorted, that he was condemned, and has since been attacked.

It was also on these points that I condemned his teaching; on the central matter I had before expressed disagreement, but no condemnation.

The following statement is the one which has been so widely used against him, and contains the teaching that both he and I condemn. That condemnation I hold to, but the teaching thus condemned was never his; part of it was repudiated by him before the Advisory Council in 1906, and the rest of it had been denied in a private letter of February, 1906, since widely published. I wrote, on the false information then in my hands:

"The advice supposed to be given to rescue a boy, as a last resort, in the grip of sexual passions, became advice putting foul ideas into the minds of boys innocent of all sex impulses, and the long intervals, the rare relief, became twenty-four hours in length, a daily habit. It was conceivable that the advice, as supposed to have been given, had been given with pure intent, and the presumption was so, in a teacher of Theosophical morality; anything else seemed incredible. But such advice as was given in fact, such dealing with boys before sex passion had awakened, could only be given with pure intent if the giver were, on this point, insane."

The two points on which stress is laid here, to which my condemnation applies were: (1) the fouling of "the minds of boys innocent of all sex impulses"; (2) the advice for daily self-indulgence; neither of these is true, and with the falsity of these my condemnation no longer applies to Mr. Leadbeater's advice.

(1) In the case on which most stress has been laid, the boy had already contracted an evil habit. Mr. Leadbeater found it impossible to cure the vice at once, but he induced the boy to give up his daily habit, and to lessen the frequency of the self-indulgence, gradually lengthening the intervals, that it might at last be entirely renounced. In a second case, the boy wrote to his father, expressing his intense gratitude to Mr. Leadbeater for helping him, and adding: "They were to be continued only for a very short time. Do not call them a habit, because they were never intended to be anything of the kind."

Instead, then, of advising self-indulgence Mr. Leadbeater sought to help boys in their difficulties by leading gradually up to a perfect control of the sex-functions, laying especial stress upon the avoidance of haunting lascivious thoughts. If a man is poisoned with arsenic, what is the treatment by a doctor? he does not cut off the poison at once, for that would kill; he prescribes lessening doses till the body regains its normal state. Is the doctor to be denounced as a poisoner because he takes the only means of saving his patient?

Mr. Leadbeater says positively that he has never given such advice except in cases where certain symptoms had already shown themselves either on the physical plane or in the aura, even though in one or two instances this may have taken place before what is commonly called puberty. Unhappily - as is known to every teacher of children - this vice is found at a very early age, an age much below that of any boy to whom Mr. Leadbeater spoke. This statement of his - sufficient to all of us who know him - is thoroughly borne out by the fact that most of the boys who were much in his company had never heard of any such advice being given.

His usual habit was to speak to the boy of the danger of both solitary and associated vice, to advise non-stimulating diet, exercise, and the turning of thought away from subjects connected with sex-advice on the lines borne witness to by a lad who was much with him, in a brave letter to the ~Vahan~. This was Mr. Leadbeater's ordinary advice, as it is the advice of all of us.

(2) This Mr. Leadbeater positively denied before the Advisory Committee, and there is not a shred of evidence to support the charge. He said:

"The interlineation in writing giving a statement by the mother as to interval is untrue. The original interval was a week, and then it was lengthened to ten days, then a fortnight, and so on."

I ask the members of the Theosophical Society to consider whether this simple explanation is not more consonant with the character of the great teacher who has lived among them for twenty-four years, than the lurid picture of the monster of sexual vice painted by the inflamed fancy of a few Americans and English? It must be remembered that every effort has been made to construct personal charges against him, without avail.

I have had in my possession for nearly two years a letter from one of Mr. Leadbeater's most prominent enemies, addressed to a boy whom Mr. Leadbeater was said to have corrupted, in which (with many caressing words, himself using an expression stronger than that which has been taken, in Mr. Leadbeater's case, to imply impropriety) the writer tried to coax the boy into confessing criminal relations with Mr. Leadbeater, begging him not to show the

letter to his father, and to destroy it when read. The lad, utterly ignorant of what was suggested, took the letter to his father, and the father indignantly sent a copy to me. I have also seen the original.

It is not true that this advice was given as theosophical or occult. On the contrary, Mr. Leadbeater has stated throughout that it was a purely physical matter, from his standpoint, and was given as a doctor gives advice to a patient, as a temporary expedient to avoid a worse danger, while lifting the boy out of vice into purity.

Mr. Leadbeater agrees with me that the advice is dangerous when scattered broadcast - as has been done by his assailants - and from the very first he volunteered the promise never to give it again; but in the few special cases in which he gave it, he thought he had safeguarded it from the obvious danger.

Much has been made of a "cipher letter." The use of the cipher arose from an old story in the Theosophist, repeated by Mr. Leadbeater to a few lads; they, as boys will, took up the cipher with enthusiasm, and it was subsequently sometimes used in correspondence with the boys who had been present when the story was told.

In a type-written note on a fragment of paper, undated and unsigned, relating to an astral experience, a few words in cipher occur on the incriminated advice. Then follows a sentence, unconnected with the context, on which a foul construction has been placed.

That the boy did not so read it is proved by a letter of his to Mr. Leadbeater - not sent, but shown to me by his mother - in which he expresses his puzzlement as to what it meant, as he well might. There is something very suspicious about the use of this letter. It was carefully kept away from Mr. Leadbeater, though widely circulated against the wish of the father and mother, and when a copy was lately sent to him by a friend, he did not recognise it in its present form, and stated emphatically that he had never used the phrase with regard to any sexual act. It may go with the Coulomb and Pigott letters.

There is no doubt that the sex problem is in the air, and it may be, as Dr. van Hook thinks, that that problem must be discussed in the Theosophical Society, as it is being discussed by sociologists, doctors and teachers outside. It can, however, only be decently and usefully discussed by mature men and women, possessed of physiological and pathological knowledge and of experience of the darker side of life. On the moral question we are all at one; it is the method of dealing with dangerous physiological conditions which is under debate.

Personally I think - basing the view on well known physiological facts - that as every secretory gland is readily stimulated by thought, and without stimulation does not work to excess, the occupation of the mind along healthy lines will generally avoid dangerous excess, and will preserve in the body the vital elements necessary for the continuance of youth and strength.

Dr. van Hook's medical experience is, of course, enormously wider than my own, but many doctors hold the view expressed by me that nature may, in normal cases, be left to give any necessary relief. But this does not touch Mr. Leadbeater's effort to help boy's through a difficult period by counsel often given by Catholic priests under similar circumstances, and given

by himself when a priest of the English Church. Mr. Mead has lately stated, in the pages of the Theosophical Review, that the facts of sex should be explained to boys and girls, so as to avoid the dangers to which they are exposed by hearing the coarse talk of evil-minded servants or vicious comrades.

I agree with him on this, but he will be a bold man who ventures to give such instruction, in the face of the hideous misconstruction with which Mr. Leadbeater has been met. The giving by an elder of a scientific and common sense explanation would be incredible to a society which can only regard sex through an atmosphere of prudery or vice. In all speech thereon a vicious purpose would be taken for granted.

With regard to the preamble of the resolution condemning Dr. van Hook, I am bound to say that it is based on a misrepresentation. Dr. van Hook does *not* say that any "corrupting practices . . . are the high doctrine of Theosophy and the precursor of its introduction into the thought of the outer world"; he says that certain habits, characterised a few lines lower as "this degrading practice," "could not be instantly interrupted by unspiritualised boys.

What more natural *than that he should recommend that the practice be curbed?* And who knows how many boys, taking this advice from Mr. Leadbeater, *have not been gradually weaned away from their vice and brought to entire cleanness of life?*" (Italics are mine.)

He then speaks of other boys who had not yet fallen into vice, but who were surrounded by dangerous thought-forms, as already mentioned above. Dr. van Hook, after this, says that "the introduction of this question" - obviously the question of how to deal with boys addicted to vice or on the brink of it, alluded to on the preceding page as a "problem" known to "every woman school teacher dealing with children" - "into the thought of the Theosophical world is but the precursor of its introduction into the thought of the outer world."

It is a proof of the danger of introducing an important resolution without notice, and of inflaming the listeners with a garbled account of a paper which they had not read, although they were called on to vote its condemnation, that such a misrepresentation should have been imposed on the Convention.

The further statement that Dr. van Hook has said that his letter was "dictated verbatim by one of the Masters" suggests, though it does not say, that Dr. van Hook had made this statement publicly. It would, perhaps, have been fairer to point out that Dr. van Hook had said this privately, with a request that it should not be published, and that it was promptly published by the person to whom he privately wrote it. On this, as President.

I follow the decision laid down by the General Council on July 7th, 1894, in the case of Mr. W. Q. Judge. Mr. Judge was charged with certain offences "with respect to the misuse of the Mahatmas' names and handwriting"; Mr. Judge contended that he, as Vice-President, could not be tried on such a matter; the Council, on the motion of Messrs. Keightley and Mead, decided that the point was well taken.

The Judicial Committee, on July 10th, followed this decision, and apart from the question of his office, it further declared that they could not consider a charge which involved declaration on their part as to the existence or non-existence of Mahatmas, as "it would be a

violation of the spirit of neutrality and the unsectarian nature and constitution of the Society."

The President-Founder further declared:

"The authoritative and dogmatic value of statements as to the existence of Mahatmas, their relations with and messages to private persons, or through them to third parties, the Society or the general public, is denied; all such statements, messages or teachings are to be taken at their intrinsic value and the recipients left to form and declare, if they choose, their own opinions with respect to their genuineness; the Society, as a body, maintaining its constitutional neutrality in the premises."

Until those decisions of the General Council, the Judicial Committee of 1894, and the President-Founder are annulled, I am bound by them, and cannot officially, nor can the General Council, express any opinion on the origin of Dr. van Hook's "Open Letter". By parity of reasoning, no Sectional Council should express any opinion on such a matter. Dr. van Hook is perfectly free to assert publicly - though he has not done so - that the "Open Letter" was dictated verbatim by one of the Masters, and any other member is equally free to deny it.

This is apart from the undesirable nature of the precedent set by a Sectional Convention in its condemnation of the chief officer of another Section; every General Secretary is amenable to his own Section primarily, and this hasty setting of a dangerous precedent is another proof of the unwisdom of springing on an official body an important resolution without notice. While technically accepting this resolution as from "the British Section in Convention assembled," I cannot but know that it is only the individual opinion of thirty-eight persons, unshared in by another twenty-six. It is not the deliberate opinion of the Section.

As regards the main problem:

The Theosophical Society, as a whole, cannot be committed to any special solution of this problem, and its members must be left free. Dr. van Hook, a medical man of high repute and for many years a university professor, has as much right to his view, without being charged with supporting solitary vice, as his assailants have a right to theirs, without being charged with favoring prostitution. Both accusations are equally foul and equally unjust, and people who fling them about are ipso facto disqualified from being judges.

These difficult and delicate questions of sex cannot be efficiently, or even decently, discussed in open conventions, in which young people are present. The conclusions arrived at under such conditions are inevitably those of passion, not of reason. We are all at one in condemning vicious practices, solitary or associated, and in desiring to rescue the young who have fallen into either form of vice. There is no approval of vice anywhere within the Theosophical Society; there is therefore no need for the Society to repudiate pernicious teaching on this matter any more than to repudiate assassination.

Mr. Leadbeater and myself labor as earnestly to help others to pure and noble living as do Mr. Sinnett, Mr. Mead, and their co-signatories, and there should be room enough in the Society we all love for us as well as for them.

Mr. Leadbeater resigned two and a half years ago in the vain attempt to save the Society from this dissension; he does not ask to return. I am not at liberty to resign, being where I am by my Master's order, nor am I at liberty to ask him again to take his place within the Theosophical Society without a vote of the Theosophical Society. If the Theosophical Society wishes to undo the wrong done to him, it is for the Convention of each Section to ask me to invite his return, and I will rejoice to do so.

Further, in every way that I can, outside official membership, I will welcome his co-operation, show him honor, and stand beside him. If the Theosophical Society disapprove of this, and if a two-thirds majority of members of the whole Theosophical Society demand my resignation because of this, I will ask my Master's permission to resign. If not, is it not time to cease from warring against chimeras, and to devote ourselves wholly to the work?

The trouble is confined to a small number of American and a considerable number of British members; can they not feel that they have done their duty by two years and a half of protest, and not endeavor to coerce the remainder of the Society into a continual turmoil?

The vast majority of you affirmed last year that you regarded me as the President chosen by the Masters to steer what They have called "our Theosophical ship." In Their name I call on all, who are loyal to Them and to Their choice, to work for Them, each in his own way, but in charity with all.

Your faithful servant,

ANNIE BESANT,
President of the Theosophical Society.

P.S. - Since the above was written, Dr. van Hook has been re-elected as General Secretary, his Section's answer to the British attack on him. In answer to a letter from England, he has repudiated the misrepresentation of his paper, and has made a statement similar to that made by me above, on pp. 9, 10. No unprejudiced person can read his paper in any other sense.

I am glad to take this opportunity of rebutting a statement widely circulated, but utterly untrue, that Mr. Leadbeater "deceived" me in his statement of the case at Benares. Neither then, nor at any other time, has he said anything to me which has deviated from truth in any way. I have utter confidence in his candor.

PART 3 a

This is the first printed reaction of the British Section to the events of the Leadbeater Affair following upon Annie Besant's November letter mentioned below. The "Enclosed reply" is a separately published pamphlet, and will be reproduced, possibly in 2 parts, as CWL03b.TXT and CWL03c.TXT.

At first sight one supposes that the RESOLUTIONS are the same as those published in CWL01.TXT - in fact there are many differences.

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

Especially to the Members of the British Section.

THE LEADBEATER CASE

Enclosed will be found a Reply to the President's recent Letter of November, 1908, to the Members of the Theosophical Society, in which she refuses to act in accordance with the Resolution passed at the last Convention of this Section - calling upon her to take such action as would make the repudiation by the Society of the pernicious teachings given by Mr. Leadbeater to young boys, unequivocal and final.

At a largely attended and representative Meeting of Members, held in London on November 13th, it was decided, among other things, to ask for the cooperation of all those Members who are opposed to the reinstatement of Mr. Leadbeater in the Society, without public repudiation of the teaching which determined his resignation, and for that purpose the accompanying RESOLUTIONS have been drawn up. If, after reading our Reply to Mrs. Besant, you are in favour of these Resolutions, please sign the perforated slip and return it at once to Mr. Mead.

A petition for the reinstatement of Mr. Leadbeater is being circulated by some of his supporters. If you should have already signed that Petition, but now see reason to alter your opinion, will you kindly write to its promoters and withdraw your name? – and inform Mr. Mead of your having done so.

G. R. S. MEAD. HERBERT BURROWS. W. KINGSLAND. EDITH WARD.

16, SELWOOD PLACE, ONSLOW GARDENS, LONDON, S.W. November, 1908.

RESOLUTIONS

THAT WHEREAS, at the last Convention of the British Section of the Theosophical Society, a Resolution was passed calling upon the President and General Council of the Society to take such action as would ensure "that the repudiation by the Society of this pernicious teaching [the teaching which determined the resignation of Mr. C.W. Leadbeater] may be unequivocal and final":

AND WHEREAS the President has replied to this resolution in a printed Letter to the members of the Theosophical Society, dated November, 1908:

AND WHEREAS, in that Letter, the President explicitly declines to take such action, stating that she herself only disagrees with the teaching, but that her "condemnation no longer applies to Mr. Leadbeater's advice":

AND WHEREAS, in that Letter, the President fully admits that Mr. Leadbeater did give the said teaching

(a) previous to his connection with the Theosophical Society, "when a priest of the English Church,"

(b) to boys not yet addicted to the practice, but in whom "certain symptoms had already shown themselves either on the physical plane or in the aura," and

(c) that "even though in one or two instances this may have taken place before what is commonly called puberty":

AND WHEREAS the President declines to put an end to the scandalous state of affairs involved in the identification of this teaching with the Theosophical Society - through the acclaiming of the man who stands self-convicted of it, as one worthy to be placed in the highest rank as a Theosophical teacher and guide, and also through an explicit statement by a member of the General Council that "no mistake was made by Mr. Leadbeater in the nature of the advice he gave to his boys":

AND WHEREAS, further, the President declares that she will rejoice to welcome Mr. Leadbeater back to actual membership, and ignores the condition of public repudiation by him of his teaching:

NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED -

1. That we, the undersigned members of the Theosophical Society, reaffirm the opinion expressed by the British Section at its last Convention, and embodied in the following resolution, which was carried nem. con., that. "This Convention looks on the teaching given by C.W. Leadbeater to certain boys as wholly evil, and hereby expresses its judgment on this matter".

2. That we, the undersigned, record our opinion that no person who has given such teaching should be a member of the Theosophical Society, so long as that person has not absolutely, unequivocally, and publicly repudiated the said teaching and practice.

3. That we, the undersigned, call upon the President to adhere to the pledge given at the time of her election to the Presidency, that she would not readmit Mr. Leadbeater to membership till two years after his public repudiation of the said teaching, and then only on a large majority request of the whole Society.

{Our copy lacks the perforated slip referred to, as presumably, the recipient completed it and sent it to Mr. Mead.}

PART 3 b

This is the first part of the REPLY mentioned in [Part 3], and may end up as three, rather than two files. Mead and his colleagues had a great deal to say...

[Footnotes in the original have been incorporated in the text in square brackets]

Alan Bain

To the Members of the Theosophical Society:
For Private circulation among members only.

THE LEADBEATER CASE

A REPLY

TO THE PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Of November, 1908

Printed by E.E. MARSDEN, Carr Street, Manchester; and Published by G.R.S. MEAD, HERBERT BURROWS, W. KINGSLAND, & EDITH WARD, at 16, Selwood Place, Onslow Gardens, London. S.W.

NOTE

At a representative meeting of many of the older and well-known members of the Theosophical Society, held in London, on November 13th, the present situation with regard to the Leadbeater Case was fully discussed. The President's Letter in answer to the request of the Convention of the British Section that she should take steps to put an end to the scandalous state of affairs which now obtains in the Society, was carefully considered.

In view of the fact that she refuses to take any steps, but on the contrary would welcome the reinstatement of Mr. Leadbeater, and that, too, without the public repudiation which she promised should be exacted of him, it was decided that a Reply to Mrs. Besant's Letter should be issued, and Miss Edith Ward, Mr. Mead, Mr. Kingsland, and Mr. Herbert Burrows were appointed a Committee to draw up the Reply.

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT.

The recent Letter of Mrs. Besant, as President of the Theosophical Society, which has been sent to all the members of this Section (and also to all the other Sections of the Society), purports to be her reply to an earnest appeal, by the British Section in Convention assembled, to the members of the Theosophical Society, and especially to the President and members of the General Council - to unite in putting an end to the scandalous state of affairs which now exists in the Society with regard to what is known as the Leadbeater teaching, so that the repudiation by the Society of this pernicious teaching may be unequivocal and final.

By formal direction of the Convention (held in London, July 4 and 5, 1908), a Special Report of the resolutions and of the proceedings which led up to them (including a full statement of the facts which necessitated the appeal and the debate on the subject) was prepared, by a Special Committee (whom the Convention unanimously appointed), to be issued to the members of the Section.

This Committee consisted of Miss Edith Ward, Messrs. G. R. S. Mead, Herbert Whyte, Herbert Burrows, and Mrs. Sharpe, General Secretary of the Section. An account of the proceedings of the Committee will be found in The Vahan of October, 1908.

THE REPLY

This Report, which was duly prepared and passed by the whole Committee, has been suppressed by the General Secretary, who has been supported by a majority of the Executive Committee - nine to five.

The nine are: Miss Bright, Miss Green, Mrs. Larmuth, Mr. Leo, Miss Mallet, Mr. Hodgson Smith, Mr. Wedgwood, Mr. Whyte, and Mrs. Sharpe. (Mrs. Sharpe did not vote on the actual resolution supporting her action, but voted on all other resolutions in the same sense.)

The five are: Mr. Burrows, Mr. Glass, Mr. Kingsland, Mr. Mead, and Miss Ward.

Against this solid majority the minority who have endeavoured to carry out the wishes of the Convention have been powerless. This policy of suppression has been vigorously maintained; and now, more than four and a half months after the Convention, the members are still in ignorance of these important proceedings. In spite of a resolution unanimously passed at the Convention that The Vahan, the sectional organ, should be open to the free discussion of all matters of interest to the Section, Mrs. Sharpe refused to print even the following document:

The Report of the Debate, for which two additional sessions of the recent Convention of the British Section of the Theosophical Society were required, and which culminated in the passing of two very important Resolutions, has now been agreed to unanimously by the Special Committee appointed by the Convention to prepare it for publication.

The General Secretary, however, refuses to publish the document, and is supported in her refusal by a majority of the Executive Committee. We, the undersigned members of the Special Committee (of five), are prepared to carry out the instructions of the General Council in Convention duly assembled.

The official means of issuing the Report, however having been denied us, we now apply directly to the members of the Section for the necessary funds and addresses (which may be sent to any of the undersigned), in order that we may carry out the imperative duty of acquainting the Section with the present grave state of affairs.

(Signed) G. R. S. MEAD, HERBERT BURROWS, EDITH WARD.

It has thus been deliberately rendered impossible for the facts of the case to be placed before the members. And now with only Mrs. Besant's letter before them, the members are being urged to sign a petition for Mr. Leadbeater's reinstatement. [Mr. Burrows and Mr. Mead have now printed their speeches themselves in a pamphlet, and copies may be obtained from them.]

Even in Mrs. Besant's Letter, which has gone out to the whole Society, as well as to the members of this Section, the very resolution on which she bases that reply, is not given, and it was only at the last moment that the General Secretary of this Section found herself compelled to enclose the bare text of that resolution with Mrs. Besant's Letter as sent out to the Section. [And yet Mrs. Besant (p. 3) claims that she is submitting "the whole case to the judgment of the Theosophical Society."]

Even when this opportunity arose Mrs. Sharpe has still suppressed the following two very important decisions of the Convention.

By 33 votes to 31 the Convention rejected an amendment, moved by Mrs. Sharpe, and seconded by Mr. Ernest Wood (of Manchester):

Welcoming the President's policy of collaboration with Mr. C. W. Leadbeater in any work which he is willing to do for the Society.

This amendment was rejected on its merits before the debate on the Van Hook-Leadbeater resolution (moved as an amendment to Mr. Dunlop's resolution) took place. After the protracted debate which resulted in the carrying of this resolution, Mr. Bell (of Harrogate) moved, and Mr. Wilkinson (of Nottingham) seconded:

That this Convention looks on the teaching given by C. W. Leadbeater to certain boys as wholly evil, and hereby expresses its judgment on this matter.

This was carried *nem. con.* [*nemine contradicente, unanimously, FR*]

The Van Hook-Leadbeater resolution was carried by 38 votes to 4 (all the latter cast by one Belgian delegate), 22 declining to vote. This resolution, moved in the form of an amendment, was as follows:

This Convention of the British Section of the Theosophical Society while affirming its loyalty to the first Object of the Society - namely, "to form a nucleus of the universal brotherhood of humanity" - strongly protests against evoking the sentiment of brotherhood to countenance what is wrong.

Whereas Dr. Weller van Hook, the present General Secretary of the American Section, and so a member of the General Council of the Theosophical Society, in a recent Open Letter which he has subsequently stated to have been "dictated verbatim by one of the Masters," has publicly claimed that the corrupting practices, the teaching of which determined the resignation of Mr. C. W. Leadbeater, are the high doctrine of Theosophy and the "precursor of its introduction into the thought of the outer world": -

This Convention declares its abhorrence of such practice, and, in view of the incalculable harm to Theosophy and of the disgrace which this teaching must inevitably bring upon the Society earnestly calls upon all its members, especially the President and members of the General Council, to unite in putting an end to the present scandalous state of affairs, so that the repudiation by the Society of this pernicious teaching may be unequivocal and final.

Moved by Herbert Burrows; seconded by G. R. S. Mead; supported by A. P. Sinnett, C. J. Barker, J. S. Brown, Dr. C. G. Currie, H. R. Hogg, B. Keightley, W. Kingsland, W. Scott-Elliott, W. Theobald, B. G. Theobald, L. Wallace, C. B. Wheeler, H. L. Shindler, A. P. Cattanach, Dr. A. King, Baker Hudson, W. H. Thomas, A. B. Green, J. M. Watkins, E. E. Marsden, H. E. Nichol, by the delegates of the London and Blavatsky Lodges, and by many others.

Immediately after the vote was taken Miss Dupuis, of the H. P. B. Lodge, read the following declaration, in which the majority of the representatives who had declined to vote joined by standing with her:

We cannot vote for this amendment as it is worded. We will not vote against it as it involves so much. We stand and hereby proclaim that we utterly condemn the practices alluded to, but refuse to condemn any individual.

Reply to the President's Letter.

This serious and earnest appeal to safeguard the good name of the Society and to assist in preserving Theosophy from harm, the President now rejects with all her strength. Mrs. Besant's reply takes the form of special pleading in defence of Mr. Leadbeater; she withdraws her former unequivocal condemnation of his teaching and substitutes for it equivocal phrases; humbly apologises to him; and finally invites the Society to vote for Mr. Leadbeater's triumphant reinstatement without further guarantee.

The change in Mrs. Besant's attitude is amazing, but still more astonishing is her forgetfulness of her emphatic pledges given to the Society at the time of her election to the Presidency.

PART 3 c

In continuing the scanning of the REPLY to the President's Letter begun as [Part 3 a], I have had to work with a very poor copy, and the work is taking much longer than anticipated. This pamphlet is about half finished.

Some readers may wonder (again) what point there is in dredging up these past "scandals" in the Theosophical Society. The view of masturbation as "self-abuse" would raise few supporters today, and the fact that the British Section make such strong condemnation of it simply reflects the views of the Victorian era of which they were a part.

This, however, although mentioned at length in the literature, is not the major concern, when one looks beneath the surface of the circumstances. The real problems arose because the International President, together with other officials of the T.S., *lied* to her own members, *denied* them full access to all the relevant documents, and, with CWL, could be said to appear to manipulate the Society and its members to her own purposes.

It has been argued, in very recent times, that a similar attitude has prevailed within the T. S. in America, and it would not be the first time in the history of the Society that similar allegations have been made.

My task here, however, is not to draw conclusions, but to present as much of the evidence as is available in a case which was crucial to the future (and therefore the present) nature of the Theosophical Society itself. No doubt, at the end of this exercise, which will be a long one, I shall offer some more thoughts and opinions.

For the moment, let us read some more of the REPLY to Annie Besant made by some members of the British Section in November, 1908:

The President's Pledges.

In April, 1907, in answer to a telegram from the Council of the Blavatsky Lodge in these words: "Would you as President permit X's [Mr. Leadbeater's] readmission?" - Mrs. Besant replied:

"If publicly repudiates teaching, two years after repudiation on large majority request of whole Society, would reinstate; otherwise not."

What Mrs. Besant meant by "repudiation," and what we have all understood her to mean, is quite clear from her public letter to the members of the British Section, dated March 24, 1907 (p. 5).

[This was written nine months after Mrs. Besant had received the official Minutes of the Advisory Committee, and her opinion, therefore, was then not based on alleged "false information."]

"As regards his [Mr. L.'s] readmission to the Society - I do not know that he wishes readmission - I shall continue to oppose it, as I have hitherto done, until he says publicly that the teaching is *wrong* [italics Mrs. Besant's], not only that he will refrain from it, as he promised to do in February, 1906, and also before the Advisory Board in London." [In his letter to The Vahan (May, 1907), Mr. Leadbeater himself says that he does not wish to rejoin.]

At the Convention of the American Section, 1906, Mrs. Kate Buffington Davis read the following from a letter of Mrs. Besant's, dated from Benares, August 9, 1906. [Mrs. Besant had also already received her official copy of the Minutes by this date.]

Any proposal to reinstate Mr Leadbeater in the membership of the T. S. would be ruinous to the Society. It would be indignantly repudiated here and in Europe, and I am sure in Australia and New Zealand, if the facts were known. If such a proposal were carried in America - I do not believe it possible - I should move all the T.S. Council, the supreme authority, that the application of membership should be rejected. But I am sure that Mr. Leadbeater would not apply.

Why Mrs. Besant italicises the word "wrong" in the last quotation but one is quite evident to all who remember her exceedingly strong, unequivocal, and repeated acceptance of the phenomenal pronouncements published by the late President-Founder just prior to his decease.

In his Presidential Address at the Adyar Anniversary Meeting, December 29, 1906 (see General Report, p. 3), referring to the Leadbeater case, and to the specific question as to whether Mr. Leadbeater's teaching was right or wrong, Col. Olcott stated:

"So when Mahatma M. came to me last Friday night I asked Him the question, and He replied "wrong."

In a letter to Mr. Leadbeater, dated January 12, 1907, Colonel Olcott writes on his death-bed:

"Both Mahatma M. and Mahatma K.H. assured me you did well to resign; that it was right to call a Council to advise upon the matter, and that I did right in accepting your resignation; but They said we were wrong in allowing the matter to be made public, for your sake and the good of the Society. They said you should have stated in your resignation that you resigned because you had offended the standard of ideals of the majority of the members of the Society by giving out certain teachings which were considered objectionable. They have told both Annie and myself that your teaching young boys to . . . is wrong."

In Colonel Olcott's report of one of the Adyar "interviews," dated January 11, 1907, in reply to a leading question, the answer reported is:

"No, we cannot tell you this, for that concerns himself alone, but it is different when he teaches things to others that will harm."

And in answer to another question:

"Write and ask him, it is not for us to say. We do, however, affirm that these teachings are wrong."

Moreover, in her pamphlet on *The Testing of the Theosophical Society* (one of her Election addresses), Mrs. Besant writes (p.7), in reference to Col. Olcott's "Conversation with the Mahatmas":

"I may add that the "Conversation" in no way suggests Mr. Leadbeater's reinstatement, and that we at Adyar could not read that into it, as we were told at the same time that the Master, in answer to a suggestion to that effect, has sternly refused his approval."

We do not cite these utterances as authoritative for ourselves, nor do we pause to criticise them, we simply place them on record to show why Mrs. Besant emphasised the word wrong."

On this point at least we thought we were all agreed on ordinary grounds of morality whether we accepted or rejected the authority of the phenomenal answers reported by Colonel Olcott. The thing was unquestionably wrong under any circumstances.

"Mahatmic" Contradictions.

In May, however, of this year, Dr. van Hook, the General Secretary of the American Section, and as such a member of the General Council of the Society, in Open Letters to his Section,

declared that Mr. Leadbeater's teaching on the point was right in every respect. (Addendum, May 5th, 1908, p.6):

"No mistake was made by Mr. Leadbeater in the nature of the advice he gave his boys. No mistake was made in the way he gave it."

It was at the same time widely circulated privately on his own declaration, that these Letters were not really his, but "dictated verbatim by one of the Masters." These astounding statements obtained the widest credence, and the result was that Mr. Leadbeater was invited to take the post of editor of part of the official organ of the American Section, by a large majority referendum vote.

In face of this, many of the members of the British Section could no longer remain silent; they were bound to protest, and call attention to the very grave danger that threatened the Society, and in which it is now actually involved.

These "Mahatmic" pronouncements, however, were not the ground of that protest; it may be left to those who believe in their authenticity to reconcile their glaring contradictions. No decision on such manifest incongruities was asked for, and therefore, Mrs. Besant's argument as to official ruling on pp. 13 and 14 of her Letter is quite beside the point.

The Logical Consequence of Dr. van Hook's Contention.

What was strongly objected to and most energetically protested against was the public declaration by a responsible officer of the General Council that Mr. Leadbeater's teaching is right. If Mr. Leadbeater's teaching is right, and he made no mistake in any way whatever, as Dr. van Hook (or his "Master" if he prefers it) contends, why should not Mr. Leadbeater continue such teachings, as they have proved, according to Dr. van Hook, of the greatest value; and by a parity of reasoning, why should not any pupil of Mr. Leadbeater's or anyone else in the Society who wishes to follow his footsteps, do the same?

Against this hideous prospect we protested and do protest. If Mr. Leadbeater's teaching is right, then it should be followed. That is the only logical position. Mr. Leadbeater himself says it would be "dangerous" only "if promiscuously given"; he as an occultist knows when it should be given, he claims. It is not really dangerous for him to give it; and he simply bows to Mrs. Besant's "opinion that it is dangerous."

Mr. Leadbeater is consistent in this, that he has never recanted; he has defended this teaching in the face of everything. What conclusion is likely to be drawn from this by those who believe that Mr. Leadbeater is a high adept? Simply that he knows on this subject; and has only promised not to do it again because of prudish convention, ignorant "hysterical" uproar, and "insane prejudices."

He is the "martyr" occultist persecuted for his knowledge! What results? That his pupils will think as he thinks; that they will do as he has done. Why not, if he was and is right?

This view, that Mr. Leadbeater is right, is already being adopted far and wide in the Society at this moment. In what way does Mrs. Besant's Letter help us to stem the tide?

Mrs. Besant's Contradictions.

Mrs. Besant's view (pp. 5 and 6) emphasised to a final utterance for those who accept her authority ("I speak as Occultist. 'He that is able to receive it, let him receive it'" leaves the door wide open for Mr. Leadbeater's teaching. But at the expense of what contradiction! Mr. Leadbeater has taught it, and refuses to repudiate the teaching; yet he is said by Mrs. Besant at the same time to be "at one" with her in condemning it as being "degrading, unmanly, unwomanly" (p. 61, while he himself declares that it is "dangerous" only "if promiscuously given" (The Theosophist, Feb., 1908), and Mrs. Besant herself elsewhere in her Letter (pp. 7 and 8) expresses only disagreement and withdraws condemnation.

But H. P. B. did not equivocate on the subject - and she, we suppose - could speak with as much authority on occultism as Mr. Leadbeater and Mrs. Besant. (She characterised it to me as "the sin against the Holy Ghost" - G. R. S. M.) [See The Secret Doctrine, III, 445 (Diagram).]

Mrs. Besant has now entirely changed her former view on the subject, for in her Letter,* of June 9, 1906, she writes of her first impression on hearing the charges in February:

*{This is the "Simla Letter" sent to the E.S. wardens and sub-wardens, with a covering note in which occur the words: "You may use publicly my view of the fatal nature of the teaching, *should need arise.*" [The italics are Mrs. Besant's.]}

"This was the first time I had heard of such a method of meeting the sexual difficulty, let alone of Mr. Leadbeater's recommendation of it. I had always regarded self-abuse as one of the lowest forms of vice, a thing universally reprobated by decent people. To me it was not arguable. But I have since heard that it is sometimes practised and recommended by ascetics, otherwise good men, for the sake of preserving chastity - as though self-abuse did not destroy chastity as much as prostitution, and in an even more degrading way!"

But Mrs. Besant now asserts (pp.5 and 6) that "Occultism" "condemns solitary vice as only less harmful than prostitution." To us it still remains "not arguable," and to this we make no exception, either on the ground of the lesser of two evils, or on the perverted ground of doing evil that good may come. and therefore we protest and appeal to all who love the good name of the Society, to pronounce unmistakably on this subject, and to resist the triumphant reinstatement into the Society as an injured "martyr" of the man who has brought all this sorrow and suffering upon us.

In a Society like ours, just because of the deference his many pupils, adherents, and admirers pay to Mr. Leadbeater's assertions, his obstinate insistence that his teaching is right is the most potent means of erecting it into a generally recognised Theosophical doctrine, of the first importance. This is proved by the fact that Dr. Weller van Hook in one of his Open Letters (Addendum, May 5, pp. 5 and 6) appeals to the doctrines of reincarnation and karma, as expounded by Mr. Leadbeater especially to suit his teaching, in justification of it.

The boys' statements also that it was taught as "Theosophical" formed the basis of one of the charges.

This pernicious teaching is not merely "ascribed" to Mr. Leadbeater, as Mrs. Besant says in her opening words, it is fully and freely confessed by him and strenuously defended. In what way this teaching, which Mrs. Besant now refuses to condemn, when taught by Mr. Leadbeater, can make for "purity" and for "the Society's good name" (p. 3) is beyond us.

This concludes the REPLY to the President's Letter of November 1908 begun as [Part 3]. The various sections have now been collated and will be available shortly on request as a single file.

Mention is made in this section of "The Cipher Letter," which was, not surprisingly, separately printed in its entirety for those who wished to avail themselves of its contents. This will [Part 4]. It is quite short. A.B. (Ed.)

PART 3 d

The Documents.

On p. 6 Mrs. Besant writes, quoting a previous letter of hers (the "Simla Letter"):

"On June 7th [1906] I received an account of the acceptance by Mr. Leadbeater before the Committee of the facts alleged in the evidence."

As this might give the unknowing reader the impression that Mrs. Besant had not had previously before her any of the "facts alleged in the evidence," or any knowledge of the "acceptance by Mr. Leadbeater" of them, to make it clear we recite the facts.

In February, 1906, Mrs. Besant herself was the first to receive the charges and original evidence on which they were based, from America, drawn up and laid before her by the two chief officials of the Section (in their private capacity), and also by the two chief officers of the E.S. there, in a letter dated January 25.

Mr. Leadbeater, to whom also a copy had been forwarded, was then with Mrs. Besant at Benares. After consultation with her, Mr. Leadbeater wrote a letter of confession and excuse (dated February 27) to the then American General Secretary; and Mrs. Besant also sent a letter to the chief officer of the E. S. in which she repeated Mr. Leadbeater's excuses, but expressed disagreement with his teaching; in view of Mr. Leadbeater's promise to abstain from this teaching in future, however, she did not favour the "searching investigation" demanded, and said she saw no reason why he should be withdrawn from activity.

So far all had been kept as silent as possible. Mr. Leadbeater's letter and Mrs. Besant's reply being entirely unsatisfactory, the Executive Committee of the American Section then felt themselves compelled to lay the whole matter officially before Colonel Olcott, the President-

Founder of the Society, who promptly called together an Advisory Committee consisting of the then Executive Committee of the British Section, to which Section Mr. Leadbeater belonged.

The members of this Committee were: Mr. Sinnett, Dr. Nunn, Mr. Mead, Mrs. Stead, Miss Ward, Miss Spink, Mrs. Hooper, Mr. Bertram Keightley, Mr. Thomas, and Mr. Glass. There were also present Mr. Burnett, as representative and delegate of the Executive Committee of the American Section, and M. Bernard, the representative of the Executive Committee of the French Section.

The documents submitted by the American Executive consisted of: (1) The charges and evidence already laid before Mrs. Besant; (2) Mr. Leadbeater's letter of confession and excuse; (3) rebuttal statements of the boys to some of the statements made by Mr. Leadbeater in his letter and (4) corroborative evidence and testimony in two further cases obtained after sending to Mrs. Besant the first evidence on which the charges were brought.

The original charges, based on the evidence of two boys, were:

FIRST: That he is teaching young boys given into his care habits of self-abuse and demoralizing personal practices.

SECOND: That he does this with deliberate intent and under the guise of occult training or with the promise of the increase of physical manhood.

THIRD: That he has demanded, at least in one case, promises of the utmost secrecy.

It was with regard to the rebuttal evidence (3) and the further corroborative evidence (4), that Mr. Leadbeater said at the beginning of the inquiry, as quoted by Mrs. Besant (p.7):

"I have only just now seen anything at all of the documents, except the [read "that"] first letter."

This "first letter" is the first lengthy document containing the charges and evidence laid before Mrs. Besant in February.

Below, in parallel columns, will be found Mrs. Besant's version of what took place, together with the full text of the Minutes from which she is supposed to be quoting.

MRS. BESANT'S LETTER (p. 7).	MINUTES OF THE ADVISORY BOARD.
As to the "evidence," he stated at the time: "I have only just now seen anything at all of the documents, except the first letter"; on his hasty perusal of them, he stated that some of the points "are untrue and others	I have only just now seen anything at all of the documents except that first letter. There have been other supposed rebuttals and other documents which I had only seen

<p>so distorted that they do not represent the facts"; yet it was on these points, unsifted and unproven, declared by him to be untrue and distorted, that he was condemned, and has since been attacked.</p>	<p>to-day and while there are a number of points I should challenge as inaccurate, <i>yet all those are minor points and do not affect the great question.</i></p> <p>It is simply that there are points of so-called rebuttal which are untrue and others so distorted that they do not represent the facts of the case <i>but these do not affect the central points.</i></p>
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It will be seen that the important qualifying phrases italicised by us are omitted by Mrs. Besant.

This was Mr. Leadbeater's statement at the beginning of the inquiry, before he was questioned and had to make some damaging further admissions.

Mrs. Besant's statement that it was on the points in the second batch of documents only that "he was condemned and has since been attacked" is not the fact.

The Committee unanimously advised Col. Olcott to accept Mr. Leadbeater's resignation, which was written only just before it met, because of his own confession in the first place, and because to their amazement he still persisted in defending his teaching, and made even further admissions.

At that time in the Society we were unanimous that it was wrong. Mr. Leadbeater's teaching had not yet been introduced into the "thought of the Theosophical world."

Denunciation of the Committee.

To weaken this unanimous advice Mrs. Besant now denounces some of the members of the Committee as unfit to advise Colonel Olcott, with whom the ultimate decision rested and whose impartiality Mr. Leadbeater freely acknowledged at the end of the inquiry.

In reply to the late President-Founder's question: "I should like to ask Mr. Leadbeater if he thinks I have acted impartially?" - Mr Leadbeater replied: "Absolutely." (See Minutes.)

Mrs. Besant, nevertheless, declares that "the so-called trial of Mr. Leadbeater was a travesty of justice" (p. 7), and so asperses the memory of the late President-Founder.

Mr. Leadbeater was not tried judicially; the nature of the Committee was twice laid down by Colonel Olcott as follows:

"(a) Of course you know the executive power is vested in me. You are here to advise me and to hear what Mr. Leadbeater has to say, and to act according to your judgment after hearing him."

"(b) We should not keep in anything, but have frank disclosure. You are not sitting judicially, but to advise me what to do."

Mr. Leadbeater was given every opportunity to explain his position and justify his conduct; unless, of course, questioning him on the evidence is to be considered unfair and a "travesty of justice."

To show the baselessness of Mrs. Besant's denunciation, it may be stated that the apparently most telling point she tries to make - the shooting story - seems to have arisen from a rumour we heard at the time, that if the matter became public, and Mr. Leadbeater were to return to America, it was likely that a relative of one of the boys might "go for him with a shot-gun." (E. W., G. R. S. M.).

As to psychic influence, though this is quite news to the two of us who sat on the Committee, we may be permitted to remark that it is hardly consistent of Mrs. Besant to denounce belief in psychic testimony as a disqualification.

The unanimous opinion of the Committee was that such teaching should not be given under any circumstances whatever, not even to depraved boys, much less therefore to boys who had no knowledge of such practices.

The only real difference of opinion among the members of the Committee was as to whether they should advise expulsion or acceptance of resignation only, as commensurate with the offence, after Mr. Leadbeater's further admissions. They finally took the more lenient course.

The unanimous decision of the Committee was given in the following resolution:

"That having considered certain charges against Mr. Leadbeater, and having listened to his explanations, this Committee recommend the acceptance by the President-Founder of his resignation already offered in anticipation of the Committee's decision."

On p. 8, Mrs. Besant now expressly withdraws the condemnation of Mr. Leadbeater's advice which she had put on record in her very important letter of June, 1906, on the ground that the "information" on which she had based it was "false." It's falsity is alleged on two points.

First Point of Alleged "Falsity."

(1) With regard to the first (the "fouling" of the mind), it is sufficient to quote Mrs. Besant's own words of condemnation, in parallel columns with Mr. Leadbeater's own admissions before the Advisory Committee.

MINUTES OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE.	MRS. BESANT'S LETTER OF JUNE 9th. 1906.
<p>Mr. THOMAS: Your reply as to scarcely re-collecting suggests that there were so many cases. I should like to know whether in any case . . . there was definite action?</p> <p>Mr. LEADBEATER: You mean touch? That might have taken place. * * *</p> <p>Mr. MEAD: I want to ask whether this advice was given on appeal or not?</p> <p>Mr. LEADBEATER: Sometimes without, sometimes with. I advised it at times as a prophylactic.</p> <p>M. BERNARD: Since Mr. Leadbeater was teaching these boys to help them in case of need, considering that men may be in the same difficulty, has he taught this to any grown-up men? Has he taught the same thing in the same personal way to grown-up men as to children?</p> <p>Mr. LEADBEATER: I believe that at least on two occasions in my life I have given that advice to young men as better than the one generally adopted.</p> <p>Col. OLCOTT: Since you came into the Society?</p> <p>Mr. LEADBEATER: I think not, but one case might have been. You are probably not aware that one at least of the great Church organisations for young men deals with the matter in the same manner [!]</p>	<p>He [Mr. Leadbeater] denied none of the charges, but in answer to questions, very much strengthened them, for he alleged that he had actually handled the boys himself, and that he had thus dealt with boys before puberty "as a prophylactic."</p> <p>So that the advice which was supposed to be given to rescue a boy as a last resort, in the grip of sexual passion, became advice putting foul ideas into the minds of boys innocent of all sex-impulses.</p> <p>[Still further than this, Mrs. Besant condemned Mr. Leadbeater's teaching in all respects. Alan Bain]</p> <p>Let me here place on record my opinion that such teaching as this given to men, let alone innocent boys, is worthy of the sternest reprobation. It distorts and perverts the sex-instinct, implanted in men for the preservation of the race; it degrades the ideas of marriage, fatherhood, and motherhood, humanity's most sacred ideals; it befouls the imagination, pollutes the emotions, and undermines the health.</p>

MINUTES OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE.	MRS. BESANT, IN THE SAME LETTER AS ABOVE.
<p>M. BERNARD: Since Mr. Leadbeater was teaching these boys to help them in case of need, considering that men may be in the same difficulty, has he taught this to any grown-up men? Has he taught the same thing in the same personal way to grown-up men as to children?</p> <p>Mr. LEADBEATER: I believe that at least on two occasions in my life I have given that advice to young men as better than the one generally adopted.</p> <p>Col. OLCOTT: Since you came into the Society?</p> <p>Mr. LEADBEATER: I think not, but one case might have been. You are probably not aware that one at least of the great Church organisations for young men deals with the matter in the same manner [!]</p>	<p>Let me here place on record my opinion that such teaching as this given to men, let alone innocent boys, is worthy of the sternest reprobation. It distorts and perverts the sex-instinct, implanted in men for the preservation of the race; it degrades the ideas of marriage, fatherhood, and motherhood, humanity's most sacred ideals; it befouls the imagination, pollutes the emotions, and undermines the health.</p>

It will thus be seen that Mrs. Besant's original condemnation was based not on "false information," but on her own interpretation of Mr. Leadbeater's admissions.

That the reason for giving the "advice" was sometimes other than that professed, may be seen from the fact that, in his letter of confession, Mr. Leadbeater admitted that he had told one of the boys "that physical growth is frequently promoted by the setting in motion of these currents, but that they need regulation." The boy's evidence on this point ("the promise of the increase of physical manhood") formed the basis of one of the charges. The cipher letter further corroborates this evidence.

In the face of the opinion she placed "on record" in 1906, Mrs. Besant now denies (p. 8) that there was any "fouling" of the "imagination" even of the "minds of boys innocent of all sex-impulses." Yet (on p. 9) she admits it was taught not only to boys not yet addicted to the practice, but also to one or two "before what is called the age of puberty."

The plea of justification now urged for this extraordinary change of opinion is that "certain symptoms had already shown themselves either on the physical plane or in the aura."

The giving of this teaching then even to children Mrs. Besant now refuses to condemn in Mr. Leadbeater's case; and thus opens the way for any psychic in the Society to justify the teaching of it on his bare assertion that he has seen this or that "symptom" in a child's aura.

All such excuses and subterfuges we emphatically reject, for the practice under any circumstance can never lessen lust but only enhance it.

Second Point of Alleged "Falsity."

(2) The second point on the "falsity" of which Mrs. Besant withdraws her condemnation is the question of frequency. Here Mr. Leadbeater's denial, quoted by Mrs. Besant (p. 9), and the testimony of the mother of boy No. 3 as to the "original interval" are in direct conflict.

In the letter to the boy, the genuineness of which Mr. Leadbeater acknowledges, he writes:

"There may be this much reason in what he [the Doctor] says, that while you are not quite well we should spend no force that can be avoided. You will remember that when we met in --- I suggested longer intervals until you were completely recovered."

It is to be noted that this "suggestion" was made because the boy was ill. The "original" interval to which the mother refers was advised prior to this meeting.

The most striking point in Mrs. Besant's plea is her appeal for "utter confidence" in Mr. Leadbeater's statements and denials; frequently she says with regard to evidence "it is not true that . . .," when this simply means "Mr. Leadbeater says it is not true." Mr. Leadbeater is always to be believed no matter what the testimony against him of the boys and mothers (or even of his own letters) may be, for Mrs. Besant has "utter confidence in his candour."

But one of the main points against Mr. Leadbeater is that he taught these practices without the knowledge of the parents and bound the boys to secrecy, as has been fully admitted by himself. Mrs. Besant writes, in her Simla letter of June 9, 1906:

"Nothing can excuse giving to young boys instructions on sexual matters to be kept from their parents, the rightful protectors of their children."

Why then, if Mr. Leadbeater is so candid with Mrs. Besant, did he not breathe a word to her of his teaching before he was detected? For in the same letter Mrs. Besant writes:

"This was the first time I had heard of such a method of meeting the sexual difficulty let alone Mr. Leadbeater's recommendation of it. I had always regarded self-abuse as one of the lowest forms of vice, and a thing universally reprobated by decent people. To me it was not arguable."

Now we are not labouring this point as to precisely "daily" practice, but Mrs. Besant knows, as we know, that the cipher letter says, "twice a week is permissible," preceded and followed by words that make it impossible to put a curative construction upon the "advice."

How then does Mrs. Besant deal with this most important document, which, unfortunately, came into the hands of the American Executive only a day before the meeting of the Advisory Committee in London, too late to be included in the evidence? No contemptuous words can brush aside this document.

The Cipher Letter.

The "fragment of paper" is sufficient to accommodate not a note only but a letter of 229 words, beginning with "My own darling boy," and ending with "Thousand kisses darling" (in cipher). It is true that the first half of this letter refers to a psychic experience, but the second, of equal length, begins with the words "Turning to other matters," and these matters are sexual; it is in the latter part that the Cipher sentences occur, and it is in the body of the cipher, towards the end, that the sentence referred to by Mrs. Besant ("glad sensation is so pleasant") is found.

If, as Mrs. Besant says (p. 11), the boy replied to the letter (though his reply was not sent), the letter can hardly be a forgery to "go with the Coulomb and Pigott letters." If the boy himself did not understand the sentence in the sense implied, as Mrs. Besant says - the mother (in a covering letter addressed to one of the members of the Investigating Committee in America) says she so understands it, and makes it an additional ground of complaint.

As the letter stands it is impossible to read the sentence otherwise than as applying to its immediate context. It could not apply to the psychic experience, for that was not of a pleasant nature.

Mrs. Besant, however, says that Mr. Leadbeater states he does not "recognise it [the letter] in its present form." Who then has changed the "form" of the letter - the boy or the mother? And if so, what possible purpose could be served thereby? Will Mr. Leadbeater himself venture to assert that the letter or any part of it is a forgery?

But even if the sentence in question were entirely eliminated, there is that in the rest of the letter which calls for the most searching inquiry, and its genuineness is further corroborated by the identity of its very peculiar phrasing with that of the other letter in evidence which Mr. Leadbeater has acknowledged as his.

It is, therefore, impossible to join Mrs. Besant in letting it "go with the Coulomb and Pigott letters."

As to this document we agree with Miss Ward in her recent circular that:

"If it is genuine it settles for us [me] the whole question of Mr. Leadbeater's attitude: if it is not genuine it is a piece of inconceivable wickedness, which leaves Mr. Leadbeater grossly wronged and of which the perpetrator should, by every code of honour and justice, be unveiled and punished."

It is remarkable that Dr. van Hook himself has nowhere published this "repudiation," but from a copy of a letter written by him to Mr. Whyte, which Mrs. Besant has had printed in "Theosophy in India" [Sept., 1908], we find that Dr. van Hook expressly states that "in the Letters published over his [my] signature" the "general problem" has not been dealt with, but only the "specific question" of Mr. Leadbeater's "solution" of it.

We may here point out that it is not the fact that the Convention had before it only a "garbled account," as Mrs. Besant says (p. 13), of Dr. van Hook's utterances; every sentence

that could he used to persuade the Convention that Dr. van Hook did not mean what he wrote, was insisted on by Dr. van Hook's and Mr. Leadbeater's supporters; his paragraphs were read repeatedly in full, and the sentences Mrs. Besant quotes (p. 12) were especially insisted on.

In his Open Letter (Addendum, May 5) Dr. van Hook speaks of nothing else but Mr. Leadbeater's teaching and method and "solution" of the problem. And if the following paragraphs in it do not refer to Mr. Leadbeater's "solution," to his "system," to the blessing he is conferring by it, then to what on earth do they refer?

Dr. van Hook's "repudiation" of his own plain meaning simply makes nonsense of his whole contention. Dr. van Hook (or, if he prefers it, his "Master") writes:

"Hence the "crime" or "wrong" of teaching the boys the practice alluded to was no crime or wrong at all, but only the advice of a wise teacher who foresaw an almost limitless period of suffering for his charge if the solution for his difficulties usually offered by the World were adopted and relief obtained by an associated instead of by an individual and personal act.

"The introduction of this question into the thought of the Theosophical World is but the precursor of its introduction into the thought of the outer World. Mr Leadbeater has been the one to bear the persecution and martyrdom of its introduction. The solution of the question can only be reached by those who study it from the Theosophic standpoint, admitting the validity of our teachings in regard to thoughts and their relations to acts. Hence the service of Theosophy to the world in this respect will be of the most far-reaching consequence, extending into the remote future of the progress of Man.

"No mistake was made by Mr. Leadbeater in the nature of the advice he gave his boys. No mistake was made in the way he gave it. Nor did he make any mistake in the just estimation of the consequences of any other solution of the terrible problem which was presented to him.

"If any mistake was made it was a mistake of judgment in trusting too much to the confidence of the parents of the boys who, he thought, knew and loved him so well that they would accept his judgment on matters about which ordinary people have little or no knowledge and about which he, by the nature of his occult training, had a full comprehension.

"Betrayal of confidence on the part of some parents of the boys resulted in the scandal which brought this problem to the attention of Theosophists as a preliminary to its introduction to the world. Woe to those who violated their vows in making disclosures in this case. All honor to those parents who, braving the opinion of the World, have boldly set themselves against the current of the World's prejudice and have avowed themselves and their sons under undying obligation to the great teacher who aided their sons in overcoming difficulties which without his aid would not only have been insuperable in this life but would have led them into almost inconceivable complications in future lives."

If this does not mean the introduction into the thought of the Theosophical Society, and thus into the thought of the outer world, of Mr. Leadbeater's "solution" of the problem, what can it possibly mean? Mr. Leadbeater's "martyrdom" is not because of his introducing the

general sex problem with regard to young people; that has been introduced into the thought of the world for many many centuries.

It is because of his "solution" of it that Dr. van Hook calls on us to exalt Mr. Leadbeater to the highest pinnacle of honour, for he gives "all honour" to the parents who entrust their children to Mr. Leadbeater to receive such teaching, and who avow their undying obligation for this high favour!

Against the introduction of this "solution" of the sex problem into the "thought of the Theosophical world" and against Dr. van Hook's glorification of it, we protest with all our energy; we characterise the teaching of it in any case as a "corrupting practice" and "wholly evil," no matter who gives it, not excepting occultists and psychics; and we call for the public repudiation of it by the man who has confessed to teaching it practically, before he is invited to return in triumph as a „wise teacher" to the Theosophical Society.

The Main Issue Evaded.

As to the main issue, then, Mrs. Besant evades it when she says (p. 14):

"The Theosophical Society, as a whole, cannot be committed to any special solution of this [the sex] problem, and its members must be left free."

This we have not asked; what we do ask our fellow-members to do, is to condemn one special and corrupting practice as a solution of the problem. Advice to break off gradually this corrupting habit when once it had been contracted, is not the ground of our protest. It is the teaching of this thing to men who have never practised it, and to boys and children who have never heard of it even, against which we protest.

The Real Cause of the Present Dissension.

Mrs. Besant says (p. 15) that Mr. Leadbeater: "resigned two and a half years ago in the vain attempt to save the Society from this dissension."

As to a magnanimous resignation there was little choice; the wording of the unanimous resolution of the Committee shows that clearly enough.

There was, however, only one way in which Mr. Leadbeater could save the Society from dissension, as he himself said before the Advisory Committee:

"Since this has come forward it would be undesirable that I should *appear before the public.*" [Italics ours.]

The trouble has not been made by those who accepted Mr. Leadbeater's resignation as the natural sequence of his conduct, but by those who have persistently forced him into ever greater and greater prominence; and although he has once stated that he does not seek re-entry, he has lent himself in every way to being pushed forward publicly, and has thus aided most powerfully in keeping this scandal and this dissension alive in the Theosophical Society

with ever greater and greater intensification.

The Letter of the President in answer to our earnest appeal will only bring more dissension, and help the more to ventilate the unsavoury subject of Mr. Leadbeater's "solution" and methods in the Theosophical Society. Under such circumstances how can people be invited to join our ranks?

It is manifestly unfair to allow outsiders to involve themselves in such a scandalous state of affairs without warning, and that means stating the facts. Just the very people whom we desire to welcome will be kept out, and that, too, even with Mrs. Besant's Letter alone before them, much more when they come to know the whole matter.

What folly is this to sacrifice the welfare of the Society in the vain attempt to re-establish the public reputation of an individual who has lost it on his own confession and by his persistent refusal to repudiate his pernicious teaching and practice!

Combined Action Necessary.

Already many have left because of the policy pursued by Mr. Leadbeater's supporters. In America hundreds, it is said as many as a thousand, have gone out in the last two and a half years; and here, among a number of other good members, we have lost two old General Secretaries and one former Acting General Secretary.

Why, we ask, should old and valued members, or even the latest recruit, be driven out of the Society for the sake of one man, who has taught self-abuse to men, boys, and children, and refuses to repudiate his corrupting system?

Combined action being now forced upon us, we earnestly appeal to our fellow members not to resign individually, but to join us in our present protest, and register their names with us; so that if still further action is forced upon us we may take it together as a united body. We appeal not only to the members of our own Section, but also to all members of the Society who sympathise with our protest, to give us their support by also registering their names.

We would further ask our sympathisers to let our protest be known as widely as possible in the Society. For while the President has at her disposal not only the official organisation of the whole Society but also the good services of a widespread inner order, we are dependent on unorganised effort.

True Loyalty.

Finally, Mrs. Besant calls on us to be "loyal" to the Masters, and "to Their choice," and "to work for Them." Is it, we ask, loyalty to Masters to tolerate and to refuse to condemn the teaching of self-abuse?

We say that it is because of our loyalty to all the Masters of Morality who have taught the world throughout the ages that we protest, and that in so doing we work for Theosophy, and should fail in our plain duty were we not to protest. It is the best loyalty, therefore, to the

Theosophical Society, and also to its elected President, no matter how "chosen," to protest, and resist the introduction of this teaching into the thought of the Theosophical world, and therewith also the reinstatement of Mr. Leadbeater in the Society without his full public repudiation of this teaching.

We cannot do better than conclude with the following words, quoted from the leaflet entitled *Occultism and Truth*, issued in 1894, at the time of the Judge crisis, and signed by H. S. Olcott, A. P. Sinnett, Annie Besant, Bertram Keightley, W. Wynn Westcott, E. T. Sturdy, and C. W. Leadbeater: "A spurious Occultism dallies with truth and falsehood, and argues that deception on the illusory physical plane is consistent with purity on the loftier planes on which the Occultist has his true life; it speaks contemptuously of "mere worldly morality" - a contempt that might be justified if it raised a higher standard, but which is out of place when the phrase is used to condone acts which the "mere worldly morality" would disdain to practise.

The doctrine that the end justifies the means has proved in the past fruitful of all evil; no means that are impure can bring about an end that is good; else were the Good Law a dream and Karma mere delusion. From these errors flows an influence mischievous to the whole Theosophical Society, undermining the stern and rigid morality necessary as a foundation for Occultism of the Right Hand Path."

G. R. S. MEAD.
HERBERT BURROWS.
W. KINGSLAND.
EDITH WARD.

16, Selwood Place,
Onslow Gardens,
London, S. W., Nov., 1908.

[Copies of all the documents may be seen by Members of the Theosophical Society on application to Mr. Mead or Miss Ward.]

PART 4

[The next series of documents to be uploaded in this historical study will be made up from carbon copies of original transcripts, together with transcripts of original handwritten letters.

Apart from the first item, these will be the letters of Helen I. Dennis, who, in 1906, was

the Corresponding Secretary of the Esoteric School of Theosophy, American Division, writing from 218 East 60th Street, Chicago. The Assistant Secretary was listed at an address in Philadelphia, so one may suppose that they worked from home. - A.B., ed.]

THE LEADBEATER "CIPHER LETTER"

Authentic copy from the original, written by C. W. Leadbeater to one of his pupils about 1906, with explanatory letter from the boy's mother. The cipher letter was typewritten on paper identified by color and watermark as that used by him in other communications, and was received as an enclosure with another letter.

The "Cipher Letter"

PRIVATE

My own darling boy, there is no need for you to write anything in cipher, for no one but I ever sees your letters. But it is better for me to write in cipher about some of the most important matters; can you always read it easily? Can you describe any of the forms in rose-colour which you have seen entering your room? Are they human beings or nature spirits?

The throwing of water is unusual in such a case, though I have had it done to me at a spiritualistic seance. Were you actually wet when you awoke, or was it only in sleep that you felt the water? Either is possible, but they would represent different types of phenomena. All these preliminary experiences are interesting, and I wish we were nearer together to talk about them.

Turning to other matters, I am glad to hear of the rapid growth, and the strength of the results. Twice a week is permissible, but you will soon discover what brings the best effect.* The meaning of the sign [Circle with dot in center] is osauisu. Spontaneous manifestations are undesirable, and should be discouraged. Eg ou dinat xeuiou iamq, ia oaaet socceoh nisa iguao. Cou oiu uii iguao, is ia xemm oiu dina xamm. Eiat uiuu iuqqao xiao zio usa utmaa; tell me fully. Hmue taotuueio et ti qmautuou. Uiiotuoo lettat eusmeoh.

(The following paragraph is the boy's translation of the paragraph written in cipher - beginning with the first*)

The meaning of the sign [Circle with dot in center] is urethra. Spontaneous manifestations are undesirable and should be discouraged. If it comes without help, he needs rubbing more often, but not too often or he will not come well. Does that happen when you are asleep? Tell me fully. Glad sensation is so pleasant. Thousand kisses darling.

Key to the cipher.

Cipher a b c d e f g h i j k l m
Translation e a b c d, i e f g h, o i j k l

Cipher n o p q r s t u v w x y z
Translation m n, u o p q r s a, t u v w x y

**Letter from the Boy's Mother
May - 1906.**

Dear

Your request was duly received asking for a statement from our son as to whether he had approached Mr L. ... for aid, or whether Mr L. ... had approached him, but owing to my feeling that there was no necessary haste, and to some pressing home conditions, it has been delayed until now and I trust the delay has caused no complications.

At the present moment I believe it right to place in the hands of the Investigating Committee such evidence as we have pertaining to a sad difficulty. Our only desire is that a full, fair setting forth of all points in the matter be made.

We have the deepest appreciation of Mr L's kindness to the boy and ourselves in many ways, and whatever may come from us, we wish to avoid any semblance of pre-judging. What conclusions I have arrived at are based on the facts at hand.

My husband will send some statements later, setting forth his view of the situation as now presented to him.

Our son's statement clearly shows that Mr L. ... opened the subject.

After having fully discussed the matter with both his father and me, he has given the key to the cipher in which certain information was given to him by Mr L. ... in "private" notes placed in letters. Our son was so disinclined to relate what Mr L. ... had taught him, that for a time we felt we were asking him to disregard his honor. However, we arrived at the firm conviction that Mr L. ... had no moral right to give him instruction and then bind him by word or attitude to secrecy.

No minor can join the T. S. without the consent of parent or guardian. How much less then has any one, teacher though he be, the right to give a teaching that he knows is not generally accepted, and then cause the boy to keep it away from his parents and further promote the secrecy by private notes and the use of a cipher.

Mr L. ... gave to this boy a teaching admittedly dangerous, and, at the same time, prevented the counsel and the guidance of his parents in so critical a matter by impressing the boy strongly with secrecy.

Mr L. ... either considered the parents unfit counsellors or else he feared their disapproval. In either case it was an assumption of privilege. For no matter which view he held, the parents

are Karmically responsible for the child, and such teaching so contrary to their sense of right would have been possibly permissible only after having consulted them and received their consent.

Neither the boy's father nor I would have permitted Mr L. ... to so instruct him. We have average intelligence; we have been devoted T. S. members since 1892 and surely would have been glad to co-operate with Mr L. ... in any measure we believed to be a useful factor in the boy's evolution.

Therefore, no matter what may be established as Mr L's motive, the fact that he ignored the rights and responsibilities of the parents deserves condemnation.

Our son left the slip of paper on the floor, from which the enclosed cipher note is copied. I also found another on the floor some time after finding the above mentioned cipher. That note was written in Mr L's hand and asked our son to keep a record of days when "experiments" were made, but this is now mislaid. It was not of so dangerous a nature as the enclosed; for in this, you will observe, Mr L. ... expresses himself as "glad the sensation is pleasant" showing that he approves of the sensuous part of the practice.

This surely was teaching the boy to throw pleasurable consciousness into the practice. Would not that make reactionary thought forms?

Mr L. ... knew from my letters to him, that I was earnestly striving to aid the boy in his moral and mental growth, and he directly, or indirectly taught the boy to keep this important phase of growth away from his parents. This was not fostering frankness, to say the least!

Mr L. ... says in his letter to Mr F., "The business of discovering and training especially hopeful younger members, and preparing them for Theosophical work has been put in my charge."

A man may have credentials which bespeak his ability to teach mathematics or to teach occultism but it is unfair to the intelligence and duty of the parents to be denied knowledge of the method.

Again and again we have been told to accept only what mind and conscience approve. Our duty is to give the child the best we know. Where can Mr L. ... find justification in carefully teaching this practice which he knew was so generally condemned, and which he took no pains to put before parents for their acquiescence?

A. B. said to me in '97, "Never make the mistake of doing evil that good may come."

Now it appears to me that this act is far more evil in its effects than what we call lust, for it warps the nature and annuls any possible good that might result. No matter how great a person has given Mr L. ... this work to do, our duty and right is to pass judgment on the methods, and since, as parents and guardians of youth in the T. S. we disapprove of them, our way is clear, and that is, to denounce such teachings.

These statements are not made in the spirit of one who is unwilling to hear all sides, but are the results of pondering on evidence at hand which comes from Mr L. ... and as facts, are irrefutable.

It is an inexplicable feature in this case, that the boy was taught this method while away from his home.

There was ample opportunity for Mr L. ... to have consulted the boy's father about this when in our city, but, he did not.

I have only touched upon the parents' view, which is the fringe of a matter pregnant with other phases.

Trusting that the utmost frankness and courage may prevail at all points in this investigation, I am,

Sincerely Yours,

[Blank - ed.]

[[Part 4]] - reproduced from two printed sheets.]

PART 5

This short document is a transcript of a letter from another source, details of which are given in the copy held here in England, though other copies may exist elsewhere.

Letter from Judge Khandalavaka to Annie Besant, stated to be from Brooke's 'Neo-Theosophy Exposed,' page 442.

"Mr Khandalavaka was late Special Judge, Poona, and E.S. member, and member of Mrs Besant's Theosophical Educational Trust."

"Copy of Exhibit in C.C. No. 1778 of 1913, Poona, 23rd Aug. 1906.

"Dear Sister Annie,

"After reading your E.S.T. letter regarding Mr. Leadbeater I have thought fit to write to you, as it appears to me that the well-being of the T. S. must seriously be taken to now.

"The whole of L.'s attitude seems to indicate that he believed the foul practice was permissible in Occultism and that his Master would not object to it. (You say that 'in fact excitement and misuse of the sexual organs is one way of stimulating astral powers and is largely used in schools of pseudo-occultism.')

Is this statement correct?

Who is there who can say he has personal knowledge that a particular person took to exciting and misusing the sexual organs and thereby acquired astral powers? We are too apt to make these statements too lightly. It is hardly correct again to speak of pseudo-occult schools and that they largely take to sexual practices for gaining occult powers.

"(You have put it before the E.S.T. members that excitement and misuse of the sexual organs leads to acquirement of astral powers.)

"There are good, bad and indifferent members, and the sexual instinct once getting the upper hand in some members, your statement may be taken hold of and the practice resorted to, to have some inkling at least of astral powers.

"(In trying to answer an awkward question you have made the statement that Leadbeater may have acquired astral powers only.)

"He, however, cannot be said to possess merely astral powers. He has written a regular manual on the Devachanic Plane, and in other books of his, and speeches and pamphlets, he has spoken and written about the higher planes in great detail."

[End of Document]

Uploaded (from a photocopy) by Alan Bain, June 1996.

PART 6

This is the first of a number of letters written by Helen I. Dennis. This transcript is taken from a carbon copy in the recently discovered archive in England.

Chicago, March 8th, 1906.

Dear Mrs. Besant: -

The enclosed speaks for itself and gives proof, if any further proof were needed, of what Mr. Leadbeater is teaching the youths entrusted to his care.

Yours truly,

(Signed) Helen I. Dennis.

The following is an exact copy of a note sent to the third boy by Mr. Leadbeater. He is one of the boys who travelled with Mr. Leadbeater for months. It was accidentally discovered by the housekeeper of the house in which the family lived while in -----, among some rubbish which they had left behind them.

The housekeeper is an F.T.S., and a practical Scotch woman who never throws anything into the fire without first looking at it and thus she found it. ----- has been the home of the family for sometime and it is the home to which the third boy went when his travels with Mr. Leadbeater were ended. They now live in -----.

The mother had told this housekeeper that Mr. L. had given the third boy some exercise for the private, that would kill out all desire for women and marriage. The mother did not know just what it was, only that he did it in the morning while at his bath. It seems that the third boy told the family doctor what he was doing, and he must have written to Mr. L. about it and received the following reply.

PRIVATE. "You made a mistake in mentioning that matter to the doctor; these things should be kept entirely to ourselves, and it may lead to much undesirable talk. I told you long ago that there were different opinions as to the best way to manage these things, and your doctor evidently holds a strongly opposite view. Still, there may be this much reason in what he says, that while you are not quite well we should spend no force that can be avoided. You will remember that when we met in ----- I suggested longer intervals until you were completely recovered.

Suppose you leave him entirely alone until the end of the year, and then report to me whether he has been troublesome in any way. Let us see how long he can conveniently go, for we certainly do not want any drain on the system, as you say. But keep your thoughts entirely away from all subjects that might excite him, and if he is persistent, put him into cold water."

I certainly expected a cable from her after the receipt of this letter, announcing the reversal of her decision, such as came later in June, but instead I received following, merely repeating her decision of Feb. 26th.

Helen I. Dennis

April 18, 1906.

"I have your other note, and as I understand very well the object and nature of what was said to the boys, I can only repeat that I dissent from the method, but believe, am sure, the object was to save from profligacy or excess of any kind."

(Signed) Annie Besant.

PART 7

This is from a carbon copy of a transcript of an original letter from Helen I. Dennis. Punctuation and variations between British and American English usage are as in the copy before me.

- A. B.

New York, N.Y., April 9th. 1906.

My Dear Mrs. Besant: -

Your letter of Feby. 26th. 1906 in reply to my letter of Jan. 25th., preferring charges against Mr. Leadbeater, of teaching secret practices to boys, has been received. I at once came to New York to consult with Mr. Fullerton and other E. S. and T. S. Officials, before framing my inevitable reply.

It is with deepest regret that I must write to you that your answer is most unsatisfactory to me and to the other signatories of the letter of Jany. 25th.

Perhaps you can imagine the inner conflict I have endured before writing the following letter, which stands for my conscience of right.

Your belief that Mr. L. teaches these theories only "in rare cases" to boys in trouble, is proved incorrect by the letter to Mr. Fullerton, in which Mr. L. himself explains making "One experiment" on a thirteen year old child, at that time immature even for his years and who did not reach puberty until three years later.

Up to the present time, it is known that four boys under the age of fourteen have been taught and one has been committed to a sanitarium for treatment of epilepsy which his physician claims to have been the result of self abuse.

Your claim that Mr. L. had agreed to discontinue these practices is tacitly refuted by his complete silence on this point in his letter to Mr. Fullerton, and by his own attitude of defence of the merits of his theory.

My argument and protest to you is therefore based on the ground of Mr. L's defence of the theory. I must protest that Theosophy is diametrically opposed to such a theory and that its

ethics cannot tolerate the deception, hypocrisy and treachery practiced on the parents of these boys.

In common honesty, he should have made known his theory to the parents, instead of inculcating ideas of concealment from them. A fourth boy when questioned, replied that he must get permission from Mr. L. before he could answer. He stated that he had been told by Mr. L. that he must not attempt to explain it to his parents as he would not be able to make them understand the theory. At present writing his mother can learn nothing further.

Equally in common honesty, those who follow Mr. L. as an occult leader, should know what he advocates, that all may decide for themselves, whether or not they will elect to follow and lend him their moral support.

That the crime of which Mr. L. stands self confessed can sanely be argued upon from the basis of "good motive" seems incredible. Such sex practices proposed as a substitute for and an improvement upon the marriage relation, strike at the very root of the physical welfare of the humans race and inevitably result in mental and moral degradation.

We who appeal to you as the head of the E. S. T. can but stand appalled at what seems to be your attitude of condoning this offence, by your public support, even though you disclaim approval of it.

It is an offence which would be recognized as a moral cancer in any worldly organization, and which would render one guilty of it, an outcast and an exile even in the secular professions or in any educational institution in America, and we hope and believe, anywhere in the civilized world.

When we learn that he has been licensed to stand before the world for twelve or fifteen years, with these persistent rumors stalking at his side, in Ceylon, in India, and in Europe, what can we understand?

When for all these years, he has allowed you to believe these rumors false and permitted you to hold him up before the world as a worthy exponent of Theosophical teachings of purity; when in the face of the facts that within the past few months, in answer to a petition, from India, that you depose him his place at your side, he even allowed your name to be used as a shield in an article in the February 1906 Theosophist, signed by Colonel Olcott, to the effect that these rumors were slanders and the vile imaginings of "Hysteriacs;" when this deliberate deception has been carried on for years; when finally actual proof reaches you from America, that these slanders are living, breathing, corrupting facts, and you reply to me that you "know that his motives are good and pure," what can we think? What *are* good motives?

In the words of our beloved and honoured General Secretary, Mr. Fullerton, "we could weep tears of blood."

But should we as officials deal with the motives or the facts? Is the point at issue one of personal friendship or one of official honor and support? Should not the E. S. and the T. S. be, like Caesar's wife, above reproach and especially on the sex question?

By the code of even common worldly ethics, we had the right to confidently expect, that without an instant's delay, you would retire him into complete obscurity, thus taking the first step towards purging the Theosophical Society from within.

If such action would result from a purely worldly standpoint of ethics how much more should we rightly expect this evidence of purity in the Head of an Occult School?

A body which does not purge itself from within cannot live. It must ultimately decay or be shattered by attacks from without.

I can only repeat that I protest and protest again that on this matter of honor and purity, I can accept no compromise, nor can I lend myself to the deception of E.S. and T.S. members that my standing silent would imply.

I have therefore laid the matter before Mr. Fullerton, the General Secretary, and the Executive Committee of the American Section, so that, that phase of the case has passed out of my hands.

The chaotic condition of mind, of an ever increasing number of members and officers of the E.S., as this knowledge is rapidly spreading, makes an organised unity of the School ever more and more remote, and in order to avoid the sham and pretense on my part it is necessary to do otherwise, I am therefore temporarily suspending certain activities of the School, such as admission of members, the issuance of documents, etc.

It is also my intention to suspend certain group activities wherever in my judgment it becomes necessary because of the development of circumstances and pending receipt of further instructions from you.

Deeply as I regret having to write such a letter as this, far more deeply do I deplore the circumstances that have made its writing necessary in the name of common honesty and purity.

(Signed) Helen I. Dennis.

PART 8

This text is from a carbon copy of a transcript written initially to Helen I. Dennis in America from Annie Besant. Details follow:

Shanti Kunja
Benares City
May 10th, 1906.

My Dear Mrs. Dennis: ---

I am very grieved to read your letter.

You ask me what you are to think as to my position. This: I know Mr. Leadbeater to be a disciple of Master K; I have constantly met him out of the body, and seen him with the Masters, and trusted with their work. I know that if he were evil minded this could not be. I cannot therefore join in hounding him out of the T.S. in which he has been one of our best workers.

Further, I know how much terrible evil exists among young men, and the desperate straits in which they find themselves. To deal with these evils falls to the lot of many a clergyman, parent, and teacher, and I cannot pour unlimited condemnation on an attempt to deal with them.

My own publication of the Knowlton pamphlet was a mistake; but it was made with good intent. The Masters saw the motive, and cared not for the blunder, and what I did carried me to discipleship.

You speak of a petition made to me in India, to remove him from my side. It is the first I have heard of it; there has been no such petition. I looked up the Feb. Theosophist, which I had not read; I do not think the Colonel used my name to shield Mr. Leadbeater, and he speaks of attacks on himself.

The T. S. and E. S. cannot be "above reproach" in your sense. The Coulomb attack of H.P.B. was made in the name of high morality and discredited the T.S. But it had to bear it. The forgery of Judge discredited the T.S. but we had to bear it, till Judge himself broke away; he was not expelled. These trials come from time to time.

Doubtless from the worldly point of view I should save trouble by deserting Mr. Leadbeater, but I do not see that to be my duty.

As he is now publicly attacked, I have advised him to resign, and to appeal to Colonel Olcott to investigate the charges, and to decide the matter, and he to suspend his work meanwhile, The decision rightly lies with the President.

As to the American E.S., all its activities must be suspended.

It is sad that you have so been so hasty, instead of keeping silence till the T. S. President and Executive Council had had the charges laid before them. Nothing would have been lost by taking the more dignified and constitutional line, and much public trouble would have been avoided. I am surprised that Mr. Fullerton, who owes Mr. Leadbeater so much, has not acted with less precipitancy.

Sincerely yours,

(Signed) Annie Besant.

PART 9

Transcript of a letter from Helen Dennis, Corresponding Secretary of the Esoteric School of Theosophy in America, to a Miss Gosse in England.

Mrs. Helen I. Dennis
218 E. 60th St.
Chicago.

June 4th 1906.

Dear Miss Gosse,

You can imagine my joy in receiving your letter. - This is the reason I have been unable to write decent letters this winter. Since last November when I learned the first "incredible" facts I have tried to do what was right without undue publicity and with some blunders of course as the result.

That I have walked the floor literally by the hour with a veritable bleeding heart goes without saying. I of course laid the whole matter *first* before Mrs. Besant and the bitterest drop in my cup was, after weeks of waiting, to receive on Mch 26th or 27th I forget which - a letter from my beloved and revered teacher - actually asking me to cover up this crime and go on as though nothing had happened.

And now I am accused of hasty action! Well nothing matters now that the T.S. officials have vindicated the cause of truth and purity - I am resigning my office as Corr Secy and the letter of announcement is in the hands of the printer - to be sent to the members. I shall send you a copy when out.

You must not think I have done this thing alone - No, I have a husband first - who has stood nobly by me and advised every step. Mr. Fullerton, Mr. Knothe - Mrs & Mrs Chidester, all the Sec'y of Discipline - Editor of Messenger - every official whom I have had to inform stands as one and are ready to stand the disgrace of the thing for the sake of the Society.

I am so glad you are with me. I felt sure you would be altho' I felt that it would be an official discourtesy to your E.S. superiors if I wrote of it to you - before they were ready to tell you

officially. I have tried to tell only those where it was absolutely necessary in the cause of official honor & the welfare of the Society. I grasp your hand across the Sea and through eternity in the name of truthful friendship.

I cannot get over Mrs. Besant's attitude - It has shaken my faith in her wisdom - though I will not let it be shaken as to her sincerity - Blinded by *what* delusion, do you suppose, she is doing this awful thing? Well I must close - things are in a bad way here. Mr. C. Jinarajadasa has made a bad matter much worse than it need have been by so called defence of Mr L and Mrs B which is taking a most jesuitical turn.

Yours Lovingly,

Helen I. Dennis.

PART 10

A letter to Miss Joan Amice Bottrell-Gosse in England.

This significant letter, transcribed from the original, shows the great sadness and despair that the CWL Affair in 1906 had upon not just the members of the T. S. in America, but also in the E. S. of the day. In copying it to this medium, I have been overwhelmed by the misery which rises from the pages of 90 years ago. I was asked recently if posting this material makes me happy. The answer is that it makes me very sad. Very sad indeed. Read on...

A. B.

Esoteric School of Theosophy
American Division.

Corresponding Secretary
Mrs. Helen I. Dennis
218 East 60th St.
Chicago

Assistant Secretary
Mrs. Elizabeth M. Chidester, M.D.
2321 Madison Square
Philadelphia

November 25th '06

Dear Friend,

I have been half ill and postponed writing from many causes. As to the E.S. - only sadness is there to write about. The seven highest officials - Dr. C, the five Secy of D and I have resigned our offices because of Mrs. Besant's attitude and record. How *can* the School be *truly* occult?

As a means of mutual study and mutual improvement of great use to all - but as an Esoteric or Occult body - truly where are we? I cannot go into details - it is all too dreadful to us all. The School in America is suspended awaiting her appointment of my successor and our members are nonplussed by the uncovering of the crimes of X - supported as an Initiate and direct Messenger of the White Lodge for years.

One does not need to pry into a man's past history to see that he has a dirty face - as it would seem that those claiming occult leadership should have seen such an aura without clairvoyantly prying into a man's life. Our members are naturally wondering, confused and losing confidence. The Inner Circle in the opinion of all who have resigned has no excuse for being - we regard it just as you do & cannot give our moral support to such building up of a purely personal following in an Occult body supposed to have a true basis of spiritual realities.

Altogether it is impossible! Never was I so sure of the truths of theosophy & I have learned much in the past year's suffering. I do not believe that Masters work with certain methods & I do believe they are & always *will* use certain other methods. The latter I shall try to follow by aid of my own conscience & intuition. The T. S. can use all the time and energy I can give and I shall do what I can in that.

And dark days are ahead of us in that with Mr. L. claiming that he *is* an instrument of the Masters - and not a few in this country believe it and are defending him and his theories by claiming that we have grossly misrepresented his teachings. Well we are fast becoming a house divided against itself. Have you a similar party in the T.S. in England?

Do you see "Jack London's" serial story - "Before Adam"? I am sending the first installment and will send the others if you care to see them. Perhaps it is also coming out in England also [sic]. It is widely read here.

Just now a play a comedy is on the stage called "The Road to Yesterday" dealing with "Reincarnation" - the first scene is 1903 in London - the second and third back to 1603 & the fourth and last return to 1903 again. The characters of 1603 in old England are the same as those in 1903 - reborn in 1903 & the karma between them is quite skillfully worked out. - Has it appeared in London? We are having Walls of Jericho Leah Heschua [?] & that one with the twins in too - in America. Well this world is full of interest and there is so much to do. I will write more at length later. There are many social and family duties just now that seem to have been suddenly let loose upon me. I am always so glad to hear from you and the necklace I wear often. My love to Mrs. Betts - Ever your friend

Helen I. Dennis.

[There follows a further sheet with a postscript. This in on another sheet of headed notepaper which gives, on the top right, the following information:

"Secretaries of Discipline

"Christian Gnostic, John H. Knapp, Room 1031 State Mutual Bldg. Boston, Mass.

"Philosophic, Walter G. Greenleaf, 49 East Kinzie Street, Chicago.

"Pythagorean, William K. James, 805 Faraon Street, St. Joseph, Mo.

"Raja Yoga, Mrs. Grace Shaw Duff, 87 Riverside Drive, New York City.

"General, Mrs. Mary Shibley Cole, M.D. Richmond, Ill."]

[The postscript follows]:

P.S. I forgot to reply to you about the Inner School in connection with CWL. - There is no connection whatever. - The printed letter reached England before Mrs. Besant had the slightest inkling of the facts about Mr. L - in fact the summer I was in England I knew that the new Inner School was to be formed but I knew nothing of the nature of it.

She was considering the matter then spoke of it to a few - as to what would be the conditions of it etc. These facts I know and there was not the least possible connection between the formation of it & CWL's acts. Needless to say none of us Americans ever heard or thought of a remote hint of X's doings when I was in London that summer.

Never had I heard the faintest rumor until after my return - when I learned that they had been rife here under the surface for several years, having come from Ceylon.

No I have not read Hitchen's new book - will try to later when I am rested enough to read and all E.S. official duties are ended - I know of Stanley Hall's ideas - have heard him here of course.

I am glad you enjoy the book for notes - I found these invaluable for E.S. records too. My love to Mrs. Betts - and may the coming year be a happier one theosophically than the last one has been. Yes I should of course be interested in your study scheme - I gave your letter to F.T.S. here.

As ever

H. D.

[A note on the reverse of the letter, written after it had been folded]:

"Yes I have been told that English people & Americans addressed their letters differently - but I did not realize about it - glad you called my attention to it. - Would Miss Ward for instance object to being written as Miss Edith Ward?"

[Editorial note. In places it is difficult to tell from Mrs. Dennis' handwriting whether a full stop/period is intended or a dash. I have tried to render these according to the sense of the letter. - A. B.]

EDITORIAL REMARKS

Source: Postings of Alan Bain from June, 9th to June, 30th 1996 in the former internet group „theos-L Email List“.

The present pdf version of 2022 is verbatim with changes in the layout (paragraphs and restoration of highlights and tables that were omitted in the ASCII version for technical reasons), as well as some obvious transcription errors such as "ha1f" instead of "half" or "hut" instead of "but".

Additional information

[Besant-Leadbeater - Other Letters](#)

The 29 letters below are excerpted from pp. 109-197 of the following book:

Evolution of Mrs. Besant. Being the life and public activities of Mrs. Annie Besant, secularist, socialist, theosophist and politician. With sidelights on the inner workings of the Theosophical Society and the methods by which Mr. Leadbeater arrived at the threshold of divinity by The Editor of Justice, Madras, 1918.

The Case against C. W. Leadbeater

<https://blavatskytheosophy.com/the-case-against-c-w-leadbeater/>

DAWN Magazine

<http://theosophy.katinkahesselink.net/dawn/index.html>

“Corrupted Theosophy”

<https://cwleadbeater.wordpress.com/2016/12/22/corrupted-theosophy/>

Frank Reitemeyer

<https://theosarchive.com>