

An Important Statement by Mr. J. M. Pryse*

In justice to Mr. Mead and Mrs. Besant, whom I count as friends (even though, good-naturedly differing with them, I have a poor opinion of the Gnostics and do not look for the coming of any world-savior) I wish to state, from my personal knowledge, that the oft-repeated charges that they, or either of them, made unwarranted changes in the revised (third) edition of the S. D., tampered with the manuscript of the third volume, and suppressed the fourth volume, are wholly false, with no foundation whatever in fact.

When the T. S. split into irreconcilable factions I resigned from it. I am not a member of the Society, or of any other Society. For that reason, and also because the term Theosophy now connotes many doctrines and doings of which I disapprove, I do not call myself a Theosophist, and do not use the word Theosophy in my writings.

I follow as faithfully as I can the teachings of H. P. B., and am not concerned with the beliefs and activities, the bickerings and animosities, of the theosophical factions, to which, in fact, I have for many years paid very little attention. But among the many fantastic legends and foolish fables that have sprung up since the disruption of the T. S. is this malicious accusation brought against Mrs. Besant and Mr. Mead, which it would be wrong for me to ignore: for, as I was for four years in the London headquarters, had charge of the printing office, and printed the revised S. D., I naturally had every opportunity to know the facts; whereas this absurd accusation is the fabrication of semi-theosophists who hung on the fringe of the Society, and is being circulated by pseudo-theosophists who were never in any way connected with the original T. S., and who quite evidently have not absorbed its philosophy and ethical principles.

The first printing of the S. D. was divided into two "editions," which are therefore identical save for the words "second edition" on the title-page. The printing was done from the type, but stereotype matrices were made in case another should be called for. When that time came, however, we found that the matrices had been accidentally destroyed; and I, for one, was decidedly pleased at their loss, since it made opportune a much needed revision of the text, which arduous labor was undertaken by Mr. Mead and Mrs. Besant. Joyfully I placed copies of the S. D. in the paper-cutter, trimmed off the edges, and had assistants paste the pages on large sheets of writing-paper, to afford wide margins for making corrections. As Mrs. Besant could spare but little time from her other theosophical activities, the work of revision was done mostly by Mr. Mead, who was assisted by other members of the staff in verifying quotations and references.

Up to the time of her death H. P. B. regularly passed on to Mr. Mead the articles she wrote for her magazine, for him to correct and revise the manuscripts before sending them to the printer, and therefore he was certainly better qualified than any one else to do the same with her writ-

ings that had been published before she had benefited by his painstaking assistance.

In revising the first edition of the S. D. he did precisely the work which he had formerly done on those manuscripts—only that, and nothing more. For it was obvious to anyone familiar with the literary and mechanical details of book-publishing that the manuscript of the S. D. had not been properly prepared for the printer, and that the proof-reading had been so carelessly done that even glaring grammatical errors, inadvertently made by the author, had been allowed to stand. No changes were made by Mr. Mead or by Mrs. Besant except such as should have been made in the original manuscript before printing.

For his scholarly and conscientious work in making the revision Mr. Mead deserves the gratitude of all discriminating readers of the S. D., as does Mrs. Besant also for her share in the arduous task.

When I had finished printing vols. I. and II. Mrs. Besant placed the manuscript of vol. III. in my hands. After reading it, I gave it to my brother John to make a typewritten copy, which he did. It was in an unfinished state, and badly arranged. H. P. B. had rewritten some of the pages several times, with erasures and changes, but with nothing to indicate which copy was the final revision; Mrs. Besant had to decide that as best she might.

As it contained far less matter than either of the other volumes, Mrs. Besant told me that she would pad it out by adding the E. S. T. Instructions, since H. P. B. had told her she might do so. These Instructions, it will be noticed, cover the very ground of the proposed vol. IV., of which only a few pages were found, merely enough to mark where H. P. B. had discontinued writing. I am inclined to believe that she intended to incorporate these Instructions in vol. IV., and that she had this in mind when she wrote, too optimistically, that the last two volumes were "almost completed." A big pile of manuscript also was found after H. P. B.'s death, but it proved to be only the old manuscript of vols. I. and II., returned by the printer.

Living as I did for four years in the family group at the London headquarters over which Mrs. Besant presided, and knowing that both she and Mr. Mead, during all those years, were devoted followers of H. P. B., sincere, honorable, truthful and conscientious, I cannot leave uncontradicted the mendacious statements and insinuations that they, my old comrades, mutilated, corrupted, suppressed or made any dishonest use of the writings left by their teacher, H. P. B.

Yours fraternally,

James Morgan Pryse.

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