

OLD DIARY LEAVES

Second Series

THE
TRUE HISTORY
OF THE
THEOSOPHICAL
..... SOCIETY

OLCOTT

OLD DIARY LEAVES.



ANCIENT RUINED TEMPLE PORTAL, ADYAR.

[*Frontispiece.*]

OLD DIARY LEAVES

THE ONLY AUTHENTIC HISTORY OF
THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

SECOND SERIES, 1878-83

BY

HENRY STEEL OLCOTT

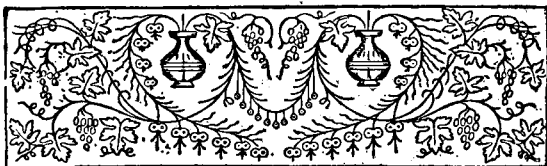
PRESIDENT-FOUNDER OF THE SOCIETY

... Nothing extenuate,
Nor set down aught in malice."

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INTRODUCTION

THE Diary from which the present series of chapters has been compiled was opened in January 1878, three years after the formation of the Theosophical Society at New York, by the late Madame Blavatsky, myself, and a few others, and has been systematically kept up ever since. Under the title, "Old Diary Leaves: The True History of the Theosophical Society," a volume, with illustrations, was published in the year 1895, by Messrs. G. P. Putnam & Sons (London and New York), which has had a wide circulation. It covered the period from the first meeting of my great colleague and myself in the year 1874, down to the sailing of our party from New York for Bombay in December 1878. The thread of our narrative, now taken up, leads us from that point onward to the autumn of 1883, embracing the novel and exciting incidents of the establishment of our movement in India and Ceylon, from which such momentous results have followed. No important event has been omitted, no falsification of the record resorted to. Other volumes will be issued from time to time should there be a demand. I am proud of the fact that, although these memoirs have been appearing monthly in the *Theosophist* since March 1892, and

have been read by hundreds of living witnesses to the events cited, my veracity has not once been challenged, and but one slight inaccuracy pointed out. The growth of the Society has been as steady within the past four years as it had been up to the time of the publication of the first volume of these memoirs, the number of new branch charters issued having been 148, and the total, from the beginning up to the close of last year (1898), 592, as against 394 up to the close of the year 1894. These Branches are now grouped within eight administrative sections, whose head-offices are respectively at Benares, London, Paris, Amsterdam, Stockholm, New York, Sydney, and Auckland (N.Z.). The General Headquarters of the whole Society and the President-Founder's official residence are at Madras, Madras. The work, therefore, already covers the greater part of the civilized world, while its literature finds its way over an even wider area, being read in the camps of miners and explorers, the huts of pioneers, and the cabins of ships sailing in all seas.

So world-covering a movement and so strongly based a Society is entitled to be taken seriously by men who think, and, since the Diary of one of its two chief founders gives the data for a truthful history of its rise and progress, and he, the survivor, alone knows all the facts, it seems to be his clear duty to write it while his memory is still strong and his strength unimpaired.

One motive which prompted me to begin was that I might leave behind me, for the use of the future historian, as accurate a sketch as possible of that great personality-

puzzle, Helena Petrowna Blavatsky, co-founder of the Theosophical Society. I declare upon honor that I have not written one word about her or her doings, save in the spirit of loyalty to her memory and to truth. I have not written a line in malice. I knew her as companion, friend, co-worker, equal—on the plane of personality; all her other colleagues stood with her in the relation of pupil to teacher, or as casual friends, or passing acquaintances, or mere correspondents. None knew her so intimately as I, for none save me saw her in all her many changings of mood, mind, and personal characteristics. The human Helena Petrowna, with her unchanged Russian nature; the Madame Blavatsky, fresh from the Bohemian circles of Paris; and the “Madame Laura,”—the bays and bouquets of whose concert tours of 1872-3 as a pianist, in Italy, Russia, and elsewhere, were not long wilted when she came to New York through Paris,—were as well known to me as, later on, became the “H. P. B.” of Theosophy. Knowing her, therefore, so well, she was not to me what she was to many others—all goddess, immaculate, infallible, co-equal with the Masters of Wisdom; but a wondrous woman, made the channel for great teachings, the agent for the doing of a mighty work. Just because I did know her so much better than most others, she was a greater mystery to me than to them. It was easy for those who only saw her speaking oracles, writing profound aphorisms, or giving clue after clue to the hidden wisdom in the ancient scriptures, to regard her as an Earth-visiting *angelos* and to worship at her

feet; she was no mystery to them. But to me, her most intimate colleague, who had to deal with the vulgar details of her common daily life, and see her in all her aspects, she was from the first and continued to the end an insoluble riddle. How much of her waking life was that of a responsible personality, how much that of a body worked by an overshadowing entity? I do not know. On the hypothesis that she was a medium for the Great Teachers, only that and nothing more, then the riddle is easy to read; for then one can account for the alterations in mind, character, tastes, and predilections which have been touched upon in previous chapters; then the H. P. B. of the latter days fits on to the Helena Petrowna of New York, Paris, Italy, and all other countries and epochs. And what does the following passage (written in my Diary by her hand on the page for 6th December 1878) mean, if not that? It says: "*We* got cold again, I think. Oh, unfortunate, empty, rotten old body!" Was this "empty" body empty of its proper tenant? If not, why should the phrase have been written with her hand in a variant of her proper handwriting? We shall never get at the truth. If I recur again and again to the problem, it is because the deeper I go into these incidents of the past, the more exciting and baffling grows the mystery. So let us pass on once more and rejoin the pilgrims at New York, in the cabin of the good steamer "Canada," of the National Line, bound for London in the bitter month of December.



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