THE

"OCCULT WORLD PHENOMENA,"

AND

THE SOCIETY FOR PSYCHICAL RESEARCH.

BY

A. P. SINNETT,

Author of "The Occult World," "Esoteric Buddhism," &c.

WITH

A PROTEST

BY

MADAME BLAVATSKY.

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THE "OCCULT WORLD PHENOMENA."

THE Report which has been addressed by Mr. R. Hodgson to the Committee of the Psychical Research Society, "appointed to investigate phenomena connected with the Theosophical Society," is published for the first time in the December number of the Proceedings of that Society,—six months after the meetings were held at which the Committee concerned announced its general adhesion to the conclusions Mr. Hodgson had reached. In a letter addressed to *Light* on the 12th of October, I protested against the action thus taken by the Psychical Research Society in publicly stigmatising Mme. Blavatsky as having been guilty of "a long-continued combination with other persons to produce, by ordinary means, a series of apparent marvels for the support of the Theosophic movement," while holding back the documentary evidence on the strength of which their opinion had been formed.

In a note to the present Report (page 276) Mr. Hodgson says: "I have now in my hands numerous documents which are concerned with the experiences of Mr. Hume and others in connection with Mme. Blavatsky and the Theosophical Society. These documents, including the K. H. MSS. above referred to, did not reach me till August, and my examination of them, particularly of the K. H. MSS., has involved

a considerable delay in the production of this Report." In other words, Mr. Hodgson has employed the time during which his Report has been improperly withheld in endeavouring to amend and strengthen it so as to render it better able to bear out the committee's hasty endorsement of the conclusions he reached before he obtained the evidence he now puts forward.

But even if the committee had been in possession—which it was not—of the Report as it now stands, its action in promulgating the conclusions it announced on the 24th of June, would have been no less unwarrantable and premature. The committee has not at any stage of its proceedings behaved in accordance with the judicial character it has arrogated to itself. It appointed as its agent to inquire, in India, into the authenticity of statements relating to occurrences extending over several years—alleged to have taken place at various parts of India, and in which many persons, including natives of India and devotees of occult science in that country were mixed up—a gentleman of great, of perhaps too great, confidence in his own abilities, but, at all events, wholly unfamiliar with the characteristics of Indian life and the complicated play of feeling in connection with which the Theosophical movement has been developed in India during recent years.

Nothing in his Report, even as it now stands—amended with the protracted assistance of more experienced persons unfriendly to the Theosophical movement—suggests that even yet he has begun to understand the primary conditions of the mysteries he set himself to unravel. He has naïvely supposed

that every one in India visibly devoted to the work of the Theosophical Society might be assumed, on that account, desirous of securing his good opinion and of persuading him that the alleged phenomena were genuine. He shows himself to have been watching their demeanour and stray phrases to catch admissions that might be turned against the Theosophical case. He seems never to have suspected what any more experienced inquirer would have been aware of from the beginning, that the Theosophical movement, in so far as it has been concerned with making known to the world at large the existence in India of persons called Mahatmas—very far advanced in the comprehension of occult science—and of the philosophical views they hold, has been one which many of the native devotees of these Mahatmas and many among the most ardent disciples and students of their occult teaching, have regarded with profound irritation.

The traditional attitude of mind in which Indian occultists regard their treasures of knowledge, is one in which devotion is largely tinged with jealousy of all who would endeavour to penetrate the secrecy in which these treasures have hitherto been shrouded. These have been regarded as only the rightful acquirement of persons passing through the usual ordeals and probations. The Theosophical movement in India, however, involved a breach of this secrecy. The old rules were infringed under an authority so great that occultists who found themselves entangled with the work could not but submit. But in many cases such submission has been no more than superficial. Any

one more intimately acquainted, than the agent of the S. P. R., with the history and growth of the Theosophical Society would have been able to indicate many persons among its most faithful native members, whose fidelity was owing entirely to the Masters they served, and not to the idea on which they were employed—at all events not so far as it was connected with the demonstration of the fact that abnormal physical phenomena could be produced by Indian proficients in occult science.

Now for such persons the notion that European outsiders, who had, as they conceived, so undeservedly been admitted to the inner arcana of Eastern occultism, were blundering into the belief that they had been deceived,—that there was no such thing as Indian occultism, that the Theosophical movement was a sham and a delusion with which they would no more concern themselves—was enchanting in its attractions; and the arrivals in their midst of an exceedingly self-reliant young man from England attempting the investigation of occult mysteries by the methods of a Scotland Yard detective, and laid open by total unfamiliarity with the tone and temper of modern occultism to every sort of misapprehension, was naturally to them a source of intense satisfaction. Does the committee of the S. P. R. imagine that the native occultists of the Theosophical Society in India are writhing at this moment under the judgment it has passed? I am quite certain, on the contrary, that for the most part they are chuckling over it with delight. They may find the situation complicated as regards their relations with their Masters in so far as

they have consciously contributed to the easy misdirection of Mr. Hodgson's mind, but the ludicrous spectacle of himself which Mr. Hodgson furnishes in his Report—where we see him catching up unfinished sentences and pointing out weak places in the evidence of some among the Indian chelas, against whom, if he had better understood the task before him, he ought to have been most on his guard—is, at all events, one which we can understand them to find amusing.

I regard the committee of the S. P. R.—Messrs. E. Gurney, F. W. H. Myers, F. Podmore, H. Sidgwick, and J. H. Stack—much more to blame for presuming to pass judgment by the light of their own unaided reflections on the raw and misleading report supplied to them by Mr. Hodgson, than he for his part is to blame, even for misunderstanding so lamentably the problems he set out naturally ill-qualified to investigate. It would have been easy for them to have called in any of several people in London, qualified to do so by long experience of the Theosophical movement, to report in their turn on the *prima facie* case, so made out against the authenticity of the Theosophical phenomena, before proceeding to pass judgment on the whole accusation in the hearing of the public at large. We have all heard of cases in which judges think it unnecessary to call on the defence; but these have generally been cases in which the judges have decided against the theory of the prosecution. The committee of the S. P. R. furnish us with what is probably an unprecedented example of a judicial refusal to hear a defence on the ground that the *ex parte* statement of the prosecutor has been convincing by itself. The

committee brooded, however, in secret over the report of their agent, consulted no one in a position to open their eyes as to the erroneous method on which Mr. Hodgson had gone to work, and concluded their but too independent investigation by denouncing as one of the most remarkable impostors in history—a lady held in the highest honour by a considerable body of persons, including old friends and relations of unblemished character, and who has undeniably given up station and comfort to struggle for long years in the service of the Theosophical cause amidst obloquy and privation.

She is witnessed against chiefly for Mr. Hodgson, as any one who will read his Report will see, in spite of his affected indifference to their testimony, by two persons who endeavour to blacken her character by first exhibiting themselves as engaged in fraud and deception, and by then accusing her of having been base enough to make such people as themselves her confederates. These are the persons whom his Report shows Mr. Hodgson to have made the principal allies of his inquiry. It is on the strength of writings obtained from such persons that the committee of the S. P. R. chiefly proceeds in coming to the conclusion that Mme. Blavatsky is an impostor. And this course is pursued by a body of men who, in reference to Psychical phenomena at large (which the designation of their society would suggest that they are concerned with) decline all testimony, however apparently overwhelming, which comes from spiritualistic mediums tainted by receiving money for the display of their characteristics. I am not suggesting that they ought

to be careless in accepting such testimony, but merely that they have violated the principles they profess—when the repression of unacceptable evidence is at stake—in a case in which, by their disregard, it was possible to frame an indictment against persons—whom I am not justified in assuming that they were prejudiced against from the first, but whom, at all events, they finished by condemning unheard.

And going further than this, they have not hesitated to publish, with all the authority their proceedings can confer, a groundless and monstrous invention concerning Mme. Blavatsky, which Mr. Hodgson puts forward at the conclusion of his report to prop up its obvious weakness as regards the whole hypothesis on which it rests. For it is evident that there is a powerful presumption against any theory that imputes conscious imposture and vulgar trickery to a person who, on the face of things, has devoted her life to a philanthropic idea, at the manifest sacrifice of all the considerations which generally supply motives of action to mankind. Mr. Hodgson is alive to the necessity of furnishing Mme. Blavatsky with a motive as degraded as the conduct he has been taught by M. and Mme. Coulomb to believe her guilty of, and he triumphs over the difficulty by suggesting that she may be a Russian political agent, working in India to foster disloyalty to the British Government. It is nothing to Mr. Hodgson that she has notoriously been doing the reverse; that she has frequently assured the natives orally, by writings, at public meetings, and in letters that can be produced, that with all its faults the British Government is the best available for India, and repeatedly

from the point of view of one speaking *en connaisance de cause* she has declared that the Russian, would be immeasurably worse. It is nothing to Mr. Hodgson that her life has been passed *coram populo* to an almost ludicrous extent ever since she has been in India, that her whole energies and work have been employed on the Theosophic cause, or that the Government of India, after looking into the matter with the help of its police when she first came to the country, soon read the riddle aright, and abandoned all suspicion of her motives. Mr. Hodgson is careless of the fact that every one who has known her for any length of time laughs at the absurdity of his hypothesis. He has obtained from his guide and counsellor—Mme. Coulomb—a fragment of Mme. Blavatsky's handwriting, picked up, it would seem, some years ago, and cherished for any use that might ultimately be made of it—which refers to Russian politics, and reads like part of an argument in favour of the Russian advance in Central Asia. This is enough for the Psychical Researcher, and the text of this document appears in his Report in support of his scandalous insinuation against Mme. Blavatsky's integrity. The simple explanation of the paper is, that it is evidently a discarded fragment from a long translation of Colonel Grodekoff's Travels in Central Asia (or whatever title the series bore) which Mme. Blavatsky made at my request for the *Pioneer* (the Indian Government organ), of which I was at that time Editor. I will not delay this pamphlet to write to India and get the dates at which the Grodekoff series of articles appeared in the *Pioneer*. They ran for some weeks,

and must have appeared in one of the latter years of the last decade, or possibly in 1880. By applying to the *Pioneer* printers, Mr. Hodgson could perhaps obtain, if the MS. of this translation has been preserved, several hundred pages of Mme. Blavatsky's writing, blazing with sentiments of the most ardent Anglo-phobia. It is most likely, as I say, that the pilfered slip of which he is so proud, was some rejected page from that translation, unless, indeed, which would be more amusing still, it should happen to have fallen from some other Russian translations which Mme. Blavatsky, to my certain knowledge, once made for the Indian Foreign Office during one of her visits to Simla, when she made the acquaintance of some of the officials in that department, and was employed to do some work in its service.

I venture to think that if Mme. Blavatsky had not been known to be too ill-supplied with money to claim redress at the costly bar of British justice—if she had *not* been steeped to the lips in the flavour, so ungrateful to British law courts, of Psychic mystery, the committee of the S. P. R. would hardly have thought it well to accuse her, in a published document, of infamous conduct, which, if she were really guilty of it, would render her a public foe in the land of her adoption and an object of scorn to honourable men—at the flippant suggestion of their private agent in desperate need of an explanation for conclusions which no amount of pedantically ordered circumstances could render, without it, otherwise than incredible.

II.

I now pass on to examine in detail that portion of Mr. Hodgson's Report which affects to criticise my own narrative of phenomena recorded in the *Occult World*. I shall neither weary the reader nor myself by expanding this pamphlet into a detailed reply to the whole catalogue of minute conjectures which Mr. Hodgson has put together in his Report while abusing the hospitality which was extended to him at the head-quarters of the Theosophical Society at Adyar, and while leading the guileless representatives of the movement in Madras to suppose, that by opening their hearts and records to his inspection, by giving him the freest access to their apartments and their diaries, they would best persuade him of the simple truthfulness of their lives and the improbability that they were slaving amidst penury and self-sacrifice for the propagation of an empty delusion and the cruel deception of their best friends. It will be enough for my present purpose if I blow out the keystone of the clumsy arch he has constructed; if I show the futility of the attempt he has made to discredit the testimony I have myself given of the occult phenomena that have passed under my own observation. If my record stands, Mr. Hodgson's general theory must fall to the ground. He has recognised this, and has directed a considerable portion of his essay to the criticism of my own book.

He begins by quoting a passage from my "deposition to the committee." A few words of explanation may be given here about this deposition. I had gladly tendered myself for cross-examination by the committee in reference to the story I had told in my published Theosophical writings. The only members of the committee present on the only occasion when it was thought worth while to examine me were Mr. Gurney and Mr. Stack. A shorthand-writer recorded what passed. I do not know whether the testimony I gave has been written out in full. It has, at all events, never to my knowledge been published. I fully recognise that no particular object would be served by its publication, for the committee never seemed to grasp the purpose with which I had conceived that it might be worth while to take my evidence. If there had been any weak points in any part of my story, inquiry directed to these might either have shown that I had not been sufficiently careful in stating my case, or such cross-examination would, in reality, have served to strengthen instead of disturbing it. But the committee had no questions to ask me, and merely wished to know, in a general way, what I had to say. I had taken with me various letters and papers referred to in the *Occult World*. In the absence of any systematic direction by the committee of my examination, I showed some of these, and made some general statements as to the circumstances with which they had been connected, thus necessarily going over some of the ground already trodden in my original narrative. The passage quoted in Mr. Hodgson's report is apparently from such general state-

ment. It relates to an incident described in the *Occult World* (pp. 96-7, 4th edition). I obtained an answer from my Mahatma correspondent written inside a closed note of my own, the point of the whole story being that Mme. Blavatsky, to whom I confided the letter, had never been out of my sight for any appreciable interval from the moment she put my letter in her pocket to the time, a few minutes later, when she gave it me back with the answer written inside the unopened envelope.

In the deposition I appear to have said: "She was out of my sight but for an instant of time . . . . I will undertake to say she was not out of my sight for ten seconds." This account Mr. Hodgson compares with the original account of the transaction which appears in the *Occult World*. He writes:

"In the account given in the *Occult World* Mr. Sinnett undertakes to say only that she had not been away to her own room *thirty seconds*, admitting that she was also out of his sight for a minute or two in Mrs. Sinnett's room. After this I cannot feel certain that Mme. Blavatsky may not have been absent in her own room for considerably more than thirty seconds, nor do I feel certain that Mme. Blavatsky may not have retired to some other room during the interval of a few minutes which Mr. Sinnett assigns to her conversation with Mrs. Sinnett in the adjoining room. Even apart from this uncertainty I cannot attach any importance to the case after finding that, on my second trial, I could open a firmly-closed ordinary adhesive envelope under such conditions as are described by Mr. Sinnett, read the enclosed note and reply to it, the question and the reply being as long as those of Mr. Sinnett, and reclose the envelope, leaving it apparently in the same condition as before, in one minute, and it appears to me quite possible that Mme. Blavatsky, with her probably superior skill and practice, might have easily performed the task in thirty seconds."

If Mr. Hodgson had said something quite different from all this, and if I had wanted to write a ludicrous caricature of some unsound argument he might have employed, it seems to me I could hardly have written anything more grotesque than the passage quoted above. It has been to me a source of inextinguishable wonder that a man exhibiting intelligence in some directions could present himself to the public with an argument like that in his mouth. When, under circumstances when it is quite obvious that one could not have been tracking the moments with a watch, a man speaks of a limited number of seconds, a round number like thirty, it simply means a very short interval of time. Moreover the account as it really stands in the *Occult World* is as follows:

"She put it in her pocket, went into her own room, which opened out of the drawing-room, and came out again *almost instantly*. Certainly she had not been away thirty seconds."

And because on another occasion I tell the same story and say:—

"She was out of my sight but for an instant of time. I will undertake to say she was not out of my sight ten seconds."

Mr. Hodgson has the comical assurance to say that my parallel statements betray discrepancy, and that the accuracy of my testimony therefore stands impugned. And this, in spite of the fact that I drew a sketch at the time of my "deposition" to show the committee how the rooms were actually arranged. The drawing-room and Mme Blavatsky's room were side by side, both opening out of the verandah in which my wife and Mme. Blavatsky were

sitting, when I gave her the letter (not "in the drawing-room," as the committee's notes have inaccurately reported me as saying). Mme. Blavatsky went into her room by one door—all standing open, be it understood, as is usual during the day in the cool weather in India—while I went *via* the drawing-room on my way back to my own writing-room. The door of connection between the drawing-room and Mme Blavatsky's room was but a few feet from the verandah and of the wall. It was at this that Mme. Blavatsky appeared before I had crossed the drawing-room, saying the letter had been already taken. Any one else is in as good a position as I to estimate the number of seconds during which she can have been out of my sight. It was a very small number. Dwelling on the matter it becomes clear that my loose estimate, thirty seconds—equivalent to a very brief interval, and used as an alternative expression to "almost instantly"—was excessive; that ten would certainly be nearer the mark. Counting seconds now—as I write—and imagining myself pacing across that corner of my room at Allahabad, I am disposed to think that five would really be a better estimate again.

Now, Mr. Hodgson actually goes on in his Report to argue that I must be an inaccurate and untrustworthy narrator because of this discrepancy of my evidence about the ten and the thirty seconds. When a man is guilty like this of the *ne plus ultra* of folly in an argument, one does not know what to say to him. One cannot emphasize by illustration the nonsense involved in his contention. Nothing

could be more nonsensical than the contention itself. But it is nevertheless the foundation of the major part of Mr. Hodgson's subsequent theorising about my book. I am an inaccurate man; I must be given up; I have been shown to have told one story at one time and another at another about the same thing, and there is an end of me. And whatever I may say after this, even if the thing itself does not betray error, it is impossible to have confidence in so careless an estimator of seconds. And the picture Mr. Hodgson gives us of himself opening a letter—doubtless with ready appliances of boiling water and all that may be wanted, his monstrous assumption that Mme. Blavatsky has "probably superior skill and practice" at such work—with water, it is to be presumed, always boiling in her pocket, is merely the beginning of the stupendous pyramid of extravagant conjecture which he builds, bottom upwards, upon the famous discrepancy of the seconds; and which men with reputations for intelligence to squander, are, marvellous to say, not ashamed to publish in the Proceedings of the Psychical Research Society.

As for the two or three minutes Mme. Blavatsky spent in my wife's room—from which Mr. Hodgson draws erroneous conclusions he has never checked by frank inquiry—the two rooms were connected by a wide open door, through which Mme. Blavatsky, lounging about and waiting, only passed after my wife had entered her room coming round the other side of the house. Even while in my wife's room she would not have been out of my sight had I risen from my chair and looked round.

The next matter Mr. Hodgson refers to is a case in which I describe a letter as dropped before me in a marvellous way in a room at Bombay. He conjectures that it was dropped through a slit in the boards of the ceiling. Mr Hodgson thinks that, and I think differently, that is all that can be said about the matter, *except* that there is no particle of evidence to support Mr. Hodgson's belief, beyond the fact that Mme. Coulomb suggested it.

The committee says (p. 204 of the Report) that "where persons like the Coulombs have been concerned, their unsupported assertion cannot be taken as evidence." Now one of the gross inconsistencies and unfair attributes of the present Report is, that while the committee thus affects to take credit for care in the reception of evidence, Mr. Hodgson devours, open-mouthed, anything the Coulombs say to him, presenting their statements in due course to his readers. He affects, at intervals, to regard their testimony as worthless, but still he gives it; and since the committee cannot shake off responsibility for the Report which forms the basis of their own judgment, and which they publish to the world, all that can be said in regard to the pretence they make in the sentence just quoted is, that they have not acted up to it. They say such and such evidence must not be taken, and then they proceed to take it and to put it forward, and, as a careful examination of the Report will show, to build conclusions upon it, and use bricks made out of M. and Mme. Coulomb's statements as the foundation for the fantastic edifice they rear above.

The incident referred to at the bottom of page 258 is relatively trivial, and could not be elucidated properly without drawings and explanations out of keeping with its importance. I mentioned the incident in the original story, page 96, as "interesting rather for its collateral bearings than by itself alone." Mr. Hodgson next deals with a case I describe, in which a fragment of plaster bas-relief was apparently brought by occult means to me at Allahabad at about the time when the plaster cast from which it was taken fell and broke at Bombay, and the pieces, *minus* that conveyed to me, were collected by several persons present. Mr. Hodgson's conjecture is, that the fragment I found at Allahabad was previously broken off by Mme. Blavatsky and sent to Allahabad to be hidden there in my room by a confederate. It is only by an examination of the fragments still in my possession that this groundless conjecture can be tested. The nature of the fracture, as it happens, is such as to make it appear to any reasonable observation mechanically impossible; first, that the important piece could have been broken off by itself, leaving the plaque otherwise intact; secondly, that had the piece been thus broken off, the plaque in its fall, could not have starred in the way the fracture has actually occurred.

Mr. Hodgson's comments on certain notes which I received apparently by occult means at Allahabad about the same time, and in Mme. Blavatsky's absence, form an amusing illustration of the way in which his indictment has been prepared. He says, "This is curiously like the *en cas* which was provided by

Mme. Blavatsky for General Morgan in connection with the Adyar saucer phenomenon, and which, as General Morgan did not ask any questions, remained in the possession of the Coulombs." Of course it is *Mr. Hodgson's assumption* that the scrap of paper thus produced by the Coulombs was prepared by Mme. Blavatsky, but, as usual, Mr. Hodgson's empty guesses on one page become adamantine facts when referred back to at a later stage of his narrative.

Amongst the simplest of the incidents I described in the *Occult World* were those which had to do with the power Mme. Blavatsky possessed of emitting some kind of current from her hands, which made an audible sound on objects she touched, or even held her hand over. On one special occasion a crowd of people, after a dinner-party at which she had been present, made a pile of their hands, held one above another on the table, and all declared when Mme. Blavatsky rested her hand on the top of the pile, and emitted the current I have spoken of, that they felt a slight shock pass through their hands, which we all heard record itself as a rap on the surface of the table. In reference to this incident, Mr. Hodgson remarks, "I have not taken part in forming a pile of hands such as Mr. Sinnett describes" (as if the deficiencies of his experience were a serious factor in these transactions), "but I cannot," he says, "attribute any importance to his confident statement concerning this and similar incidents, now that I have examined some of the possibilities in other cases about which he speaks with equal if not greater confidence." That is to say, now that the general accuracy of my

testimony is impaired by the wonderful discovery Mr. Hodgson has made about the ten and thirty seconds, for, ludicrous as the position is, that impeachment continues to underlie all the groundless pretences which Mr. Hodgson makes throughout this Report in regard to having shaken the value of my testimony.

As regards the bell sounds, of which so much has been said, Mr. Hodgson thinks they might at least have been produced by Mme. Blavatsky by means of a machine concealed about her person, crediting his own sagacity in this way with a suspicion he appears to think too profound to have entered any other mind previously. It is enough to say that this elementary conjecture was of course a primary idea in all our minds when these bell-phenomena were first brought under our notice, only to be rejected as soon it arose on account of its manifest inapplicability to the case. It is true Mr. Hodgson fortifies his conjecture—writing, "Mme. Coulomb asserts that they were actually so produced by the use of a small musical-box . . . . and showed me stains resembling iron-mould (on some discarded under-garments of Mme. Blavatsky) which she affirmed had been caused by contact with the metal of the machine."

Later on, Mr. Hodgson shows great patience in counting g's with their tails turned one way, or d's with their stems turned another, and in one document finds a particular d, 1,106 times. If any one exhibiting similar mechanical patience, would go through the whole Report, and count the number of times in which, as in the case just quoted, it breaks faith with the committee's declara-

tion that the assertion of the Coulombs cannot be taken as evidence, an array of cases might be compiled rivalling in number some varieties of Mme. Blavatsky's g. But certainly, if Mr. Hodgson had honestly refrained from imbibing ideas at the overflowing fountain of Mme. Coulomb's evidence, he would have come home with a comparatively meagre stock of accusations to bring against the good faith of Mme. Blavatsky and her Theosophical colleagues in India.

Mr. Hodgson says about the bell sounds: "Mr. Sinnett seems to have overlooked the great uncertainty in all localisation of sounds (Mr. Sinnett having, of course, assumed that his readers would credit him with paying attention to childish simple considerations of that kind), and the possibility that, if Mme. Blavatsky had one such machine she might possibly have had two, does not seem to have occurred to Mr. Sinnett." If a savage, looking at a locomotive engine, suggested that there was a horse inside, and hearing that I had denied this, as inadequate to explain the motion of the train, remarked that "it does not seem to have occurred to Mr. Sinnett that there might be two," he would have risen to the exact level of Mr. Hodgson's sagacity as exhibited in this criticism.

I must pass over some trifling criticisms, tempting as some of them are by their *naiveté*, to deal with the elaborate comments now put forward in regard to the narrative of the Simla picnic. This was the occasion on which a much talked-of cup and saucer were dug up from the ground. An important feature in con-

nection with this occurrence, as described by myself is "that Mme. Blavatsky had no share in the choice of the spot chosen for the luncheon," as Mr. Hodgson now sums the matter up. As a matter of fact the feast was a breakfast, and was so described by me in the *Occult World*. The inaccuracy, therefore, that Mr. Hodgson commits, in referring to it as a luncheon, is one that I should think well within the grasp of the S. P. R. committee, and calculated to give them much concern. But to pass on. Mr. Hodgson says: "Almost the reverse of this appears from the opening sentences of Colonel Olcott's account." This account was written by Colonel Olcott for circulation at the time among the Fellows of the T. S. at Bombay. Now, in reference to Colonel Olcott, when dealing with his testimony, Mr. Hodgson convicts him of various instances of "unreliability," "lapses of memory," and "extreme deficiency in the faculty of observation." On these grounds he feels justified in putting Colonel Olcott's testimony aside as worthless whenever it is convenient to do so. But now that a narrative of Colonel Olcott is discovered, which fails to correspond with a narrative of the same events by myself, Mr. Hodgson's volatile imagination at once invests it with all the attributes of an indisputable standard, and triumphantly points to the certain evidence thus afforded of my own inaccuracy. A large part of the criticism on which we are now entering rests on this assumption—so daring, considering the previous passage—that if a difference is detected between my account and Colonel Olcott's, that proves that I am wrong. But unfortunately for

Mr. Hodgson's argument it is only his own extraordinary faculty for stumbling over the literal phraseology of a sentence and failing to catch its essential meaning that has made him think there is any difference of the least importance between Colonel Olcott's narrative and my own. The passage from Colonel Olcott's Report now quoted is as follows:

"Although she had never been at Simla before, she directed us where to go, describing a certain small mill, which the Sinnetts, Major ——, and even the jampanies affirmed did not exist. She also mentioned a small Tibetan temple as being near it. We reached the spot she had described and found the mill at about 10 a.m., and sat in the shade and had the servants spread the collation."

Now Colonel Olcott is, broadly speaking, right in his account, and yet it is true that Mme. Blavatsky had no share in the choice of the spot selected for our breakfast. The explanation of the simple paradox is as follows:—One objective point for our expedition was *a* Tibetan temple, which Mme. Blavatsky declared must exist somewhere down in the valley, and asserted to be near a mill. We wished to visit the temple because we had reason to believe it had lately been visited by a certain occultist. Not to dwell upon details, which, as will be seen shortly are of no real importance, we found our temple, and, amidst some merriment, a very small water-wheel in the neighbourhood, a little native construction fixed in a stream, which justified Mme. Blavatsky's clairvoyante pertinacity about a mill. *But then we proceeded on our journey. There* is the only imperfection in Colonel Olcott's narrative, a hiatus which at the time was of

no interest to him. I was on in advance with the gentleman here spoken of as Major ——, and led the way to the spot which I had selected in my own mind, —a certain place beside the stream where I had once been before,—as that at which our breakfast should be spread. There, however, we found the water of the stream dirty and disagreeable, and, moreover, discovered a little way down that preparation was being made for a Hindu cremation. Major —— and I then struck upwards into the woods to choose a more suitable encampment, and of our own independent volition chose one, where the servants, when they came up, were ordered to prepare the breakfast. All this, of course, Mr. Hodgson ignores, even assuming as the basis of his later remarks that the picnic took place at the spot chosen by Mme. Blavatsky, for he writes: "As this place appears in Mr. Sinnett's account as a place they are not likely to go to, we cannot attach much weight to his opinion that the cup and saucer were of a kind they were not likely to take."

It is tedious to continue a repetition of the same remarks, but here again it will be observed that Mr. Hodgson finds fault with the particular statement in hand for no better reason than that one of its predecessors stands bespattered with his own groundless insinuations. From first to last of these criticisms levelled against the *Occult World* phenomena I deny that there is a single allegation which has any rational foundation whatever, or one that could have stood the test of an honest discussion with myself before an impartial tribunal if the committee had conceived the

fair treatment of this inquiry desirable, or had ventured to play the part of an impartial tribunal itself. "Probably," says Mr. Hodgson, "Mme. Blavatsky's native servant Babula, an active young fellow, who I am assured on good authority had formerly been in the service of a French conjuror, could throw even more light upon the day's proceedings than Colonel Olcott's account." Fresh insinuation—groundless, offensive, unintelligent—put forward with all the authority of the S. P. R. as the result of a special mission to India and an incubation of six months over its eggs. Moderate common sense, by the light of the facts described, will show that neither Babula nor all the active young fellows in Simla together could have contributed to the result which actually occurred in the smallest degree. The cup and saucer were dug up within a few yards of the spot where we breakfasted. That Mme. Blavatsky should "create" a cup and saucer was a joking suggestion of one of the ladies present, itself the consequence of fortuitous conditions, and all the silly and inappropriate objections that have been brought against my narrative of the occurrence—Mr. Hodgson's among the number—leave the force of its evidence absolutely unimpaired.

Two other prominent phenomena took place during the picnic, besides that of the cup and saucer. Mr. Hodgson writes: "The concealment of the diploma and the management of the bottle of water would have been still easier tasks for Babula than the burying of the cup and saucer in the rooted bank." In face of such remarks it is difficult to maintain our trust in the perfect good faith of the present Report, but we must

imitate the plan adopted by Mr. Hodgson when, finding it difficult to face the unimpeachable good faith of Colonel Olcott—and justify his moral attitude at the expense of his understanding. Neither with the diploma nor with the bottle of water could Babula have had anything to do. To do full justice to Mr. Hodgson's criticisms I must trouble the reader with some further quotations.

"In connection with this incident Mr. Sinnett has much to suggest about the abnormal stupidity of a certain cooly who had been sent with empty bottles to a brewery with a pencil note asking for water, and who, finding no European at the brewery to receive the note, brought back the empty bottles. It was apparently one of these empty bottles thus brought back that Mme. Blavatsky took for her experiment. Who was this abnormally stupid cooly? Surely not Madame Blavatsky's personal servant, Babula? and yet Babula was in some way concerned. Colonel Olcott wrote,—after saying that wanting some tea they found they were out of water,—

"'Servants were sent in various directions, but could get none. While Babula was sent off on a second search, Madame quietly went to the lunch baskets, took an empty water bottle, put it in the loose sleeve of her gown, and came straight to where we were sitting on the grass. The bottle was full of the clearest and softest water, of which we all partook.'

"Granted that Babula was present, the fact that all the bottles became empty, and afterwards that one of them became full, may be easily accounted for without the necessity of supposing that there was anything more substantial than a smile in Mme. Blavatsky's sleeve. It is curious how much Babula has been kept in the background of Mr. Sinnett's account, carelessly, no doubt, and not carefully, but then, if carelessly, Mr. Sinnett must be charged with a grievous lack of ordinary perspicacity."

One hardly knows where first to pick out the bits

of false assumption, foolish reasoning, and self-sufficient perversity which constitute the tangled web of this whimsical criticism. Of course the "abnormally stupid cooly" *was not* Babula, but one of my own coolies employed on the service of the day. His journey to the brewery and return are covered in Colonel Olcott's Report by the single sentence, "Servants were sent in various directions but could get none." The fact that Babula had gone "on a second search" (following Colonel Olcott's description) when Madame contrived to fill one of the previously empty bottles, has no bearing on the event at all, any more than the great truth that there are milestones on the Dover Road. What purpose has Mr. Hodgson in view in pressing upon the attention of the reader the fact that, while Mme. Blavatsky performed the feat described with one of the empty bottles, which we all saw her take from the basket where we knew there were none but empty bottles—Babula had gone away on a second search? If he was off the scene he could not be helping to do the trick. But Mr. Hodgson seems to think that any kind of darkly significant mention of Babula's name, on the cruel theory about the simple and devoted boy that he has constructed, will impress his readers with a general notion that there was trickery somehow going on. The only trickery concerned really is the rhetorical trickery to which Mr. Hodgson thus descends, but of this, indeed, there is but too much in the present Report. That "Babula has been kept in the background of Mr. Sinnett's narrative" is simply explained by his total insignificance on this occasion. Mr. Hodgson has dragged him now into

a European celebrity to suit the strained necessities of his own attack, and if Mr. Hodgson could have been seen looming on the horizon, in 1880, then Babula would perhaps have been left at home. Not that that would have mattered in the slightest degree to our present fertile critic, whose methods of analysing such occurrences as I have had to describe rises triumphant above the limitations of circumstance as of common sense. But no matter how inapt, how illogical, how flippant from what ought to be the point of view of a psychic researcher, any silly insinuation he once makes against me, however gratuitous, is firm ground for him to stand upon thenceforward when misrepresenting me as found lacking in ordinary perspicacity.

I shall rest content with blowing a few more holes through this criticism of the *Occult World*, at once the most elaborate and most irrational, the most patient and the pettiest, the most microscopic and the most undiscerning review,—and immeasurably the most unscrupulous,—to which that much discussed book has been subjected, and will leave some blocks of Mr. Hodgson's shattered edifice for readers of intelligence, guided by the explanations here given, to break up into smaller fragments for themselves if they choose. Let me pass on now to Mr. Hodgson's treatment of the pillow incident. (*Occult World*, pp. 75-79.) Mr. Hodgson writes:

"Mr. Sinnett's subjective impressions of the previous night appear to be in close relation with the incident, if not to form part of it. But as they are not exactly described I am, of course, unable to deal with them. If they were neither hallucination nor extreme illusion suffered by Mr. Sinnett, they

may have been due to Mme. Blavatsky's boldness and cleverness, in which case the cushion may have been manipulated before Mr. Sinnett spoke of his impressions that morning."

The use which Mr. Hodgson can make of the potential mood, when he has no solid evidence (derived from M. or Mme. Coulomb) to go upon, will amuse the patiently analytical reader of the wonderful composition under notice. But the real art of the sentence just quoted lies in the introduction of the idea that the point for Mme. Blavatsky to work at during the early morning of the day under discussion was the subsequently famous cushion. Mr. Hodgson writes as if the whole difficulty were how Mme. Blavatsky or her assumed confederate, Babula, should get at the cushion. The cushion, at that period, had not entered on the field of view. But Mr. Hodgson wishes us to suppose that its selection later in the day by myself, as a place where the token to be given me should be found, was something that Mme. Blavatsky could easily have foreseen. He writes, "Mme. Blavatsky's intimate acquaintance with Mr. Sinnett may have enabled her to anticipate with considerable confidence that he would choose the cushion!" For pure absurdity this remark deserves to rank among the first half-dozen gems of that sort in Mr. Hodgson's collection. An intimate acquaintance with any one might enable a friend to forecast his probable choice of a favourite author, or favourite opera, but would not suggest beforehand what horse he would be likely to draw in a sweepstakes, or what bean out of a bagful. Yet the "choice" of the cushion was an issue almost as

unforeseeable in its nature as the choice of the bean would be. Mr. Hodgson argues to suit the facts of the moment, "Simply because such places as the ground and the tree had been chosen before, they were not likely to be chosen again." Had the circumstances been different, and his object to disparage the choice of a spot of ground, can we doubt that Mr. Hodgson would have written "Simply by observing his previous habits of choice, Mme. Blavatsky must have known that the ground or a tree would be selected." But on the theory that these were ruled off by previous experiments, why was I precluded from selecting, as a place of concealment—under the table-cloth on the grass, for example, or inside the then uncut cake (which I remember crossed mymind as a place to choose, but was mentally discarded in favour of the cushion), or inside one of my own pockets, or underneath my wife's jampan set down at random on the ground, or underneath any other of the half-dozen jampans present, or underneath a napkin spread on the ground for the purpose, or on the roof of the stone hut near where we were sitting, or somewhere within that hut (such an obvious place! Mr. Hodgson would have said if that had been selected), or in one of the luncheon-baskets—or so on for another page or two. And yet Mr. Hodgson has either the simplicity or assurance to say the cushion was likely to be chosen.

Of course he proceeds to fortify this hypothesis with others of a like nature, trusting that his readers will regard three or four untenable conjectures as perhaps in the mass more tenable than either separately. If

the cushion had not been chosen "some conversation might ensue as to whether the place fixed upon was best, and ultimately it might be decided they should look for it in one of the cushions." Provided the occult feat under notice had actually been faulty in thus involving preliminary conversation as to the place to be chosen, Mr. Hodgson might have had some ground for suggesting that this destroyed the point of the performance; but seeing that the feat was performed straight off, without hesitation, as I desired, the suggestion that under different circumstances it would have been suspicious, does not seem very forcible or sagacious. If I were to point to an animal and say "that is a donkey" (and a naturalist should confirm my opinion), I am so far shown to know a donkey when I see one, and my judgment in such matters is not impugned if any one tells me,—"Suppose you had first said it was a cow and then a pig, you might have gone on guessing till you got right in the end." The evidential value of the "Pillow Incident" remains, in truth, absolutely untouched by Mr. Hodgson's gratuitous hypothesis. His pretence is, that he is suggesting ways in which the result accomplished might have been brought off by ordinary means, and he merely staggers about among the facts, ignoring one while he is framing a hypothesis, incompatible with it, to explain another, and then attempting to get over the first fact by suggesting some other alternative hypothesis incompatible with the second. The multiplication of theories on this principle *ad nauseam* is not legitimate argument, but disingenuous trickery with words, by

which it is hoped the intelligence of careless readers may be ensnared,—or else it shows what so many other characteristics of Mr. Hodgson's Report exhibit, indeed but too plainly, that he is distinguished by a singular inability to apply anything but the coarsest material reasoning to any problem; and while tolerably skilful with boiling water and sealing wax, is correspondingly deficient in the gifts required for estimating probabilities.

And while quite in his proper sphere when trying experiments with sealing wax and gum, to try how long it would take him to get inside a letter and fasten it up again so as to look as it did at first, Mr. Hodgson shows himself a *gobemouche* of the first water when he scents a new suspicion. Passing on to criticise the circumstances of the incident known to readers of the "Occult World" as that of the Jhelum telegram, he appends the following note to the statement that "afterwards Mr. Sinnett was requested through Mme. Blavatsky to see the original."

"I may here mention a curious document that was unintentionally lent me for several days by Mr. Damodar. I had with some difficulty obtained several specimens of Mahatma writing, and in an envelope inclosing some of these I afterwards found a slip of paper which had not—as I concluded when later I discovered that it was not enumerated among those lent to me—been observed in the envelope when Mr. Damodar gave me permission to take the specimens away. This document was a single small fragment of paper, undated and unsigned. On one side of it were written the following words in red ink, and the writing resembles that attributed to Mahatma M.:—'Send this by copying telegram and original telegram to A. P. S. Charge to my account and send bill. Let Deb. study more

carefully his part.' Whether this document had anything to do with the above incident I can, of course, only conjecture."

This note is interesting in two ways. First, it shows us that Mr. Hodgson did not hesitate to use as evidence against the Theosophical group at Adyar, and Mr. Damodar in particular, a paper which he thought had slipped into his possession "unintentionally"—which, therefore, he had no better moral right to use, than he would have had if he had taken it off or out of Mr. Damodar's desk in his absence. Secondly, it shows us the temper of mind in which this scientific, careful investigator collected and reported on his evidence—and won from the committee to whom he made his report the public declaration that "they have satisfied themselves as to the thoroughness of Mr. Hodgson's investigation, and have complete reliance on his impartiality." For a longer acquaintance than Mr. Hodgson possessed with the course of my relations with the Mahatmas would have shown him that the slip of paper he fastened on with so much interest, believing himself to have got hold of it "unintentionally," related to one of several transactions occurring long after the incident of the Jhelum telegram, though long before the "investigation" at Madras. Mahatma M. sent me two or three telegrams at various times through Mr. Damodar on business relating to the Society, during the cold weather of 1881-82, and as the original of one such telegram in Mahatma M.'s handwriting coming to me by post from Mr. Damodar, and following the transmission of the same words over the wires, is still in my

possession, in all probability this is the message to which the directions on the slip of paper referred. They could not have any reference to the Jhelum telegram for two reasons—firstly, because Mahatma M. had nothing whatever to do with the Jhelum telegram, the original of which was in Mahatma K. H.'s handwriting. Will Mr. Hodgson here introduce his favourite potential mood, and suggest that whoever wrote the message in Mahatma M.'s hand, *may* also have written the Jhelum message in Mahatma K. H.'s? Then I will recommend to attention my second reason, which was that I obtained a sight of the original of the Jhelum telegram *not* by having it sent me by Mr. Damodar, but by favour of the officials of the telegraph department, who had it forwarded, to oblige me, from their Jhelum to their Allahabad office.

Mr. Hodgson infects me with a disposition to make conjectures, so I will hazard a suggestion that the slip of paper in this case may have been included but not enumerated among the series lent to Mr. Hodgson, rather less "unintentionally" than he supposes. It looks to me only too much like an experiment on his credulity—perhaps already conjectured to be voracious for suspicions which might point to knavery lying hidden in the midst of guileless integrity—and perhaps as a test for the question how far he might be disposed to make use of information he might think "unintentionally" conveyed to him.

Mr. Hodgson has not much to say that is very crushing about the Jhelum incident itself except to

suggest that Mme. Blavatsky may have read my letter, and "have telegraphed the right reply to a confederate at Jhelum, one of the various people who, to suit Mr. Hodgson's hypotheses, is taught beforehand, in the interests of the ever-ramifying fraud, to produce a fair imitation of the handwriting I conceive to be that of the Mahatma K. H. It is amusing to observe how at every turn Mme. Blavatsky, whose means, to judge from her ordinary life all this while in India, are not at all superabundant, is freely credited with maintaining confederates and bribing servants, and the "peons," or messengers of the post office, all over the country. This feature of Mr. Hodgson's criticism is only one more illustration of a psychological fact which he emphasises strongly also in many other ways, though quite unconsciously, that a considerable degree of physical cunning is quite compatible with a marvellous inability to appreciate moral probabilities.

Had the Jhelum incident stood alone, and had I endeavoured to rest large inferences on the circumstances under such conditions, there might have been some force in the conjecture that it might have been brought about by confederacy; but when, in the midst of an immense multiplicity of occult phenomena that manifestly could not be promoted by all the confederacy in creation, there stand a considerable number of the kind that could only be explained by highly complicated confederacy ramifying all about India, costing much money, and subject to innumerable dangers of betrayal: when it is manifest that Madame Blavatsky could not be thus supported by a regiment of

confederates, the confederacy hypothesis in each case shares the discredit that attaches to it as a comprehensive theory.

It will, perhaps, have been apparent already that Mr. Hodgson's criticisms on the "Occult World" phenomena sin sometimes against fairness and candour, and sometimes against intelligence, but the final remark which closes the series ingeniously unites both characteristics. I tell a story in the *Occult World*, pp. 137-139, concerning the production of a certain profile portrait on a sheet of previously white paper which lay under plain observation, in a book, on the drawing-room table, during the interval of time which elapsed between its last inspection as blank paper and its discovery impressed with the portrait. On this narrative Mr. Hodgson remarks:

"It is not necessary to say any more concerning the exiguity of Mr. Sinnett's account than that Mme. Blavatsky is exceedingly skilful in the use of both pencil and brush. I have seen specimens of her handiwork, not only on certain playing cards which Colonel Olcott showed me, each card being a clever humorous sketch, but in drawings precisely similar to that mentioned by Mr. Sinnett, where the face on the white paper was defined by contrast with cloudy blue shading."

The sneer here at what is called the exiguity of my account is ill placed, because the point of the incident, regarded as a test phenomenon, resides in its extreme simplicity. Here is no congeries of circumstances to be weighed and compared with one another, claiming a long elucidation, as in the case of the Vega incident, or even the Jhelum telegram. The charm of the portrait incident as an occult test

turns on the utter simplicity of the transaction. The paper was seen to be blank before breakfast, left in a book on the table in sight of us all while we had that meal, and found to bear a portrait when we went to look at it immediately afterwards. Mr. Hodgson can hardly suggest confederates here, nor count g's, nor exhibit his cleverness in opening closed envelopes with steam from boiling water. There is, of course, nothing to allege or urge against the story. If I am telling what I believe to be the truth—and hitherto my bitterest opponents have recognised that people who know me would think it stupid to suggest the contrary—there is no getting out of the conclusion that on this occasion an occult phenomenon was wrought. I think there is no getting out of that conclusion, compatibly with sound sense, in a great many other cases as well; but we may keep for a moment to the portrait incident.

Mr. Hodgson would obviously have complimented my story if he had called it concise, under the circumstances, but by using a synonymous expression, carrying a slight flavour of opprobrium, he may entrap a weak-minded reader in thinking there must be something wrong about a narration that can be regarded as exiguous. But then comes another insinuation, groundless and irrelevant, but quite on Iago's pattern, as vaguely suggestive of an undefined suspicion. Mme. Blavatsky is skilful with pencil and brush! As to the fact it is not worth arguing the matter. The testimony of her intimate friends would, I think, be quite the reverse, in spite of the pen-and-ink illuminations on the playing cards above referred to, and I

conjecture that the blue shading drawings shown to Mr. Hodgson as hers were shown to him as *occult precipitations* of hers, though he now calmly suppresses this. But in any case the remark has no practical or logical bearing on the case in hand at all. Mme. Blavatsky might have had the artistic genius of Michael Angelo and the resources of a drawing school in her bed-room, and it would not have made an atom of difference to the phenomenal character of the transaction I describe, for she was eating her breakfast with us the whole time during which the sheet of white paper became impressed with the blue portrait. The paragraph under review, in fact, is a mere snarl without any sense or meaning in it, and I can only interpret the action of the committee in allowing it to stand in their published Proceedings by supposing that they preferred, as I have been told they desire, to repudiate responsibility for the report as to its details. If they began to edit it they would very likely have been puzzled to know where they should stop. They elected a course, therefore, which bade fair to get the Theosophical Society blackened as much as possible, while by professing to shirk the responsibility it was their duty to bear, they have tried to prevent any of Mr. Hodgson's black from coming off on their own fingers.

Complacently pluming himself in conclusion on the success which he has *not* attained in showing that the *Occult World* phenomena can be satisfactorily accounted for by trickery, Mr. Hodgson gives me up as an observer who does not exercise due caution. He has riddled each of my stories in detail with the

lightning of his penetrating sagacity, and now the wreck can be put aside once for all, out of the path of a Psychic Research, carried on, in harmony with prevailing modes of thought, by the help of measuring tapes and caligraphic experts.

I think that all reasonable men, on the contrary, especially if they start from any moderate familiarity with the psychic fermentation going on in the world will be rather drawn over to the conclusion that the independent investigation of a man so glaringly unable to deal fairly with the investigations of others, and so ill prepared, to judge by the exhibition he unconsciously makes of the quality of his own mind, to enter into sympathy with spiritual ardour or self-devotion to a lofty cause, is itself discredited by his absolute failure to shake the solidity and coherence of the plain and unvarnished tale told in my book. Nothing I can say, I am well aware—it is unlikely that anything any one can say—will disturb the supreme satisfaction with which Mr. Hodgson contemplates the fruit of his Indian mission enshrined in his long-studied Report. He is so content with his own conclusions that he never, it would seem, cares to check them for his own guidance by consultation with others. During the half year he has spent in polishing his Report he has never referred to me to find out what I could say in defence of my narrative, how I could answer for this or that circumstance that appeared to him suspicious. He has preferred to blunder alone into the quagmire of inconsistency and misapprehension the foregoing pages have shown to constitute his Report so far as it deals with my own

work. To confront with suspicions that arise in his mind the person against whom they are levelled would appear to be a course of action foreign to Mr. Hodgson's instincts. He came into possesson while at Madras of the famous Coulomb letters (or, at all events, obtained some of them); he knew that Mme. Blavatsky had declared them to be replete with forged interpolations. He never took them to her and said, "What part do you declare to be forged, and how do you account for the apparent cohesion of the letters?" From the depths of his own consciousness, and by meditating profoundly on the tails of g's, as it may fairly be presumed the forgers, if there were forgers, had in their turn meditated before him, he decided that Mme. Blavatsky must be an impostor. A suspicion, it would seem in Mr. Hodgson's mind, is a precious treasure to be guarded from rude contact with the rough airs of Heaven until, nourished by careful accumulation of circumstance, and fortified by consultation with persons known to be in sympathy with the young serpent in the egg, it grows big enough to be let loose for mischief. And careful all the while to observe the spirit of the maxim about treating your friends as though they might one day be your enemies, Mr. Hodgson makes notes to be used against them of unfinished phrases that drop from the lips of his hosts at Adyar, and getting himself photographed in fraternal association with a crowd of Theosophists at the convention, so cleverly guides them to invert his policy themselves, that they guilelessly treat as a friend the investigator who can hardly, the while, have been unaware that he was destined to develop into their enemy.

III.

I do not, as the title of the pamphlet will have shown, design it to be a reply adequately meeting the whole battery of attack now directed by the Psychic Research Society against the honour and credit of the leaders in the elevated philosophical movement the committee seems so little able to appreciate. The enormous pile of entirely one-sided evidence collected by its agent during the first half of the past year and worked into what has been thought to be the most damaging shape it could assume, during the second half, manifestly constitutes a paper which I cannot profess a readiness to deal with in all its details offhand and within a few days. But Mr. Hodgson's second-hand suspicions concerning the shrine, and the multifarious accusations by Mme. Coulomb of which he has meekly made himself the channel, beat in vain against the Theosophical position if *my narrative stands*. It has seemed to me desirable, therefore, to show without delay what hasty readers, less conversant with the whole case than myself might not so quickly have perceived, that in truth there is no force whatever in the objections which Mr. Hodgson brings against any one of the long series of experiences related in my book. It is only by beginning with criticisms so absurd that it is difficult to understand how he can have vanquished the sense of shame he must have felt in first endeavouring to work with them—those concerning the

ten and thirty seconds—that he was able to inaugurate the system on which he has striven to damage the credit of my story. That system has been to level an undue reproach at me, and to keep referring to me as a man who has incurred that reproach. And each fresh reference of that kind is an excuse for suggesting that I am probably at fault again. A man open to so much reproach can hardly be trusted even when you cannot *prove* him wrong. And so the long indictment rolls like a snowball.

Very little would it have concerned me, indeed, under other circumstances, what Mr. Hodgson might think or say about my book or my capacity or incapacity for describing events as they occur. I have not trembled before possibilities of ridicule or incredulity in helping to explain recent Theosophical developments to the world. I write for those who might understand, and have faculties of mind to catch the value of my message; and these have proved far more numerous than I ever hoped in the beginning would be the case, and for the rest, whoever may disbelieve or think my statements of no importance, those are people with whom I have no intellectual business to transact. When they like to jeer, it amuses them, and there is an end of the matter. But other interests of far greater importance than my literary credit have become involved in the attack now made upon me, and it has, therefore, been my duty to expose the worthless character of Mr. Hodgson's fault-finding.

The Psychical Research Society for its part seems to follow a different policy from that I have just indicated as my own, and striving above all things to

keep well with public opinion, to make terms with prejudice, to hold at arm's length whatever may entangle it with psychical developments, for which the general sense of the community is not yet ripe, it has conceived itself bound to shake off with every appearance of detestation the brief association into which it was at one time tempted with the leaders of the Theosophical Society. These persons were under a cloud of suspicion; the published letters of Mme. Coulomb's collection raised doubts of their probity. I do not for one moment blame the leading members of the S. P. R. for resolving on a searching inquiry. It is the manner in which that inquiry was carried out from first to last that I condemn, and I condemn that most unreservedly. There has been no step taken that looks as if it had been dictated by a careful sense of justice only, anxious to arrive at the truth. The examination of the Coulomb letters, conducted as it has been, has been but the mockery of an examination. The committee and the agent they employed have equally shrunk, at every fresh turn their investigation took, from calling on the persons they have accused, for any defence. To any one acquainted with the people concerned and familiar with the circumstances of the case, the spectacle of Mr. Hodgson winding his way as he describes among the chelas at Adyar, conceiving suspicions and hiding them from everyone in a position to explain them away, disguising his mind to the last—never diverging into the candour which ought to have characterised his action throughout—is one which makes the whole proceeding in which he has

been employed a comprehensive outrage on all the principles of justice and fair play.

With adequate pains taken I believe that every allegation which Mr. Hodgson makes in his Report to the moral prejudice of each and all of the Theosophical group in India, and of Mme. Blavatsky in particular, could be demolished and shown to be the result of false testimony or of misunderstanding, to be stupid beside other facts, that are in themselves indisputable and totally undeserved. But it is relatively easy to circulate injurious charges, it is sometimes a task of Herculean magnitude to disprove them in detail. For the present I do not intend to go into a wearisome examination of Mr. Hodgson's hearsay evidence about the shrine. I content myself with giving in an Appendix to this reply some extracts from evidence of an opposite kind collected at the time by some of the Theosophists at Adyar to check the apparent testimony of the Coulomb letters; and in regard generally to all that concerns Mme. Blavatsky in the present Report, I would suggest that people who fancy Mr. Hodgson has made out a *prima facie* case against her (he cannot have done more, for the defence has not yet been heard), I would suggest that before rivalling the committee of the Psychical Research Society in precipitately giving judgment on an *ex parte* statement, they at least await the appearance of certain Memoirs of Mme. Blavatsky which, driven by what has now been published to make a somewhat premature use of materials in my hands, I am engaged in preparing for the press. These Memoirs will appear, no doubt, in the course of the spring. Mean-

while the flood of calumny which is now directed against her is only effective in the estimation of persons who remain outside the circle of her intimate acquaintance, and inoperative with those for whom personal knowledge of her life and character render inherently absurd the conclusions now derived from the circumstantial evidence Mr. Hodgson has so laboriously scraped together, and that the S. P. R. has recklessly hurled against her without waiting to hear how it might be analysed or elucidated by any competent critic.

NOTE.

Mr. Mohini, knowing me about to issue a pamphlet dealing with Mr. Hodgson's Report, wishes to comment on the random attacks Mr. Hodgson levels against his veracity. His analysis—with explanation sufficiently detailed to illuminate Mr. Hodgson's mistakes—of the various comments on his evidence and statements scattered through the Report, would extend this publication to inconvenient length. Moreover, I do not wish for a moment that it should be regarded as a complete reply. It is only designed to bring about the leading features of Mr. Hodgson's methods, and to exhibit plainly a few of the considerations which render his Report so discreditable to himself and to the committee which has assumed the responsibility of publishing it. However, I cannot deny Mr. Mohini this opportunity of pointing out one salient blunder

which Mr. Hodgson falls into in dealing with his testimony.

Referring to the evidence about "the strange voice" (see pp. 357-8 of the Report) Mr. Mohini now says:

Briefly stated, the phenomenon consisted in my hearing at the same time two voices—Mme. Blavatsky's and another—while sitting with her alone in her room in the house of the late Mr. Nobin K. Bannerji *at Darjiling*. "Concerning this incident," Mr. Hodgson says, "I need only remind the reader of the hollow in the wall which was near the corner of Mme. Blavatsky's room. The confederate may have been Babula, previously instructed in the reply, and with a mangoe-leaf in his mouth to disguise his voice." In regard to this hypothesis I, in my turn, need only remind the reader that the incident did not take place at Madras, where Mr. Hodgson examined Mme. Blavatsky's rooms, but *at Darjiling*, in the Himalayas, months before the house at Madras was bought or occupied. What light is thrown on Mr. Hodgson's conclusions by this inaccuracy, after all his patient and searching inquiry, in which great attention is always professed to have been paid to facts, I leave others to determine.

The following protest by Mr. Mohini, on behalf of an absent person misrepresented by Mr. Hodgson, must not be withheld.

In conclusion, I protest against the cruel misrepresentation of the position of Mr. Babaji, which occurs on p. 247. He is *not* "entirely homeless, apart from the Theosophical Society," in the sense in which alone the words will be understood by the English reader.

He is homeless as any man of respectable parentage may be if he takes monastic vows. His family, who are well off, will gladly find him a home if ever he should want it. But in adopting a religious life he has, in accordance with custom, set himself apart from the world and its ties.

I regret that I cannot, without unduly delaying the issue of this pamphlet, insert a letter I have received from Mr. Rudolph Gebhard, witness of certain phenomena which Mr. Hodgson has criticised in his Report in the same spirit he has shown in dealing with my own narrative. Mr. Gebhard conclusively shows that Mr. Hodgson's theory as to how the Elberfeld letter phenomenon may have been produced, is quite untenable and incompatible with the facts.

MADAME BLAVATSKY'S PROTEST.

The "Society for Psychical Research" have now published the Report made to one of their Committees by Mr. Hodgson, the agent sent out to India to investigate the character of certain phenomena, described as having taken place at the Head-quarters of the Theosophical Society in India and elsewhere, and with the production of some of which I have been directly or indirectly concerned. This Report imputes to me a conspiracy with the Coulombs and several Hindus to impose on the credulity of various persons around me by fraudulent devices, and declares to be genuine, a series of letters alleged to be written by me to Mme. Coulomb in connection with the supposed conspiracy, which letters I have already myself declared to be in large part fabrications. Strange to say, from the time the investigation was begun, fourteen months ago, and to this day, when I am declared guilty by my self-instituted judges, I was never permitted to see those incriminating letters. I draw the attention of every fair-minded and *honourable Englishman* to this fact.

Without at present going into a minute examination of the errors, inconsistencies, and bad reasoning of this Report, I wish to make as publicly as possible my indignant and emphatic protest against the gross

aspersions thus put upon me by the Committee of the Psychic Research Society at the instigation of the single, incompetent, and unfair inquirer whose conclusions they have accepted. There is no charge against me in the whole of the present Report that could stand the test of an impartial inquiry on the spot, where my own explanations could be checked by the examination of witnesses. They have been developed in Mr. Hodgson's own mind, and kept back from my friends and colleagues while he remained at Madras abusing the hospitality and unrestrained assistance in his inquiries supplied to him at the Headquarters of the Society at Adyar, where he took up the attitude of a friend, though he now represents the persons with whom he thus associated—as cheats and liars. These charges are now brought forward supported by the one-sided evidence collected by him, and when the time has gone by at which even he could be confronted with antagonistic evidence and with arguments which his very limited knowledge of the subject he attempted to deal with do not supply him. Mr. Hodgson having thus constituted himself prosecutor and advocate in the first instance, and having dispensed with a defence in the complicated transactions he was investigating, finds me guilty of all the offences he has imputed to me in his capacity as judge, and declares that I am proved to be an arch-impostor.

The Committee of the P. R. S. have not hesitated to accept the general substance of the judgment which Mr. Hodgson thus pronounces, and have insulted me publicly by giving their opinion in favour of their

agent's conclusions—an opinion which rests wholly and solely on the Report of their single deputy.

Wherever the principles of fairness and honourable care for the reputation of slandered persons may be understood, I think the conduct of the Committee will be regarded with some feeling resembling the profound indignation of which I am sensible. That Mr. Hodgson's elaborate but misdirected inquiries, his affected precision, which spends infinite patience over trifles and is blind to facts of importance, his contradictory reasoning and his manifold incapacity to deal with such problems as those he endeavoured to solve, will be exposed by other writers in due course—I make no doubt. Many friends who know me better than the Committee of the P. R. S. will remain unaffected by the opinions of that body, and in their hands I must leave my much abused reputation. But one passage in this monstrous Report I must, at all events, answer in my own name.

Plainly alive to the comprehensive absurdity of his own conclusions about me as long as they remained totally unsupported by any theory of a motive which could account for my lifelong devotion to my Theosophical work at the sacrifice of my natural place in society in my own country, Mr. Hodgson has been base enough to concoct the assumption that I am a Russian political agent, inventing a sham religious movement for the sake of undermining the British Government in India! Availing himself, to give colour to this hypothesis, of an old bit of my writing, apparently supplied to him by Mme. Coulomb, but which he did not know to be as it was, *a fragment of*

an old translation I made for the *Pioneer* from some Russian travels in Central Asia, Mr. Hodgson has promulgated this theory about me in the Report, which the gentlemen of the P. R. S. have not been ashamed to publish. Seeing that I was naturalised nearly eight years ago a citizen of the United States, which led to my losing every right to my pension of 5,000 roubles yearly as the widow of a high official in Russia; that my voice has been invariably raised in India to answer all native friends that bad as I think the English Government in some respects—by reason of its unsympathetic character—the Russian would be a thousand times worse; that I wrote letters to that effect to Indian friends before I left America on my way to India, in 1879; that every one familiar with my pursuits and habits and very undisguised life in India, is aware that I have no taste for or affinity with politics whatever, but an intense dislike to them; that the Government of India, which suspected me as a spy because I was a Russian when I first went to India, soon abandoned its needless *espionage*, and has never, to my knowledge, had the smallest inclination to suspect me since—the Russian spy theory about me which Mr. Hodgson has thus resuscitated from the grave, where it had been buried with ridicule for years, will merely help to render his extravagant conclusions about me more stupid even than they would have been otherwise in the estimation of my friends and of all who really know me. But looking upon the character of a spy with the disgust which only a Russian who is *not* one can feel, I am impelled irresistibly to repudiate Mr. Hodgson's groundless and

infamous calumny with a concentration of the general contempt his method of procedure in this inquiry seems to me to merit, and to be equally deserved by the Committee of the Society he has served. They have shown themselves, by their wholesale adoption of his blunders, a group of persons less fitted to explore the mysteries of psychic phenomena than I should have thought—in the present day, after all that has been written and published on the subject of late years—could have been found among educated men in England.

Mr. Hodgson knows, and the Committee doubtless share his knowledge, that he is safe from actions for libel at my hands, because I have no money to conduct costly proceedings (having given all I ever had to the cause I serve), and also because my vindication would involve the examination into psychic mysteries which cannot be dealt fairly with in a court of law; and again because there are questions which I am solemnly pledged never to answer, but which a legal investigation of these slanders would inevitably bring to the front, while my silence and refusal to answer certain queries would be misconstrued into "contempt of court." This condition of things explains the shameless attack that has been made upon an almost defenceless woman, and the inaction in face of it to which I am so cruelly condemned.

H. P. BLAVATSKY.

Jan. 14, 1886.

APPENDIX.

The following evidence is taken from a Pamphlet prepared at Madras as "the Result of an Investigation into the charges against Mme. Blavatsky, brought by the Missionaries of the Scottish Free Church at Madras":

FACTS REGARDING THE "OCCULT ROOM" UP TO JANUARY, 1884, AND AFTER.

1.

"When I was at Head-quarters at Adyar last January (1883), I went into the Occult room five or six times. Of these, on four occasions during *day time*. On two of these occasions during the day there happened to come into the room several Theosophists from Southern India who were desired by Madame Blavatsky on one occasion and Mr. Damodar on the other to examine the shrine and the walls of the room. These persons, after very careful examination, found nothing suspicious. The shrine was found attached to a solid wall behind, and there were no wires or other contrivances which could escape the trained eye of a Police officer like myself who was watching close by."

R. CASAVA PILLAI,
Inspector of Police, Nellore.

2.

"I witnessed a phenomenon (on 1st April, 1883), a full account of which was published by me in the *Philosophic Inquirer* of the 8th April, 1883. I went up to the shrine with two sceptical friends of mine and the doors were opened for me to inspect closely. I carefully examined every thing, touching

the several parts with my hand. There was no opening or hole on this side of the cupboard (shrine). I was then led into the adjoining room to see the other side of the wall to which the shrine is attached. There was a large almirah standing against this wall, but it was removed at my request that I might see the wall from that side. I tapped it and otherwise examined it to see if there was no deception, but I was thoroughly satisfied that no deception was possible.

On 14th September, 1884, after reading the missionary article, I again went to see the room at 8 a.m. and was met by Mr. Judge, Dr. Hartmann, and Mr. Damodar, who took me upstairs. On the other side of the wall at the back of the shrine, I saw close to the wall an ingenious, furniture-like apparatus, to which was fastened a sliding door, which, when opened, showed a small aperture in the wall. Inside of this there was hollow space large enough for a lean lad to stand in if he could but creep into it through the aperture and hold his breath for a few seconds. I attempted in vain to creep in through the opening, and afterwards stretched out my hand with difficulty into the small hollow to see the internal structure. *There was no communication with the back board of the shrine.* I could see that the machinery had not been finished, and the sliding panels, &c., all bore the stamp of the freshness of unfinished work."

P. RUTHNAVELU,
Editor, Philosophic Inquirer.

3.

"I first saw the Occult room in August, 1883. Since then I have frequently examined the shrine and the wall at the back of the shrine up to January, 1884, when I left the Head-quarters, and I can safely affirm that any trickery was impossible. Mrs. Morgan was engaged in new papering the back wall of the shrine, and I frequently saw the work in progress in December last, so that any tampering with the back of the shrine would have been discovered then if anything of the kind had occurred."

H. R. MORGAN,
19*th Aug.*, 1884. *Major-Genl. (Madras Army), retired.*

4.

"I had a scientific education in my younger days, and for the last 12 years or more I have been a teacher *inter alia* of Natural science. When I was in England in 1870, one of my favourite places of resort was the Polytechnic Institution where scientific lectures are delivered. One of these lectures was—I may mention—the raising of ghosts by Professor Pepper, and I am fully conversant with the appliances and apparatus he used to illustrate his lectures with. I have had considerable experience in Parlour Magic, Prestidigitation, &c.

"In May, 1883, when I was a guest at the Head-quarters, I had many opportunities of being in the Occult room, and of examining it and the shrine, and once I very carefully examined the shrine at the desire of Madame Blavatsky before and after the occurrence of a phenomenon that I saw. I can safely say, without any equivocation or reservation, that in the Occult room, or anywhere within the precincts of the Head-quarters, I never could find any apparatus or appliances of any kind suggestive of fraud or tricks."

J. N. UNWALLA (M.A.)

3*rd Aug.*, 1884. *IId. Master, Bhavnagar, High School.*

5.

"I went to the Head-quarters of the Theosophical Society, at Adyar, on 5th July, 1883. I examined the rear, top, bottom, and side planking of the shrine, as also the walls in its vicinity, most carefully and minutely, and found no cause to suspect fraud."

C. SAMBIAH CHETTY,

17*th Sept.*, 1884. *Local Fund Engr., Guntoor.*

6.

Mrs. Morgan writes:—"I can state for a fact, that during my stay at Adyar during December, 1883, Madame Blavatsky took Mr. C.—— and myself and showed us the back of the shrine and the wall she had built behind it, where there had been a door, and the people were welcome to inspect this and see it was barred and bolted, yet she thought it would remove the least occasion for suspicion, were it bricked up, and so had it done.

The wall then presented a fine, highly polished white surface. This wall I shortly after saw papered, as I superintended the hanging of the paper."

7.

"I have very often been at the Head-quarters at Adyar before 18th May, 1884, and have been in the Occult room and seen the shrine many a time. I have carefully examined the walls and floor of the room, but have never found any secret door, window or trap of any kind."

1*st Sept.*, 1884. HARISINGJEE ROOPSINGJEE.

8.

"Examined the trap doors, which very clearly appear to have been newly made, and in such a clumsy manner that they could not be used at all."

14*th Sept.*, 1884. A. G. BALKRISHNA IYER.

9.

"I have now seen two of the so-called sliding panels, evidently manufactured not with the purpose to assist phenomena, but with the object of bringing discredit on them."

2*nd October*, 1884. W. BATCHELOR.

10.

"Previous to 18th May, 1884, I had examined the Occult room several times along with the shrine and its surroundings. I had an interest in so examining, as I wanted to be able to give my unqualified testimony conscientiously to a prominent sceptical gentleman at Madras who knew me well, and who urged me to state all my experiences about phenomena. Madame Blavatsky herself asked me on several occasions to examine. I knew more of the phenomena of Madame Blavatsky than any outsider. Madame Coulomb was herself treating me as a real friend, and telling me things which she would not tell to others. I have no hesitation in stating it for a fact that any contrivances like trap-doors, &c., had nothing at all to do with Madame Blavatsky, who had not the remotest idea of them. The Coulombs are the sole authors of the plot.

"I have witnessed the phenomena of the Mahatmas at different

times and places where there was not the least possibility of having trap-doors or practising any trickery. I have seen and known the exalted sages who are the authors of these phenomena, and I could therefore confidently assert that the phenomena that used to take place at Adyar were all genuine."

30th August, 1884. BABAJI DHARBAGIRI NATH.

11.

"I was present on several occasions when witnesses to Occult phenomena examined the shrine. There was a wardrobe on the other side of the wall behind the shrine, and this was removed on two occasions in my presence that some Theosophists, who wanted to satisfy themselves, might examine the wall. In July, 1883, Madame Blavatsky went to Ootacamund. During her absence, every week without fail, I used to take out all the things from the shrine and clean it myself from the inside with a towel. I cleaned it several times in the presence of Madame Coulomb, and on other occasions in the presence of others. I used to rub hard the frame with a towel, and had there been any workable panel at the time, it would not but have moved under the pressure. It was during that time that General Morgan saw the phenomenon of the broken saucer, and it was also during that period that Mr. Shrinivas Row put in his letter in the shrine and received an instantaneous reply. In December, 1883, owing to the observation made by a visitor, Madame Blavatsky asked me to examine the shrine, and I and Mr. Subba Row very carefully examined it as well as the wall behind; and we were both thoroughly satisfied that there was no ground for trickery."

19th August, 1884. DAMODAR K. MAVALANKAR.

12.

Dr. Hartmann on the very day of his arrival (4th December, 1883), expressed a desire to see the shrine and was taken there. He states: "The so-called shrine was a simple cupboard hung loosely to a wall in Madame Blavatsky's room. I examined it on this occasion, and more carefully afterwards, and found it like any other cupboard, provided with shelves and a solid unmovable back, hung upon an apparently solid and plastered wall."

13.

Apart from the numerous instances on which Col. Olcott had occasion to see the shrine, he states he had twice the opportunity of distinctly seeing the surface of that part of the wall where the cabinet (shrine) was hung up. About the 15th of December, 1883, he returned from his northern tour, and two days after his arrival, feeling much indisposed, he slept in the Occult room upstairs. He had been told to try a certain experiment by making some marks "on the spots of the wall corresponding to the centre and four corners of the cupboard." This he did by having the cupboard moved by the assistance of servants. After the anniversary was over he went to Ceylon, whence he came back to Adyar on the 13th of February, 1884, and was there up to the 15th. At this time he again had the shrine moved to examine the marks.

Col. Olcott, therefore, could distinctly state that from the 17th of December, 1883, up to the 15th February, 1884, there was no hole or opening of any kind in the surface of the wall which touched the back board of the "shrine."

14.

Mr. Gribble, the gentleman employed by the missionaries as an expert, states as follows:

"I was also shown two of the sliding doors and panels said to have been made by M. Coulomb after Madame Blavatsky's departure. One of these is on the outside of the so-called Occult room upstairs. Both of these have been made without the slightest attempt at concealment. The former is at the top of a back staircase, and consists of two doors, which open into a kind of bookshelf. This gives the idea of having been constructed so as to place food on the shelves inside without opening the door. The other contrivance is a sliding panel which lifts up, and opens and shuts with some difficulty. It is evidently of recent construction. Certainly, in its present state, it would be difficult to carry out any phenomena by its means. Neither of these two appliances communicate with the shrine, which is situated on the cross wall dividing the Occult room from an adjoining bedroom."

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