

Extract from

Madras Mail, 7th May 1938

MADAME BLAVATSKY.

To the Editor, of the Madras Mail.

Sir — In reviewing my “Defence of Madame Blavatsky” (Madras Mail Mar. 6), your reviewer is, of course, within his rights to opine that what I consider my mild and studious writings are really “uncritical and violent,” but he exceeds his powers in raising me to the rank of a Theosophist. I have made it clear in the preface to Vol. 1. that I am not a Theosophist but an independent writer, as is rather well-known in my own country, and am defending not Madame Blavatsky, Theosophist, but Madame Blavatsky a deeply wronged *person*. I happen to believe that Mahatmas exist, but so do many people, especially in India, who have no connection with the Theosophical Society. I only go further than some in judging that Madame Blavatsky was speaking the very simple truth when she said that some of these “superior scientists, not flapdoodle gods,” as she described them, were behind her. However, in my books, I am not in the least concerned to prove that Mahatmas exist, but to prove that Madame Blavatsky could not have carried out her phenomena in the manner charged against her by the Society for Psychical Research, and to this end, I have intensively examined every record available. Except for a few minor errors, which I have duly corrected either in the volumes or in “New Universe,” the organ of the Friends of Madame Blavatsky, I appear to have made out a case to which there is no reply, and the Society for Psychical Research has remained dumb to this day, a year after Vol. 1.

Perhaps I may be permitted to quote part of your reviewer’s Last paragraph? He writes:

“We fear that the campaign for vindicating Madame Blavatsky has been started a little too early. There are still amongst us people who have seen the famous almirah with the double door!”

I do not doubt that the double-backed cupboard existed, but my view is that Madame Blavatsky knew nothing about it. Even if all Madras could testify to having seen it, this, to my mind, could only prove that they had seen it, not that Madame Blavatsky ordered it to be made thus. Actually, in “Defence of Madame Blavatsky,” I have not yet come to the problem of the double-backed cupboard; this will be considered in a later volume on the Shrine phenomena. So, with all my critical faculty stretched to the utmost, I cannot find any reason why your reviewer should drag in the cupboard while saying not one word about the *letters* with which the whole of Vol. 2. is concerned and where I have made a detailed exposure of these letters as only to be accounted for as forgeries by the Coulombs.

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Your reviewer recommends me to be cautious with the use of Theosophical literature. “One Report’ used by her (me) although sent out from Adyar, was denounced by Colonel Olcott himself in The Madras Mail.”

The Report would not appear to have been “denounced,” but withdrawn from circulation as “unauthorised.” But, if the Colonel had denounced it, that would not influence me in the least so long as I found, as I do find, that the testimony in the Report stands examination at the present day by reference to other records. Whatever may have been the motive for withdrawal is little to me in 1938. I can only consider that withdrawal as a piece of judicial folly. Fortunately copies are still extant and the modern

student can read, among other matters, the self-convicting letters of Mr. Coulomb that I reproduce in Vol. 2. pp. 80-86; can hear him “imploring” Madame Blavatsky not to take the keys of her rooms from him, not to hand over her rooms to the Board of Control — these rooms where the hole, trap doors and double-backed cupboard were, where she was alleged *to know that they were!*

The excited 1884 world induced to believe anything said against Madame Blavatsky but we, to-day, care only for the evidence. Mr. Coulomb’s written prayers to Madame Blavatsky, then in Europe, to be left in control of her rooms indicate him as privy to what was hidden, and soon to be discovered, in those rooms. Her action in handing the rooms to the Board of Control indicates that she knew of nothing to hide there and had no fear of inspection. If they had been accomplices, Coulomb would have taken a different tone and she would not have handed over the keys.

Your reviewer continues: “Mrs Hastings possesses greater zeal than knowledge. Her critical powers need development. And she overlooks important things. She ought to have known and told us (Vol. 2. p.11) that when the T.S. had difficulty in removing the Coulombs it was due to interference by a Mahatma! That ought not to have been omitted, but the omission shows how difficult it is even for a Theosophist to write about Theosophical Matters.”

On p.11, I was speaking of the difficulties of removing the Coulombs “to the last,” that is, *after* the reception of a Mahatmic letter (quoted in full on p. 84) advising the Board of Control to “act without delay” against the Coulombs. As for the *earlier* letter referred to by your reviewer, the one advising the Board to try kindness on Madame Coulomb, this, too, is given in full on p. 94. I omitted nothing. The Board, having obeyed the earlier advice and the Coulombs having not even been told to go, the difficulties in removing them did not arise until the second letter was received, on April 26, about six weeks after the first, on March 12.

Beatrice Hastings.
Worthing, Sussex, April 9
