

THE O. E. LIBRARY CRITIC

Published monthly at 1207 Q St., N. W., Washington, D. C.

BY

The O. E. Library League

Vol. XXV

July, 1937

No. 1

Yearly subscription. United States and Canada, fifty cents; foreign, two shillings sixpence or 62 cents. Single copies, five cents. Blank (unfilled) British postal orders and stamps, Canadian paper money and stamps accepted.

"DEFENCE OF MADAME BLAVATSKY"

Defence of Madame Blavatsky, Vol. I. By *Beatrice Hastings*.

Pp. 60. Paper, The Hastings Press, 4 Bedford Row, Worthing, Sussex, 1937. 2/6 in England; 80 cents from the O. E. LIBRARY.

"A valiant defense of those who are unjustly attacked" is one of the virtues enumerated by a Master as among the steps leading up the golden stairs to the Temple of Divine Wisdom. One would therefore expect to find professed theosophists in the very forefront of the defenders of H. P. Blavatsky against the numerous attacks on her character which, whatever effect they may have upon theosophists, have been very generally accepted by the public. It is a fact that if you confess yourself among outsiders as a theosophist, you risk being considered a crank, a follower of that blatant swindler and impostor, Blavatsky, and are treated, if not with supercilious contempt, at least with condescending pity. One would therefore expect that sheer self-protection, to say nothing of justice, would impel those who believe the attacks unfounded to use every effort to confute them.

Of the various attacks on Madame Blavatsky those of the Society for Psychical Research, of Solovyoff, of Arthur Lillie, of Bechofer Roberts (Ephesian)—and the very recent one of H. E. and W. L. Hare are the best known. And here it is necessary to point to two considerations. The attacking book may not be widely read by the public, but the press reviews are, and it is these which influence public opinion. Usually these are not critical studies, but more or less favorable comments. This is a matter of course, for it is easy enough to summarize a writer's statements with an approving nod, but quite a different job to find where they are wrong. To have any value at all, the review of a new book should be written by someone having some knowledge of the subject dealt with. This is by no means always the case. There are professional reviewers who can write readable damned nonsense in excellent style, and so expressed that one is deceived into thinking that the writer knows something of the subject. These penny-a-liners, or it may be more expensive adjuncts of the review sections of papers and magazines, are often sheer humbugs. Like everybody else I am disposed to accept their assertions, but it almost invariably happens that when the subject dealt with is one of which I happen to know something the farce reveals itself. Papers like the *London Times*, *Observer*, *Spectator*, pay for the most abject rubbish of literary nincompoops and defraud their readers therewith. I might also include less well-known publications such as *The Spiritualist*, *Prediction*, *Psychic Science*, all of which are fooled by their reviewers.

The second point is this. The attacker has received a fine advertising in the press. Everybody accepts what he says. But let someone attempt to present the press with the real facts in rebuttal, and he quickly finds that he is ignored or at best is told that "the discussion is closed." So the prosecutor comes out on top and the defense is ignored. Those who would push the defense are limited to special theosophical journals, or to

independent pamphlets, none of which have a public circulation which would render a defense effective.

What do I mean by "defense"? I do not mean vague sentimental expressions of confidence. These are cheap enough and common enough, and are perhaps all that can be expected of those who have neither the time, ability, nor documentary resources necessary for a thorough sifting of evidence. They mean little, for there was never an impostor who did not have his faithful and trusting followers. Such an examination means not only patient, intelligent and judicial study; it means access to documents which are available to but few. There are such persons and there are such documents in the case of Madame Blavatsky. When these conditions are known to exist in conjunction—the brains and the material—and no effort is made to defend the founder of Theosophy, one is disposed to rub his eyes and ask whether they really accept the words of the Master above quoted, or whether, being themselves satisfied, they selfishly decide to ignore those who are being misled. I have not the least hesitation in mentioning some of them. The United Lodge of Theosophists, an ultra-Blavatsky and decidedly highbrow association, in its several journals has not uttered a word in defense of H. P. B. against the calumnies of the Hare Brothers, excepting a brief article in the magazine *Theosophy* (Oct., 1936) disposing of the Hare book by ignoring its arguments, and the still more highbrow society in New York which claims that it alone consists of theosophists. Seemingly these propose to mount to the Temple of Divine Wisdom by a stairway in which "a valiant defense of those who are unjustly attacked" does not form one of the steps. One can only wish them success, even if one thinks of the one who would enter the sheepfold, not through the door, but by climbing in some other way.

These facts, patent enough, afford a reason for those who care to bestir themselves. The Point Loma T. S. and the *Canadian Theosophist* (Adyar T. S.) have made valuable contributions, and especially must be mentioned Mr. Jinarajadasa who, in his book, *Did Madame Blavatsky Forge the Mahatma Letters?* and in an article summarized in the last *CRITIC*, has done splendid work in presenting evidence. Aside from this, however, Adyar officialdom, wrapped in adoration of C. W. Leadbeater, has in recent years devoted more attention to defending masturbation than to defending H. P. B. (See last *CRITIC*.)

It is therefore most heartening to find that a series of books with the title *Defence of Madame Blavatsky* has been begun by Beatrice Hastings, an English writer. Mrs. Hastings is not a member of any theosophical society at the present time, but was once, for about two years, associated with the Blavatsky Lodge in London. As she tells us, she became interested in H. P. B. through reading the attack of the Society for Psychical Research, which seems to have affected her much as it did Mrs. Besant. So convinced was she of the shallow, narrow and false assumptions of the charges that she resolved on an elaborate defense of H. P. B. and collected a large amount of literature of importance for this purpose, larger, I infer, than that possessed by any other one person. This she proceeded to digest.

Result of the Digestion

The first evidence of her activity is the book *Defence of Madame Blavatsky*, Vol. I. The four sections are: (1) "Madame Blavatsky and the Mahatma Letters"; (2) "A Note on the 'Kiddle Incident'"; (3) "The Mahatma Letters and Messrs. Hare"; (4) "Mahatma K. H. and A. P. Sinnett".

I should like to quote extensively, for Mrs. Hastings' style is concise, pungent and at times sarcastic, but I can refer to but a few points. The first section, "Madame Blavatsky and the Mahatma Letters", has its chief value, I think, in pointing out the entire difference of style in her writings and in the Mahatma Letters which Messrs. Hare would have us believe were written by her. Especially it is brought out that some

of the very best of the Mahatma Letters, from the standpoint of style and of force, were written at the very time she was too ill to do much of anything. Here, too, we find a very clear statement about the K. H. telegram to Sinnett from Jhelum (p. 16). Sinnett, at Allahabad, had sent to H. P. B. at Amritsar, a letter addressed to Mahatma K. H., which the postmark showed to have been received at 2 P. M. At 4 P. M., only two hours later, Sinnett received a telegraphic reply from K. H., dispatched from Jhelum, eight hours by train from Amritsar, and subsequent investigation showed that the original telegram, on file at Jhelum, was in K. H. script. On the fraud hypothesis H. P. B. would have had to telegraph a reply to Sinnett's inquiry to a confederate at Jhelum, skilled in the K. H. script, for re-writing and telegraphing to Sinnett. She couldn't have written it herself, as Jhelum was 200 miles away and the time only two hours! The cost of maintaining a corps of skilled forgers all over the country would have run a fair sized hotel, and she a penniless old lady!

Hashing the Hares

To one who has read the Hare book, *Who Wrote the Mahatma Letters?*, the third section, "The Mahatma Letters and Messrs. Hare", will prove especially interesting. I thought I had sucked about all the juice out of the Hare lemon, but I deceived myself. The Hare book is an almost inexhaustible mine of misinformation, misquotations, false logic, wrong dates, puerilities and, I regret to say, positive falsehoods. In 19 pages (pp. 37-55) Mrs. Hastings picks the Hares to bits; she pulls off the feathers, flays them, peels off the flesh, removes the viscera and finally pulverizes the skeleton. One regrets that she could not devote the entire volume to her irate fireworks. I recommend the reading of this section to Dion Fortune and the editor of *The Occult Review*, who have passed favorably on the Hare book, evidently after a most superficial reading (see April CRITIC). Here is but one point. In the CRITIC of October, 1936, I pointed out that 26 out of the 27 purported Americanisms cited by the Hares (pp. 119-120) as proving that the writer of the Mahatma Letters had lived in America and was therefore presumably H. P. B., are not Americanisms at all, but sound British. I overlooked another feature of these "Americanisms". The Hares didn't even know what the Mahatma was talking about; they thought "mundane affairs", meaning, I suppose, business. I quote Mrs. Hastings:

"I now show Messrs. Hare in the rôle of deliberate misleaders.

On p. 119, they tell the public that 'The Mahatmas' style in handling "mundane affairs" appears in the following phrases: 'I give their list and, opposite, the true reference of the phrases. The page numbers refer to 'Mahatma Letters'."

I cite only six, but Mrs. Hastings manages nearly the entire lot, thus:

- | | |
|--|--|
| P. 39. "that you, at least — mean business;" | Refers to Sinnett as a Theosophical worker. |
| P. 60. "Some thirty-five years back." | Refers to Mayer's hypothesis of matter as indestructible. |
| P. 259. "And now we will talk." | Refers to Sinnett's occult studies. |
| P. 263. "The hopes of their original backers"; | Refers to the Founders of the T. S. when starting a new cycle of research. |
| P. 269. "send you a telegram and answer on back on't"; | Refers to Hume's correspondence concerning an Anglo-Indian Branch. |
| P. 271. "we will split the difference and shake astral hands." | Refers to English vs. Tibetan customs. |

And more and more and more, which I do not quote, as space is lacking and even literary clowneries become stale if read too often. Suffice it to say that Mrs. Hastings has brought out many points in the Hare book not mentioned by other reviewers, and that in the finest style she

shows that the thunder of the Hares against H. P. B. and the Mahatmas is naught but the beating of rusty tin pans.

In the final section, "Mahatma K. H. and A. P. Sinnett", there is brought out the interesting point not mentioned elsewhere, I think, namely that K. H., far from having refused Sinnett an opportunity to meet him in person, actually gave him the chance, which Sinnett neglected, of meeting him at a lamasery near Darjiling. See pp. 58, 60.

But time's up. I must end with endorsing Mrs. Hastings' (p. 52) :

"I wish that Theosophists would spare time from their own salvation to look into these things. A group of experts on the documents could very soon make it worth no publisher's while to print such rubbish as this Hare book."

The second volume, nearly ready, will treat of "The Shrine"; "The 'Adyar Saucer' Phenomenon"; "The Coulomb Pamphlet"; "The 'Sewn Letter' to Professor Smith".
