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### **MRS. HASTINGS STATES FACTS**

*Open Note to Theosophists. Please Copy*

This is the gist of a considerably more vigorous reply I had written to the attack made on me by the late Capt. Bowen in the "O.E.L. Critic."

Capt. Bowen's "sympathy" with my work for the Defence of H.P.B. was confined within the limits possible for a Leading Theosophist who has no intention of doing much and I have a letter from the only member of his circle who showed any activity saying: "My efforts to form a F.M.B. group were neatly blocked. (That is a story which might be applied to other Theosophical groups.) Capt. Bowen stated that I "was really sitting on two stools from the start. She disclaimed any connection with Theosophy, yet had to depend for support almost entirely on Theosophists. The result was that Adyar saw in Mrs. Hastings an agent of Point Loma; Lomaites saw in her work the cloven foot of the U.L.T., and so on."

A pretty picture! And I wonder what the late Capt. Bowen saw in me! I knew nothing whatever about all this chaos called the Theosophical Movement. It was from Mr. Barker that I learned even that there was more than one T.S. As for the U.L.T., I only learned about that much later, "and so on." All that is no disgrace to me anyway. If I had known what I know now, I would probably not have touched the thing at all, certainly not in the way I did. My defence of H.P.B. begun before I knew one single Theosophist, would have been left as a literary legacy to my family along with other MSS. As it was, after I saw the Hare attack, I became enthusiastic and so earned the apparently unending and relentless enmity of "Theosophists." A sickening business.

It is very difficult to reply to a dead man. I cannot ask Capt. Bowen from whom he got his information. I can only say it is once more untrue and slanderous to the point of libel. He states that Miss Debenham paid for the "Hall," by which must be meant the larger of the two rooms I had for the F.M.B. (Capt. Bowen never came once) and that only she herself had the right to use the room for any purpose other than that for which it was provided. He goes on to say that "large numbers of the Friends," among whom presumably himself was included, were indignant with me and thought that, if I were "ready to use the hall for her political ends, it was not unlikely that she might use the funds for the same purpose." O Charity, thy name is Theosophist!

The facts are that Miss Debenham paid for the rooms up to Dec. 7th. I understood that after that she was not prepared to go on. I think that she might have been persuaded, but I am not willing to persuade people to go on with things—and I had arranged with the landlady to give up the big room and to keep on the office at my own expense, the which I did until April.

But, here is the cream of the matter. There was only *one* evening's use made of the big room for my Democratic Liberty campaign, which had nothing to do with "politics" in the party sense. At that one meeting, middle November, of only five persons, including myself, Miss Debenham was present and contributed to the campaign as she had already done. The room was never used before or after that. Now will the NEXT accuser come forward?

The late Capt. Bowen's opinion of my qualifications to defend H.P.B. were his own and there is now no need for me to trouble with them. I have said all along that my object was to "collect data" for the defence. I have done that pretty well, I think. What Capt. Bowen calls my "apparently" unselfish labour was

absolutely unselfish labour. The same kind of labour I have put in ever since I ever printed a word, for all sorts of Causes. For years I fought for every cause of freedom and thousands of people know it. When Sylvia Parkhurst published an extract from my first democratic pamphlet, she referred to me as “the well-known lover of freedom,” and so I am and always will be, Theosophists notwithstanding.

I think I should place against Capt. Bowen’s astounding assertion that my “handling of the Coulomb letters was more calculated to injure than to help,” the judgment of the secular Indian “Pioneer:” that “Mrs. Hastings has made out a shattering case against Madame Coulomb.” Also, I may correct a notion, first launched by Dr. Stokes—one of his few mistakes—that I made a personal attack on Rebecca West. I informed Dr. Stokes that I had a few years back written a whole, quite personal book on the old “New Age” where I might have “attacked” Miss West had I thought her worth while. I never mentioned her name. I only told my story to show what a very *honourable* party was slandering Madame Blavatsky and accusing her of dishonesty. Now perhaps that canard will cease to circulate? Again, Capt. Bowen’s reference to my “personal attack” on “Ephesian” is simply silly. If Theosophists cared nothing about the defence of H.P.B. my reply to “Ephesian” in “New Universe,” No. 4, would be circulated by the million. Finally, I shall continue the “Defence” as and when I think fit. The F.M.B. will never die.

Beatrice Hastings.

4 Bedford Row,  
Worthing, Sussex, Eng.,  
Sept. 25, 1940.

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*O.E. Library Critic*, Vol.XXVII, May-June, 1940

Part of the letter from P.G. Bowen to the *O.E. Critic*

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I have a great deal of sympathy with Mrs. Hastings, but I think I know more of the causes behind her difficulties than you appear to do. Mrs. H., unquestionably, brought much of her troubles upon herself, by attitude and actions which, to say the least, were indiscreet. The real root of the trouble lay in the hall, which was provided, at her own expense, by Miss Debenham, founder of the Society of Divine Wisdom, to be used for the purposes of the “Friends of Madame Blavatsky” movement. Mrs. H., nor anyone else except Miss Debenham, herself, had no right whatsoever to use this hall for any purpose other than that for which it was provided. Yet, quite on her own account, Mrs. H. proceeded to use it for meetings of a purely political nature, a thing quite naturally calculated to offend the donor. I do not say that Miss D. was offended, for I do not know, but I do know that large numbers of the “Friends”—average decent persons, of average intelligence, were, rightly enough, I think, indignant with Mrs. H., and the feeling, not unnaturally arose, and was voiced, no doubt, originally, in the form of gossip, or not very serious, nor yet well-considered speculation, that if Mrs. H. was ready to use the hall for her political ends, it was not unlikely that she might use the funds provided for the “Defence” for the same purpose. So the demand for an accounting came about.

It is easy to say that one should give Mrs. H. credit for good faith, seeing the amount of (apparently) unselfish labour she was putting into her “Defence of H.P.B.” Such an argument is really very weak, for do we not frequently see persons put a lot of work into worthy objects, with some quite ulterior motives. I think it is quite plain that there is as much right and as much wrong on one side as on the other, in this matter.

My own view is that the “Defence” is a whole time job for anyone, and that Mrs. H. having undertaken it should have stuck to it, and left politics to politicians. Not that I now think she could ever have made a success of the Defence. Apart from her first pamphlet dealing with the Hare book, which was excellent, her work as defending counsel was feeble and unconvincing. Remember I was once her enthusiastic supporter, but the quality of the work with which she followed up her first pamphlet, quite dashed my hopes. Her handling of the Colomb letters was far more likely to injure than to help, and could do nothing to convince, even the most openminded, and generous student, of H.P.B.’s innocence. Purely personal attacks on fellow writers are not argument. Bechofer Roberts and Rebecca West, etc., may (I little doubt it) be, and be guilty of, all the discreditable things, Mrs. H. alleges of them, but no matter how thoroughly one discredits them, one does not thus establish H.P.B.’s credit. The truth is that the job was far outside Mrs. H’s range. She is obviously a first class literary critic: that is her field, and while the Defence lay within that field, she did admirable work. But ability of a kind she does not possess is needed to make the Defence of H. P. B. effective. The job is probably beyond the scope of any one person, particularly so when such person does not work easily with others, nor take advice kindly, as is obviously the case with Mrs. H. It seems to me, as I thought from the beginning, that the one way in which H.P.B. might be justified before the world was that which I urged in my APPEAL to the Societies:—namely the employment of all the information, of all the resources of ALL the Theosophical Societies, together with that of expert investigators. I am not opposed to such attempts as that of Mrs. H., every mite counts: though, as far as noticeable results are concerned I regard them as foredoomed to failure. But the important point to remember is, I think, this, that if H. P. B. is being let down, it is with the great Societies, as represented by their leaders who call the tune to which their followers dance, that the real blame should lie.

Mrs. H. was really sitting on two stools from the start. She disclaimed any connection with Theosophy, yet had to depend for support almost wholly upon Theosophists. Those supporters came to regard “The Friends” as a definite part of their normal lodge activities. The result was that numerous Adyarites saw in Mrs. H. an agent of Point Loma; Lomaites saw in her work the cloven foot of the U.L.T., and so on, and so forth. It is really no good closing one’s eyes to such facts, and expecting to find great things emerging from the jumble.

My own experience of the average intelligent citizen and Theosophy is not quite as you suggest. It it[sic] not H. P. B. he thinks of when you mention that you are a Theosophist, but Mrs. Besant, Leadbeater, Krishnamurti, etc. It is not H. P. B.’s reputation, which nowadays is hardly known at all, except to a rare few students, which reflects on Theosophy, but it is the doings of the later leaders, including, very prominently, Arundale, and above all the “Dancing World Mother”. It is this rubbish which must first be swept away and destroyed, before any attempt at rehabilitating H. P. B., no matter how successful, can help Theosophy. In fact Theosophists must become genuine practisers of H. P. B.’s teachings before they become fit to “defend” her. \* \* \*

NOTE:

[Shortly after writing this letter Capt. Bowen passed away, July 30, 1940, at his home in Dublin Ireland.]

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