

**NEW UNIVERSE**

**“Try”**

**A Review devoted to the defence of  
MADAME BLAVATSKY**

**6<sup>d.</sup>**

# NEW UNIVERSE

## “Try”

Vol. 1. No. 5.

July, 1938.

6d.

Editor - Beatrice Hastings.

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Review of a review by Miss Rebecca West of  
“Ephesian’s” *Mysterious Madame*.

(*Daily Telegraph*. May 8th, 1931.)

A year or two before the Great War, certain women, and especially women in London, were in a curious state of seethe. This was not due to the agitation for the Vote, but may have been an expression of inhibited fervour; for the leading Suffragettes, with political cynicism, had announced that they wanted no humanitarian “side-issues”, and the Christabel turned her stony eye on any member romantic enough to suppose that the time for humane effort is now and always and not merely “when we get the Vote”. The result of this terrible policy was a set-back to reform, and last year, 1937, Sir John Simon was able to sign to the strangling in cold blood of two young mothers each with five little children: a barbarous horror that could not have been perpetrated in 1907 when women were burning with the spirit of reform.

Meanwhile, in the pre-war years, Grant Allen and similar advanced authors had caught on, and then, the Ibsen plays came to London; and much of the idealistic fervour lying idle under the frigid Pankhurst banner was worked off in the theatre by such women as dared not defy the orders and work as individuals. To the revolting young person I was born, who could scarcely conceive of making any fuss about the right to do one's own will within the limit of the criminal code, Ibsen's heroines seemed mostly loquacious parochial bores and their imitators a bit cranky. Actually, most of these stopped at audacious verbalism; but some went further, and many a quaint tale circulated. Among other crazes, one sprang up among spinsters to present the community with illegitimate children by men in the public eye.

Now you must not take what I am going to say too seriously, for it may be partly a pleasantry—but this is true that I have never read Ibsen's play where Rebecca West comes in, I never got that far with his feminine bores. I have always supposed, however, that Becky was the model for the ambitious spinsters (maybe I am thinking of the *Woman who Did?*), and I do clearly remember that people found it odd that a young woman should deliberately label herself with that name, especially as the name had considerable commercial value and was the property of the dramatist.

The young woman who did soon began to make a small stir of the go-getting sort, as they call it. She found a home for her slip-slop journalism in some suffrage paper, and aspired higher. One day, I found her romancing about myself and appearing, among what she described as “us intellectuals”, to found her remarks on a personal acquaintance, an honour I was obliged to disclaim. I had never seen her, and have not to this day. Years went by, many years . . . then, here in Worthing, I came on a book called “Boon”, by Mr. H. G. Wells, that had been published some time after I left England in 1914. To my astonishment, I saw “Rebecca West” cited as one of the critics of the *New Age* in its most brilliant days! Now, in those days, it was such an honour to write in the *New Age* that the most potential swelled-heads assumed, if they did not feel, modesty when speaking of any connection with the paper. Even Mr. St. John Ervine

was quite content to describe himself as the humblest of reviewers in its celebrated pages. It was known that there was an anonymous woman critic, but the secret was so well kept that even the curious and gossiping Arnold Bennett left without discovering it. At that period, Mr. Wells and the young woman above mentioned were very good friends, the which deepens the mystery of his assignation to her of a position on such a paper as the *New Age*. Who could have told him such a fiction! Well, wherever, Mr. Wells' vast circulation carried, and still carries, there went, and still goes, the young woman sitting— *in my seat*: for I was the anonymous woman critic on the *New Age*, and the young woman never wrote one single line in the paper. I learn that her first novel, with such a push-off, was hailed as a work of genius, and she has now arrived at a position that could only be possible in an epoch like this when publicity takes the place of ability. From a slovenly journalist, she has, indeed, become a smart journalist, and in fact is very readable about Huey Longs and such subjects : but a *writer* she was not born and could never become. She is one of the ring of reviewers who will talk you anything from Milton to—Madame Blavatsky, and with equal critical impotence; the band of powerful log-rollers who are known in publishing circles as Humph, Grumph and Blumph and whose strangle-hold on literature has been a tragedy this twenty years. In vain, young writers try to break the ring; it will not be broken until these people die off. The ring is largely Catholic, openly or secretly, and is clever at copying the Jesuit method of feigning sympathy with liberty and of permeating and assimilating (like your python) any movement that threatens the future establishment of Catholic temporal power. Here is a story : A book I know of that exposes the portentously false legend of the “Little Flower” (who was six feet tall and with the tone of a dragoon sergeant-major) Sister Theresa of Lisieux, was refused by a publishing firm because “Rebecca West’s sister is an ardent R.C. convert, and West would throw her weight against the book”.

Charming. Our young woman is evidently an obscurantist Power, and yet, at every dinner for Liberty, there she may be seen dining, and whenever there is a list of names of lovers-of-freedom to be signed and given publicity, there she will be found signing.

\* \* \*

Now for what she has written about Madame Blavatsky.

“After an early marriage to a general she eloped with the captain of an English boat to Constantinople and became a bareback rider in a circus.” Proof? None. The reviewer simply copies gossip, making no enquiry.

“She then became the mistress of a Balkan opera singer, with whom she travelled widely in Central and Eastern Europe.” Proof? None.

“Mislaying this gentleman, doubtless at a railway-junction, she plucked another flower by the wayside, whom she accompanied to America on a business trip.” Proof? None. (A study for incipient Freudians, the above !). Readers of my article on “Ephesian’s” *Mysterious Madame* may have fancied, as I did, that he had touched the bottom of literary vulgarity. I had then read only an extract from the *Daily Telegraph* review, and now see that our young woman's primitive vulgarness is somewhat below what “Ephesian”, with his early talent and good training, might find tolerable. Here is more:

“ . . . she returned to Russia and announced her intention of settling down with her original husband, who was doubtless not too pleased, since for some time she had adopted dressing-gowns for day wear. One day, however, she met the Balkan opera-singer in the streets of Tiflis. It may be surmised that there was one moment, just one moment, when he looked over his shoulder and calculated how long it would take

him to cover the ground to the next street-corner; but in the end he eloped with her to Kiev. There she quarrelled with the Governor, and posted such scurrilous poems about him all over the city that she was exiled. One would give something to see those poems, for as her later comments on her followers show, she had punch, she had drive, she had direction.”

This passage almost stultified my mind. I could only murmur a “tough-guy” tag: Can you beat it! *This is the only reference to the writings of H.P. Blavatsky.* The rest of the article is a retailing of gossip with comments in the manner of those quoted above. What punch our young woman has, what drive, what direction—to the area.

I dealt with most of the above slanders in “New Universe” No. 4, and shall not trouble to correct them again here; but the slander about the exile from Tiflis may be met. In 1884, when the Coulomb scandal started, and rumours were flying, Colonel Olcott was insistent in obtaining from Russia all possible information about Madame Blavatsky. Among the documents sent was a personal letter from Prince Dandoukof, Commander-in-Chief and Governor-General of the Caucasus, enclosing a certificate from the Police Department of Tiflis, stating that Madame Blavatsky had never made herself liable to any accusation. This certificate is in the Adyar archives and is quoted by Miss Mary Neff in her “Personal Memoirs of H. P. Blavatsky”.

The information offered to the readers of the *Daily Telegraph* proves that the lady reviewer had never looked into her subject at all but, although she assumes a knowing attitude, had simply copied down the spiciest stuff from “Ephesian”, who copied it from someone else; thus cheaply columns may be filled nowadays. However, I repeat that “Ephesian” probably would not quite associate himself with certain expressions added by his plagiarist, who does not shrink from anything, for instance, this:

“. . . indeed, there seems something super-natural about her ability to have had all these adventures. For she could have been considered handsome only had she been a bloodhound . . .”. Again: “Her one child was a hunchback, and died after an ailing infancy. This must have been an eternal shame and grief to her warm vigorous animal nature”.

Madame Blavatsky never had a child at all and her sexlessness was proverbial among all who knew her; her writings, of course, would advise any critic of this sexlessness even were there no other testimony. As for the “hound” simile, I can only say that rarely in all my literary career have I read anything so wantonly cruel and brutal; for coarse, horse wit of the kind, one would have to get out of literature altogether and on to some street pavement. There is one photo of Madame Blavatsky that should not have been published, for she is obviously swollen with rheumatism and suffering pain that conquers even the usual expression of her marvellous eyes; but even so, there is the distinction of the shape of the forehead and the strange light above the brows that shows forth in every Blavatsky portrait. I shall try to reproduce in this “N. U.”, and if not in No. 6, two photos that although taken from prints speak for themselves in reply to the “D. T.” reviewer.

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I begin to be sure that nobody can attack Madame Blavatsky with mental impunity. They may go on abusing her almost to the end, but sooner or later, a wand seems to be laid on their brain and they have to perform *pu-ja!* Listen to this from the concluding paragraph:

“. . . feeling that she had the thirst for reality which is the root of all good living, followers crowded

around her. . .”

That sentence was certainly automatic, for no-one who realised the meaning of the words could have set pen to the rest of the review. An instant later, we are in the mud again: “But she had accustomed them to ask for miracles, herself to perform them. So she died prisoned in falsity, though the best in herself seems to have survived in spite of everything in the society she formed; which, after all, did and still does serve the purposes of a good many very admirable people”. Not one of whom, one may conclude, would consent to make the acquaintance of this reviewer. But what a petty chaos of ignorance, insult and patronage!

The review was timed to appear on May 8th, the anniversary of H.P.B.'s death when Theosophists of all groups and of none were preparing for their memorial gatherings. It is to be supposed that the Editor of the *Daily Telegraph* was unaware of this additional outrage to one of the foulest articles ever written about a woman beloved and honoured by thousands and, I add, who will be honoured so long as genius and literature endure.

*Circular.*

#### TO THE FRIENDS OF MADAME BLAVATSKY.

Dear Friends,

Our London Social Rooms are now settled at  
94, LADBROKE GROVE, LONDON, W.II.  
Tel : Park 7716 (Blavatsky)

There are a drawing-room on entrance floor and a semi-basement, light, quiet and comfortable for smoker-students and my office. At first, until I can organise volunteers to remain in charge, the place can only be generally open from 3 p.m. to 10.30 p.m. Tuesdays and 10 a.m. to 10.30 p.m. Wednesdays, when I shall be there. *Opening day: June 7th, 1938.* Visitors, Wednesdays, 4 to 6 and 8 to 10 p.m. Tea and coffee may be ordered.

A Friend has guaranteed half the rent for two years and I want the rest and running expenses. Also, I want gifts of books helpful to the Defence of H.P.B. and her Works for the library. Our Transcript Branches and Members are preparing typed scripts of all the out-of-print pamphlets, reports, etc., concerning the Defence. We do not desire any books dealing with controversies that have arisen since H.P.B.'s death, unless these directly affect the Defence.

We also want pictures and photos of H.P.B. and of places where she lived, and of Olcott, Damodar and others of the early period.

A special group will be formed of serious and disciplined students only to deal with the documentation of the *Mahatma Letters* and *Letters of H.P.B. to A. P. Sinnett*, these directly affecting the defence. Copies of these books will be received with special gratitude. Donors of books should inscribe their names inside.

Our outside work for the next six months will be the circulation of our new explanatory leaflet; to be sent to Clergy, Editors, M.P.'s, Teachers and other professional people, landlords, tenants, tradesmen, anyone

and everyone.

*THE SEED WILL BEAR ITS OWN FRUIT.* 10,000 nearly are already out, and we aim at 100,000 this summer. Some Friends are despatching them in hundreds and everyone can send or give a few. The leaflet need only be folded in three, blank space outermost. put in a small trade envelope, open with flap turned in; halfpenny stamp. Some over-lapping will do no harm, quite the contrary.

Yours sincerely,

BEATRICE HASTINGS.

*General Hon. Sec. F.M.B.*

All communications to 4, BEDFORD ROW, WORTHING, SUSSEX, ENGLAND.

#### FUNDS.

The more money we receive, the wider we can spread our propaganda to enlighten the public.

“All you can take with you out of this world is what you give away.” (H.P.B.)

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In September, we shall begin weekly Talks on Madame Blavatsky, at 94. Friends who can speak please send in their names.

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By the generosity of a Subscriber, this number will be sent to the world Press.



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Miss Elsa Tornblad and 47 Swedish Friends will begin the next list in "N.U." No. 6.

*(To be continued)*

#### NOTES.

There is scarcely time left to say a word. This number is only the originally intended 16 pages because I am deep in Vol. 3 tackling the formidable Solovyoff Jericho (Solovyoff is coming first, before Shrine and phenomena), and also in the business of our Social Rooms. But I wanted to make H.P.B. a present for her birthday and begin publishing the Roll of Honour, and so—Cheerio !

Details of FRIENDS' organisation, review of many reviews and all else held over to No. 6.

## **THE FRIENDS OF MADAME BLAVATSKY**

#### NOTE.

In the spring of 1872, in Cairo, Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky started a society called "La Société Spirite", her objects being, firstly, to convince the public of the reality of "spiritualistic" phenomena, and, secondly, to demonstrate the scientific basis of the manifestations and the possibility of repeating certain phenomena at will. She began this work against the advice of her friend, the famous Coptic

occultist, Paul Metamon, who said that it was premature. The Society had been in existence for about two weeks when, in the absence of Madame Blavatsky, some mediums whom she had engaged organised a fraudulent séance, and were caught; the Society then came to an end. Among the sitters was a Miss E. Cutting, later, Madame Coulomb. She was of Levantine extraction, spoke Italian, but knew some English and French, and she had been employed as nursery governess in an Egyptian family. Being dismissed, she had taken service in a small hotel. After the exposure of the mediums, which she witnessed (testifying, incidentally, to the absence of Madame Blavatsky), she called on H.P.B., showed sympathy and lent her some money.

H.P.B. left Egypt, went to Russia and Paris, and thence, July 1873, to New York, where the Theosophical Society was founded, in 1875. She left America for India in 1879 and set up the headquarters of the T.S. in Bombay.

Meanwhile, Miss Cutting had become Madame Coulomb and, with her husband, a Frenchman born in Egypt, had left that country, bankrupt, and, after wanderings here and there, had fallen on evil days in Ceylon. She read in a newspaper of Madame Blavatsky's arrival in India, wrote to her, and received a friendly reply. More correspondence followed and then, without announcing their coming, the Coulombs appeared at Bombay headquarters on March 28th, 1880, their fares having been paid by the French Consul at Galle. The penniless couple were welcomed and taken in, and soon they became, respectively, housekeeper and handy-man of the establishment; and they made themselves invaluable as domestics.

But Madame Coulomb was conceited, envious and incredibly ambitious; and she soon showed her character. As early as July, 1881, she furtively slandered Madame Blavatsky and offered, unsuccessfully, to sell "secrets" to the "Bombay Guardian". The Theosophical Society made much progress and in Dec. 1882, moved to Adyar, Madras. Here, the couple did pretty much as they pleased so far as the household was concerned. But, as Mme. C. remarks on page 50 of her pamphlet ("Some Account of my Association with Madame Blavatsky." Out of print now.). "There is no peace for the wicked, says Isaiah, no more was there any for the Coulombs". She blames Madame Blavatsky for the lack of peace, but the case seems to have been that Mme. C. was obsessed by an envious hatred of H.P.B. that amounted to a disease and that time only increased. The climax arrived when Madame Blavatsky, on the eve of sailing from Bombay for Europe, Feb. 20, 84, prevented Mme. C. from borrowing 2,000 Rupees from a rich Theosophist. When leaving the ship, after saying good-bye, Mme. C. told H.P.B.'s servant, Babula, that she would be revenged on his mistress. She returned to Adyar from Bombay and, a week or two later, the Board of Control that had been set up to take charge of the household during the absence of Madame Blavatsky, began to hear about "trap-doors" for fraudulent phenomena. Mme. C.'s evil tongue being well-known, no-one believed what she said, especially as she denied having said it, when tackled on the subject. However, the Board had discovered pilfering by the Coulombs, and set about collecting information from well-known Theosophists. Affidavits were made that testified to Mme. C.'s habits of secretly slandering Madame Blavatsky and the Society in general, and of attempting to get money from members. It was decided to expel the couple; they resisted, refused to leave. On May 18th, H.P.B. cabled to the Board authority *to demand the keys* of her private rooms from the Coulombs. This indicates her sense of innocence.

Then it was found that a hole in the wall and trap-doors actually did exist in Madame Blavatsky's rooms. The discovery did not shake the faith of the members on the spot who, one and all, Indians and Europeans, agreed that no fraud could have been carried out already by these contrivances, obviously only in process of construction by the man Coulomb. The couple were got rid of at last on May 23rd.

Mme. C. had mentioned no compromising letters, although she had tried to blackmail the Board of Control into paying her 3,000 Rupees as the price of her peaceful departure. But, in August, three months later, she sold to the Rev. Patterson, Editor of the "Christian College Magazine" at Madras, a bundle of seventy letters, all allegedly written by H.P.B., and nineteen of which contained instructions to the Coulombs to produce fraudulent "phenomena". Mr. Patterson published the letters (or, rather, notes and selected extracts from letters). One result of this was the despatch to India by the Society for Psychical Research of Mr. Hodgson to investigate the affair. The world is only too well aware that the S.P.R. branded Madame Blavatsky as an impostor.

What the public does not know is that Madame Blavatsky was never given a hearing. She was treated to the sort of "justice" that is now practised on a gigantic scale by the dictators. The S.P.R. constituted itself judge, jury and prosecuting counsel, allowed in neither defendant, defending counsel nor witnesses, condemned the accused in absence and published in print its judgment. This beats even Hitlerism.

Time, however, seems bound to work for justice. So far as men can be just, they rectify injustice in the end, even although the victim may be dead. This is the supreme human tribute to Ideal Justice. Men must keep this ideal or perish, and they know it. When Voltaire threw up all his studies to vindicate Jean Calas, when Zola faced ruin to defend Dreyfus, they worked for the universal defence of ideal justice.

Of recent years, people have looked into the case of Madame Blavatsky, have discovered the dictatorial insolence with which she was "judged", have discovered, also, that the records available tell heavily in her favour. Whatever may be the explanation of the phenomena she performed, these could not have been carried out in the manner charged against her. Most of the case, as this was made out, can be torn to shreds by reference to the records. These records are now being brought to public light in a series of small, packed volumes, "Defence of Madame Blavatsky". This series is intended to appeal to the more intellectual among the world-public and (albeit the writer is not connected with any Theosophical Society) to Theosophical students. A popular story of the whole affair will be issued later.

## **FRIENDS OF MADAME BLAVATSKY**

This is an independent organisation appealing to all lovers of justice and intellectual and individual liberty. Aim: to procure the public withdrawal of the Report of the Society for Psychical Research, 1885, that condemned Madame Blavatsky as an impostor. The registration fee is fixed at one shilling so as to admit of the widest possible membership, but Members will subscribe according to their means. Adherents may send collective lists; cards of membership will be sent individually.

Started publicly only in January, 1938, the Friends numbered adherents in fifteen countries by the end of March, and its sphere widens daily. Applications for membership and subscriptions should be sent to the General Hon. Sec. (*pro tern*), Mrs. Beatrice Hastings, 4, Bedford Row, Worthing, Sussex, England.

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Cheques and orders payable to Mrs. Beatrice Hastings, 4 Bedford Row, Worthing, Sussex, England.

Mrs. Beatrice Hastings is a writer well-known in literary circles, but, having written mostly anonymously, is unknown to the general public. The quotations below may, therefore, be convenient.

April 14th, 1932: "Beatrice Hastings, the cleverest, woman writer of her day."—*Everyman*.

1934. (Mr. Victor Neuburg): "Mrs. Hastings, the famous critic, star turn of the 'New Age' when that paper was by far the best-written in London."—*Sunday Referee*.

June 1st, 1933. (Londoner's Diary): "I can recall only one other Englishwoman who publishes in both French and English, and that is Mrs. Beatrice Hastings."—*Evening Standard*.

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