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H. P. B.

by C. J. [Charles Johnston]

When I first met H. P. B. in the spring of 1887, she was already an old and valued friend. I had been first introduced to her by reading A. P. Sinnett's *Occult World* in November, 1884, and *Esoteric Buddhism* in the following spring; and had been completely convinced of the truth of her message, of the reality of the Masters, and of her position as Messenger of the Great Lodge.

This conviction was tested by the attack made on her by the Society for Psychological Research in London, in June, 1885, when I made a vigorous protest in H. P. B.'s defence, and by further study of *Isis Unveiled*, *Five Years of Theosophy* and *Light on the Path* in the months that followed. H. P. B. came to England in May, 1887, and settled with some of her friends at Maycot, a villa in Upper Norwood near the Crystal Palace. I was in London for Indian Civil Service examinations, and was able to make arrangements through these friends to visit her. When I entered the room, she was sitting writing, with her back to the door. She turned to greet me, the powerful face lit up by a smile in the great blue eyes, her hair light golden brown, naturally waved or rippled, and parted and drawn back.

She was at work on the first volume of *The Secret Doctrine*, which came out at the end of 1888; she talked about some of the ideas it contained, and such was the immense generosity of her nature that she never made her visitor feel young, ignorant, inexperienced. There was an unconscious, whole-hearted humility about her, as rare as it was beautiful. One was always aware of the largeness and dignity of H. P. B.'s nature, yet there was nothing stilted or artificial about it. When at Lansdowne Road in the summer of 1888, whither she had moved from Maycot with her loyal friends, she stood behind my chair at lunch, stroking my hair and accusing me of using a tallow candle-end to keep it smooth, - there was not the least lapse from dignity: it was the humour of a good natured-Titan.

An immense feeling of power surrounded her; it was like being in a room with a tremendously active volcano, though eruptions — and there were eruptions - had less to do with that impression of power than had the steadily maintained force that was present in everything she did, — was present equally when she seemed to be doing nothing.

In the summer of 1888, H. P. B. was seated at a small table in the drawing-room at Lansdowne Road, not writing nor playing solitaire, as she so often did. I was seated at the opposite side of the table, talking to her of my coming journey to India. H. P. B. began to move her right hand, as if tapping the table with her fingers, but stopping some six inches from the surface. The tap came, just the same, seemingly from the point on the table which she would have touched with her fingers. She did this half a dozen times without any break in the talk. Then I said: "That is interesting! Suppose you make the raps come on the back of my hand!" and I laid my closed hand before her on the table. The raps continued to come, with a cracking noise as before, and with the sensation of a spurt of electricity coming from my hand toward her finger tips. Then I said:

"It would be still more interesting if you made the raps come on the top of my head!" H. P. B. smiled and, raising her hand till it was about a foot from my head, which was slightly bent forward, she produced half a dozen raps, felt and heard as before. Then she said, in answer to a question:

“I could only show you how it is done if you were clairvoyant!”

In talking to her, one had always the sense of power, wisdom, integrity, humour. But at rare intervals there was a notable change. It was as though a door had opened within her, a door into the infinite worlds. One had a sense of a greater than H. P. B. speaking, a tremendous authority and force.

I once asked her what her own experience was during such visitations. She said that it was as if she stepped out and stood at one side, listening, keenly interested, fully remembering afterwards all that was said. “Nothing of the medium about it!” she added.

Rightly to judge her works requires a long perspective. Writing in 1887 she accurately foretold the immense revolution in physics which began with, the discovery of X-rays, Becquerel rays, radium and the miracle of radioactivity which transformed the whole of science; she even foretold the date — “before 1897”. Years before, an article published by her declared that the day of a four-dimensional world was at hand. What was then an enigma is now a commonplace. What she wrote concerning gravity should be compared with the latest views. The quantum theory of light is constructively discussed in an essay, *An lumen sit corpus*. What she wrote concerning the Buddhism of Tibet, derided by orientalist, has been approved by high Lamas.

Far greater is the value of her spiritual teaching. She outlined the path of immortal life, indicating the signposts on that immemorial way. Those who have had the devotion, the sacrifice, the fortitude to follow her guidance, know of their own knowledge that she truly imparts the wisdom of the Way of Life.
