

THE OCCULTIST OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

H. P. B.

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[Reviewing in the *Sunday Referee* of January 7th the second volume of *The Complete Works of H. P. Blavatsky*, whom he described as "an overwhelming and essentially noble personality," Victor B. Neuburg wrote:—

This appreciation may seem exaggerated, emanating from one who is not and has never been connected with the T.S.; but it is now due to suggest that possibly, when the true history of the period she covered comes to be recorded, with all its effects and ramifications, H. P. B. may be hailed as the greatest figure of her age.

In response to a request for a more detailed consideration of his judgment, Mr. Neuburg has sent us the following article—EDS.]

The publication of H. P. B.'s *Opera Omnia* erects a monument to her achievements more enduring than brass; for it is likely that the Sun will outlast her daughter-planets.

Every great life—a life that is "outstanding"—has the quality of uniqueness; the higher we arise in the evolutionary scale, the more our individuality shows itself; for the more "individual," or undividable, do we become. Through intense differentiation we arise towards unity.

The many resemble each other, more or less, in their personalities; the few individualities are alike only in their uniqueness; in their characteristics, their lives, they differ infinitely.

It is these differences, these infinite mutabilities of personality, that cause what we call genius, which is simply an aspect of race-embodiment in an individual. There is a fierce controversy always and inevitably about the merits or demerits, qualifications or lacks, of the Great Ones; for they "strike" all those whom they contact at a different angle of personality; again, a characteristic of greatness.

By this test, H. P. B. may be considered profitably by the impartial student and historian. Everything possible to be said about anyone has been said about her. There is no need here to give the names, even, of her detractors and panegyrists;

they run into scores; no two are alike. From the unveiled hostility of J. N. Maskelyne and G. W. Foote to the appreciation of G. R. S. Mead and the Countess Wachtmeister, H. P. B. has been criticised in every conceivable way.

It is only great souls who cause this infinite variety of reactions. There is a crystallization of race-experiences that brings the gift of seeming, and of being, all things to all men. Here is the mark of Attainment; the price to be paid is nearly always, humanly speaking, that of Attainder. Attainder and Attainment together sum up the relationship between the Adept and his fellowmen; this is provable from all our records. And by this standard H. P. B. being adjudged, she is proven indubitably of the Blood Royal of the Masters.

The ordinary human of to-day possesses more facts, probably, than were ever available before in the planet's history. Wisdom remains as rare as ever. The streetman is "better informed" than Pythagoras or Archimedes; that is, he is better supplied with facts. But mere facts are to wisdom as pigments to the creative artist. In mere facts there is no science; it is in the weaving and blending and harmonising and correlating of facts that wisdom consists. It matters very little to us, if it matters at all, that Herodotus and Paracelsus were "incorrect" in detail; in Mind man moulds facts; facts never mould man; and so, in their separate ways and degrees, Herodotus and Paracelsus "stand" for wisdom—the wisdom of their age— as against mere knowledge. These men were, in to-day's speech, Adepts or Masters. Knowledge is not wisdom, as a polished stone is very rarely a diamond.

H. P. B.'s works all give clues needed to an understanding of her life and being. For the task wherewith she was entrusted it would be impossible to imagine a more unlikely past than was hers; it was doubtful, shadowy, mysterious, compromised. Accused of fraud and spying; at one time a "spiritualist medium," with unnumerable shady contacts with life and humans, it can be asserted with complete accuracy that, of all the conscious beings upon this planet of paradox and romance incredible, H. P. B. was the last to be entrusted with the custody of the Pearl of Wisdom that is the product of human tears and laughter; that Pearl had been maturing for aeons in the Great Sea of thought. Yet the unexpected and impossible happened; paradox again transcended platitude; the choice of the devas made the prejudices and the predilections of unenlightenment look small and mean, and pitifully inadequate. The "senders" saw

from a different angle; that is all. The difference in view-point between man and deva is ultimately a mere matter of focus.

The age into which H. P. B. plunged—that is really the most appropriate word—was an age in which, in the general break-up of creed-crusts that were unable to withstand the acid tests of science, there was a real danger to western humanity that the outer crust would be mistaken for the core or *cor* itself.

Had that happened, the race (this is a magic word) of Humanity would have been retarded for an aeon; for the western tradition of civilization would have lost sight entirely of the Human Goal. This nearly happened in the mid-nineteenth century; and the knowledge that this was so, and that she personally had to restore the vision of the Goal, will be found to explain much that is otherwise inexplicable in the life and labours of H. P. B.

H. P. B.'s passions, prejudices, controversies, impatiences, irritabilities, abnormalities of custom and habit, are all understandable with this key. To the truth, as she held it, she subordinated everything; her own life, work, happiness and reputation included. She was a Master; no more to be judged by human standards only than were Paracelsus or Cagliostro. It is fatally easy to criticise the Masters; it is nearly always impossible to fathom their motives. It is they whose vision, reflected in the minds of men, leads humanity onwards. That vision sometimes, by its brilliance, blinds the visionary to the ordinary affairs of life, so easy to the average human. So, from the conventional angle, the Great Ones "act askew". They remain Great Ones, nevertheless. And a man's real spiritual worth is to be measured by his view of them.

Had sight of the Human Goal been completely lost, even for a moment, the temporary death of the Western Ideal would have ensued; this was the spiritual objective of the Dark Ones. It is not yet guessed how nearly they succeeded.

From behind the veil emerged H. P. B. with the Torch; that those who had earned the Sight might see ideas in their true relationship to Reality.

As a result of the conflict behind, what was happening in the Western world? Specialised scientists on one side of the house, and religious fanatics on the other, were brawling with the Truth between them, unperceived by either army, and being pummelled and crushed to death in the conflict. H. P. B. intervened to rescue Truth ere Truth got battered beyond recognition. She succeeded. Such is her achievement.

Between religionists and scientists H. P. B. herself was all but crucified. An embodied Force, she assailed on the one hand, those whose evolutionary scheme stopped short at humanity, refusing to rise above it; and, on the other hand, those who mistook symbols for concrete things, events and facts. In a phrase, she was a spiritual protagonist with the opposed legions of materialism assailing her on either side.

The opposing armies had but one point in common; hatred of H. P. B., whose interest was centred in Truth Herself, and not in any partial and distorted presentation of Her. This was at the time when Truth and Her interests were almost completely subordinated to partisanship.

There is a tradition—a tradition not without considerable confirmation in history—that during the last quarter of each century a Messenger shall be sent to the West; a Messenger who shall bring light to that section of western humanity that is ready for an inner illumination. An intensified campaign occurs in the last century of a millennium. This is part of what is loosely called the Hermetic Doctrine. H. P. B. was the Light-Bearer of the nineteenth century to the western world.

A day or two ago I met the Editor of one of London's most famous weeklies; a man who is a philosopher, an "independent," a man of enormous although specialised, erudition. He compared H. P. B. to Mrs. Eddy . . .

Those who hold this view would be less certain if they would glance at a little book—one of H. P. B.'s minor works—called *Nightmare Tales*. The first tale has for title "A Bewitched Life". There is no particular distinction in the style; but there is so much distinction in the idea, and in the way in which the writer works it out, that it is an unassailable statement that the writer's knowledge was first-hand. No mere amateur or dabbler, no ordinary deriver, in Occultism could have written this tale, which bears the mark of the fountainhead.

I have heard a fool declare that *Zanoni* was the work of a madman. It does not occur to the fool that there may be realms of the mind and being beyond his own gaze and reach. That is why he *is* a fool—the Fool of the Taro. The uninstructed criticism of H. P. B. is just as foolish. Your orthodox religionist, in the Victorian Age, used to declare, in the abundance of his ignorance, that Evolution was not true because a man was not a monkey. He thought that that statement disposed finally of Darwin. Yet many of H. P. B.'s critics, many of whom were students of science and Darwinians, criticised, or rather, abused H. P. B. with the same complacent ignorance wherewith the re-

ligious bigots assailed Darwin. Darwin's defenders were many and influential; H. P. B.'s few and, with an exception or two, obscure.

The obscurantist children of the Dark did their damndest to "dowse" the Lucifer of their age. By reason of a long and complicated miracle they failed. The long and complicated miracle was H. P. B.'s charmed life.

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To-day the highest and clearest thought-atmosphere is enhuied by the incalculably potent tinge brought to the western mind by H. P. B. and her circle. Before the advent of the modern Theosophical Idea, Reason, in the large karmic sense wherein it is used by Éliphas Lévi had been forgotten. That Reason, an all-embracing Reason including within itself the twin doctrines of Rebirth and Fate, was restored to the West.

For centuries Europe had blundered on at the theological mercy—which is mercilessness—of rival superstitions that vented their mutual bigotries in torturings, burnings, mutilations, ostracisms. In the mid-nineteenth century these superstitions were to be vanquished by a new religion called Science, which replaced superstition by denying that there was any truth worth the title that was not scientifically provable, "scientifically" being understood strictly in a nineteenth-century, that is, religious, sense.

H. P. B. hated religion— as popularly understood—herself; and she assailed this new religion calling itself Science; partly because it *was* a new religion; partly because it denied the possibility of what—to her—was the only reality that counted; the Path that leads for amoeba to deva. She denied the Evolutionary scheme of her century because it stopped short at men; not because it "went too far," as the religionists asserted; but because it did not go far enough.

H. P. B. transcended her age; just as Socrates, Bruno, Confucious, Asoka, Pythagorus, Lucretius, transcended their ages. An age grows towards the Teacher; usually after the Teacher has passed beyond the hope of earthly reward. It is the Paradox again.

Looking around Europe and Asia to-day we may find scores of societies, groups, cults, periodicals; all influenced, consciously, by the heritage of idea—the agelong wisdom—that H. P. B. restored to the West. The White Group that is said to hold the destinies of Europe in its "gift" chose the most improbable in-

strument conceivable because it was to prove the most efficient. Once again, it is all a question of focus; and the Intelligences that despatched H. P. B. as Messenger to her Age did not err. Her mission has been accomplished. She changed the current of European thought, directing it towards the sun.

Between two fires of idea the modern world is scorched; two tyrannies, both seeking as prey and prize the soul of man, beset us. Our Youth, in despair, knows not to which—if to either—to turn for aid. There is the hope that it will not turn. Before it lies the path that stretches from the beginnings of life to beyond a divinity incarnate—into Samadhi, and, it may be, beyond. No man, possibly no god, knows. But the very existence of the Path was forgotten in Europe until H. P. B. re-discovered it for herself, and announced her re-discovery to the West.

VICTOR B. NEUBURG