

Open letter to the American Section of the Theosophical Society



Abstract and train of thoughts¹

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Refuting the false and malicious reports and insinuations by M.A. Lane, a thoroughly dishonest man and a wicked slanderer. 3

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¹ Title page illustration by Painted-Bees.

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Having learnt that an ex-Fellow of the Theosophical Society, Mr. Michael-Angelo Lane, is going about the United States spreading false and malicious reports about the Society he once belonged to, its founders, officers, and especially about the undersigned; I, H.P. Blavatsky, give herewith the true history of our acquaintance with Mr. M.A. Lane. Were there not an ocean between us, and did each Fellow know me personally, there would be no need of this letter. As, however, Mr. Lane is going about among you, from one city to the other, trying to destroy your confidence in all of us, the case is too serious to leave it unnoticed. Already he has succeeded in persuading several of the most honourable Theosophists to break with the Society. If it were only a question of myself, whom he represents as an old fraud “who will wear herself out,” his falsehoods would little matter; but he aims at and threatens something immensely higher and more important than myself; namely — the Theosophical Society, and the idea of universal brotherhood, which he denies to it, because it is absent from a few personalities. Therefore it is absolutely necessary to show those whom he tries to pervert what kind of a character they believe in.

The first time that Mr. Lane’s name was brought to my notice, was last year, in October, by Mr. W.Q. Judge, when [552] he came to England. At what time, or when, Mr. Lane joined the Theosophical Society is unknown to me, but it must have been in 1883 or 1884, as I gather that he was in correspondence with Mr. Dāmodar Māvalankar, who left India for Tibet at the very beginning of 1885, when I myself finally left Madras for Europe. It follows then, that I had never seen him till the present year, nor heard of him in any way calculated to draw my attention, especially as from March 1884, I was in Europe up to December of that year, and knew nothing of the said correspondence.

I felt every time Mr. Lane’s name was mentioned a cold disagreeable sensation in me, which I could not conquer.

Mr. Judge seemed most friendly to Mr. Lane, and tried hard to awaken sympathy for him in me, by arguing that since Mr. Lane received a letter (or letters) from a Master, *he must be a good man and Theosophist*. To this I objected, replying that as I had never heard, nor knew anything about any one of the Masters favouring Mr. Lane with their correspondence, I could not say whether the said letter (or letters) was genuine. Mr. Judge said he thought so; but being very busy, I paid little attention to

the plea. I write this from my best recollections, one among which remains always distinct and vivid: I felt every time Mr. Lane's name was mentioned a cold disagreeable sensation in me, which I could not conquer, but which, as Mr. Judge seemed so friendly to his correspondent, I did not speak of. Beyond a passive resistance to his plea, to write and answer myself some letter with questions he had received from Mr. Lane, I have always avoided hurting Mr. Judge's feelings by a direct refusal to do so, for I saw he thought me very heartless not to take any notice of such an earnest young man. Finally, before returning to America, Mr. Judge left the said "Lane letters" made up in a small package on my desk. There they remained untouched for months, until finally, stored away probably with other papers, they disappeared. I have *never opened, not even touched them*; I could not, for they seemed to repel me whenever my eye fell upon them.

But I believe that even Mr. Judge knew M.A. Lane only through correspondence, until the latter came to work with him in the *Path* office in April last. For on the 8th of that month Mr. Judge wrote to me of his "new man and friend," a mystic who had once gone to India but never reached it, [553] and who was "a good young man," desirous of working for the Theosophical Society with all his soul. Then on the 25th of April I received Mr. Lane's application for the Theosophical Society, with Mr. Judge's recommendation. My first feeling was to refuse. It was just after Dr. E. Coues' treacherous and false joint letter in the *R.-P. J.*, wherein he tried to father upon me a deception and a lie, and I knew that the "good young man" was *en rapport* with my enemies. But no sooner had I decided to reject the application than I was advised to accept him *on probation*, as his true character would be made to appear before three months were over. I did as I was ordered. Then came letters expressing Mr. Lane's desire of coming to London to work with us. I did not like the idea, yet since I was told to do so, I even telegraphed to him to come.

From the moment he set foot in England his behaviour was very extraordinary. Instead of coming direct to London, he went "travelling" without even notifying us of his arrival, until we heard he was in Dublin, trying "mildly" to upset our Fellows of the Dublin Lodge with "his cynical and sceptical remarks," as was said in a letter. He failed in this, and finally came to London. Then began an unspoken drama of systematic day-by-day treachery which deceived everyone in the house excepting myself, since I had been doubly warned from India and from America.

He was received with the utmost kindness, and obtained the full sympathy of Countess Wachtmeister. He asked her to be allowed to stay with us, offered to work for the Society, and lived, therefore, in our house, treated as a brother by all. Instead of working for Theosophy, however, he did nothing, either for it or for us. But from the first day he went into the office at Duke Street, he began to work systematically on Mr. C.F. Wright's sensitive nature, and almost succeeded in upsetting his confidence in his best friends and his colleagues, and even in the whole Theosophical Society. Fortunately, Mr. Wright who is of an honourable and sincere, if even somewhat weak nature, recognized his error in good time. Those who want to know what he has to say of his late "friend" Mr. Lane, may read his sworn affidavit, just sent to Mr. Judge.

[554]

I do not know what M.A. Lane may, or may not, be saying of his relations with me; nor do I care. But all those who lived in the house will testify, that after greeting and talking with him for five minutes, I told him frankly that I had too much work to do to be able to lose time by attending to him personally. After that for the whole duration of his stay, which lasted several weeks, I never gave him a chance of remaining alone with me; I saw very little of him, and that only in the evenings before other persons, and refused point-blank Countess Wachtmeister's entreaties to permit the "poor young man" to have half-an-hour's *private* conversation with me. He had made her believe that he could do no work because of being so terribly wretched. He pretended that he was "on the eve of committing suicide through unrequited love," that I alone could give him comfort and good advice. As neither myself nor the Society have anything to do with love requited or otherwise, I took this pretext to refuse. I had my reasons for doing so. The fact of having remained alone and without witnesses with me, would have given him the opportunity of putting into my mouth any statement he pleased and swearing to it. If he maintains that he has ever had a *strictly* private conversation with me, then he utters one more falsehood. I knew that he had come in the hope of finding out something damaging against the Society and especially myself; and what I knew was verified, as he said so to Mr. Wright, adding that he had been sent from America by friends to learn what he could about our *frauds* and to expose them. Several times during meals I looked him straight in the eyes, asking: "Well, Mr. Lane, have you found out what you wanted about me?" and every time he winced and tried to turn the question into a joke. Several days before my departure for France I said to him that he could receive no more esoteric instruction from me, nor remain in the Section. He asked why, and I simply answered that I knew he was "not interested in the teachings." He said nothing. He pretended to me several times that he was anxious to "vindicate my character" from the attacks of the S.P.R. and Hodgson's lies,¹ and that he wanted, therefore, to write my life. I told him I did not want him to do so, as he knew nothing of me really, and refused to [555] give him "facts" about myself. He tried the same with others, but failed. He pretended also great friendship for me, and even asked me to leave with him a pair of old silk gloves that I had taken off during a drive, with what intent I know not. About a fortnight after he came, he suddenly disappeared for ten days, and upon returning said he had gone to enjoy English scenery. In truth he had gone to the Isle of Wight where was at that time a certain person, then and now the most bitter enemy of the Society and myself, and with whom he had entered *into alliance offensive and defensive* against us. I knew all this, but said nothing; simply allowing him as much rope as he needed to hang himself. He was very cynical in his conversations, and tried several times to draw out of me opinions as to various members of the Theosophical Society in America, talking especially about four persons, two out of whom he has now turned against the Society, telling sundry anecdotes of them, and laughing at their credulity. He spoke of a letter one of them had received from a "Master" last year, in a letter from Adyar, asking what I thought of it, to which I replied that I knew nothing of it. The whole time he remained with us he did *absolutely* nothing, but go about ques-

¹ [In 1986, H.P. Blavatsky was exonerated by Dr. Vernon Harrison, Ph.D., Member of the Society for Psychical Research, London, England. For an in-depth analysis consult <https://www.theosociety.org/pasadena/hpb-spr/hpbspr-h.htm> — ED. PHIL.]

tioning everyone and trying to pick up all the information he could about me. As however I have no secrets whatever, and that for three years almost there is not a letter or a document that comes by post or otherwise which could not be read by the Countess, Mr. Bertram Keightley, and now Mr. Mead, who all three help me as secretaries, I cared little for his watching me, but watched him in my turn.

I have proofs that Mr. Lane is only one of a regular band of conspirators bent upon destroying our Society. As to his natural deception, it is absolutely sickening.

As this is not a psychological study but the narrative of plain facts, I need not dwell upon it much longer, but will state a last fact. Finding me invariably the same with him, he mistook this attitude for ignorance of his designs on my part. I hate no one, nor is it in my nature to do so. Moreover, thinking his doubts were sincere, I only pitied him; and thus went so far as to laugh more than once at him to his face, for failing to find out any of the proofs he wanted, and acted more as a friend than one who mistrusted him. But now I have lost faith even in the sincerity of his doubts, for *I have proofs that Mr. Lane is only one of a regular band of [556] conspirators bent upon destroying our Society. As to his natural deception, it is absolutely sickening.* When bidding me goodbye with several other friends who had accompanied me to the railway station, when I was already seated in the carriage and all were standing round me, *he suddenly bent over, and kissing me quite tenderly on the cheek, begged me to assure him that I would soon return.* I confess that *Judas kiss* was more than I could stand, and I almost betrayed myself. He had told me he would wait for Colonel Olcott's arrival. Instead of that, on the following morning he took up his trunk and carpet-bag and sailed off to America without saying one word to anybody, without even thanking the Countess for the hospitality he had found in our house. Had she not been accidentally in the dining room when he looked in as he was leaving the house, he would have left London without even telling the additional lie that he was going to Scotland.

He had come to find out fraud, evil, interested motives, humbug or charlatanry, and he found instead half-a-dozen of the most earnest men and women, working with an unselfishness and singleness of purpose he is unable to understand, let alone to emulate.

Such is the true story of our short personal relations with Mr. M.A. Lane. He had come to find out fraud, evil, interested motives, humbug or charlatanry, and he found instead half-a-dozen of the most earnest men and women, working with an unselfishness and singleness of purpose he is unable to understand, let alone to emulate. He found *absolutely nothing* against me, except, perhaps, that my temper is not always of the mildest, when excruciating pains and overwork are added to the daily pleasure of hearing and reading the brutal attacks of my enemies upon my character my work in the Society, and private life. He found us, in fact, as we are: struggling to preserve the existence of the Theosophical Society, to spread Theosophy, to make the world better through the dissemination of the noblest Eastern teachings, if not through personal example, since we are all human, and that *errare humanum est*. He saw the two or three Theosophists blessed with some income give it away almost to the last penny to enable the British Section, the "Blavatsky Lodge,"

and the Esoteric Section of the Theosophical Society to have their meeting rooms, an office, and a journal to continue their work. And he found other Theosophists, having no income of their own but good official positions and good salaries, giving up both in order to devote their [557] time entirely to the work of the Theosophical Society, for which labour they could get only a poor board and lodging, and very meagre pocket money. This is what Mr. Lane saw and found there, where he had come to discover fraud; and knowing all this, he never raised a finger to help us carry the heavy burden, but lived amongst us as a “brother,” erratic and lazy, still charitably excused, forgiven, and sympathised with by those to whom he was coolly preparing to deal the *coup de grâce* of Judas-Cain — a kiss, and a death blow.

May Karma decide between us and him!

And now he is going to and fro in the United States, creating disturbances among the Theosophical Societies, inventing and writing falsehoods, most of which come back to us. He speaks of his seven years’ membership in the Theosophical Society, calling it “a fraudulent universal brotherhood,” and boasts of his “intimate association with the leaders of the *thing*” (the Theosophical Society). As he cannot mean, under this term of leaders, Colonel Olcott, whom he never met, nor myself, as there never was any intimacy between us, he means Mr. Judge: only his “intimate association” with the latter brings out the more vividly the honesty and sincerity of the one, and the perverse and unscrupulous nature of the other. W.Q. Judge, himself incapable of deception and treachery, trusted M.A. Lane in more than one way, and showed himself *an honest man*; and M.A. Lane, who deceived W.Q. Judge, in more than one way too, did not prove himself an honest man, but a traitor and a liar. I have but to bring one of his slanderous falsehoods to the notice of all; and this will suffice: he said to several persons in New York, who are my witnesses, that I was “in league with Mr. Judge for a large money-getting scheme, a conspiracy to obtain big sums of money under false pretences.”

The purpose of this letter to the American Section is to forewarn our Fellows about Mr. Lane, and to tell him to his face that he lies.

Now I write this *open letter* to all, in order to tell him to his face that he lies. I challenge him to prove what he says; not by secret hints and insinuations, as is his wont; not by asking his correspondents to give him some guarantee of good faith, if he tells them *what he knows*; but by coming out boldly and fearlessly, as an honourable man, sure of his [558] facts, and who has every proof in hand. Unless he does so, he will have to suffer for his falsehoods, for even theosophical patience has its limits. And I say that that which he brings against me is nothing new, nothing he learnt while living with us, but only the hybrid fruit born from old, unverified and stale slanders of the Coulomb and Hodgson fabrications, blended with the more recent inventions of two other worthy persons whom he helps, and with one of whom he became on intimate terms in London, visiting that deadly enemy of ours while living with us as a guest and a brother. Some of these fabrications will not bear daylight, and he knows this; while others are of that kind which can only produce shouts of laughter among Theosophists, like the one invented by an expelled Fellow, who now publishes the cock-and-bull story about “Madame Blavatsky having been expelled

from the Theosophical Society,” which event, it is said, “caused much excitement in the Esoteric circles”!!

I now close in addressing myself to Mr. Lane personally.

- 1 I challenge and defy him to prove what he says about my conspiracy with Mr. Judge.
- 2 I challenge and defy him to show that I have ever received any money from anyone on fraudulent pretences, or was ever paid for so-called phenomena;
- 3 Or that I did not give almost every penny I have earned with my literary work to the Theosophical Society;
- 4 Or that even in those rare cases when I received from personal friends small sums, I have failed to turn them over to the Society, notwithstanding their expressed wish that I should keep them for my own use; or that I have invented the Masters;
- 5 Or produced by tricks bogus phenomena;
- 6 Or that I have ever asked or begged for money not only for myself but the Society;
- 7 Or to show on good authority that I have one penny in this world that I could call my own; and finally,
- 8 That the British Section, the “Blavatsky Lodge,” and the Esoteric Section have any of them more than a few pounds in their funds.
- 9 And he has to *prove* (not merely *to state*) that the working fund of the Esoteric Section for the establishment of which *labour of love on my part*, I received only curses, treachery, and vilification, putting up with all that for the sake of a few who are true and worthy, that this fund has not been kept alive chiefly with the sums furnished by a few [559] Fellows of the “Blavatsky Lodge,” American dollars being very rare guests in it.
- 10 He will also have to bring forward those members of the Esoteric Section, or Fellows of the Theosophical Society, who have ever been pressed personally for funds or asked for them by myself, from anyone in the United States, India, or England.

Let him prove this — but publicly, before a court if need be — if he would not be regarded by every honest man as a wicked slanderer.

I therefore defy him to produce one single proof.

Owing to my normal state of pennilessness, I can only work incessantly and suffer for the Theosophical Society, giving to *Lucifer*,¹ the *Revue Théosophique*, and the writing of books, my services *gratis*. I never have nor will I ever have a penny I can call my own — and do not feel at all ashamed to confess it. But shame on those who,

¹ For *the first time in my life*, I am opening a Subscription List for donations to *Lucifer* in that magazine, which has, otherwise, to be stopped, as every month brings in a large deficit. What with its being boycotted by the pious proprietors of the railway stalls, and the poor patronage of Theosophists, it is owing chiefly to Dr. Keightley's and Mr. Bertam Keightley's generosity that it was not stopped a year ago.

knowing this, slander me by inventing the contrary. Shame on those also who believe in such falsehoods on the mere word of a young man who has made himself now worthy of a *niche* along with the Coulombs, and other traitors.

I ask for no defence, expect no help, plead for no one's sympathy. I have now given up all hope in human fairness, and lost all faith in better days to come for myself. I am prepared for the worst kind of martyrdom, and would smile in its face. I work for TRUTH, and in accordance with my sacred pledge and vows, which I, at least, *will never break*. But I demand, in the name of Humanity, stern justice only, and that I should be judged on *facts*, not on the word of my enemies, none of whom have I ever offended consciously or unconsciously. Personally, I forgive them; but to defend the Theosophical Society I will fight till my last breath.

Bring forward irrecusable, undeniable proofs, all of you who would kill the Society and crush its faithful servant, H.P. Blavatsky; for gossip and even the most cunning [560] insinuations are played out. The day of shame for those who were credulous and weak enough not to discern truth from falsehood, sincerity from hypocrisy, loyalty from treachery, is perhaps at hand, and when it comes it will be a day of bitter regret for some.

Let that honest man whom I have ever wronged arise and denounce me.

Let any honourable person, whether man or woman, who thinks that he has become worse in morality through his association with Theosophy — let him point his finger at me.

Where is that Fellow whom I have ruined or led astray?

And where are they whom I have tried to take away from their duty or advised to dishonest action, or, if they lived under the same roof with me, who *if honest*, did not become the better for it?

Let such be unearthed and brought forward if possible;

Then, and only then, proclaim me a FRAUD. Failing such, the world must, in justice, condemn my accusers as — VILLAINS.

H.P. BLAVATSKY





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