

William Quan Judge
The Seal of HP Blavatsky

The Theosophical Society stands or falls by Blavatsky. Give her up as an idea, withdraw from the path traced by her under orders, belittle her, and the organization will rot; but remember her and what she represented, and we triumph.



First published in *The Path*, Vol. VII, February 1893, pp. 343-34]. Republished in Dara Eklund (Comp.). *Echoes of the Orient: The Writings of William Quan Judge*. 2nd ed. Pasadena: Theosophical University Press: Vol. I, 2009; A REMINISCENCE, pp. 320-22.¹

THE INTERESTING SERIES OF HISTORICAL PAPERS now running in *The Theosophist* entitled “Old Diary Leaves” by Col. Olcott naturally recalls to the mind various small events of the early years of the Theosophical Society, but nearly all the first members have disappeared from sight, some wholly uninterested in our work, others gone over to the other side of death. But some remain who do not concur in all the details written by Col. Olcott.

The origin of our seal is one of the things yet to be cleared up, and which will be at the proper time. The cut here shown² is from the original electroplate made in 1874 or '75 or even earlier from a wood-cut produced at the same time. The wood-cut would have been used in this printing but that the impression might destroy it. Both, the plate and the wood-cut, have been many years quietly resting in a drawer. Very plainly this cut is substantially our seal. The omitted portion is the Egyptian cross in the centre. In place of that cross the letters “E.B.” appear, and those letters mean “Elena Blavatsky,” the initial E being aspirated. Above is the coronet of a Countess. Added within the circle are astrological and cabalistic signs referring to the owner who used it. That owner was H.P.B. [H.P. Blavatsky]. It has been used often by her for stamping letter paper, and a quantity of the same letter-paper she used is in the drawer with the wood-cut.

Who, then, is the person from whom came the idea of our seal? Is it H.P.B. or someone else? If not H.P.B., how is it that she was using this design for her paper so many years ago? Several persons have claimed to be the founders of the Society, or designers of its seal, or first movers in its early years. A Philadelphia Doctor some years ago had the hardihood to write to the New York Headquarters saying that he was the one who designed our seal. Since then he has passed away. The plain unvarnished truth, which hurts no one save the man who denies it, is that H.P. Blavatsky was the head, front, bottom, top, outskirts, past and future of the Theosophical Society. We were all but pawns on the chessboard. What is the use of permitting vanity to influence us toward denying the facts?

¹ [This article may not be from the pen of Mr. Judge. We reproduce it, however, as the item following it and entitled “Correspondence” would not carry much meaning without it. — *Dara Eklund*.]

² [See frontispiece]

No game, no battle, no diplomacy can go forward without agents, subordinates, generals, privates, but there is always a moving head without whom there would be no success. Not only was H.P.B. predominant with us in 1875, but she is yet. The very organization was suggested by her in a letter which will be published in facsimile if any one feels disposed to deny the foregoing assertion. She wrote that we ought to model our Society on the United States, which is a collection of sovereign bodies united in one aim.

In the “Diary Leaves” Col. Olcott says that it was proposed to make the Theosophical Society an extra-Masonic degree. The impossibility of this may be seen when we reflect that such a thing — out of the question in itself — would leave out H.P.B. But, you say, he refers to letters from William Q. Judge and Gen. Doubleday asking for the ritual. This is but one of the little errors that creep in after lapse of years. An examination of the correspondence shows that Brothers Judge and Doubleday wrote — often — that if there was to be a ritual for the initiation into the Theosophical Society, then it should be sent, or the whole initiation abandoned. And many members recollect how much was said *pro* and *con* about abolishing initiation and accompanying ritual altogether, until at last it so came about. Masonic degrees were not once talked of, unless Col. Olcott may have said he would have wished us to be affiliated with Masons. This item in the “Old Diary Leaves” is clearly *lapsus calami*¹ In the same number of the “Leaves” there is a reference to G.H. Felt and a long draft of a letter of his as to which Col. Olcott is not clear. This is easy to settle. The letter was drafted by William Q. Judge and copied out by Felt, and the person he speaks of in the letter as experimenting with is Brother Judge. These things I state advisedly and with permission. It was intended for use at a meeting of the T.S.² in 1876, but instead of using that a paper was read by Brother Judge embodying the facts and including many other records of different experiments.

Other flitting scenes will recur later. Some embrace the funeral of Baron de Palm and what led up to it, others the making of our early diplomas by hand, and so on. But however the facts may come out, it remains a fact that the T.S. stands or falls by H.P. Blavatsky. Give her up as an idea, withdraw from the path traced by her under orders, belittle her, and the organization will rot; but remember her and what she represented, and we triumph.



¹ [slip of the pen]

² [Theosophical Society]

Correspondence

First published in *The Path*, Vol. VII, March 1893, p. 347]. Republished in Dara Eklund (Comp.). *Echoes of the Orient: The Writings of William Quan Judge*. 2nd ed. Pasadena: Theosophical University Press: Vol. I, 2009; CORRESPONDENCE, pp. 322-23.

Dear Path,

The article in February about our seal interested me, but the writer only hints that perhaps the seal used by H.P.B. on her letter paper was the origin of our seal. Is there any proof as to dates? May she not have adopted it from our seal?

Yours,

X. M.

Answer

Since the February article was written I have obtained proof positive that H.P.B. used the seal, as given in that article, upon her letter paper and envelopes as early as June 1875. The Society was founded in November 1875, so that she was using the symbol for four months before we adopted it. If the writer of the article “A Reminiscence” had known of this he might have gone further and positively asserted that her private symbol became our public corporate seal — another proof of the predominance of herself and her Masters in the Theosophical movement. The positive evidence secured during the month consists in old letters and envelopes of June and earlier in 1875, bearing the seal in colors, red, gold, and white. There lies before the writer a letter with its envelope, written by her from Philadelphia on June 10th, 1875, each having the symbol precisely as printed in February *Path* and from the same plate.

WILLIAM Q. JUDGE

