

Blavatsky on the trans-Himalayan Fraternity

The acquisition of the highest knowledge and power requires not only many years of the severest study enlightened by a superior intelligence and an audacity bent by no peril; but also as many years of retreat in comparative solitude, and association with but students pursuing the same object, in a locality where nature itself preserves like the neophyte an absolute and unbroken stillness if not silence! Where the air is free for hundreds of miles around of all mephitic influence; the atmosphere and human magnetism absolutely pure, and no animal blood is spilt.



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Sir,

“*On the authority of an adept [?] they [the Theosophists and Madame Blavatsky] are all mediums under the influence of the lower spirits.*”

Such is the sentence used by you in an editorial review of Mr. Sinnett’s *Occult World*.¹ Doubtful as its pertinency might appear, I personally found nothing very objectionable in it, the more so, as elsewhere you do me the honour to express your conviction that (whether controlled by good or bad spirits) I am yet a “strong physical medium” — that term precluding at least the suspicion of my being a regular impostor. This letter then is not directed against you, but rather against the pretensions of a would-be “adept.” Another point should be also attended to before I proceed, in order that the situation may be as clearly defined as possible.

Finding myself for the period of nearly seven years one of the best abused individuals under the sun, I rather got accustomed to that sort of thing. Hence, I would hardly take up the pen now to defend my own character. If people, besides forgetting that I am a woman, and an old woman, are dull enough to fail to perceive that had I declared myself anything in creation, save a Theosophist and one of the founders of our Society, I would have been in every respect — materially as well as socially — better off in the world’s consideration, and that therefore, since, notwithstanding all the persecution and opposition encountered, I persist in remaining and declaring myself one, I cannot well be that charlatan and pretender some people would see in me — I really cannot help it. Fools are unable, and the wise unwilling to see the absurdity of such an accusation, for, as Shakespeare puts it:

Folly in fools bears not so strong a note
As foolery in the wise, when wit doth dote. . . .²

It is not then to defend myself that I claim space in your columns, but to answer one whose *ex-cathedra* utterances have revolted the sense of justice of more than one of our Theosophists in India, and to defend them — who have a claim on all the reverential feeling that my nature is capable of.

¹ *Spiritualist*, June 17th

² [*Love’s Labour’s Lost*, Act V, scene 2]

A new correspondent, one of those dangerous, quasi-anonymous individuals who abuse their literary privilege of hiding their true personality, and thus shirk responsibility behind an initial or two, has lately won a prominent place in the columns of your journal. He calls himself an “adept”; that is easy enough, but does or rather can he prove it? To begin with, in the sight of the Spiritualists, as much as in that of sceptics in general, an “adept,” whether he hails from Tibet, India, or London, is all one. The latter will persist in calling him an impostor; and the former, were he even to prove his powers, in seeing in him either a medium or a juggler. Now your “J.K.,” when he states in the *Spiritualist* of June 24th, that “the phenomena attendant upon real adeptship are on an entirely different plane from Spiritualism” risks, nay is sure, to have every one of the above expletives flung in his face by both the above-mentioned classes.

Could he but prove what he claims, namely, the powers conferring upon a person the title of an initiate, such epithets might well be scorned by him. Aye, but I ask again, is he ready to make good his claim? The language used by him, to begin with, is not that which a true adept would ever use. It is dogmatic and authoritative throughout, and too full of insulting aspersions against those who are not yet proved to be worse or lower than himself; and fails entirely to carry conviction to the minds of the profane as of those who do know something of adepts and initiates — that it is one of such proficientes who now addresses them. Styling himself an adept, whose “Hierophant is a western gentleman,” but a few lines further on he confesses his utter ignorance of the existence of a body which cannot possibly be ignored by any true adept! I say “cannot” for there is no accepted neophyte on the whole globe but¹ at least knows of the Himalayan Fraternity. The sanction to receive the last and supreme initiation, the real “word at low breath,” can come but through those Fraternities in Egypt, India and Tibet, to one of which belongs “Koot Hoomi Lal Singh.” True, there is “adept” and adept, and they differ, as there are adepts in more than one art and science. I, for one, know in America of a shoemaker, who advertised himself as “an adept in the high art of manufacturing Parisian cothurns.”² J.K. speaks of Brothers “on the soul plane,” of “divine Kabbalah culminating in God,” of “slave magic,” and so on, a phraseology which proves to me most conclusively that he is but one of those dabblers in Western occultism which were so well represented some years ago, by French born “Egyptians” and “Algerians,” who told people their fortunes by the *Tarot*, and placed their visitors within enchanted circles with a Tetragrammaton inscribed in the centre. I do not say J.K. is one of the latter, I beg him to understand. Though quite unknown to me and hiding behind his two initials, I will not follow his rude example and insult him for all that. But I say and repeat that his language sadly betrays him. If a Kabbalist at all, then himself and his “Hierophant” are but the humble self-taught pupils of the mediaeval, and so-called “Christian” Kabbalists; of adepts, who, like Agrippa, Khunrath, Paracelsus, Vaughan, Robert Fludd, and several others, revealed their knowledge to the world *but to better conceal it*, and who never gave the key to it in their writings. He bombastically asserts his

¹ [unless]

² [Also known as buskin, a thick-soled laced boot reaching to the calf or knee, similar to that worn by actors in ancient Greek and Roman tragedy to gain elegance and height.]

own knowledge and power, and proceeds to pass judgment on people of whom he knows and can know nothing. Of the “Brothers” he says:

. . . if they are true adepts, they have not shown much worldly wisdom, and the organization which is to inculcate their doctrine is a complete failure, for even the very first psychical and physical principles of true Theosophy and occult science are quite unknown to and unpractised by the members of that organization — the Theosophical Society.

How does he know? Did the Theosophists take him into their confidence? And if he knows something of the British Theosophical Society, what *can* he know of those in India? If he belongs to any of them, then does he play false to the whole body and is a traitor? And if he does not, what has he to say of its practitioners, since the Society in general, and especially its esoteric sections that count but a very few “chosen ones” — are secret bodies?

The more attentively I read his article the more am I inclined to laugh at the dogmatic tone prevailing in it. Were I a Spiritualist, I would be inclined to suspect in it a good “goak” of John King, whose initials are represented in the signature of J.K. Let him first learn, that mirific Brother of the “Western Hermetic Circle in the soul-plane,” a few facts about the adepts in general, before he renders himself any more ridiculous.

① No true adept will on any consideration whatever reveal himself as one to the profane. Nor would he ever speak in such terms of contempt of people, who are certainly no more silly, and, in many an instance, far wiser than himself. But were even the Theosophists the poor misled creatures he would represent them to be, a true adept would rather help than deride them.

② There never was a true Initiate but¹ knew of the secret Fraternities in the East. It is not Éliphas Lévi who would ever deny their existence, since we have his authentic signature to the contrary. Even P.B. Randolph, that wondrous, though erratic, genius of America, that half-initiated seer, who got his knowledge in the East, had good reasons to know of their actual existence, as his writings can prove.

③ One who ever perorates upon his occult knowledge and speaks of practising *his* powers in the name of some particular prophet, deity, or Avatāra, is but a sectarian mystic at best. He cannot be an adept in the Eastern sense — a *Mahatma*, for his judgment will always be biased and prejudiced by the colouring of his own special and dogmatic religion.

④ The great science, called by the vulgar “magic,” and by its Eastern proficientes *Gupta-Vidyā*, embracing as it does each and every science, since it is the acme of knowledge, and constitutes the perfection of philosophy, is universal; hence — as very truly remarked cannot be confined to one particular nation or geographical locality. But, as Truth is *one*, the method for the attainment of its highest proficiency must necessarily be also *one*. It cannot be subdivided, for, once reduced to parts, each of them, left to itself, will, like rays of light, diverge from, instead of converging to, its centre, the ultimate goal of knowledge; and these parts can re-become the

¹ [unless]

Whole only by collecting them together again, or each fraction will remain but a fraction. This truism, which may be termed elementary mathematics for little boys, has to be recalled in order to refresh the memory of such “adepts” as are too apt to forget that “Christian Kabbalism” is but a fraction of *Universal Occult Science*. And, if they believe that they have nothing more to learn, then the less they turn to “Eastern Adepts” for information, the better and the less trouble for both. There is but one royal road to “Divine Magic”; neglect and abandon it to devote yourself specially to one of the paths diverging from it, and like a lonely wanderer you will find yourself lost in an inextricable labyrinth. Magic, I suppose, existed millenniums before the Christian era; and, if so, are we to think then, with our too-learned friends, the modern “Western Kabbalists,” that it was all *Black Magic*, practiced by the “old firm of Devil & Co.”? But, together with every other person who knows something of what he or she talks about, I say that it is nothing of the kind; that J.K. seems to be superbly ignorant even of the enormous difference which exists between a Kabbalist and an Occultist. Is he aware, or not, that the Kabbalist stands, in relation to the Occultist, as a little detached hill at the foot of the Himalayas to Mount Everest? That what is known as the Jewish Kabbala of Shimon Ben Yochai, is already the disfigured version of its primitive source, the great Chaldaean *Book of Numbers*. That as the former, with its adaptation to the Jewish Dispensation, its mixed international Angelology and Demonology, its Oriphiels and Raphaels, and Greek Tetragrams, is a pale copy of the Chaldaean, so the Kabbala of the Christian Alchemists and Rosicrucians is nought in its turn but a tortured edition of the Jewish. By centralizing the Occult Power and his course of actions in some one national God or *Avatāra*, whether in Jehovah or Christ, Brahmā or Mohammed, the Kabbalist diverges the more from the one central Truth. It is but the Occultist, the Eastern Adept, who stands a Free Man, omnipotent through his own Divine Spirit as much as man can be on earth. He has rid himself of all human conceptions and religious side issues. He is at one and the same time a Chaldaean Sage, a Persian Magus, a Greek Theurgist, an Egyptian Hermetist, a Buddhist Rahat, and an Indian Yogi. He has collected into one bundle all the separate fractions of Truth widely scattered over the nations, and holds in his hands the One Truth, a torch of light which no adverse wind can bend, blow out or even cause to waver. Not he the Prometheus who robs but a portion of the Sacred Fire, and therefore finds himself chained to Mount Caucasus for his intestines to be devoured by vultures, for he has secured God within himself, and depends no more on the whim and caprice of either or evil deities. True, “Koot Hoomi” mentions Buddha. But it is not because the Brothers hold him in the light of God or even of “a God,” but simply because he is the Patron of the Tibetan Occultists, the greatest of the *Illuminati* and Adepts, self-initiated by his own Divine Spirit, or “God-Self,” into all the mysteries of the invisible universe. Therefore to speak of imitating “the life of Christ,” or that of Buddha, or Zoroaster, or any other man on earth, chosen accepted by any one special nation for its God and leader, is to show oneself a Sectarian even in Kabbalism, that fraction of the one “Universal Science” — Occultism. The latter is prehistoric and is coeval with intelligence. The Sun shines for the heathen Asiatic as well as for the Christian European, and for the former still more gloriously, I am glad to say.

To conclude, it is enough to glance at that sentence of more than questionable propriety, and more fit to emanate from the pen of a Jesuit than that of a Kabbalist, which allows of the supposition that the “Brothers” are only a branch of the old established firm of “Devil & Co.,” to feel convinced that, beyond some “Abracadabra” dug out from an old mouldy MS. of Christian Kabbalism, J.K. *knows nothing*. It is but on the unsophisticated profane, or a very innocent Spiritualist, that his bombastic sentences, all savouring of the *anch’ io son’ pittore*,¹ that he may produce some sensation. True, there is no need of going absolutely to Tibet or India to find *some* knowledge and power “which are latent in every human soul”; but the acquisition of the highest knowledge and power requires not only many years of the severest study enlightened by a superior intelligence and an audacity bent by no peril; but also as many years of retreat in comparative solitude, and association with but students pursuing the same object, in a locality where nature itself preserves like the neophyte an absolute and unbroken stillness if not silence! Where the air is free for hundreds of miles around of all mephitic influence; the atmosphere and human magnetism absolutely pure and — no animal blood is spilt. Is it in London, or even the most hidden country village of England, that such conditions can be found?

Bombay

July 20th, 1881



¹ [“I too am a painter” — an expression attributed to Correggio on seeing a painting of Raphael. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]