

*English newspaper  
slanders Russian lady*



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Sir,

It appears that the Editor (or Editors?) of that scurrilous English paper at Lahore, the (un) *Civil* and (more cowardly than) *Military Gazette*<sup>3</sup> — inasmuch as it is ever ready to attack defenceless women — has again been at its little game. I do not read it, but friends at Lahore tell us that upon the strength of an article published in the *New York World* by a member of the Theosophical Society, and which quoted from a private joking letter of Col. Olcott's<sup>4</sup> to a most intimate friend (the Recording Secretary of the Theosophical Society of New York) the words: "I have not one cent, neither has Blavatsky," the bullying paper pretending to accept the sentence *literally* has uttered a column of slanderous insinuations to warn the natives that we are no better than penniless adventurers. These friends implore us to answer the attack in the paper which published it. My answer is: the *Gazette* seems ever ready — whether the calumnies and idiotic misrepresentations against us come from its Editor (or Editors) or from outsiders — to open its columns to filthy abuse, as though they were so many Indian sewers to carry off the public literary garbage. Such an ambition is quite worthy of the paper. But I appeal to every *gentleman* and honest man in India, whether Native or British, to decide what name should be given to Editors who will attack in such a cowardly way a woman they do not know, and merely upon the testimony of malicious rumours [79] set afloat by enemies? There is not a *gentleman* who would not say, under these circumstances, that it would demean me to ask them to insert my reply. For six months running, we of the Theosophical Society, and especially I, have been attacked without the slightest provocation by dozens of papers, good, bad, and indifferent. The small curs have barked at us, in imitation of the large

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<sup>1</sup> [One of the oldest daily newspapers in South Asia and the oldest in Bangladesh. Originally published in Bengali script, it evolved into an English format published from Kolkata and other locations such as Cuttack, Ranchi and Allahabad. The paper discontinued its publication in 1991 after 123 years of publication, although it was relaunched in Dhaka in 2006 where it is now published in Bengali once again.]

<sup>2</sup> [Transcribed from H.P. Blavatsky's *Scrapbook*, Vol. VI, p. 24a, by courtesy of The Theosophical Society, Adyar. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

<sup>3</sup> [A daily English language newspaper founded in 1872 in British India. It was published from Lahore, Simla and Karachi, sometimes simultaneously, until its closure in 1963.]

<sup>4</sup> [Colonel Henry Steel Olcott, 1832–1907, American military officer, journalist, lawyer, co-founder and first President of the Theosophical Society.]

dogs. Yet, neither Col. Olcott nor I, have become deaf nor struck dumb by this canine cacophony, and their malice never being equal to our contempt for them, we have never answered one single word to their vituperations. Were Col. Olcott and I, an Englishman and an English woman, *no* Editor in India would have dared to say the tenth part of what was said about us. He being an American, and I a Russian, we have to pay the penalty of being born in our respective countries. If the Theosophical Society, on account of its professed views, is collectively slandered and hated by all *good* Christians, and especially *padris* (as bound by that alleged religion of mercy and charity) still our “heathenish” views have nothing to do at all with the rest of the people. With the exception of a few of wide circulation, whose Editors being gentlemen have never, even when opposed to our views, *insulted* us; the Anglo-Indian papers abuse me — *because I am a born Russian*, and Col. Olcott because, in their eyes, he is guilty of the double crime of being an American and — associated in his work with a daughter of my, to them, hateful country. As to the native papers, few of any standing have ever overstepped the bounds of propriety. Those which have, show that their editors have either totally misunderstood us, or are but sycophants to the opinions of the “Sahibs.” I leave Col. Olcott to do as he likes in this particular case. But shall *I* honour one of *such* papers and demean myself by answering it directly? Shall *I* pay attention to the husky voice of every Scottish Editor, who chooses to black-guard me within the too extended boundaries of the law of libels? Never. To the friends, who are anxious that I should show the truth, prove who I am and whether I am penniless, I have but to point out to my American passport and my Russian papers; send my enemies for information to the [80] St. Petersburg “Book of Heraldry and Nobility”;<sup>1</sup> refer them to various bankers, and other respectable English and native gentlemen who can prove that my income, derived from perfectly legitimate and private sources, has been ample enough to cover all personal expenses and a large share of the Society’s. Moreover, that not a rupee of it has been given by any Native or Anglo-Indian. These witnesses, as well as the books of the Society, will prove that while the income of the latter, from “Initiation fees” and small donations for the Library, was during these two whole years in India but Rs. 1,560 (one thousand five hundred and sixty), Col. Olcott and I spent up to the 31<sup>st</sup> of December, 1880, the sum of Rs. 24,951 (twenty-four thousand nine hundred and fifty-one).

No one has a right to put his hand into my pocket and count my money; yet to give my friends a brilliant chance for refutation, a sure weapon against the vile insinuations of the *C. and M. Gazette*, I advise them to invite the Editors to go to the “Alliance Bank of Simla” and make enquiries at Allahabad. Just before Col. Olcott wrote that joke to his friend, showing “Blavatsky” penniless, out of Rs. 3,200 I had taken with me from Bombay, I placed Rs. 2,100 in the bank I have noticed; and a month later received nearly Rs. 2,000 more from home, the cheque being changed for me by a well-known English gentleman at Allahabad. I will not speak of other monies received — certainly not from natives, but legitimate sums through English hands — for the sum of Rs. 5,000 suffices to show the falseness of the *lying* charges brought against us by our enemies.

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<sup>1</sup> [Most likely what was known in Russia as the *Gerbovník*, containing the coat of arms of the Nobility and their description. It was published in 1789-99 by the Department of Heraldry. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

To conclude, I invite the Editor of the *C.M. Gazette* to leave his cowardly, half-veiled hints and come out boldly with a dishonourable imputation that the law of libel covers — if *he dares*. Until then, I have a perfect right to abstain from noticing him as not being a gentleman. And if he goes too far, I yet have confidence enough in the abstract [81] principle of British justice, to believe that it will protect *even a Russian* domiciled under the shadow of its flag.

Yours fraternally,

H.P. BLAVATSKY

Bombay, February 1881

