

Lodges of Magic



Occult truth cannot be absorbed by a mind that is filled with preconception, prejudice, or suspicion. It is something to be perceived by the intuition rather than by the reason — being by nature spiritual, not material.

Among the pre-requisites for psychic development, noted in the mystical Manuals of all Eastern religious systems, are a pure place, pure diet, pure companionship, and a pure mind.

Active, wide-awake, earnest, unselfish Branches are needed, whose members shall not be constantly unmasking their selfishness by asking “What will it profit us to join the Theosophical Society, and how much will it harm us?” but be putting to themselves the question “Can we not do substantial good to mankind by working in this good cause with all our hearts, our minds, and our strength?”

First published in *Lucifer*, Vol. III, No. 14, October 1888, pp. 89-93.

Republished in *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (LODGES OF MAGIC) X pp. 124-30.

When fiction rises pleasing to the eye,
Men will believe, because they love the lie;
But Truth herself, if clouded with a frown,
Must have some solemn proofs to pass her down.

— C. CHURCHILL

ONE OF THE MOST ESTEEMED OF OUR FRIENDS in occult research, propounds the question of the formation of “working Lodges” of the Theosophical Society, for the development of adeptship. If the practical impossibility of forcing this process has been shown once in the course of the theosophical movement, it has scores of times. It is hard to check one’s natural impatience to tear aside the veil of the Temple. To gain the divine knowledge, like the prize in a classical tripos, by a system of coaching and cramming, is the ideal of the average beginner in occult study. The refusal of the originators of the Theosophical Society to encourage such false hopes, has led to the formation of bogus Brotherhoods of *Luxor* (and Armley Jail?) as speculations on human credulity. How enticing the bait for gudgeons in the following specimen prospectus, which a few years ago caught some of our most earnest friends and Theosophists.

“Students of the Occult Science, searchers after truth, and Theosophists who may have been disappointed in their expectations of Sublime Wisdom being freely dispensed by HINDU MAHATMAS, are cordially invited to send in their names to . . . , when, if found suitable, they can be admitted, after a short probationary term, as Members of an Occult Brotherhood, who do not boast of their knowledge or attainments, but teach freely [at £1 to £5 per letter?] and without reserve [the nastiest portions of P.B. Randolph’s *Eulis*], all they find worthy to receive” (read: teachings on a commercial basis; the cash going to the teachers, and the extracts from Randolph and other “love-philtre” sellers to the pupils!)¹

¹ Documents on view at *Lucifer* Office, viz., Secret MSS. written in the handwriting of *** (name suppressed for past considerations), “Provincial Grand Master of the Northern Section” One of these documents bears the

If rumour be true, some of the English rural districts, especially Yorkshire, are overrun with fraudulent astrologers and fortune-tellers, who pretend to be Theosophists, the better to swindle a higher class of credulous patrons than their legitimate prey, the servant-maid and callow youth. If the “lodges of magic,” suggested in the following letter to the Editors of this Magazine, were founded, without having taken the greatest precautions to admit only the best candidates to membership, we should see these vile exploitations of sacred names and things increase an hundredfold. And in this connection, and before giving place to our friend’s letter, the senior Editor of *Lucifer* begs to inform her friends that she has never had the remotest connection with the so-called “H(ermetic) B(rotherhood) of L(uxor),” and that all representations to the contrary are false and dishonest. There is a secret body — whose diploma, or Certificate of Membership, is held by Colonel Olcott alone among modern men of white blood to which that name was given by the author of *Isis Unveiled* for convenience of designation,¹ but which is known among Initiates by quite another one, just as the personage known to the public under the pseudonym of “Koot Hoomi,” is called by a totally different name among his acquaintances. What the real name of that society is, it would puzzle the “Eulian” phallicists of the “H.B. of L.” to tell. The real names of Master Adepts and Occult Schools are never, *under any circumstances*, revealed to the profane; and the names of the personages who have been talked about in connection with modern Theosophy, are in the possession only of the two chief founders of the Theosophical Society. And now, having said so much by way of preface, let us pass on to our correspondent’s letter. He writes:

A friend of mine, a natural mystic, had intended to form, with others, a Branch T.S.² in his town. Surprised at his delay, I wrote to ask the reason. His reply was that he had heard that the T.S. only met and talked, and did nothing practical. I always did think the T.S. ought to have Lodges in which something practical should be done. Cagliostro understood well this craving of humans for something before their eyes, when he instituted the Egyptian Rite, and put it in practice in various Freemason lodges. There are many readers of *Lucifer* in * * * shire. Perhaps in it there might be a suggestion for students to form such lodges for themselves, and to try, by their united wills, to develop certain powers in one of the number, and then through the whole of them in succession. I feel sure numbers would enter such lodges, and create a great interest for Theosophy.

A.

heading, “A brief Key to the Eulian Mysteries,” *i.e.*, *Tantric* black magic on a phallic basis. No; the members of this Occult Brotherhood “do not boast of their knowledge.” Very sensible on their part: least said, soonest mended.

¹ In *Isis Unveiled*, Vol. II, p. 308. It may be added that the “Brotherhood of Luxor” mentioned by Kenneth MacKenzie (vide his *Royal Masonic Cyclopaedia*) as having its seat in America, had, after all, nothing to do with the Brotherhood mentioned by, and known to us, as was ascertained after the publication of “Isis” from a letter written by this late Masonic author to a friend in New York. The Brotherhood MacKenzie knew of was simply a Masonic Society on a rather more secret basis, and, as he stated in the letter, he had *heard of, but knew nothing of our* Brotherhood, which, having had a branch at Luxor (Egypt), was thus purposely referred to by us under this name alone. This led some schemers to infer that there was a regular Lodge of Adepts of that name, and to assure some credulous friends and Theosophists that the “H.B. of L.” was either identical or a branch of the same, supposed to be near Lahore!! — which was the most flagrant untruth.

² [Theosophical Society]

In the above note of our venerable and learned friend is the echo of the voices of ninety-nine hundredths of the members of the Theosophical Society: one-hundredth only have the correct idea of the function and scope of our Branches. The glaring mistake generally made is in the conception of adeptship and the path thereunto. Of all thinkable undertakings that of trying for adeptship is the most difficult. Instead of being obtainable within a few years of one lifetime, it exacts the unremitting struggles of a series of lives, save in cases so rare as to be hardly worth regarding as exceptions to the general rule. The records certainly show that a number of the most revered Indian adepts became so despite their births in the lowest and seemingly most unlikely, castes. Yet it is well understood that they had been progressing in the upward direction throughout many previous incarnations, and when they took birth for the last time, there was left but the merest trifle of spiritual evolution to be accomplished, before they became great living adepts. Of course, no one can say that one or all of the possible members of our friend A.'s ideal Cagliostroian lodge might not also be ready for adeptship, but the chance is not good enough to speculate upon: Western civilization seems to develop fighters rather than philosophers, military butchers rather than Buddhas. The plan "A." proposes would be far more likely to end in mediumship than adeptship. Two to one there would not be a member of the lodge who was chaste from boyhood and altogether untainted by the use of intoxicants. This is to say nothing of the candidates' freedom from the polluting effects of the evil influences of the average social environment. Among the indispensable prerequisites for psychic development, noted in the mystical Manuals of all Eastern religious systems, are a pure place, pure diet, pure companionship, and a pure mind. Could "A." guarantee these? It is certainly desirable that there should be some school of instruction for members of our Society; and had the purely exoteric work and duties of the Founders been less absorbing, probably one such would have been established long ago. Yet not for practical instruction, on the plan of Cagliostro, which, by-the-by, brought direful suffering upon his head, and has left no marked traces behind to encourage a repetition in our days. "When the pupil is ready, the teacher will be found waiting," says an Eastern maxim. The Masters do not have to hunt up recruits in special * * * shire lodges, nor drill them through mystical non-commissioned officers: time and space are no barriers between them and the aspirant; where thought can pass they can come. Why did an old and learned Kabbalist like "A." forget this fact? And let him also remember that the potential adept may exist in the Whitechapels¹ and Five Points of Europe and America,² as well as in the cleaner and more "cultured" quarters; that some poor ragged wretch, begging a crust, may be "whiter-souled" and more attractive to the adept than the average bishop in his robe, or a cultured citizen in his costly dress. For the extension of the theosophical movement, a useful channel for the irrigation of the dry fields of contemporary thought

¹ [Whitechapel is a district within East London, England, in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. It is located 3.4 miles east of Charing Cross and roughly bounded by the Bishopsgate thoroughfare on the west, Fashion Street on the north, Brady Street and Cavell Street on the east and The Highway on the south. It has been for a long time a poor and working-class neighbourhood perhaps best known for being the location of the infamous Jack the Ripper murders in the late 1880s. — Cf. Wikipedia]

² [The Five Points was a neighbourhood in the central lower area of the Manhattan borough of New York City, New York, generally defined as being bound by Centre Street in the west, the Bowery in the east, Canal Street in the north and Park Row in the south. Five Points gained international notoriety as a disease-ridden, crime-infested slum that existed for well over 70 years. — Cf. Wikipedia]

with the water of life, Branches are needed everywhere; not mere groups of passive sympathisers, such as the slumbering army of church-goers, whose eyes are shut while the “devil” sweeps the field; no, not such. Active, wide-awake, earnest, unselfish Branches are needed, whose members shall not be constantly unmasking their selfishness by asking “What will it profit us to join the Theosophical Society, and how much will it harm us?” but be putting to themselves the question “Can we not do substantial good to mankind by working in this good cause with all our hearts, our minds, and our strength?” If “A.” would only bring his * * * shire friends, who pretend to occult leanings, to view the question from this side, he would be doing them a real kindness. The Society can get on without them, but they cannot afford to let it do so.

Is it profitable, moreover, to discuss the question of a Lodge receiving even theoretical instruction, until we can be sure that all the members will accept the teachings as coming from the alleged source? Occult truth cannot be absorbed by a mind that is filled with preconception, prejudice, or suspicion. It is something to be perceived by the intuition rather than by the reason; being by nature spiritual, not material. Some are so constituted as to be incapable of acquiring knowledge by the exercise of the spiritual faculty; *e.g.*, the great majority of physicists. Such are slow, if not wholly incapable of grasping the ultimate truths behind the phenomena of existence. There are many such in the Society; and the body of the discontented are recruited from their ranks. Such persons readily persuade themselves that later teachings, received from exactly the same source as earlier ones, are either false or have been tampered with by chelas, or even third parties. Suspicion and inharmony are the natural result, the psychic atmosphere, so to say, is thrown into confusion, and the reaction, even upon the stauncher students, is very harmful. Sometimes vanity blinds what was at first strong intuition, the mind is effectually closed against the admission of new truth, and the aspiring student is thrown back to the point where he began. Having jumped at some particular conclusion of his own without full study of the subject, and before the teaching had been fully expounded, his tendency, when proved wrong, is to listen only to the voice of his self-adulation, and cling to his views, whether right or wrong. The Lord Buddha particularly warned his hearers against forming beliefs upon tradition or authority, and before having thoroughly inquired into the subject.¹

¹ [In replying to the question:

Are there any dogmas in Buddhism which we are required to accept on faith?

A *Buddhist Catechism* [*Kalama Sutta* of the *Anguttaranikāya*, quoting H.S. Olcott's *Buddhist Catechism*, pp. 55, 56, 1881 ed.] explains:

No. We are earnestly enjoined to accept nothing whatever on faith; whether it be written in books, handed down from our ancestors, or taught by the sages. Our Lord Buddha has said that we must not believe in a thing said merely because it is said; nor in traditions because they have been handed down from antiquity; nor rumours, as such; nor writings by sages, because sages wrote them; nor fancies that we may suspect to have been inspired in us by a deva (that is, in presumed spiritual inspiration); nor from inferences drawn from some haphazard assumption we may have made; nor because of what seems an analogical necessity; nor on the mere authority of our teachers or masters. But we are to believe when the writing, doctrine, or saying is corroborated by our own reason and consciousness.

For this I taught you not to believe merely because you have heard, but when you believed of your consciousness, then to act accordingly and abundantly.

— Cf. *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (THE DOCTRINE OF AVATĀRAS) XIV p. 417

An instance. We have been asked by a correspondent why he should not “be free to suspect some of the so-called ‘precipitated’ letters as being forgeries,” giving as his reason for it that while some of them bear the stamp of (to him) undeniable genuineness, others seem, from their contents and style, to be imitations. This is equivalent to saying that he has such an unerring spiritual insight as to be able to detect the false from the true, though he has never met a Master, nor been given any key by which to test his alleged communications. The inevitable consequence of applying his untrained judgment in such cases, would be to make him as likely as not to declare false what was genuine, and genuine what was false. Thus what *criterion* has anyone to decide between one “precipitated” letter, or another such letter? Who except their authors, or those whom they employ as their *amanuenses* (the *chelas* and disciples), can tell? For it is hardly one out of a hundred “occult” letters that is ever written by the hand of the Master, in whose name and on whose behalf they are sent, as the Masters have neither need nor leisure to write them; and that when a Master says, “I wrote that letter,” it means only that every word in it was dictated by him and impressed under his direct supervision. Generally they make their chela, whether near or far away, write (or precipitate) them, by impressing upon his mind the ideas they wish expressed, and if necessary aiding him in the picture-printing process of precipitation. It depends entirely upon the *chela’s* state of development, how accurately the ideas may be transmitted and the writing-model imitated. Thus the *non-adept* recipient is left in the dilemma of uncertainty whether, if one letter is false, all may not be; for, as far as intrinsic evidence goes, all come from the same source, and all are brought by the same mysterious means. But there is another, and a far worse condition implied. For all that the recipient of “occult” letters can possibly know and on the simple grounds of probability and common honesty, the unseen correspondent who would tolerate one *single fraudulent line in his name*, would wink at an unlimited repetition of the deception. And this leads directly to the following. All the so-called *occult* letters being supported by identical proofs, *they have all to stand or fall together*. If one is to be doubted, then all have, and the series of letters in *The Occult World, Esoteric Buddhism, etc., etc.*, may be, and there is no reason why they should not be in such a case * * * *frauds*, “clever impostures,” and “forgeries,” such as the ingenuous though stupid agent of the “S.P.R.” has made them out to be, in order to raise in the public estimation the “scientific” acumen and standard of his “Principals.”

Hence, not a step in advance would be made by a group of students given over to such an unimpressible state of mind, and without any guide *from the occult side* to open their eyes to the esoteric pitfalls. And where are such guides, so far, in our Society? “They be blind leaders of the blind,” both falling into the ditch of vanity and self-sufficiency. The whole difficulty springs from the common tendency to draw conclusions from insufficient premises, and play the oracle before ridding oneself of that most stupefying of all psychic anaesthetics — IGNORANCE.

Question 1

First published in *Lucifer*, Vol. III, No. 17, January 1889, pp. 437-38.
Republished in *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (LODGES OF MAGIC) X pp. 289-90.

MADAM,

I have only two remarks on your notes to my letter published in the December Number of *Lucifer*.

- 1 I do not “hope” to see spooks by the help of the Theosophical Society. My baser part sometimes desires manifestation, but I recognize such desire to be impure. I earnestly trust no Member of the Society will ever indulge in the evocation of phenomena, whether for curiosity, or for the gratification of the intellect.
- 2 I asked if the worship of the One God in spirit and in truth was the aim of the Society. You reply with the motto of the Society. But your real answer appears to be in the opening article of the Magazine on Denunciation.

I candidly think the formation of the Society was a mistake. Not a mistake in motive, but a mistake in generalship. The speed of the slowest ship marks the rate of progress of a fleet. The weak ones of the Society mark its position in the world. But if the Society has only helped *one* brother to right living, then it has done much to justify its existence, and I have naught to say.

My real reason in again addressing you is to call your attention to a Novel written by A. de Grasse Stevens.¹ At page 141 is a reference to yourself as a Russian spy who was ejected from India by Lord Dufferin.

I have never before seen this curious slander in print, and, although you may consider it beneath contempt, I think it a pity to allow it altogether to escape notice.

The reprehensible conduct of the Publishers in allowing an Author to libel a living person, and that person a woman, is such that I do not care to express my opinion on paper more fully than in this letter.

I am, your most *faithful* servant,

A. E.

Answer 1

The Theosophical Society has “helped “ many and many of its “brothers” to “right living” — and this is its proudest boast.

I thank our Correspondent for his kind remarks about me. With regard to publishers in general, their “reprehensible conduct” may perhaps find an excuse in the great law of the “struggle for life”; this species having always been known to feed and thrive on the carrion of murdered reputations. As to the authoress of this would-be politico-social novel, a rather *green* than young American, it is said, her exceptional claim to distinction from other trans-Atlantic writers of her sex, would seem to be an intimate acquaintance with the lobby and the back stairs of politics.

¹ [Entitled: *Miss Hildreth*.]

Apart from the half-dozen living people whose reputations she slaughters on a single page, what this political Amazon invents is that:

“ . . . Mme. Blavatsky, for many years carried on a secret correspondence with Monsieur Zinovief [?!], chief of the Asiatic Department,” and that “but *for Lord Dufferin’s clear-sightedness* Madame might still be carrying on her patriotic work” — presumably in India.

LIES from the first word to the last. I never knew a “Monsieur Zinovief,” nor corresponded with one at any time. I *defy* any government in the world to produce the slightest evidence, *even inferential*, that I have ever been a spy, or corresponded *secretly* with any Russian authority. As to Lord Dufferin he reached India only after I left it. As I have answered fully the infamous libel in the *Pall Mall Gazette* of January 3rd, I hope the public will leave this fresh lie to share the fate of the many that preceded it — in the waste-paper basket of literature.

Question 2

First published in *Lucifer*, Vol. III, No. 16, December 1888, pp. 288-90, 339-41.
Republished in *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (MISCELLANEOUS NOTES) X p. 242.

[I own I should like to see phenomena] It is not in the Theosophical Society that our correspondent can ever hope to evoke spooks or to see any *physical* phenomena.

[Is not the “Esoteric Section” of the T.S. likely to run counter to the views of your Editorial on “Lodges of Magic”? Who is to ensure that the Esoteric Members are not only willing to, but *will* “abide by its rules”?]

Answer 2

Our correspondent’s question is a natural one — coming from a European. No, it does not run counter, because it *is not* a lodge of *magic*, but of *training*. For however often the true nature of the occult training has been stated and explained, few Western students seem to realize how searching and inexorable are the tests which a candidate must pass before *power* is entrusted to his hands. Esoteric philosophy, the occult hygiene of mind and body, the unlearning of false beliefs and the acquisition of true habits of thought, are more than sufficient for a student during his period of probation, and those who rashly pledge themselves in the expectation of acquiring forthwith “magic powers” will meet only with disappointment and certain failure.

H.P. BLAVATSKY

