

*Boris de Zirkoff on
Edward Douglas Fawcett*



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Bio-bibliography of Edward Douglas Fawcett by Boris de Zirkoff, from *H.P. Blavatsky Collected Writings*, Vol. IX, pp. 415-16.¹

EDDWARD DOUGLAS FAWCETT WAS AN ENGLISH PHILOSOPHER and man of letters, son of E. Boyd Fawcett and Myra MacDougall; born at Hove, Brighton, in 1866; died in London, April 14th, 1960; married in 1896, M.B.V. Jackson, and in 1947, Mrs. Vera Dick-Cunyngham, daughter of Mr. Mostyn Pryce, Gunley, Montgomeryshire. Educated at Newton College, South Devon, where he got a scholarship, and at the Westminster School, where he was Queen's Scholar and winner of many school prizes. Next four years were spent studying philosophy, after which he went on the staff of the *Daily Telegraph*, as Assistant Sub-Editor. The one absorbing interest of his life has been metaphysical study. Came in contact with Theosophy in London, and for a time was greatly interested in the activities of the Theosophical Movement. When Madame Blavatsky was at Ostende, in 1887, he went to see her and gave her some assistance in the writing of *The Secret Doctrine*, mostly on points of Western Philosophy and Science, the extent of which help is difficult to determine. At a later time, however, he made some rather pretentious claims in regard to this assistance.

In 1890, he resigned from his position and journeyed to Adyar, serving for a time on the Editorial Staff of *The Theosophist*. He delivered a series of very scholarly lectures both in Madras and at Adyar, and became a Buddhist while in Ceylon. He did not stay there very long, however, and returned to England, after which he did not seem to have had any connection with the Movement.

It is a curious fact that Madame Blavatsky was by no means certain as to the seriousness of his interest in matters occult, and wrote to Sinnett from Ostende to the effect that she hopes "his enthusiasm will not evaporate."² Apparently it did, after a while.

¹ Our frontispiece, "Opus 217. Against the enamel of a background rhythmic with beats and angles, tones, and colours: Portrait of M. Félix Fénéon in 1890," by Paul Signac (Museum of Modern Art, New York), was inspired by E.D. Fawcett's science fiction novel *Hartmann the Anarchist or The Doom of the Great City*, illustrated by Fred T. Jane. London: E. Arnold, 1893; 214pp.

² *Letters of H.P. Blavatsky to A.P. Sinnett*, No. CIV, p. 227

Fawcett's interests were divided between study and sports, and he was engaged in later years in a great deal of mountaineering, making the only recorded ascent of the famous Mer de Glace, from Chamonix, up the mule-trail, in a motor car of ordinary size. In philosophy he has been an idealist whose distinctive mark is the discussion of Imagination as the fundamental reality of the Universe.

In his early years he contributed valuable essays to the pages of both *The Theosophist* and *Lucifer*, among which mention should be made of "The Case for Metempsychosis."¹

After his brief association with the Theosophical Movement, he published the following works:

1. *Riddle of the Universe*, London, 1893²
2. *Individual and Reality*, London 1909
3. *The World as Imagination*, 1916
4. *Divine Imagining*, 1921
5. *The Zermatt Dialogues*, [416] London 1931, where Basil Anderton, writing a Foreword, says that Fawcett read when he was seventeen Louis Figuier's *Day After Death*, and quotes the following rather curious words of Fawcett's:

This book defends belief in the plurality of lives . . . The problem of life became interesting, and I began a long course of self-education in science and philosophy . . . Coming as a young man into touch with the Theosophists and their "Indian wisdom," I was asked to revise the philosophy and science of Madame Blavatsky's *Secret Doctrine*; a syncretistic and fanciful work, but full of suggestions; a popular version or advance-guard, as it seemed, of an Eastern cult whose intellectuals were yet unborn. But there dwelt here merely a religion *manquée*.

Mr. Anderton concludes by saying that Fawcett, leaving the Theosophists in disillusionment, wrote his *Riddle of the Universe*, as an exposition of monadology.

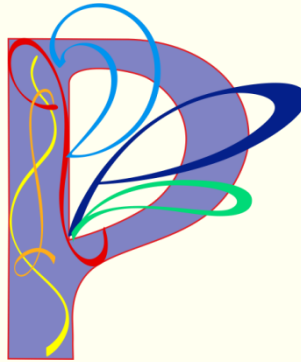
We also have from his pen:

6. *From Heston to the High Alps*, 1936
7. *The Oberland Dialogues* (On the Soul), 1939
8. *Hartmann the Anarchist*, published as early as 1893, and in which he anticipates the idea of airplanes employed for purposes of war.

¹ *Lucifer*, Vol. V, October & November, 1889

² Reviewed by Bertram Keightley at some length in *The Theosophist*, Vol. XV, January 1894, and in *Lucifer*, Vol. XIII, November 1893 & January 1894.

E.D. Fawcett was the brother of Lieut.-Col. P.H. Fawcett (born at Torquay in 1867) who engaged in several expeditions to explore the wilds of South America, in search of a mysterious city which he seems to have had reasons to believe was there. He did not come back from his last exploration in 1925, and no conclusive evidence of his death has ever been found. He was a serious student of occultism and wrote a number of articles on this subject which evince profound intuitive understanding of spiritual matters.¹



¹ *Theosophical Sources: The Theosophist*, Vol. XI, pp. lxxxviii-lxxxix, cxiii; *Lucifer*, Vol. VI, p. 161.