Spurned the substance and clutched the shadow
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About pseudo-Theosophy

Shall we winnow the corn, but feed upon the chaff?

Republished in *Blavatsky Collected Writings, (ON PSEUDO-THEOSOPHY) XI* pp. 45-61.

The more honesty a man has, the less he affects the air of a saint. The affectation of sanctity is a blotch on the face of devotion.

— LAVATER

The most difficult thing in life is to know yourself.

— THALES

The presiding genius in the *Daily News* Office runs amuck at *Lucifer* in his issue of February 16th. He makes merry over the presumed distress of some theosophists who see in our serial novel, “The Talking Image of Urur” — by our colleague, Dr. F. Hartmann — an attempt to poke fun at the Theosophical Society.¹ Thereupon, the witty editor quizzes “Madame Blavatsky” for observing that she “does not agree with the view” taken by some pessimists; and ends by expressing fear that “the misgivings that have been awakened will not easily be laid to rest.”

*Ride si sapis.*² It is precisely because it is our desire that the “misgivings” awakened should reach those in whom the sense of personality and conceit has not yet entirely stifled their better feelings, and force them to recognize themselves in the mirror offered to them in the “Talking Image,” that we publish the “satirical” novel.

This proceeding of ours — rather unusual, to be sure, for editors — to publish a satire, which seems to the short-sighted to be aimed at their gods and parties only because they are unable to sense the underlying philosophy and moral in them, has created quite a stir in the dailies.

The various Metropolitan Press Cutting Agencies are pouring every morning on our breakfast table their load of criticism, advice, and comment upon the rather novel policy. So, for instance, a kindly-disposed correspondent of the *Lancashire Evening Post*³ writes as follows:

The editor of *Lucifer* has done a bold thing. She is publishing a story called “The Talking Image of Urur,” which is designed to satirise the false prophets of Theosophy in order that the true prophets may be justified. I appreciate the motive entirely, but, unfortunately, there are weak-minded theosophists who can see

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¹ [Published in 1890 in book form by John W. Lovell Company, New York. For some strange reason, the last chapter of this story, essential to the correct understanding of the whole tale, was not published in the pages of *Lucifer*, except for its closing paragraph. — Boris de Zirkoff.]

² [Laugh, if you are wise.]

³ February 18th
nothing in Dr. Hartmann’s spirited tale but a caricature of their whole belief. So they have remonstrated with Madame Blavatsky, and she replies in *Lucifer* that

“... the story casts more just ridicule upon the enemies and detractors of the Theosophic Society than upon the few theosophists whose enthusiasm may have carried them into extremes.”

Unfortunately, this is not strictly accurate. The hero of the tale, a certain Pancho, is one of these enthusiasts, and it is upon him and upon the mock “adepts” who deceive him that the ridicule is thrown.¹ But it never seems to have occurred to Madame Blavatsky and Dr. Hartmann that the moment you begin to ridicule one element, even though it be a false element, in the faith, you are apt to shake the confidence of many if not most believers, for the simple reason that they have no sense of humour. The high priestess of the cult may have this sense for obvious reasons,² but her disciples are likely to be lost if they begin to laugh, and if they can’t laugh they will be bewildered and indignant. I offer this explanation with all humility to Madame Blavatsky, who has had some experience of the effects of satire.

The more so as, according to those members of the T.S. who have read the whole story, it is precisely “Madame Blavatsky” against whom its *satire* is the most directed. And if “Mme. Blavatsky” — presumably the “Talking Image” — does not object to finding herself represented as a kind of mediumistic poll parrot, why should other “theosophists” object? A theosophist above all men ought ever to bear in mind the advice of Epictetus:

> If evil be said of thee, and if it be true, correct thyself; if it be a lie, laugh at it.

We welcome a witty satire always, and defy ridicule or any efforts in this direction to kill the Theosophical Society, so long as it, as a body, remains true to its original principles.

As to the other dangers so kindly urged by the *Post*, the “high priestess” acknowledges the benevolent objections by answering and giving her reasons, which are these: The chosen motto of the Theosophical Society has been for years — “There is no religion higher than truth”; the object of *Lucifer* is in the epigraph on its cover, which is “to bring to light the hidden things of darkness.” If the editor of *Lucifer* and the Theosophists would not belie these two propositions and be true to their colours, they have to deal with perfect impartiality, sparing no more themselves than outsiders, or even their enemies. As to the “weak-minded theosophists” — if any — they can take

¹ Cf. [In connection with Pancho, a character in Dr. Franz Hartmann’s story, “The Talking Image of Urur,” realizing that he had been a fool.]

> As everyone is, or will be, who, feeling drawn toward Occultism, instead of proceeding prudently to acquire it and thus learn the truth, permits his fancy to run off after his own preconceived ideas, or lends ear to the insane talk of fanatical enthusiasts. Those whom sober occultists call “Masters,” though so vastly superior to average humanity, are not Genii or Enchanters out of the “Arabian Nights,” but mortal men with abnormal powers.

— Blavatsky Collected Writings, (MISCELLANEOUS NOTES) XI p. 159

² The “obvious reasons” so delicately worded are these: “the high priestess of the cult” is almost universally supposed, outside of the T.S., to have exercised her own satirical powers and “sense of humour” on her alleged and numerous victims by bamboozling them into a belief of *her own invention*. So be it. The tree is known by its fruits, and it is posterity which will have to decide on the nature of the fruit. — [ED.]
care of themselves in the way they please. If the “false prophets of Theosophy” are to be left untouched, the true prophets will be very soon — as they have already been — confused with the false. It is high time to winnow our corn and cast away the chaff. The T.S. is becoming enormous in its numbers, and if the false prophets, the pretenders (e.g., the “H.B. of L.,” exposed in Yorkshire by Theosophists two years ago, and the “G.N.K.R.” just exposed in America), or even the weak-minded dupes, are left alone, then the Society threatens to become very soon a fanatical body split into three hundred sects — like Protestantism — each hating the other, and all bent on destroying the truth by monstrous exaggerations and idiotic schemes and shams. We do not believe in allowing the presence of sham elements in Theosophy, because of the fear, forsooth, that if even “a false element in the faith” is ridiculed, the latter “is apt to shake the confidence” in the whole. At this rate Christianity would be the first to die out centuries ago under the sledge-hammer blows dealt to its various churches by its many reformers. No philosopher, no mystic or student of symbolism, can ever laugh at or disbelieve in the sublime allegory and conception of the “Second Advent” — whether in the person of Christ, Krishna, Sosiosh, or Buddha. The Kalki Avatāra, or last (not “second”) Advent, to wit, the appearance of the “Saviour of Humanity” or the “Faithful” light of Truth, on the White Horse of Death — death to falsehood, illusion, and idol- or self-worship — is a universal belief. Shall we for all that abstain from denouncing the behaviour of certain “Second Adventists” (as in America)? What true Christians shall see their co-religionists making fools of themselves, or disgracing their faith, and still abstain from rebuking them publicly as privately, for fear lest this false element should throw out of Christianity the rest of the believers? Can any of them praise his co-religionists for climbing periodically, in a state of paradisiacal décolleté, on the top of their houses, trees, and high places, there to await the advent? No doubt those who hope, by stealing a march on their slower Brethren, to find themselves hooked up first, and carried bodily into Heaven, are as good Christians as any. Should they not be rebuked for their folly all the same? Strange logic!

The wise man courts truth; the fool, flattery.

However it may be, let rather our ranks be made thinner, than the Theosophical Society go on being made a spectacle to the world through the exaggerations of some fanatics, and the attempts of various charlatans to profit by a ready-made programme. These, by disfiguring and adapting Occultism to their own filthy and immoral ends, bring disgrace upon the whole movement. Some writer remarked that if one would know the enemy against whom he has to guard himself the most, the looking glass will give him the best likeness of his face. This is quite true. If the first object of our Society be not to study one’s own self, but to find fault with all except that self, then, indeed, the T.S. is doomed to become — and it already has in certain centres — a Society for mutual admiration; a fit subject for the satire of so acute an observer as we know the author of “The Talking Image of Urur” to be. This is our view and our policy. “And be it, indeed, that I have erred, mine error remaineth with myself.”

[See “Kali-Yuga and the Kalki-Avatara” in our Buddhas and Initiates Series. — ED. PHIL.]
That such, however, is the policy of no other paper we know of — whether a daily, a weekly, a monthly, or a quarterly — we are quite aware. But, then, they are the public organs of the masses. Each has to pander to this or that other faction of politics or Society, and is doomed “to howl with the wolves,” whether it likes or not. But our organs — *Lucifer* pre-eminently — are, or ought to be, the phonographs, so to speak, of the Theosophical Society, a body which is placed outside and beyond all centres of forced policy. We are painfully conscious that “he who tells the truth is turned out of nine cities”; that truth is unpalatable to most men; and that — since men must learn to love the truth before they thoroughly believe it — the truths we utter in our magazine are often as bitter as gall to many. This cannot be helped. Were we to adopt any other kind of policy, not only *Lucifer* — a very humble organ of Theosophy — but the Theosophical Society itself, would soon lose all its raison d’être and become an anomaly.

But “who shall sit in the seat of the scorners?” Is it the timid in heart, who tremble at every opinion too boldly expressed in *Lucifer* lest it should displease this faction of readers or give offence to that other class of subscribers? Is it the “self-admirers,” who resent every remark, however kindly expressed, if it happens to clash with their notions, or fails to show respect to their hobbies?

... I am Sir Oracle,

And when I open my lips let no dog bark!  

Surely we learn better and profit more by criticism than by flattery, and we amend our ways more through the abuse of our enemies than the blind pandering of friends. Such satires as *A Fallen Idol*, and such chelas as Nebelsen, have done more good to our Society, and certain of its members, than any “theosophical” novel; for they have shown up and touched au vif the foolish exaggerations of more than one enthusiast.

*Self-abnegation is possible only to those who have learnt to know themselves*; to such as will never mistake the echo of their own inner voice — that of selfish desire or passion — for the voice of divine inspiration, or an appeal from their MASTER. Nor is chela-ship consonant with mediumistic sensitiveness and its hallucinations; and therefore all the sensitives who have hitherto forced themselves into discipleship have generally made fools of themselves, and sooner or later, thrown ridicule upon the T.S. But after the publication of the *Fallen Idol* more than one such exhibition was stopped. “The Talking Image of Urur” may then render the same, if not better, service. If some traits in its various *dramatis personae* fit in some particulars certain members who still belong to the Society, other characters — and the most successful of them — resemble rather certain EX-members; fanatics, in the past, bitter enemies now — conceited fools at all times. Furthermore “Puffer” is a compound and very vivid photograph. It may be that of several members of the T.S., but it looks also like a deluded victim of other bogus Esoteric and Occult Societies. One of such just sprung

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1. [The Merchant of Venice, Act I, scene I, 93-94]
up at Boston, U.S.A., is now being nipped in the bud and exposed by our own Theos-
ophists.

These are the “Solar adepts” spoken of in our January editorial, the âmes damnées of
shameful commercial enterprises. No event could vindicate the policy of our journal
better than the timely exposure of these pseudo-adepts, those “Sages of the Ages”
who bethought themselves of trading upon the public hunger for the marvellous ad
absurdum. We did well to speak of them in the editorial as we have. It was timely and
lucky for us to have pointed to the ringleaders of that shameful speculation — the
sale of bogus occult knowledge. For we have averted thereby a great and new danger
to the Society — namely that of unscrupulous charlatans being taken for Theos-
ophists. Misled by their lies and their publications filled with terms from Eastern phi-
losophy and with ideas they had bodily stolen from us only to disfigure and misapply
them — the American press has already referred to them as Theosophists. Whether
out of sheer flippancy, or actual malice, some dailies have headed their sensa-
tional articles with “Theosophic Knaves,” and “Pantognomostic Theosophs,” etc., etc. This is
pure fiction. The editor of the Esoteric had never been at any time a member of our
society, or of any of its numerous Branches. “ADHY-APAKA, alias the Hellenic ETH-
 NOMEDON and ENPHORON, alias the Greco-Tibetan, Ens-movens OM mane padmi AUM”
(sic) was our enemy from the beginning of his career. As impudently stated by him to
a reporter, we theosophists hated him for his “many virtues”! Nor has the Sage “bent
under the weight of centuries,” the VIDYA NYAIKA, said to be represented by a person
called Eli Ohmart, had anything to do with the T.S. The two worthies had, like two
venomous wily spiders, spread their webs far and wide, and numerous are the Yan-
kee flies caught in them. But thanks to the energy of some of our Boston members,
the two hideous desecrators of Eastern philosophy are exposed. In the words of the
Boston Globe, this is the —

**Weird tale which may have a sequel in court.**

“If there are no arrests made, I shall go right on with the work; but if they
make trouble, I shall stay and face the music.”

Hiram Erastus Butler, the esoteric philosopher of 478 Shawmut Avenue, ut-
ttered the foregoing sentiment to a Globe reporter last evening as calmly as one
would make a casual remark about the weather.

Thereby hangs a tale, a long, complicated, involuted, weird, mystical, scientific,
hysterical tale — a tale of love and intrigue, of adventure, of alleged and to
some extent of admitted swindling, of charges of a horrible and unspeakable
immorality, of communion with embodied and disembodied spirits, and espe-
cially of money. In short, a tale that would make your head weary and your
heart faint if you attempted to follow out all its labyrinthine details and count
the cogs on its wheels within wheels. A tale that quite possibly may find its se-
quel in the courts, where judge, jury, and counsel will have a chance to cudgel
their brains over almost every mystery in the known universe.

These are the heroes whom certain timid Theosophists — those who raised their
voices against the publication of the “Talking Image of Urur” — advised us to leave
alone. Had it not been for that unwillingness to expose even impersonal things and
deeds, our editorial would have been more explicit. Far from us be the desire to “attack” or “expose” even our enemies, so long as they harm only ourselves, personally and individually. But here the whole of the Theosophical body — already so maligned, opposed, and persecuted — was endangered, and its destinies were hanging in the balance, because of that impudent pseudo-esoteric speculation. He, therefore, who maintains in the face of the Boston scandal, that we did not act rightly in tearing off the sanctimonious mask of Pecksniffian piety and the “Wisdom of the Ages” which covered the grimacing face of a most bestial immorality, of insatiable greediness for lucre and impudence, fire, water, and police proof — is no true Theosophist. How minds, even of an average intelligence, could be caught by such transparent snares as these publicly exhibited by the two worthies, to wit: Adhya-Apaka and Vidya Nyaika — traced by the American press to one Hiram E. Butler and Eli Ohmart — passes all comprehension! Suffice to read the pamphlet issued by the two confederates, to see at the first glance that it was a mere repetition — more enlarged and barefaced, and with a wider, bolder programme, still a repetition — of the now defunct “H.B. of L.” with its mysterious appeals of four years ago to the “Dissatisfied” with “the Theosophical Mahatmas.” The two hundred pages of the wildest balderdash constitute their Appeal from the Unseen and the Unknown and the Interior of the Inmost (?) to “the Awakened.” Pantognomos and Ekphoron offer to teach the unwary “the laws of ENS, MOVENS, and OM,” and appeal for money. Vidya Nyaika and Ethnomedon propose to initiate the ignorant into the “a priori Sambudhistic [?] philosophy of Kapila” and — beg for hard cash. The story is so sickening that we dislike to stain our pages with its details. But now to the moral of the fable.

Ye spurned the substance and have clutched the shadow.

For fourteen years our Theosophical Society has been before the public. Born with the threefold object of infusing a little more mutual brotherly feeling in mankind; of investigating the mysteries of nature from the Spiritual and Psychic aspect; and, of doing a tardy justice to the civilizations and Wisdom of Eastern pre-Christian nations and literature, if it did not do all the good that a richer Society might, it certainly did no harm. It appealed only to those who found no help for their perplexities anywhere else. To those lost in the psychic riddles of Spiritualism, or such, again, as, unable to stand the morbid atmosphere of modern unbelief, and seeking light in vain from the unfathomable mysteries taught by the theology of the thousand and one Christian sects, had given up all hope of solving any of the problems of life. There was no entrance fee during the first two years of the Society’s existence; afterwards, when the correspondence and postage alone demanded hundreds of pounds a year, new members had to pay £1 for their diploma. Unless one wanted to support the movement, one could remain a Fellow all his life without being asked for a penny, and two-thirds of our members have never put their hand in their pocket, nor were they asked to do so. Those who supported the cause were from the first a few devoted Theosophists who laboured without conditions or any hope for reward. Yet no association was more insulted and laughed at than was the Theosophical Society. No members of anybody were spoken of in more contemptuous terms than the Fellows of the T.S. from the first. The Society was born in America, and therefore it was regarded in England with disfavour and suspicion. We were considered as fools and knaves, victims and frauds before the benevolent interference of the Psychic Research Society, which
tried to build its reputation on the downfall of Theosophy and Spiritualism, but really harmed neither. Nevertheless, when our enemies got the upper hand, and by dint of slander and inventions had most maliciously succeeded in placing before the credulous public, ever hungry for scandals and sensations, mere conjectures as undeniable and proven facts, it was the American press which became the most bitter in its denunciations of Theosophy, and the American public the most willing to drink in and giggle over the undeserved calumnies upon the Founders of the T.S. Yet it is they who were the first told, through our Society, of the actual existence of Eastern Adepts in Occult Sciences. But both the English and the Americans spurned and scoffed at the very idea, while even the Spiritualists and Mystics, who ought to have known better, would, with a few exceptions, have nothing to do with heathen Masters of Wisdom. The latter were, they maintained, “invented by the Theosophists”; it was all “moonshine.” For these “Masters,” whom no member was ever asked to accept, unless he liked to do so himself, on whose behalf no supernatural claim was ever made, unless, perhaps, in the too ardent imagination of enthusiasts; these Masters who gave to, and often helped with, money, poor Theosophists, but never asked anything of the rich — these MASTERS were too much like real men. They neither claimed to be gods nor spirits, nor did they pander to people’s gush and sentimental creeds. And now those Americans have got at last what their hearts yearned for; a bona fide ideal of an adept and magician. A creature several thousand years old. A true-blue “Buddhist-Brahman” who appeals to Jehovah, or Jahveh, speaks of Christ and the Messianic cycle, and blesses them with an AMEN and an “OM MANI PADME HUM” in the same breath, relieving them at the same time of 40,000 dollars before they are a month old in their worship of him. . . . Wullah!1 Allah is great and — “Vidya Nyai-ka” is his only prophet. Indeed we feel little pity for the victims. What is the psychology that some Theosophists are accused of exercising over their victims in comparison with this? And this necessitates a few words of explanation.

Ignorance not altogether bliss.

All know that there is a tacit, often openly-expressed, belief among a few of the Fellows of the T.S. that a certain prominent Theosophist among the leaders of the Society psychologizes all those who happen to come within the area of that individual’s influence. Dozens, nay, hundreds, were, and still are, “psychologized.” The hypnotic effect seems so strong as to virtually transform all such “unfortunates” into irresponsible nincompoops, mere cyphers and tools of that theosophical Circe. This idiotic belief was originally started by some “wise men” of the West. Unwilling to admit that the said person had either any knowledge or powers, bent on discrediting their victim, and yet unable to explain certain abnormal occurrences, they hit upon this happy and logical loophole to get out of their difficulties. The theory found a grateful and fruitful soil. Henceforth, whenever any Fellows connected theosophically with the said “psychologizer” happen to disagree in their views upon questions, metaphysical or even purely administrative, with some other member — “on despotism bent,” forthwith the latter comes out with the favourite solution: “Oh, they are psychologized!” The magic WORD springs out on the arena of discussion like a Jack-in-the-

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1 [An acknowledgement of Allah’s omnipresence probably inspired by the early translations of One Thousand and One Nights.]
box, and forthwith the attitude of the “rebels” is explained and plausibly accounted for.

Of course the alleged “psychology” has really no existence outside the imagination of those who are too vain to allow any opposition to their all-wise and autocratic decrees on any other ground than phenomenal — nay, magical — interference with their will. A short analysis of the Karmic effects that would be produced by the exercise of such powers may prove interesting to theosophists.

Even on the terrestrial, purely physical plane, moral irresponsibility ensures impunity. Parents are answerable for their children, tutors and guardians for their pupils and wards, and even the Supreme Courts have admitted extenuating circumstances for criminals who are proved to have been led to crime by a will or influences stronger than their own. How much more forcibly this law of simple retributive justice must act on the psychic plane; and what, therefore, may be the responsibility incurred by using such psychological powers, in the face of Karma and its punitive laws, may be easily inferred. Is it not evident that, if even human justice recognizes the impossibility of punishing an irrational idiot, a child, a minor, etc., taking into account even hereditary causes and bad family influences — that the divine Law of Retribution, which we call KARMA, must visit with hundredfold severity one who deprives reasonable, thinking men of their free will and powers of ratiocination? From the occult standpoint, the charge is simply one of black magic, of envoûtement. Alone a Dugpa, with “Avichi” yawning at the further end of his life cycle, could risk such a thing. Have those so prompt to hurl the charge at the head of persons in their way, ever understood the whole terrible meaning implied in the accusation? We doubt it. No occultist, no intelligent student of the mysterious laws of the “night side of Nature,” no one who knows anything of Karma, would ever suggest such an explanation. What adept or even a moderately-informed chela would ever risk an endless future by interfering with, and therefore taking upon himself, the Karmic debit of all those whom he would so psychologize as to make of them merely the tools of his own sweet will!

This fact seems so evident and palpably flagrant, that it is absurd to have to recall it to those who boast of knowing all about Karma.

Is it not enough to bear the burden of the knowledge that from birth to death, the least, the most unimportant, unit of the human family exercises an influence over, and receives in his turn, as unconsciously as he breathes, that of every other unit whom he approaches, or who comes in contact with him? Each of us either adds to or diminishes the sum total of human happiness and human misery, “not only of the present, but of every subsequent age of humanity,” as shown so ably by Elihu Burritt, who says:

There is no sequestered spot in the Universe, no dark niche along the disc of non-existence, from which he (man) can retreat from his relations to others, where he can withdraw the influence of his existence upon the moral destiny of the world; everywhere his presence or absence will be felt — everywhere he will

1 [bewitchment]
have companions who will be better or worse for his influence. It is an old saying, and one of fearful and fathomable import, that we are forming characters for eternity. Forming characters! Whose? Our own or others’? Both — and in that momentous fact lies the peril and responsibility of our existence. Who is sufficient for the thought? Thousands of my fellow-beings will yearly enter eternity with characters differing from those they would have carried thither had I never lived. The sunlight of that world will reveal my finger-marks in their primary formations, and in their successive strata of thought and life.

These are the words of a profound thinker. And if the simple fact of our living changes the sum of human weal and woe — in a way for which we are, owing to our ignorance, entirely irresponsible — what must be the Karmic decree in the matter of influencing hundreds of people by an act perpetrated and carried on for years in premeditation and the full consciousness of what we are doing!

Verily the man or woman in the unconscious possession of such dangerous powers had much better never be born. The Occultist who exercises them consciously will be caught up by the whirlwind of successive rebirths, without even an hour of rest. Woe to him, then, in that ceaseless, dreary series of terrestrial Āvīchīs; in that immeasurable aeon of torture, suffering, and despair, during which, like the squirrel doomed to turn the wheel at every motion, he will launch from one life of misery into another, only to awake each time with a fresh burden of other people’s Karma, which he will have drawn upon himself! Is it not enough, indeed, to be regarded as “frauds, cranks, and infidels,” by the outsiders, without being identified with wizards and witches by our own members!

The genus “Infidel” and its varieties.

It is true to say that the varieties of infidels are many, and that one “infidel” differs from another infidel as a Danish boarhound differs from the street mongrel. A man may be the most heterodox infidel with regard to orthodox dogmas. Yet, provided he proclaims himself loudly a Christian, that heterodoxy — when even going to the length of saying that “revealed religion is an imposture” — will be regarded by some as simply “of that exalted kind which rises above all human forms.”

A “Christian” of such a kind may — as the late Laurence Oliphant has — give vent to a still more startling theory. He may affirm that he considers that “from time to time the Divine Influence emanates itself, so to speak, in phenomenal persons. Śākyamuni was such; Christ was such; and such I consider Mr. (Lake) Harris to be — in fact, he is a new avatar,” and still remain a Christian of an “exalted kind” in the sight of the “Upper Ten.” But let an “infidel” of the Theosophical Society say just the same

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1 Devachan, rather; the entr'acte between two incarnations.
2 Vide Lady Grant Duff’s article “Laurence Oliphant” in the Contemporary Review for February, pages 185 and 188.
3 ibid. Quoted from Sir Thomas Wade’s notes, by Lady Grant Duff, page 186.
4 [Or “Upper ten thousand,” a phrase coined in 1852 by American poet Nathaniel Parker Willis to describe the upper circles of New York, and hence of other major cities. In 1875, both Adam Bissett Thom and Kelly’s Directory published books entitled The Upper Ten Thousand, which listed members of the aristocracy, the gentry, officers in the British Army and Navy, members of Parliament, Colonial administrators, and members of the Church of England. The usage of this term was a response to the broadening of the British ruling class which had been caused by the Industrial Revolution. — Wikipedia]
(minus the absurdity of including the American Lake Harris in the list of the Avatārās), and no contumely heaped upon him by clergy and servile newspapers will ever be found too strong!

But this belongs properly to the paradoxes of the Age; though the Avatārīc idea has much to do with Karma and rebirth, and that belief in reincarnation has nothing in it that can militate against the teachings of Christ. We affirm, furthermore, that the great Nazarene Adept distinctly taught it. So did Paul and the Synoptics, and nearly all the earliest Church Fathers, with scarcely an exception, accepted it, while some actually taught the doctrine.

Do not start two hares at once.

From the sublime to the ridiculous there is but one step, and Karma acts along every line, on nations as on men. The Japanese Mikado is tottering towards his end for having played too long at hide and seek with his worshippers. Hundreds of shrewd Americans have been taken in through disbelieving in truths and lending a too credulous ear to bold lies. A French abbé has fallen under Karmic penalty for coquetting too openly with Theosophy, and attempted to mirror himself, like a modern clerical Narcissus, in the too deep waters of Eastern Occultism. The Abbé Roca, an honorary chanoine (canon) in the diocese of Perpignan, our old friend and irresistible adversary in the French Le Lotus a year ago — has come to grief. Yet his ambition was quite an innocent one, if rather difficult of realization. It was founded on a dream of his; a reconciliation between Pantheistic Theosophy and a Socialistic Latin Church, with a fancy Pope at the head of it. He longed to see the Masters of Wisdom of old India and Eastern Occultism under the sway of Rome regenerated, and amused himself with predicting the same. Hence a frantic race between his meridional phantasy and the clerical bent of his thought. Poor, eloquent abbé! Did he not already perceive the Kingdom of Heaven in the new Rome-Jerusalem? A new Pontiff seated on a throne made out of the cranium of Macroprosopus, with the Zohar in his right pocket, Hokhmāḥ, the male Sephīrōth (transformed by the good abbé into the Mother of God), in his left, and a “Lamb” stuffed with dynamite, in the paternal Popish embrace. The “Wise Men” of the East were even now, he said, crossing the Himalayas, and, “led by the Star” of Theosophy, would soon be worshipping at the shrine of the reformed Pope and Lamb. It was a glorious dream — alas, still but a dream. But he persisted in calling us the “greatest of Christian-Buddhists.” Unfortunately for himself he also called the Pope of the “Caesaro-papal Rome” “the Satan of the seven hills,” in the same number. Result: Pope Leo XIII asserts once more the proverbial ingratitude of theological Rome. He has just deprived our poetical and eloquent friend and adversary, the Abbé Roca, of the . . . exercise of all his functions in Holy Orders, as also of his living, for refusing to submit to a decree by which his works were placed on the Index Expurgatorius. These works bore the titles of Christ, the Pope, and the Democracy; The Fatal Crisis and the Salvation of Europe; and The End of the Ancient World. Even in face of the present Papal decision, he is advertising the appearance of a

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1 [See “Essential Theosophical Doctrines” in the same series. — ED. PHIL.]
2 Le Lotus, February 1888

According to the *Galignani Messenger* — (and his own articles and letters in theosophical organs, we may add) the fearless —

Abbé has, for some time [says *Galignani*], been denouncing the Papacy as a creature of Caesar, and as wholly preoccupied with the question of its temporalities in face of the crying needs of humanity. According to his view, the Divine aid was promised the Church until the end of the world, or of the age; and the Caesarean age having passed away, all things are to be made new. He looks forward to a spiritual coming of Christ by the spread of the modern sentiment of “liberty, equality, fraternity, toleration, solidarity, and mutuality,” in the atmosphere of the Gospel. Although his views do not appear to be very clear, he argues that the Gospel is passing from “the mystico-sentimental phase to the organico-social phase, thanks to the progress of science, which will illumine everything.”

This is only what had to be expected. The Abbé would not accept our joint warnings and took no heed of them. The sad epilogue of our polemics is given (not altogether correctly as regards the present writer) in the same *Globe*, wherein the news is wound up in the following words:

He has been contending, in the *Lotus*, in favour of a union of the East and the West by means of a fusion between Buddhism and the Christian Gospel; but Mdme. Blavatsky, the foremost European convert to the Indian religion, has emphatically repudiated all attempts at such union, because she cannot or will not accept the authority of Christ. The Abbé Roca is, therefore, left out in the cold.

This is not so. What “Mdme. Blavatsky” replied in *Le Lotus* to the Abbé’s assertions that the said *fusion* between his Church and Theosophy would surely come, was this:

. . . We are not as optimistic as he [the Abbé Roca] is. His church sees in vain her greatest ‘mysteries’ unmasked and the fact proclaimed in every country by scholars versed in Orientalism and Symbolology as by Theosophists; and we refuse to believe that she will ever accept our truths or confess her errors. And as, on the other hand, no true Theosophist will accept any more a *carnalised* Christ according to the Latin dogma than an anthropomorphic God, and still less a ‘Pastor’ in the person of a Pope, it is not the adepts who will ever go toward ‘the Mount of Salvation’ [as invited by the Abbé]. They will rather wait that the Mohammed of Rome should go to the trouble of taking the path which leads to Mount Meru . . .

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2 December 1887

3 [The original of this sentence is in French; H.P. Blavatsky gives here a translation which is not too close to the original. The latter may be found in Vol. VIII, p. 371, of the present Series; and the literal translation on page 390 of the same Volume. — Boris de Zirkoff.]
This is not rejecting “the authority of Christ” if the latter be regarded as we and Laurence Oliphant regarded Him, i.e., as an *Avatar* like Gautama Buddha and other great adepts who became the vehicles or *Reincarnations* of the “one” Divine Influence. What most of us will never accept is the anthropomorphized “charmant docteur” of Renan, or the Christ of Torquemada and Calvin rolled into one. Jesus, the Adept we believe in, taught our Eastern doctrines, KARMA and REINCARNATION foremost of all. When the so-called Christians will have learnt to read the New Testament between the lines, their eyes will be opened and — they will see.

We propose to deal with the subject of Karma and Reincarnation in our next issue. Meanwhile, we are happy to see that a fair wind is blowing over Christendom and propels European thought more and more Eastward.
It’s the Cat!

Dedicated those Members of the T.S. whom the cap may fit.

Republished in *Blavatsky Collected Writings* (*IT’S THE CAT!* XI pp. 287-94.

Let ignominy brand thy hated name;
Let modest matrons at thy mention start;
And blushing virgins when they read our annals
Skip o’er the guilty page that holds thy legend,
And blots the noble work . . .

— SHAKESPEARE

An excuse is worse and more terrible than a lie; for an excuse is a lie guarded.

— JONATHAN SWIFT

“The woman gave me of the tree, and I did eat,” said the first man, the first sneak and coward, thus throwing his own share of the blame upon his helpless mate. This may have been “worse than a lie” according to Pope, yet, in truth — it was not one. LIE was not born with the first man or woman either. The Lie is the product of later civilization, the legitimate child of SELFISHNESS — ready to sacrifice to itself the whole of mankind — and of HYPOCRISY, often born of fear. The original sin for which, agreeably to the orthodox Sunday School teaching, the whole world was cursed, drowned, and went unforgiven till the year 1 A.D. — is not the *greatest* sin. The descendants of Adam improving upon their grandsire’s transgression, invented lie and added to it excuse and prevarication. “It’s the cat” is a saying that may have originated with the antediluvians, whenever an *actual* sin had been committed and a scapegoat was needed. But it required the post-diluvians to father on the “cat” even that which had never been committed at all; that which was an invention of the fertile brain of the slanderers, who never hesitate to lie most outrageously whenever they feel inclined to ventilate a grudge against a brother or neighbour. Fruits of atonement, Children of redemption, we lie and sin the more readily for that. No “shame on us,” but:

*Hail* to the policy that first began
To tamper with the heart to hide its thoughts,

is the world’s motto. Is not the World one gigantic lie? Is there anything under the sun that offers such rich variety and almost countless degrees and shades as lying does? Lying is the policy of our century, from Society lying, as a necessity imposed upon us by culture and good breeding, up to individual lying, *i.e.*, uttering a good, square unmitigated lie, in the shape of false witness, or as the Russian proverb has

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2 [See “The Original Sin is a Jewish invention” in our Black versus White Magic Series. — ED. PHIL.]
it: — “shifting off a sin from a diseased on to a healthy head.” Oh lie — legion is thy name! Fibs and lies are now the cryptogamic excrecences of the soil of our moral and daily lives as toadstools are those of forest swamps, and their respective orders are as large. Both are fungi; plants which delight in shadowy nooks, and form mildew, mold and smut on both the soil of moral life and that of physical nature. Oh, for that righteous tongue:

That will not sell its honesty, or tell a lie!

**Great professors love pontificating.**

As said, there are fibs and fibs, conscious and unconscious, hoaxes and impostures, deceptions and calumnies — the latter often followed by moral and physical ruin — mild perversions of truth or evasion, and deliberate duplicity. But there are also catchpenny lies, in the shape of newspaper chaff, and innocent misrepresentations, due simply to ignorance. To the latter order belong most of the newspaper statements regarding the Theosophical Society, and its official *scapegoat* — H.P. Blavatsky.

It has become a matter of frequent occurrence of late, to find in serious articles upon scientific subjects the name of “Esoteric Buddhism” mentioned, and oftener still that of “Mme. Blavatsky” taken in vain. The latter circumstance is really very, very considerate, and — in one sense at any rate — overwhelmingly flattering!

To find one’s humble name collated with those of Sir Monier Monier-Williams K.C.I.E. and Professor Bastian is an honour, indeed. When, for instance, the great Oxford lecturer chooses to make a few big and bold slashes into fact and truth — no doubt to please his pious audience — and says that Buddhism has never had any occult or esoteric system of doctrine which it withheld from the multitudes — what happens? Forthwith, “Esoteric Buddhism” receives, metaphorically speaking, a black eye; the Theosophical Society, a kick or two; and finally, the gates of the journalistic poultry-yard being flung wide open, a vehement sortie against “Blavatsky & Co.” is effected by a flock of irritated geese sallying therefrom to hiss and peck at the theosophical heels. “Our Ancestors have saved Rome!” they cackle, “let us save the British Empire from the pretenders to Buddhist knowledge!” Again: a lucky “correspondent” gets admittance into the sanctum of Professor Bastian. The German ethnologist, “dressed like an alchemist of the middle ages” and smiling at “questions concerning the trances of famous Fakirs,” proceeds to inform the interviewer that such trances never last more than “from five to six hours.” This — the alchemist-like dress, we suppose, helping to bring about a happy association of ideas — leads *presto*, in the American “Sabbath-breaking paper,” to a stern rebuke to our address. We read on the following day:

The famous Fakirs . . . however they may have imposed on other travellers, certainly did not do so on this quiet little German philosopher, Madame Blavatsky to the contrary notwithstanding.

Very well. And yet Professor Bastian, all the “correspondents” to the contrary notwithstanding, lays himself widely open to a most damaging criticism from the standpoint of *fact* and *truth*. Furthermore, we doubt whether Professor Bastian, a learned ethnologist, would ever refer to Hindu Yogis as *Fakirs* — the latter appellation being
strictly limited and belonging only to Mussulman devotees. We doubt, still more, whether Professor Bastian, an accurate German, would deny the frequent occurrence of the phenomenon, that Yogis and these same “Fakirs,” remain in deep, deathlike trance for days, and sometimes for weeks; or even that the former have been occasionally buried for forty consecutive days, and recalled to life again at the end of that period, as witnessed by Sir Claude Wade and others.

But all this is too ancient and too well authenticated history, to need substantiation. When “Correspondents” will have learned the meaning, as well as the spelling of the term dhyāna — which the said “correspondent” writes diana — we may talk with them of Yogis and Fakirs, pointing out to them the great difference between the two. Meanwhile, we may kindly leave them to their own hazy ideas: they are the “Innocents Abroad” in the realm of the far Orient, the blind led by the blind, and theosophical charity extends even to critics and hereditary foes.

A wicked, groundless slander is often forgiven, and even forgotten; a truth told, never, for truth can never die.

But there are certain other things which we cannot leave uncontradicted. While week after week, and day after day, the “Innocents” lost in the theosophical labyrinths, publish their own harmless fibs — “slight expansions of truth” somebody called them — they also often supplement them by the wicked and malicious falsehoods of casual correspondents — ex-members of the T.S. and their friends generally. These falsehoods generated in, and evolved from the depths of the inner consciousness of our relentless enemies, cannot be so easily disregarded. Although, since they hang like Mohammed’s coffin in the emptiness of rootless space, and so are a denial in themselves, yet they are so maliciously interspersed with hideous lies built on popular and already strongly-rooted prejudices that, if left uncontradicted, they would work the most terrible mischief. Lies are ever more readily accepted than truth, and are given up with more difficulty. They darken the horizons of theosophical centres, and prevent unprejudiced people from learning the exact truth about theosophy and its herald, the Theosophical Society. How terribly malicious and revengeful some of these enemies are, is evidenced by the fact that certain of them do not hesitate to perform a moral hara-kiri upon themselves; to slay their own reputations for truthfulness for the pleasure of hitting hard — or trying, at all events, to hit — those whom they hate. Why this hatred? Simply because a calumny, a wicked, groundless slander is often forgiven, and even forgotten; a truth told — never! Prevented from disproving that truth, for good reasons, their hatred is kindled — for we hate only what we fear. Thus they will invent a lie, cunningly grafting it on some utterly false, but nevertheless popular accusation, and raise anew the cry, “It’s the cat, the ca-a-t, the ca-a-at!”

Success in such a policy depends, you see, on temperament and — impudence. We have a friend, who will never go to the trouble of persuading anyone to believe him on his “aye” or his “nay.” But, whenever he remarks that his words are doubted, he will say, in the quietest and most innocent way possible, “You know well I am too impudent to lie!” There is a great psychological truth hidden under this seeming paradox. Impudence often originates from two entirely opposite feelings: fearlessness and cowardice. A brave man will never lie; a coward lies to cover the fact of his being one,
and a liar into the bargain. Such a character will never confess himself at fault no more than a vain man will; hence, whatever mischance happens to either, they will always try to lay it at the door of somebody else. It requires a great nobility of character, or a firm sense of one’s duty, to confess one’s mistakes and faults. Therefore, a scapegoat is generally chosen, upon whose head the sins of the guilty are placed by the transgressors. This scapegoat becomes gradually “the cat.”

Now the Theosophical Society has its own special, so to speak, its “family cat,” on which are heaped all the past, present and future iniquities of its Fellows. Whether an F.T.S. quarrels with his mother-in-law, lets his hair grow, forgets to pay his debts, or falls off from grace and theosophical association, owing to personal or family reasons, wounded vanity, or what not: presto comes the cry — whether in Europe, Asia, America or elsewhere — It’s the cat. Look at this F.T.S.; he is writhing in the pangs of balked ambition. His desire to reign supreme over his fellow members is frustrated; and finding himself disappointed — it is on the “cat” that he is now venting his wrath. “The grapes are sour,” he declares, because “the cat” would not cut them for him, nor would she mew in tune to his fiddle. Hence, the Vine has “worn itself too thin.” Behold that other “star” of Theosophy, smarting under another kind of grievance — unnamed, because unnameable. Hatred — “till one be lost forever” — rages in this brotherly heart. Pouncing like a bird of prey upon its chosen victim — which it would carry far, far up into the clouds to kill it with the more certainty when it lets it drop — the would-be avenger of his own imaginary wrongs remains utterly blind to the fact, that by raising his chosen victim so high he only elevates it the more above all men. You cannot kill that which you hate, O blind hater, whatever the height you dash it down from; the “cat” has nine lives, good friend, and will ever fall onto its feet.

That which is not believed in, does not exist.

There are a few articles of belief among the best theosophists, the bare mention of which produces upon certain persons and classes of society the effect of a red rag on an infuriated bull. One of these is our belief — very harmless and innocent per se — in the existence of very wise and holy personages, whom some call their MASTERS, while others refer to them as “Mahatmas.”

Now, these may or may not actually exist — (we say they do); they may or may not be as wise, or possess altogether the wonderful powers ascribed to, and claimed for them. All this is a question of personal knowledge — or, in some cases, faith. Yet, there are the 350,000,000 of India alone who believe since time immemorial in their great Yogis and Mahatmas, and who feel as certain of their existence in every age, from countless centuries back down to the present day, as they feel sure of their own lives. Are they to be treated for this as superstitious, self-deceived fools? Are they more entitled to this epithet than the Christians of every church who believe respectively in past and present Apostles, in Saints, Sages, Patriarchs and Prophets?

Let that be as it will; the reader must realize that the present writer entertains no desire to force such a belief on any one unwilling to accept it, let him be a layman or a theosophist. The attempt was foolishly made a few years back in all truth and sincerity, and — it has failed. More than this, the revered names were, from the first, so desecrated by friend and foe, that the once almost irresistible desire to bring the actual truth home to some who needed living ideals the most, has gradually weakened.
since then. It is now replaced by a passionate regret for having ever exhumed them from the twilight of legendary lore, into that of broad daylight.

The wise warning:

Give not that which is holy unto the dogs,
Neither cast ye your pearls before swine . . .

is now impressed in letters of fire on the heart of those guilty of having made of the “Masters” public property. Thus the wisdom of the Hindu-Buddhist allegorical teaching which says, “There can be no Mahatmas, no Arhats, during the Kali-yuga,” is vindicated, That which is not believed in, does not exist. Arhats and Mahatmas having been declared by the majority of Western people as non-existent, as a fabrication — do not exist for the unbelievers.

“The Great Pan is dead!” wailed the mysterious voice over the Ionian Sea, and forthwith plunged Tiberius and the pagan world into despair. The nascent Nazarenes rejoiced and attributed that death to the new “God.” Fools, both, who little suspected that Pan — the “All Nature” — could not die. That that which had died was only their fiction, the horned monster with the legs of a goat, the “god” of shepherds and of priests who lived upon the popular superstition, and made profit of the PAN of their own making. TRUTH can never die.

We greatly rejoice in thinking that the “Mahatmas” of those who sought to build their own ephemeral reputation upon them and tried to stick them as a peacock’s feather in their hats — are also dead. The “adepts” of wild hallucinations, and too wide-awake, ambitious purposes; the Hindu sages 1,000 years old; the “mysterious strangers,” and the tutti quanti transformed into convenient pegs whereon to hang — one, “orders” inspired by his own nauseous vices; another, his own selfish purposes; a third, a mocking image from the astral light — are now as dead as the “god Pan,” or the proverbial door-nail. They have vanished into thin air as all unclean “hoaxes” must. Those who invented the “Mahatmas” 1,000 years old, seeing the hoax will not pay, may well say they “have recovered from the fascination and taken their proper stand.” And these are welcome and sure “to come out and turn upon all their dupes the vials of their sarcasm,” though it will never be the last act of their “life’s drama.” For the true, the genuine “Masters,” whose real names have, fortunately, never been given out, cannot be created and killed at the beck and call of the sweet will of any “opportunist,” whether inside or outside of the T.S. It is only the Pans of the modern nymphs and the Luperci, the greedy priests of the Arcadian god, who are, let us hope — dead and buried.

Censure is the tax a man pays to the public for being eminent.

This cry, “it is the cat!” will end by making the Theosophical Society’s “scapegoat” quite proud. It had already ceased to worry the victim, and now it is even becoming welcome and is certainly a very hoped-for sign for the cause. Censure is hard when deserved; whenever unmerited, it only shows that there is in the persecuted party something more than in the persecutors. It is the number of enemies and the degree of their fierceness, that generally decide on the merits and value of those they would

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1 [Matthew vii, 6]
brush off the face of the earth if they could. And, therefore, we close with this quotation from old Addison:

*Censure, says an ingenious author, is the tax a man pays to the public for being eminent. It is a folly for an eminent man to think of escaping it, and a weakness to be affected by it. All the illustrious persons of antiquity, and, indeed, of every age in the world, have passed through this fiery persecution. There is no defence against reproach but obscurity, it is a kind of concomitant to greatness, as satires and invectives were an essential part of a Roman Triumph.*

Dear, kind enemies of the “Tartarian termagant,” how hard you do work to add to her eminence and greatness, to be sure!