

*The New York Times on  
Blavatsky and her Mahatmas.*



## The very latest news from the World of Occultism.

### W.Q. Judge interviewed by “The New York Times” on Blavatsky and her Mahatmas.

First published in the *New York Times*, January 6<sup>th</sup>, 1889, p. 10. Republished in: Dara Eklund (Comp.). *Echoes of the Orient: The Writings of William Quan Judge*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Pasadena: Theosophical University Press: Vol. III, 2010; BLAVATSKY STILL LIVES, AND THEOSOPHY IS IN A FLOURISHING CONDITION; pp. 138-43. Frontispiece by Laurent Parcelier.

Mr. W.Q. Judge, who is the head of the Theosophical organizations of the United States, as well as President of the local Aryan Theosophical Society of New York, and editor of the Theosophical magazine, *The Path*, has just returned from a trip to England and Germany in the interest of the organizations in which he holds such prominence. In London, of course, his principal business was with Mme. H.P. Blavatsky, who is justly considered the head of all Theosophical teaching and organization outside India and Tibet, or, as she modestly prefers to be regarded, the mouthpiece and representative of the Masters, or Mahatmas, who systematically seclude themselves somewhere in the Orient from public knowledge.

“Mme. Blavatsky,” said Mr. Judge, in a conversation since his return, “is living with the Countess Wachtmeister — widow of a Swedish Count, who was an Ambassador to the Court of St. James — in Holland Park, London, and is devoting herself to the most arduous labours in the cause of Theosophy. She scarcely ever leaves the house, and from 6:30 o’clock in the morning until evening is constantly engaged in writing articles for her magazine, *Lucifer*, or other theosophical publications, replying to correspondence, and preparing the matter for further forthcoming volumes of her gigantic work, *The Secret Doctrine*. In the evening she has many visitors of all sorts — inquirers, critics, sceptics, curiosity seekers, friends — and all are welcomed with such charming grace, friendliness, and simplicity that everyone is made to feel at home with her. By 10 o’clock generally all but intimate friends have retired, but they remain an hour or two later.

“Notwithstanding that Mme. Blavatsky is beyond the vigour of middle age and for nearly three years past has been living in defiance of the leading London physicians, who gave her up long ago as hopelessly incurable of a deadly kidney disease that was liable to kill her at any moment, she never seems weary, but is the animated leader of conversation, speaking with equal ease in English, French, Italian and Russian, or dropping into Sanskrit and Hindustani as occasion requires. Whether working or talking, she seems to be constantly rolling, lighting, and smoking cigarettes of Turkish tobacco. As for her personal appearance, she hardly seems changed at all from what she was when in this country several years ago, except that she has grown somewhat stouter perhaps.

“The characteristics that are apparent in her countenance are, in equal blending, energy and great kindness. Looking at her, one can realize readily that she is just the sort of a woman who would do what she did a dozen years ago when she was coming over here from France. She reached Havre with a first-class ticket to New York and only \$2 or \$3 over, for she never carries much money. Just as she was going aboard the steamer, she saw a poor woman, accompanied by two little children, who was sitting on the pier weeping bitterly.

“‘Why are you crying?’ she asked.

“The woman replied that her husband had sent to her from America money to enable her and the children to join him. She had expended it all in the purchase of steerage tickets that turned out to be utterly valueless counterfeits. Where to find the swindler who had heartlessly defrauded her, she did not know, and she was quite penniless in a strange city.

“‘Come with me,’ said Mme. Blavatsky, who straightway went to the agent of the steamship company and induced him to exchange her first-class ticket for steerage tickets for herself, the poor woman and the children. Anybody who has ever crossed the ocean in the steerage among a crowd of emigrants will appreciate the magnitude of such a sacrifice to a woman of refined sensibilities, and there are few but Mme. Blavatsky who would have been capable of it.

“As I said, she has been condemned to death for three years but no fear is entertained of her dying before her mission is accomplished. Twice before, when in India, she was given up by the doctors, who on each occasion set a time limit of only a few days upon her existence, and her recoveries were looked upon as simply marvellous. At the time when she was worst and seemed likely to die on the road, she set out for Northern India, and as it was generally understood that she was going to the Mahatmas for succour, several persons who had a strong desire to see those mysterious Adepts followed and watched her. But at Darjeeling she mysteriously disappeared. She had been carried there, and it was inconceivable how she could, by herself, have slipped away, but she was gone and that was all that anybody could say about it. In three days she returned, apparently as well as she ever was. The most that anyone is told about how the transformation in her condition was effected is given by her in *The Secret Doctrine*, when she says:

For Sound generates, or rather attracts together, the elements that produce an ozone, the fabrication of which is beyond chemistry, but within the limits of Alchemy. It may even *resurrect* a man or an animal whose astral “vital body” has not been irreparably separated from the physical body by the severance of the magnetic or odic chord. *As one saved thrice from death* by that power, the writer ought to be credited with knowing personally something about it.<sup>1</sup>

“People who do not believe there is any ‘astral body’ or any ‘ozone’ of that sort may question her averment, but occultists and all who know how truthful a woman she is will believe her. That she recovered health with astounding suddenness is a fact that cannot be denied. Since she has been in London the physicians have been amazed

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<sup>1</sup> *Secret Doctrine*, I p. 555

by her living. First, they say the astounding quantity of uric acid in her blood should have killed her long ago, and if that was not enough to do it, the deadly poisons given her in enormous doses in treatment to which she has lately been subjecting herself ought to have finished her. But she seems to be getting better, and doubtless, if all else fails and her work continues to be necessary, she will be saved again as she was before.

“Mme. Blavatsky now very seldom gives any manifestation of her occult powers, except to intimate friends; but I had, while over there, several evidences that she can do things quite inexplicable by any laws of ‘exact’ science. Two years ago I lost, here in New York, a paper that was of considerable interest to me. I do not think anybody but myself knew that I had it, and I certainly mentioned to no one that I had lost it. One evening, a little over a fortnight ago, while I was sitting in Mme. Blavatsky’s parlour with Mr. B. Keightley and several other persons, I happened to think of that paper. The Madame got up, went into the next room, and returning almost immediately, handed to me a sheet of paper. I opened it and found it an exact duplicate of the paper that I had lost two years before. It was actually a facsimile copy, as I recognized at once. I thanked her, and she said:

“‘Well, I saw it in your head that you wanted it.’

“It was not a thing to astonish anyone acquainted with the laws of nature as comprehended by occultists, who understand clearly how consciousness of my thought was possible, how the reproduction of a thing once within my knowledge was necessarily facsimile, and how that reproduction could be effected by a simple act of volition on her part, but it would puzzle materialists to explain it in accordance with the facts.

“One night when I talked very late with a gentleman at a house distant from Mme. Blavatsky’s, he expressed a wish that I would, if I had an opportunity, get her views, without mentioning his name, upon a subject that was under discussion between us. The next day, when I was talking with her, the subject came up and I began offering his suggestions, when she interrupted me, saying: ‘You needn’t tell me that — I was there last night and heard you,’ and went on to repeat all that had been said. Of course it can be said that he had informed her with a view to deceiving me, but I am well assured that there was nothing of the sort, and that under certain existing circumstances that would have been practically impossible. I know that she very often reads people’s thoughts and replies to them in words.

“The silvery bell sounds in the astral current that were heard over her head by so many persons when she was here in New York, still continue to follow her, and it is beyond question to those familiar with her life and work that she is in constant receipt of the most potent aid from the Adepts, particularly her teacher, the Mahatma Morya, whose portrait hangs in her study and shows a dark and beautiful Indian face, full of sweetness, wisdom, and majesty. Of course it does not seem possible that he in Tibet instantaneously responds, either by a mental impression or a ‘precipitated’ note, to a mental interrogatory put by her in London, but it happens to be the fact that he does so all the same.

“Her most intimate friends in London are the Countess Wachtmeister, the Keightleys, Mabel Collins — who is associated with her in the literary work on *Lucifer* — and Dr. Ashton Ellis. Mr. A.P. Sinnett drops in occasionally, and notwithstanding the corrections she has felt called upon to make in her *Secret Doctrine* of some things in his *Esoteric Buddhism*, there seems to be cordial good feeling between him and Mme. Blavatsky. The magazine *Lucifer*, I do not think is paying expenses yet. It is a very costly thing to get up, and its circulation has necessarily slow growth. But *The Secret Doctrine* has been an enormous success. Its first edition was exhausted as quickly as it came from the binders, and a second edition is already nearly all gone. Such a demand for a work so erudite, metaphysical, and in all respects overwhelming, demonstrates that those interested most deeply in Theosophy belong to the most cultured and intelligent class of society. It requires a person to have a good education to understandingly read that book. Nevertheless, abstruse, metaphysical, erudite, and brilliant as it is, almost the whole of that gigantic work has been either dictated by Mme. Blavatsky to a shorthand writer or spoken by her into a phonograph from which it has been directly reproduced with very little if any subsequent emendation or alteration. It is, in fact, just her talk, and reading it gives a good idea of her conversation on any topic on which she ‘turns herself loose.’ If at times she is in momentary doubt or question as to an authority or quotation, it is at once supplied to her by the Mahatmas with whom she is in constant communication.

“Theosophy is gaining ground solidly in England, and with a degree of rapidity that is surprising in view of the conservatism of English thought and feeling. There are already flourishing Theosophical Societies in London, Edinburgh, Liverpool, Cambridge, Dublin, and several other places. One was just about to be started in Glasgow when I left. And among those interesting themselves most in it are scientists, leading educators, prominent men in governmental departments, and gentlemen of fortune and education. Of course, the clergy do not take kindly to it. A religious paper in London, called *The Christian*, picked up a little description in an American paper of the decorations in one of the rooms of the office of *The Path* — which was made to appear as a Buddhist temple — and editorially expressed its horror at such a demonstration of ‘paganism’ in the Christian city of New York.

“Col. Olcott left London just before my arrival there. It is not at all probable now that he will be able to give this year the series of lectures through the United States, as had been planned for him. His work in Japan and India will preclude his doing so.

“In Germany I called upon Mr. G. Gebhard, in Elberfeld, who is one of the leading theosophists of the ‘Vaterland.’ Incidentally he is a large velvet and lace manufacturer, *Commerzien-Rath* of the town and a very highly accomplished gentleman. It will be remembered that it was in his house that the famous materialization of the letter behind the picture, the sounding of the astral bells and other strange occurrences took place at the time Mme. Blavatsky was stopping there. Mme. G. Gebhard is as advanced an occultist as her husband, having been during a number of years a pupil of the famous Éliphas Lévi. Dr. F. Eckstein is the other great theosophical leader of Germany. Dr. Franz Hartmann is not so much of a theosophist as a mystic. I learned from him that he has a new book almost ready for issue, which I fancy will show his position rather more clearly than anything previously put forth by him. Theosophy is

gaining ground in Germany, but more slowly than in France. The one magazine published in its interest there — the *Sphinx* — is rather weak. Its editor, Herr Hübbschleiden, is doubtless a good man and a theosophist from conviction, but lacks the courage of his convictions in promulgating the doctrine, seeming to be afraid of getting beyond the established bounds of materialistic science. Nevertheless, his journal has done some good in awakening thought in new lines, and in its conservatism commands at least tolerant respect. I learned that not long since in one of the German courts a lawyer set up a plea of hypnotic influence as a defence for a client accused of some offense, and when it was rejected by the court, cited as demonstrations and proofs of the correctness of the scientific basis of his theory, articles published in the *Sphinx*, which convinced the court and won the case.

“Several theosophical societies are flourishing in France and the doctrine is already strong and gaining strength very rapidly in Paris, where a new magazine in its interest, *Hermes*, has just been established, in addition to that of M. Arnaud, *Le Lotus*, which is probably the most prosperous of the theosophical periodicals next to Col. Olcott’s *Theosophist* in India.”



## Suggested reading for students.



### **Tributes to Madame Blavatsky.**

- “Blavatsky interviewed by Charles Johnston”
- “Blavatsky makes it in Bagpipe Music”
- “Blavatsky on Blavatsky”
- “Blavatsky remembered by Henry Travers Edge”
- “Blavatsky's Obituary by NY Daily Tribune”
- “Blavatsky's Obituary by WQ Judge”
- “Blavatsky will instruct me in the seven sacred trances”
- “Cleather on Blavatsky (1922)”
- “Cleather on the Great Betrayal (1922)”
- “De Zirkoff on Blavatsky's background and early life”
- “De Zirkoff pays homage to Blavatsky”
- “The Esoteric She by WQ Judge”
- “The great noetic radiance of our epoch”
- “The Seal of HP Blavatsky”
- “Wachtmeister et al. reminisce on Blavatsky (1893)”

