

# I

## “THE DOLL”

Note: The mutual contradictions shown in this one section between the so-called Blavatsky-Coulomb letters, Madame Coulomb, and Dr. Richard Hodgson are among the most important to be found in the case, and, in my opinion, are alone sufficient to discredit all three as sources of reliable information. Some of these fatal inconsistencies have been previously pointed out by the late Mrs. Beatrice Hastings and (in 1951) by K. F. Vania. However, I wish to say that so far as Mrs. Hastings' discoveries in this direction go, these were observed independently by myself before reading her works; and all of the contradictions set forth here were, with but one exception (se p.5), in my notes before 1951.

\* \* \* \*

We know that a major part of the phenomena initiated by Madame Blavatsky in India consisted of apparitions of the Mahatmas, some of these being witnessed individually, others collectively. In conclusion to one of the Blavatsky-Coulomb letters, there is this passage (translated): “Oh my poor Christofolo! He is dead then, and you have killed him? Oh my dear friend, if you only knew how I would like to see him revive! . . . My blessings on my poor Christofolo. Ever yours, “H P. B.”

To this, in his Report, Hodgson added: “This extract is said by Madame Coulomb to be Madame Blavatsky's lament for the destruction of the dummy head and shoulders employed for the Koot Hoomi appearances, Christofolo being the ‘occult’ name for Koot Hoomi.”

Now unfortunately for Madame Coulomb, the genuine letter to which this apparent forgery was appended bore no date, but, as shown by Mrs. Hastings, it can be dated. As its full contents show, it antedated October 25<sup>th</sup>, and preceded the decision to establish Theosophical

Headquarters at Madras; therefore—and for other reasons also,— it could not have been written after October 24<sup>th</sup>, 1881 (see Hastings’ Defence, etc., pp. 70-71). But, as Mrs. Hastings was quick to show, though this placed the destruction of “Christofolo”—“the appearance continued.” In fact, those to Ramaswamier (M), Ross Scott (M), and Mohini (K. H.) occurred, respectively, two months, three months, and two years and four months after the auto-da-fe. When Hodgson came to India, Mme. Coulomb rectified this blunder in the forged letters, and the S.P.R. solemnly records...’Madame Coulomb declares that she had burned the dummy “in a fit of disgust at the imposture,” but that she afterwards made another.’

The whole thing being a criminal conspiracy, perhaps the appropriate comment would be—‘Laughter in Court’” (Loc. Cit.).

But what Mrs. Hastings missed is that though the Court may laugh, the Defence wants more than laughter—it wants disproof. And what disproof can there be to the idea that, despite the fact Madame Coulomb’s pamphlet mentions no resurrection, a Christofolo II was born in November 1881, conceived by the disputed plea, “Oh my dear friend, if you only knew how I would like to see him revive!”?

There is such disproof and Mr. Vania was the first to publish it: “The first use of this ‘doll,’ Madame Coulomb ‘asserted’ in her pamphlet, page 34, is as follows: ‘Let us see for what purpose the doll was made. This was to give a convincing and material proof of the existence of the brothers, as their (said) invisible presence did not fully satisfy the truth seekers.

“Among the many apparitions to which this doll has been instrumental I will choose the one seen by Mr. Ramaswamier in December 1881’.”

Clearly, Madame Coulomb here allows no second “doll,” no Christofolo II, to play the part, the declaration is unequivocal, and irrevocable: it was “this” and only this “doll”—

“Christofolo,” destroyed in October, if the Blavatsky-Coulomb “correspondence” is to be credited!—which deceived Mr. Ramaswamier the following December! One word too many from the gabbling Mrs. Coulomb and the neat case to be built by the Doctor of Laws from Cambridge was already destroyed, beforehand and forever!

But, says the clever doctor, “neither by frequent cross-examination nor by independent investigation of their statements wherever circumstances permitted, have I been able to break down any allegations of theirs which were in any way material.”

Well, unlike Mr. Vania, let us look a bit further into this. In Appendix VIII to his Report, Hodgson reviews the experience of Mr. Ramaswamier and companions when, on returning from a ride with Madame Blavatsky on December 28, 1881, they witnessed the appearance of Mahatma M. on the balcony of the Theosophical Headquarters at Bombay. As seen, this incident is chosen by Madame Coulomb as her first illustration of the use of the doll Christofolo.” But, unfortunately, it has been overlooked that this issue is a good illustration of something else besides; it is not only another revelation of this woman’s untrustworthiness, more important it is an excellent demonstration of Dr. Hodgson’s readiness to believe a lie—or to pretend belief—so long as Madame Blavatsky might be made to suffer.

The certificate of witnesses to this incident was printed in Mr. Hume’s Hints on Esoteric Theosophy, which seems to have served as a guide to events for Madame Coulomb when writing her pamphlet. The SPR agent raised numerous criticisms and objections, all of which can be met with evidential answers he failed to appreciate, but the chief controversy appeared to center on the claim that the Mahatma dropped a note, “a message to Ramaswamier, in reply to a letter (in a closed envelope) which he had written to the Brother a short time before we went out for the ride.” Mr. Ramaswamier was obstinate in his conviction that “from the time when he gave the

note to Madame Blavatsky until the Brother dropped the answer from the balcony, she was not out of his sight”—ergo, she could not have read the letter or written the answer or passed it on to a confederate without his knowledge.

And, at this point, Hodgson did a very clever but a very fatal thing, he played the fool: “I asked Madame Coulomb if she knew anything of this letter. She said that Madame Blavatsky retired to the bath-room, where she (Madame Coulomb) was; that Madame Blavatsky was in a great hurry, saying ‘Quick! Quick!’ and wrote the reply in a few seconds, which she gave to Madame Coulomb to be dropped by M. Coulomb disguised as a Mahatma” (Report, p. 363). Quite obviously, Madame Coulomb was depending upon public appreciation for decency to support her implication that Mr. Ramawamier would not have been present just then, and that he would not have failed to omit this brief absence from his recollection. Of itself, this was a neat answer to an inviting question, and gives us a good insight into the opportunistic talents of Hodgson’s chief witness. It was a quick and glib escape from an embarrassing corner. But why had Mr. Ramaswamier’s reiterated claim (“she was not out of his sight”) proved so embarrassing to the conspirators.

In her pamphlet, published a month or two before Hodgson arrived on the scene to cleverly coach his witness with leading questions, Mme. Coulomb, speaking from what she called “personal evidence,” confidently asserted that the “astral body” which Mr. Ramaswamier had seen “on the balcony at the head-quarters of the Theosophical Society in Bombay, on the memorable night of December, 1881, was no one else than Monsieur Coulomb, with the doll’s head on his own. It was he who dropped the letter in answer to the one sent through Madame Blavatsky to the mahatma, as already mentioned, and which letter in answer had been handed to

Mr. Coulomb by Madame Blavatsky, with instructions to drop it as the carriage drove back under the portico.”

In January, 1885, and after Mr. Ramaswamier’s repeated insistence that Madame Blavatsky “was not out of his sight” during the specific interval—and doubtless confronted with the witness’s direct denial that Madame Blavatsky had then handed any “letter” to “Mr. Coulomb” or anyone else, a denial we should expect Hodgson to, characteristically, omit—, Madame Coulomb apparently realized that her November fiction had not taken this into account and that a better story was wanted by her sponsor. But obviously she was no deep thinker, for though the bath-room permitted an escape in fancy from Mr. Ramaswamier’s watchful eye, her story no sooner got started than she found herself by necessity having to get her husband, “Mr. Coulomb,” out of the way also. No longer could she have the answer “handed to Mr. Coulomb by Madame Blavatsky,” so it was this time given “to Madame Coulomb to be dropped by M. Coulomb”—!!

Dr. Hodgson, being very decent about it, obligingly pretended to have forgotten all about Madame Coulomb’s previous published version—doubtless he hoped his readers would do the same—; and so he “asked Madame Coulomb if she knew anything of this letter”—! Had Mme. Coulomb been the clever confederate of a master conjuror she pretended to be and that her devotees have imagined she was, she would have found no necessity for changing her story. But plainly she knew nothing about misdirection, nor of surreptitious writing and transfer by sleight of hand, and her husband was of no help either. All she knew was that plenty of people were ready to believe whatever she told them, and that she had a champion from Cambridge who knew much about misdirection and who was ready to play the fool if only she pretended to be wise.

Apologists for Madame Blavatsky have overlooked something equally as strange as the ghostly resurrection of the incinerated “Christofolo” (?!). One of Madame Coulomb’s missionary defenders, Dr. Murdoch of Madras, in his pamphlet Theosophy Unveiled, writes, “M. Coulomb, one moonlight night, appeared on the balcony of the house, wearing this mask, and leaning against the balustrade. At the same time he dropped a letter...Colonel Olcott and Daodar [and Ramaswamier] signed a certificate, testifying to the appearance of the ‘Illustrious’ in his astral body. At an ‘entertainment,’ given in the Old College Hall, Madras, Madame Coulomb produced the mask, which corresponds fairly well with Colones Olcott’s account” (Op. cit., p. 37).

Mr. Vania, in his book p. 238, records with no pertinent comment that a correspondent from Madras, quoted in the Times of India (Oct. 17 1884), refers to a forthcoming “entertainment” by Madame Coulomb, at which, she “announces,” she “will unveil Koot Hoomi.” Mr. Vania adds a “report of this ‘entertainment’” which was “published in the Madras Mail on 20th October” being “copied by the Press throughout India and by The Times of India on 23 October” (Op. cit., pp. 239-41). The report is that during the proceedings, “some amusement was caused by the appearance on the stage of a tall figure, with a mask well surrounded with hirsute appendages, and wearing a long white robe, about 6½ feet high. It passed across the stage and disappeared.” The account states that Madame Coulomb declared, “This was Koot Hoomi who had been shown on the roof of the bungalow at head-quarters. The mask and dress formed the identical K. H. which Mr. Sinnett had done poojah to.” (Until reading Mr. Vania’s reproduction of this I was not aware that the claim had been made that this was “Christofolo’s” robe).

Now if we give as much credit to what this news reporter asserts Madame Coulomb said as we do to what Richard Hodgson alleges she told him, it becomes clear that this would be doll-maker claimed to be able to make the ghost of Christofolo not only play the part of a Mahatma at Adyar but at the Old College Hall as well. This is true because, if the “mask and dress formed the identical K. H. which Mr. Sinnett had done poojah to,” it must have been done other than the late, lamented “Christofolo,” for, after describing the creation of this “doll” on page 31 of her self-betraying pamphlet, Mme. Coulomb had written: “Now let us see for what purpose trap and doll had been made.” And she proceeds to early 1883 when, “in company with his wife and child, on their way to England,” Mr. Sinnett visited the Adyar Headquarters. Then, she alleges, “Baboula, Madame’s servant, took the Christofolo, all wrapped up in a shawl, and with Mr. Coulomb all along with the compound on the side of the swimming-bath to Colonel’s bungalow up to the terrace, where it was lifted up and lowered down to give it a vapory appearance. I went up to Madame to say that all was ready, and found her at the window, in company with Mr. And Mrs. Sinnet, looking through an opera-glass; I was very much annoyed that she should be so imprudent, but this is her nature” (Op. cit., p. 53). (That two confederates escorting “Christofolo,” “all wrapped up in a shawl,” were not required to make Mr. Sinnett see a Brother “through an opera-glass is, as we shall see—p. —, evident from a notice given by Hodgson himself).

In describing the “mask and dress” of the doll, Madame Coulomb claimed that Madame Blavatsky “cut a paper pattern of the face I was to make, which I still have; on this I cut the precious lineaments of the beloved Master, but to my shame, I must say that, after all my trouble of cutting, sewing, an stuffing, Madame said that it looked like an old Jew—I suppose she meant Shylock. Madame, with a graceful touch here and there of her painting brush, gave it a little

better appearance. But this was only a head, without bust, and could not very well be used, so I made a jacket, which I doubled, and between the two cloths I placed stuffing, to form the shoulders and chest; the arms were only to the elbow, because, when the thing was tried on, we found the long arms would be in the way of him who had to carry it” (Op. cit., p. 31).

Clearly now, the description of “Christofolo” who was paraded to receive Mr. Sinnett’s “poojah,” admits of no “long white robe” nor of “hirsute appendages,” but only of a stuffed jacket and of a cut, sewn and stuffed head, touched up with a little paint, “all wrapped up in a shawl.” The apparition at Old College Hall, Madras, simply does not correspond to even the ghost of “Christofolo”! But if it should be thought that this published description of October may have been the work of some Theosophist, some secret enemy of Madame Coulomb, eager to do her mockery, then her friend, Dr. Murdoch of Madras, one of her chief defenders, can be called upon; and in his aforementioned pamphlet, he too can be seen laboring under the fixed impression that “the mask” produced at the “entertainment” in “the Old College Hall” was claimed to be the same as worn by the lamented Christofolo, and that it “corresponded fairly well” with “Colonel Olcott’s account” (“He was dressed in white, and wore a white Fehta on his head. His beard was black, and his long black hair hung to his breast...He raised his hand and dropped a letter to us”—by “H. S. Olcott” and “Damodar K. Mavalnkar” in Certificate to the Ramaswamier balcony apparition, S.P.R. Report, p. 358. But by the confession of Madame Coulomb, “the doll” had no hand, only arms “to the elbow...).

One is not surprised that Dr. Hodgson was so prudent as to recall nothing of Madame Coulomb’s October “entertainment,” but just how far does the credulity of skepticism extend. Do the minions of Richard Hodgson really believe in these miracles of this French-woman, the physical resurrection of the destroyed, the re-animation of the incinerated? If they believe it ever



existed for the service of Madame Blavatsky, they have also to believe that the doll, Christofolo, was long since, by October 25, 1881, burned up. Mme. Coulomb, when she wrote her pamphlet after the failure of this “entertainment,” had no doubt about the non-existence of “the doll.” It was gone—even “the mask” was destroyed, for all she had saved was the pattern on which the mask had been cut out: “She cut a paper pattern of the face I was to make, which I still have; on this I cut the precious lineaments of the beloved Master...” The conclusion is clear: Madame Coulomb was not only hoodwinking her dupes with forged letters, she was fooling them with a false robe and a false mask months after the “exposure” of May, 1884, when no “doll” or “mask” or “pattern” had been shown or even hinted at!