

# Man the Barricades!

by Walter A. Carrithers, Jr.

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J. Gordon Melton, in his evaluation of Marion Meade's *Madame Blavatsky* on page 98 of this issue [*Fate*, January 1982], mentions the "hefty envelope" of material I provided him. I wish he had shared that information with FATE readers. . . .(1)

This is my response to the central and most important issue expressed in Melton's review. As he argues, "Because there are so many informants reporting episodes of fraud, it is not difficult to accept the testimony...(missing text) ...by Melton as "informants," Kiddle, had no personal charge to bring against HPB's phenomena. And Kiddle's accusation of "plagiarism" (*not* of a lecture but of broken fragments of it intermingled with the Mahatma's own thoughts in a letter) was not denied but explained as an instance of the unconscious intrusion of subjective memories (of these unacknowledged passages) into telepathic transmission. With one exception, *no* claim to personal knowledge of physical "fakery" brought against HPB's contested phenomena, whether as an accusation by any one of the remaining six "informants" named or by any other unnamed "informant," was accompanied by any sort of proof, neither an "incriminating" document nor a corroborating witness or accomplice nor any kind of physical evidence. I will confine my analysis to this single exception.

Dr. Milton claims, “Mary Billing... not only confessed to delivering a letter from a Tibetan Master to Charles Massey... but produced Madame Blavatsky’s letter with instructions on how to arrange the ‘miracle’ for Massey’s benefit.”

Alas, had Melton read pages 397 to 400 of the 1885 Hodgson Committee Report (*Proceedings, Society for Psychical Research, Part IX*)-and who can pretend to instruct the public on HPB’s guilt or innocence without first reading *that* Report?-he would have known that:

- (1) The delivered letter to Massey was not from “a Tibetan Master” but from “a Brother in Scotland” (represented as “H...,” i.e., “Hilarion, the Greek Adept”).
- (2) “Madame Blavatsky’s letter with instructions” was declared by her to be a forgery in whole or in part.
- (3) This “letter with instructions” was not brought forward by Mrs. Billing but by her (estranged) husband Dr. Billing.
- (4) Everything indicates that Dr. Billing did not allow this questioned document out of his hands: it was only *read* by Massey who “took a copy...”
- (5) Although the letter was brought to the attention of the SPR Committee in 1884, nothing indicates that the committee or its handwriting experts were permitted to examine it.
- (6) Finally, Mrs. Billing *confessed to nothing!* The false claim that she did so and “even showed Massey Madame’s letter of instructions” is a gross double canard promoted by Meade who apparently also never read the SPR Committee Report. Instead, she got these falsehoods straight from one of her principal, although unacknowledged, sources: *Priestess of the Occult* by

Gertrude Marvin Williams, who gets no credit from Meade for inventing these malicious fictions!

Naturally, for anyone so credulous as to swallow the foregoing chain of falsehoods, preferring Williams or Meade over Hodgson and company, should find no obstacle to believing the Coulombs or anyone else who accuses HPB. But for those less so inclined, I recommend the following studies which contain detailed documentation refuting all major charges of the 1884-85 Coulomb-missionary-Hodgson-SPR Committee attack and which have never been successfully contradicted on any point: *Obituary: The "Hodgson Report" on Madame Blavatsky: 1885-1960* by Adlai E. Waterman (my 1963 nom de plume), obtainable from the Blavatsky Foundation for a tax-deductible donation of \$5.00 or more.

"The 'Hodgson Report' on Madame Blavatsky" by Adlai E. Waterman, December 1969 *SPR Journal*, The Society for Psychical Research, 1 Adam and Eve Mews, London W8 6UG, England.

The latter is a reply to a critical review of *Obituary* written by Dr. Robert H. Thouless, a former SPR president who later, in print, declined to defend his review against these countercriticisms. This exchange represents the only occasion in a period of 96 years when a book defending HPB has been noticed or reviewed or a defense of HPB has appeared in the pages of the journal of the society whose 1884-85 Committee condemned her.

Buttressed by Dr. Hodgson's ingenious deceptions, the Coulomb attempt to discredit Madame Blavatsky and her Adept Brothers and their phenomena puts to shame all lesser "exposures." In contrast to these, the Coulomb "evidence" superficially

“complete” was a debunker’s delight: mutually supportive “co-confederates” armed with “incriminating letters” and documents and “confessing” in written detail to years of systematic elaborate fraud, exhibiting sliding panels and trapdoors and lesser amusements in HPB’s own rooms!

Until my 1963 book literally cut out the heart of this pretentious bugaboo, Madame Blavatsky’s antagonists were unanimous in agreeing that the case against her occult claims stood or fell on the Coulomb “evidence.” Hard-pressed to build a new case for the prosecution on the ruins of the Coulomb-missionary-Hodgson-SPR Committee anti-Blavatsky hegemony, scoffers like Meade find it imperative to ignore totally the incontrovertible contents of *Obituary*, my 18-year-old unanswered counterattack.

Meade, Melton and others are clutching at straws. Their lifeboat has been sunk.

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(1) [For more on Marion Meade’s biography of H.P.B., see Mr. Carrithers’ article titled: "A Word of Warning. . . To Reviewers, Buyers, and Readers of *Madame Blavatsky*. . . by Marian Meade. . . [and] *Ancient Wisdom Revived*. . . by Bruce F. Campbell. . .: A Summary of Findings Exposes the ‘Exposers.’" *Theosophical History* (London) 2 (Jan. 1987): 32-36.]