

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

(Contents to be disclosed only to Members of Council)

MEMO TO THE SOCIETY FOR PSYCHICAL RESEARCH

Re: Use of the Society's unpublished documents relating to Mme. Blavatsky.

(Abstract)

I. The chief question herein discussed is, In what manner shall the Society's unpublished documents relating to Madame Blavatsky be released for publication so as to best serve the interests of the Society and of Psychical Research in general?

Preliminary to proposing an answer to this, a review is made of:

(A) Circumstances leading to discovery and copying of what may prove to be the most important of the documents, viz., the Hodgson-Blavatsky Annotations ("B. Marginal Notes", etc.);

(B) The Petition, and response thereto, which led to the discovery in 1960 of what may be called The S.P.R. Case File on H.P.B. (principally comprising documents left by the investigating Committee of 1884-1885);

(C) Remarks, suggestions, and inquiries (in part, still pending) which have been made concerning possible restrictions on the sue and/or publication of the documents or parts thereof;

(D) Information and questions concerning the release of the list and film, prepared from these documents, to the Theosophical Society in England, and the subsequent offer for sale of the film to various private individuals in England and America and perhaps elsewhere.

II. The release of these documents in copy to The Theosophical Society in England and the resultant indiscriminate sale is called into question on three grounds;

(E) That in view of the agreements and/or payment of expenses which made possible the sorting, listing, and partial filming of the SPR Case File on HPB, such release and resale, from a financial standpoint, is manifestly unfair to the private party principally concerned;

(F) That release to The Theosophical Society of the important contents of the S.P.R. Archives as these relate to H.P.B., without at the same time securing from officials of The Theosophical Society promise that they will reciprocate by releasing to the S.P.R. everything they have pertaining to H.P.B.—would be grossly unfair to this Society, and could perhaps seriously jeopardize any prospect that Psychological Researchers will ever get at that other important fund of unpublished data on the case (certain published fragments of which, more than anything else in recent years, have served to weaken the evidence for H.P.B.);

(G) That such release and resale, particularly if followed by indiscriminate and irresponsible publication of the documents or parts thereof, would be to the detriment of the Society for Psychological Research, because of: (1) the special animus of certain individuals intending to make use of the documents; and (2), the unusual nature of some of the contents, such parts in presentation requiring keen and sympathetic care towards reputations involved—especially that of our society.

III. In proposing an answer to the chief question, suggest is made that interests of the Society and of the cause of Psychological Research in general would best be safeguarded if:

(H) Initial publication of any of the contents of these documents were by a Member of the Society, someone cognizant of the special obligations entailed, someone prepared and qualified to observe scrupulously the strictest rules of fair play and accuracy in such publication, someone ready to assign any credit or blame with justice and discernment; and, therefore, if:

(I) All parties concerned (including, if necessary The Theosophical Society) were to agree to: (I) a three-year moratorium on publication and public notice of both the Hodgson-Blavatsky Annotations and the SPR Case File on HPB; and (ii), in conjunction with the granting of a three-year option to the writer to make (a qualified) first public use of these documents in whole or in part (certain special considerations, financial and otherwise, to be given the Society in return for this favor).

(A)

In 1953 I ordered through F. W. Faxon Co. a complete set of the Proceedings and Journal of the Society. By subsequent reading, I discovered that, in his Catalogue to the Society's Library, Mr. Besterman had listed a copy of the pamphlet, Some Account of My Intercourse with Madame Blavatsky from 1872 to 1884, etc., by Madame Coulomb, and that this copy was annotated by Madame Blavatsky and Dr. Richard Hodgson. Sensing at once the probable importance of these unpublished notes (hitherto ignored by historians), I decided to secure a copy for use in my research into the case. As library privileges are reserved for members only and as I was unacquainted personally with any Member residing in England, while having some time before established communication with the highest officials of The Theosophical Society (as with other groups in order to provide the widest possible field for my data-gathering), I wrote to the Secretary General of The Theosophical Society in England, inquiring whether the Librarian of that Society, who is also registered as a Member of the S.P.R., might undertake to secure for me a copy of these annotations.

In refusing this request on November 18, 1953, the Secretary General, the late Mr. C.R. Groves, added, "Also, we have no member of the staff here who has the time available for research of this kind into a matter which is long dead and would be better buried" (and, as if

upon reflection, he afterwards interpolated with pen, "in my opinion". However, as a consequence of my request being later taken up by the President and Vice President of The Theosophical Society, with International Headquarters in India, Mr. Groves on reconsideration consented to this, and entered into communication with the Honorary Secretary of the S.P.R. Mr. Groves arranged that a Mrs. Saloman (a Theosophist, whom I did not know) would make a handwritten copy of the annotations at my expense, an amount he suggest at about the equivalent of twenty American dollars. So the annotations were transcribed into another copy of the same pamphlet, this letter belonging to The Theosophical Society in England.

Two years later, the work was done and the facsimile copy was received here, I microfilmed it and it was then returned to England. As such things have lain for years in the libraries and archives of Theosophical societies with little or no attention being given them, I thought no more about it. Not, that is, until last June when a third party (residing in this country but, so far as I know, no member of The Theosophical Society) put into my hands a photographic print-copy of this pamphlet with its facsimile annotations, expressing the thought that I might be interested in it since I was known to be in search of any new data on the case. Although I saw at once the embarrassing position I would be put in if these annotations were used and got into print without my knowing it and without the proper acknowledgement being paid to the Council of the S.P.R., by permission of which they were obtained, I did not have occasion to write Mr. N. Sri Ram, the President of The Theosophical Society, until the 11th of April this year (thinking in the meantime that he would shortly write me a letter long overdue). I wrote to him, beginning with a reference to the party who had shown me photo-copies of the annotations, and said: "I told him these were taken at my request, by special permission of the Council of the S.P.R., and it was done by my right as a member of the S.P.R., and that it had cost me \$20.00 to have it done;

and I asked him to keep the film copies of the Saloman copy confidential. Now it may happen that the pamphlet so annotated in the London TS HQ is open for perusal by anyone upon request; and if so I can foresee an unfortunate possibility where someone like Mr. T.H. Redfern or some other historian or student researching the case would see these annotations, realize their extreme importance, and proceed to write them up in some book or article for publication. This would, as I say, be unfortunate, for it would not only deprive me of the right to make first publication use of these annotations, annotations which I was the first to discover, which I paid for, which were given by permission of the S.P.R. at my personal request for my own use, and which were obtained at your intercession....Moreover, should these annotations suddenly break into print somewhere without my advance knowledge, I would be censured by the S.P.R. for having permitted their publication without the required proper acknowledgement being made to the Council of the S.P.R. concerning their use. Hence, may I beg you to intercede again on this subject and inform officials at the English headquarters that either this pamphlet annotated by Mrs. Saloman should be sealed up, the notes should be erased, or it should be marked that no use or reference in print to the annotations is to be made without the prior notification of Walter Carrithers. I hope you deem this wise. Or perhaps you may prefer that I first suggest this myself.."

I am pleased to report that on April 28th I received word from President Sri Ram that he promises to "request Mr. Wallace Slater, who is now the General Secretary of the English Section of the Theosophical Society, to treat the pamphlet in which there are annotations by H.P.B., as private for the time being and not open to use by anyone." He expresses the belief that Mr. Slater "would be willing to comply with my request."

(B)

These annotations by Madame Blavatsky are more less confined to the latter half of the pamphlet in question (referred to by Hodgson in his Report, p. 282 of the Proceedings, iii, as B. Marginal Notes), while her remarks on the forepart of the Hodgson booklet were written separately on "about 7-1/2 pp. foolscap" and called by Hodgson, "B. Replies". To obtain these latter, if possible, as well as other documents which might have been preserved in the archives of the S.P.R., I wrote later that same year of 1955 to the Council of the Society. My petition, addressed to the Council "as a Member of this Society and as an earnest student of Psychical Research for several years", enumerated the known documents wanted and asked for information on any others, requesting that "permission might be granted for the writer to obtain, with all costs chargeable to himself, photographic facsimiles of as many...as may be in the custody of or obtainable by the authority or influence of the Council of this Society". Suggestion was added that, "In contemplation of publication, use of such documents would of course, be dependent upon the desires of the Council, both as to place and form of publication, in respect of which the writer begs to suggest his hope that all such materials might be published complete by facsimile or, otherwise, verbatim ac literatim."

In May, 1960, this petition (with addenda) was, after a lapse of years, again addressed to the Council and was received by President Prof. H. H. Price, in consequence of an apparent misdirection given the original petition (see pages 7-10 of the addendum of May, 1960). The following month (June 30), Honorary Secretary Sir George Joy reported that, "At the recent Council meeting, your request to see certain unpublished records regarding the Blavatsky case was discussed. Although the Society possesses a great deal of the published material, I am sorry

to say that there is no reason to suppose we have ever possessed any of the unpublished records, and I am therefore unable to be of much help to you." Suggestion was added that in searching for the wanted documents I might, among other things, "advertise in the 'Times Literary Supplement'..."

On August 2, 1960, I replied to the Honorary Secretary, pointing out that, "it has not been established—at any rate, no information I have yet received establishes the fact—that the Society for Psychological Research does not still possess the documents enumerated in my petition and which were possessed in 1885 thru the authority of its Council and that Council's official Committee acting through the direct agency of Dr. Hodgson who was sent to India and authorized to obtain such information. If the present Council has assured itself that not one of those enumerated exists today in possession of the Society, I would enjoy being apprised of that simple fact. And if the Council, having established this much, does not wish to adopt a suggestion that it use its good influence to if possible locate or recover or at any rate obtain possession of any such documents as may otherwise still exist, I would also enjoy being apprised of that simple fact. At any rate, I want to be able—if the necessity should ever arise—to inform my readers that the S.P.R. has kept nothing back and has given me its wholehearted cooperation in my search for documents that would prove of great interest and value to the specialized historian and the audience of psychological research in general."

Some weeks later, I received a letter from Sir George Joy, dated 24 August 1960, beginning, "Further search among the Society's files has brought to light a large packet of documents relating to the investigation of Madame Blavatsky and the affairs of the Theosophical Society made by a Committee of the S.P.R. Council in its early years."

On August 31, 1960 I acknowledged this news, and made some suggestions as to how, by use of photocopies made at my expense, I might be permitted to examine this new find. On October 7, 1960, Sir George Joy wrote to say that the documents were being sorted and a list made, and the question was raised as to which method of photo-reproduction I might prefer, microfiching or microfilming. On November 25, 1960, he again wrote, enclosing the promised list, and asking which of the documents were wanted in copy and by what photo-reproduction process. By reply of December 1, 1960, I answered these queries, enclosing a list of those certainly or possibly wanted in copy (some cases depending upon the question of annotations). Months passed, then on March 21 of this year, I received by registered mail a reel of microfilm (marked "90 feet") together with a covering letter from Sir. George Joy. After some delay, I was able to examine the film on a local microfilm reader (I have none of my own), and I ascertained that all of the newly-found documents wanted and requested for certain were here in copy, as well as one additional with annotations. On April 8, I wrote Sir George Joy, making acknowledgement of this receipt of film, 35mm negative, as ordered.

(C)

Having anticipated that there might arise some measure of reluctance towards any publication of such documents if found, in my original petition of 1955 I had been careful to volunteer my recognition of the rights of the Council and to suggest the kind of publication which would prevent any possibility of biased editing (see quotation above). I had then also recognized the possibility that there might also be found other private documents such as "the personal notations of Dr. Hodgson himself, especially those set down during his interrogation of witnesses in India..." And, I was careful to recognize that, "despite the fact such personal notes

and memos as may exist were made by their author in his capacity as official inquirer and could rightly be considered the property of this Society or its Council, the re-examination and public revelation of such notations might perhaps be liable to ethical criticism akin to the sort that might be brought against Dr. Hodgson's unauthorized publication of private correspondence to the personal embarrassment and difficulty of the correspondents." It is to be noted, however, that in my extended petition of last year, I express a retraction of this last view in light of the Society's own observances in the Borley Rectory Case and the private records of the late Harry Price and others (see pp. 14-15). Thus I recognized that, "If the investigator can publicize the private records of a subject, records not intended for publication, the like documents of the investigator should in all fairness be open for similar inspection and criticism." And if all the facts are what we want, this is, of course necessarily true. But these earlier quotations demonstrate that so far back as the beginning in 1955 I was ready to give the Council the widest possible latitude in its determination of any restrictions to insure judicious use of the documents.

In first announcing the discovery of the "large packet of documents", Sir George Joy, writing August 24, 1960, stated, "You will doubtless have seen the note on pages 156 and 157 of the S.P.R. Journal, Vol. I, in which reference is made to a forthcoming report of the Committee, a report which was, in fact, circulated to all Members and marked 'Private and Confidential.' In that report it is stated 'No Member or Associate will be supplied with more than one copy of the Report, which will contain matter of a semi-private character, and is not intended for diffusion beyond the limits of the Society.' Many of the documents that have already been found are themselves made without the previous consent of the Council. A further question might arise as to the necessity of obtaining the consent of whoever now owns the literary property in the letters."

In response to this, under date of August 31, 1960, I said, "I also take cognizance of your remarks respecting the fact that much of this documentation was originally supplied the Society as private material; and I naturally acknowledge the fact (see my petition, page 3) that the use of these documents is, of course, "dependent upon the desires of the Council..."

At this point, another difficulty arose in connection with my being given access to these documents. In his letter of August 24th the Honorary Secretary wrote, "As to the examination of the documents of the kind you apparently contemplate, I should make it clear that the time of the officers is so fully occupied that this extra burden could not be imposed upon them. It might be possible to arrange for some person other than one of the officers, someone approved by the Honorary Secretaries, to examine any documents in which you are interested, under the supervision of one of the officers."

In my reply of August 31st, I took this subject up, "With respect, however, to the suggestion that, 'it might be possible to arrange for some person other than one of the officers, someone approved by the Honorary Secretaries, to examine any documents in which you are interested, under the supervision of one of the officers,' this does not accord with what I had in mind. As a matter of fact, I know of no one, either in England nor here, to whom I could contentedly and conscientiously delegate (with permission) my right (if that were granted) to examine these documents. Unless someone is well acquainted with the subject, a casual perusal of the documents would mean nothing to them; and indeed, I myself, after intensive study of background evidence, would be loath to decide at a moment's reading whether a document has or has not some new or especially pertinent value for the historian. As you will see on reading the second paragraph of page 3 of my petition, it was my request that 'permission might be

granted for the writer to obtain...photographic facsimiles...' By obtaining photographic copies of the documents, the extra work on the staff will be kept at a minimum, there will be no necessity for the documents to be handled by anyone besides the Society officers or their regular photo copier; and, upon receipt of the photographic copies, I can at my leisure determine which documents and which parts of documents are relevant to my study, at the same time having the advantage of visual inspection to determine any question of penmanship in various notes, annotations, etc.

"I do not know exactly what type of photo-copying machine the Society has, but I presume this task could be properly done with its use. If that is not so, then some commercial photo-copying firm could doubtless be found to do the job expeditiously."

At this point, I expressed a hope that my suggestions as to a possible resolution of this difficulty might be brought to the Council's attention: "By letter of August 9th, the Society's Secretary General, Mrs. Elizabeth Beale wrote to say that my reply [of August 2nd] to your letter of [June 30th]... 'will be brought before the Council at its next meeting on September 19th.' I suppose the later discovery of this 'large packet of documents' together with the information in your present letter generally takes care of the substance of my letter of August 2nd, though this is not of course for me to decide. But, in light of this promise, I wonder whether the present letter together with the following observations might not also be brought to the Council's attention."

I continue to quote from my letter of August 31, 1960:

"The Council will doubtless have ideas of its own on this point, but if I may be permitted to make a few possibly helpful suggestions, it would be these..." Here a number of points were suggested for possible consideration, three being:

"4. Concurrent with the advance payment of costs, I will furnish the Council with a signed and written promise (by legal, notarized affidavit, if it be so desired) to permit no third party to see the contents of these copies, to make no reproduction of these copies nor of any one of them, and to make known no information contained in them—except with the Council's specific permission for me to do so.

5. When received, I will examine the contents of these copies for a reasonable time—let us say, 90 days--, at the expiration of which period I will notify the Council of the identity (by number if the documents be so indexed) of those pages or portions of pages which I wish to copy and publish (and I repeat here, from my original petition, my expressed "hope that all such materials might be published complete by facsimile or, otherwise, verbatim ac litteratim"—the better to avoid any question of miscopy or any controversy about a passage and its relation to context).

6. Having been apprised of the number and identity of the documents wanted for publication, the Council then could consult the originals in their possession and, taking each item in turn, approve or disapprove, at the same time laying down conditions it might see fit as to publication and manner of use."

No response was ever received to these voluntary suggestions of restricted use, nor was I ever told that my suggestions here given were brought before the Council. Instead, on October 7th the Honorary Secretary wrote to say that the documents were being sorted and a list compiled and the question of alternate methods of photo-reproduction was raised. Finally, on November 25, 1960, Sir George Joy again wrote to ask exactly what documents were wanted in copy and in what form of copy. While designating those to be copied, my letter of December 1, 1960, also

stated, "I must confess that much of the material listed is new to me, little or no mention it having been made in print. Therefore, it would seem that the best prospect is to have most all of the items photo-reproduced, deciding upon examination what is and what is not to be useful, afterwards communicating the results of this examination to the Council together with request to make public use of such portions as are necessary, such use to be made with due acknowledgement to the S.P.R."

Again, no response was made to my statement of voluntary precaution, and, at last the photo-copies were received, still with no mutual agreement or understanding as regards restrictions beyond recognition of the general fact that (as I had put it), "use of these documents, of course, dependent upon the desires of the Council..." and (as Sir George Joy had put it), "no use of them or of any extracts from them can be made without the previous consent of the Council." I do not know in exactly what sense the Honorary Secretary employed the term, "use," but, while I had expressed the possibility of restrictions to cover every possible use, the reference in my original petition was only to "use...as to place and form of publication..." Nevertheless, I must declare that since receiving the microfilm of documents, I have made no kind of copy of any part of them, I have permitted no one else to examine the film, and I have disclosed not so much as a sentence to any third party.

Indeed, I am still awaiting reply to my question of April 8th, submitted with acknowledgement that the microfilm was received (and sent by airmail of that date to Sir George Joy): "4. Has the Council decided to place any restriction upon use of the copied material sent, beyond the usual accuracy of reproduction in publication, as well as accompanying acknowledgement to the Council for permission to publish?"

(D)

In view of all these precautions and restrictions voluntarily suggested on my part, and in light of my yet-unanswered plea for clarification as to any use of the documents' contents, imagine therefore my surprise and perplexity when on April 19th, less than a month after receiving the film, I got the following from Mr. Leonard Soper, writing "for the Secretary General" of The Theosophical Society in England: "We have been requested by Mr. T. H. Redfern to enquire whether you would are to have a copy of the microfilm of various papers relating to Mme. Blavatsky which the Society for Psychical Research has kindly put at our disposal."

As I had been told by Sir George Joy that all of the "papers relating to Mme. Blavatsky" and in possession of the S.P.R. had been listed for me, so that I could not think that there were there any aside from those discovered at my behest, I had to suspect that for some reason a copy of the film I had ordered had somehow come into possession of The Theosophical Society in England. But I could scarcely believe it—at any rate, not until the next day when I received another letter, this time from Dr. Henry A. Smith, President of The Theosophical Society in America (like the previous letter, also dated April 17th), reading in part, "Your letter of April 14 is on hand, and I am pleased that you have finally written to Mr. Endersby... We have en route the 90 ft microfilm from London, which I think should also be made available to him since he is publishing a book in the defense of H.P.B. This microfilm is not a confidential matter I have been informed, so I see no harm in his reviewing it, if he likes. It will be gracious therefore if you would offer him the use of your microfilm instead of my offering it through "Olcott.'" "

My immediate reply to this was: "In regards to the film you speak of, I myself—despite a

request—have no official assurance that it is not confidential. And if any use is made of it, I trust that acknowledgement will be made of the fact (which will be verified by President N. Sri Ram and Vice President Sidney Cook) that the master film itself was made at the request of the undersigned and at his own expense, while the contents of the film were discovered and brought to light after all these years only by my persistent petition and prolonged personal and solitary effort (when repeated denials, official and unofficial, had been made that the contents even existed!)."

The day after this, I received two more letters, one from Mr. Endersby (dated April 20th) in which he writes, "Incidentally, I am just sending to London for microphotos, copies of S.P.R. documents in connection with the case which do not seem to be duplicated in anything I have now; if they turn out to be important I can recopy them for you"—! And, the other, also dated April 20th, came from Mr. De Zirkoff who wrote, "I have received from Bendit the offer of 90 ft of microfilm about HPB from the SPR"—!

I may say at once that Mr. Redfern and Mr. Endersby are prominent Theosophists, each an unqualified defender of Madame Blavatsky, and, if I mistake not, each a leader of an active Theosophical group and an editor of a Theosophical journal. Moreover, while Mr. Redfern has publicly advocated a committee to write a book defending HPB against "the S.P.R. Report," Mr. Endersby has publicly announced that his book in her defense is about ready for the press. This last fact, of course, makes both of them active competitors of mine, since, as stated in my original petition to the Council, I too am engaged upon a re-examination of the case, with the intention that my findings shall be ultimately published, though already being delayed some years, partly by reason of the difficulty in obtaining access to these documents.

With this circumstance in mind, imagine my feelings at this juncture, the feelings of a would be historian who after long and anxious effort has managed on his own to obtain in copy documents long ignored by everyone else, documents unsuspected and overlooked by other historians, unique documents of the greatest importance to his research and which promise to enhance not only his understanding but also the acceptance and sale of his projected work—and then, alas! He is informed that this gem of his own discovery, dug out of what everyone else thought was barren ground only by dint of his own efforts and at his own expense and by what he thought was a right of special privilege (since he took pride in calling himself a Member of the S.P.R., and one who had received the special consent of its Council), he learns in a roundabout fashion that somehow, in a manner unknown to him, this prized information has been given over into the hands of his competitors, willy-nilly, for them to reap quick rewards and credits which rightly belong only to himself as the consequence of his own discernment and perseverance! I admit quite frankly that at this my feelings were of acute and stunned disappointment, galling disillusionment, and , I confess anger.

Needless to say, I have addressed both inquiry and complaint concerning this development to President N. Sri Ram and Vice President Sidney A. Cook of The Theosophical Society, International Headquarters at Madras. Both of these gentlemen, with whom I have been in personal correspondence for several years, and who have always shown me the kindest consideration and generosity, have given me no reason to believe that they were apprised in advance of the sale of this film by their London office nor that they would approve of it. In fact, I have just learned that Bendit—Dr. L. J. Bendit, formerly a Member of the S.P.R.—who appears to be playing some kind of role in the distribution of this microfilm, was replaced some time ago by Wallace Slater as Secretary General of the English Section of The Theosophical Society; and

one factor which has probably contributed to this is that Mr. Slater does not know me and, unlike his President and Vice President at Adyar, very probably knows nothing of my long-standing project or of my correspondence with the higher officers or of my responsibility for the discovery and making of this HPB case file and microfilm.

On April 27th, I dispatched a letter to Messrs. Cook and Ram, saying, "Needless to say, I am thinking of also lodging a protest on this matter with the Council of the Society for Psychical Research, for while this film has been distributed to others on a 'not confidential' basis, my own hands remain tied, as I have obtained no such permission..."

"But is the S.P.R. really to blame for this situation? I doubt it. After all of the inconsiderate delay and rebuff previously thrown into my path while trying to get at these documents, I find it impossible to believe that a copy of my microfilm was released to Dr. Bendit's office merely as a spontaneous expression of goodwill from the soft heart of some S.P.R. official, quite aside from its collective Council (although it may be that Brigadier R. C. Firebrace, C.B.E., prominent member of The Theosophical Society in England, may be such an official, for, if I mistake not, I recently received notice of his nomination to the Council of the S.P.R.)."

What then brought this about? And, so far as I am concerned—and no one has any better right to be concerned than I, for I alone suspected the documents existed, I alone petitioned for their search, I alone obtained their initial release by the S.P.R. Council, and I alone paid (and/or am to be billed) for their sorting, indexing, listing and original reproduction--, this unrestricted international distribution of copies on purchase (especially to competing historians who can publicize and exploit the contents without proper acknowledgement and without consideration

for detail and accuracy which will delay my own book until later), this fiasco constitutes a scandal, in my opinion, an abominable trick by someone, nothing less than a stab in my back, by whomever perpetrated and by no matter whose connivance!!"

"I mean to learn how a copy of my 90 ft film came into the hands of Dr. Bendit, and whether, as in my case, this was the result of a petition to the Council of the S.P.R., and by what member of the S.P.R., and whether such a petition was subsequently approved or not by the consent of the Council; or, whether this came as the consequence of an unprompted offer by the S.P.R. itself. But even if the S.P.R. Council, out of the depths of its inexhaustible, long-standing goodwill towards the devotees of Madame Blavatsky, voluntarily notified Bendit's office that such documents had been found, that a negative film of them had been made, and that copies could be had for 30/ea., for unrestricted circulation on a 'not confidential' basis, that would never excuse what has been done by Theosophists subsequently..."

"What then is to be gained by rushing the newly-found S.P.R. documents out in copy and into the hands of such blunderers?"

"Why especially should Dr. Bendit or officials of The Theosophical Society in England be anxious that the world or their members or students of the subject should get at these documents, now? Why so, when until I got after the documents myself alone and unaided and obtained them on my own, no Theosophist exhibited the slightest interest in what the S.P.R. might or might not have retained in its archives concerning this matter. Everyone sat blissfully by for 75 years, unconcerned, until my petition prompted the search that finally met with success—and now, promptly, in a few days, everyone scrambles to get in the act and to gobble up the desserts and gain for themselves as much credit or glory as possible. Ineffably disgusting!

"Frankly, gentlemen, I think you are too honorable men to tolerate or approve such unsportsmanlike behavior, especially on the part of those who should be exemplars of Theosophy.

"If Dr. Bendit or someone else wants to make a 'stir' and 'do something' for the defense of HPB at this relatively late date, I can give them plenty to do without rushing in and stealing my discoveries and credits. I could, for example, point to the greater mass of S.P.R. Committee documents which the S.P.R. did not find in this file, documents which are missing, whereabouts unknown, but which the S.P.R. Secretary advised me to look for elsewhere, almost anywhere, in England, Bendit's jurisdiction. Handicapped as I am by distance and lack of funds, I myself cannot institute such a search nor advertisement, like as I would."

"From the communication, concerning this microfilm, reported by Dr. Smith as received from Bendit's office, and from the similar reports of Endersby and de Zirkoff, as well as from the letter I myself received from Mr. Soper, it appears no effort is being made to give me the slightest credit for bringing about single-handedly the recovery and release of the S.P.R. case file on H.P.B. Does this mean that someone else—perhaps Dr. Bendit, formerly of the S.P.R. and now chief of the English Theosophists—is preparing to take credit for this signal feat? If so, I shall not hesitate a moment to expose Dr. Bendit in print, and I will publicly disclose his real history in connection with my project and its accomplishments, particularly as relating to this S.P.R. file and documents!"

"Clearly then, if the S.P.R. in releasing this film to Dr. Bendit's office was not prompted by the latter or by someone in his jurisdiction, then my only complaint [against Theosophists] must be that those who are distributing the microfilm of the file at his office have callously

disregarded my interests, if they knew of them in this matter. If aware of my prior and primary concern with this file and film, they simply lacked the common decency to do me justice, to play fair with me, and they didn't even bother to inform me of the intended release by them, let alone asking for my opinion its desirability."

"And I must point out another objection, viz., that the unrestricted distribution of this film without my prior knowledge may seriously embarrass me for two reasons: (i) I have kept the heads of the other Theosophical centers also informed of my petition to the S.P.R. for these documents and of the progress or successful culmination of the search...I provided none of them a copy of this film. What happens now when, as with Mr. De Zirkoff, they hear that Dr. Bendit's office is peddling copies indiscriminately for 30/-? (ii) If the S.P.R. released this film to the London TS HQ only after being questioned as to its existence by some Theosophist, is not the S.P.R. to suspect that this little pressure-play was deliberately instigated on my part by my tipping off some member of the Theosophical Society in England? Yet, as I have shown, I myself have not yet obtained notice from the S.P.R. that the contents of this film are not confidential. But it (or at any rate word of it) is being sent out from London TS HQ without any mention of the proviso that its use in print must be accompanied by proper acknowledgement to the Council of the S.P.R. What kind of folly is this?"

"Now the second key question is: Did the Theosophist or Theosophists who secured the release of this film to the Theosophical Society in England, or who afterwards authorized its distribution by the General Secretary's Office, to individual parties there and abroad, know that I had brought about its discovery, and had ordered and paid for its sorting and indexing and listing (speaking now of the HPB case file itself), and that it had been photographed at my order,

according to my instructions and only after I had consented to pay the bill?"

"In short, who in England or in The Theosophical Society, who might be responsible for this, had I informed of my negotiations on this score with the S.P.R.? To narrow the field down, and put it in my parlance, just who of my correspondents, acting secretly on confidential information I had given them, may have deliberately and knowingly stabbed me in the back?"

At this point in my letter to Messrs. Ram and Cook, I name those correspondents, who being Theosophists in England or members of The Theosophical Society, had been told privately and, as I had made expressly clear each time, only on a confidential basis, that I had submitted a petition for access to any unpublished documents the S.P.R. might still have relating to HPB; and who, in some cases (as with Smith and Redfern) had also been likewise informed that the documents had been found and/or that I had ordered copies of them. The parties named are: Dr. Henry A. Smith, Dr. L. J. Bendit, Mr. T. H. Redfern, Mr. Dudley W. Barr, Mr. Seymour Ballard, and Mrs. H. Benjamin. Two of these correspondents had been given permission to extend this information to their personal confidants, viz., Redfern's Lodge President, and Mrs. Benjamin's Co-Trustee of The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett, Mr. Christmas Humphreys (it being my intention to eventually secure photocopies of specimen Mahatma letters for analysis and reproduction). I had written Mr. Redfern, hoping to interest him in a long list of research items on the case in the Harry Price Library at the University of London, anticipating that he might secure and share these with me by copy, as I had no established correspondence with anyone in England—but he made no response.

As for Dr. Bendit, on May 24, 1956, I had written him with much the same hope, thinking he might be interested in cooperating in my search for data, since he was both a

Theosophist and a Psychological researcher—but that too came to nothing. However, at that same time, I had told him of my petition to the Council, accompanying this with the explicit admonition, "Therefore, to date, I have purposely requested my correspondents to reserve to themselves the facts I set forth. I am sure you understand this necessity."

I resume quoting from my letter to Messrs. Ram and Cook:

"In view of the present strange development I cannot help but suspect that some one or two of these correspondents violated the confidence I placed in them and, acting on this confidential information, which I had generously and naively shared with them, approached the S.P.R. in order to gain a copy of the case file and release it indiscriminately and on a 'not confidential' basis, this action depriving me of what had been hoped would be an unique asset to my book. (I had anticipated that this rare fund of information, if published for the first time in my book, would perhaps insure its saleability to a publisher, for otherwise its acceptance was a very, very problematical venture, due to the lengthy and technical nature of the work proposed. And what is the use of writing a thousand or fifteen-hundred page book that no publisher will print?)"

"Frankly, I suspect Dr. Bendit and Mr. Redfern, motivated perhaps with a desire to join forces and organize a 'Committee' for such an undertaking in defense of H.P.B. as has been proposed in Appendix 3 of Redfern's pamphlet issued as Studies No. 4 of the Peace Lodge...Perhaps Dr. Bendit thinks that his previous association with officials of the S.P.R., his entrée, may gain for him the credit of persuading the S.P.R. Council to 'withdraw' its (?) Hodgson Report?"

"Since by proof of this correspondence, he was not ignorant of my personal activity

which had initiated the proceedings that brought this file of documents to light, why did Dr. Bendit make no effort to consult me before action was taken on its release by his office?—even supposing he was ignorant of the fact that the film he obtained had been prepared at my request, an ignorance I do not believe very likely. As it is now proved that Bendit knew I was interested in these documents years before anyone else suspected their existence, if he thought I did not know they were found, why did not he communicate that fact to me as a revival of our previous correspondence? Why, indeed, was I not informed of it until others learned it first or contemporaneously—from his office? And here I should like to point out that Mr. Endersby's remarks suggest that he received a more detailed or distinguishable description of the microfilm contents than was sent to me by Soper—and if so, why was this, that I might not readily perceive the identity of the film with mine and take some quick unwanted action? And why was it that, though he had my address and had corresponded with me, and knew of my keen interest in these documents (or some of them, at any rate), Dr. Bendit himself does not appear to have been interested (as with the case of de Zirkoff) in determining whether or not I wanted a copy of the microfilm from his office? Is this not good evidence that he was either determined to offer me no help or that he already knew I had a copy of the documents filmed?

"As for the remark of Mr. Soper in his letter to me that, 'We have been requested by Mr. T.H. Redfern to inquire whether you would care to have a copy of the microfilm....,' besides showing Mr. Redfern's active cooperation in this distribution, this strikes me as a bit of sham and pretence on his part, for, of course, Mr. Redfern no less than Dr. Bendit knew that I had been after these documents for 5 years before anyone else, and he knew the additional fact that before October 2 of last year [when I wrote him on the subject] I had word that 'the S.P.R. Council has at last located the missing file on the H.P.B. case' and that I was even then engaged in

‘negotiation to obtain access to this material...!’ I may assume that in respect to this, what Mr. Redfern knew Dr. Bendit also knew—and I regard this pious solicitude as hypocrisy and fraud. Like Dr. Bendit, Mr. Redfern too did not acknowledge the confidential information given him, nor did he profess to respect privately the contents of my October letter), and too his moral view of the matter may have agreed with that of Dr. Bendit."

I mention these details only on the premise that they may convey facts which can be useful in proving—if that be the case—that the S.P.R. or some one of its officials was, by misrepresentation, induced to innocently release a copy of my microfilm to The Theosophical Society in England or to some member thereof. If such a release by the Society or by some official of the Society for Psychical Research was prompted by some Theosophist violating the confidence I had placed in him and by acting on this confidential information behind my back and to my detriment, I am sure the Council of the Society would have every justifiable excuse for rescinding the consequent release of this film.

Needless to say, I personally am greatly beholden to the Society for permitting me personal access to this case file, and if, as a result of my having told some Theosophical officials of that fact in confidence and privately, they have used the knowledge to extract a copy of the documents for their own free use behind my back, I regard that as contemptible and will publish my contempt if need be!

In fact, if this film was released to The Theosophical Society or its English section or some member thereof, by some officer or member of the Society for Psychical Research, acting without consent of the Council. I suspect that such a fact in itself would give ample grounds for the Council to disapprove and rescind the action and release, if it wished to do so.

(E)

Quite apart however from any question of proper procedure or authorized permission, there are certain very important considerations which have been overlooked, it seems to me, and which throw serious doubt on the wisdom of what has been done. My own private feelings or my own personal advantage in the matter should, quite rightly, go for little or nothing in this. But there is the question whether I have some kind of prerogative here by legal or moral right due to my money and my promise of money which alone made possible the sorting, listing, and photographing of this material as accomplished.

In my petition of October 1955, resubmitted in May 1960, I proposed that "photographic facsimiles" be made for the writer "with all costs chargeable to himself..."

In February 1957, when the Honorary Secretary complained that no "further search for the papers regarding Madame. Blavatsky would be practicable" and observed that "We are extremely under-staffed and our past records are most voluminous," I responded by letter of April 25, 1957, saying part, "if lack of staff help on the search can be remedied with money, I think I could offer some assistance in that direction."

In his letter of August 24, 1960, announcing discovery of the "large packet of documents relating to the investigation of Madame Blavatsky," and proposing an arrangement for someone to explain the documents on my behalf, Sir George Joy stated, "It would be understood that you would pay the cost of employing any such person and we feel sure that, as even this measure would still place some extra work on our staff, you would feel it just to make some contribution to the Society's funds."

My reply of August 31st to this was: “I also agree with your suggestion (according with my petition, page 3, re ‘all costs’) that any time and expense involved in my securing this kind of information will have to be paid for out of my own pocket; and ‘extra work on the staff,’ will likewise be duly recompensed.” Moreover, of my seven enumerated suggestions appearing on the final page of my letter of that date, two concerned my payment of costs involved in this:

“2. That the Council then determine what the cost will be to reproduce by the most convenient, safest, cheapest and best photographic means (probably by the Society’s own copying machine, the term ‘photographic’ implying also any comparable mechanical facsimile process) each and every one—all—of these documents, such cost to include anything due for extra work on part of the staff in connection with the copying.”

“3. Upon advance payment to cover such costs, the documents will be reproduced and the copies sent to my address, by registered post (the postal charges at my expense also).”

On November 25, 1960, Sir George Joy sent me the typed 7 page list, headed “The Society for Psychical Research: Paper Relating to the Investigation of Madame Blavatsky.” With this he wrote in part, “I now enclose a copy of a list of all the papers in the archives of this Society dealing with the Blavatsky investigation...With reference to the fifth paragraph of my letter of 24th August, the cost of the work involved in sorting and in typing amounts to £6. I leave to you what contribution you may care to make the Society’s funds.”

On December 1, 1960, I wrote to Sir George Joy, giving precise instructions as to which documents were wanted in photocopy saying, “It may be that this work can be done before the holidays. But in any case, I am prepared to pay the total costs, assuming the costs are comparable to those charged by University Microfilm, Ltd. Should the Society incur additional

expense for help (such as for making a list of certain pages to be copied, delivery and pick-up, postage, etc.), at a rate comparable to those already assumed, I shall pay these too, of course. Notification of costs and payment for same, as you prefer.”

“An International Money Order for 6 pounds (Fresno, California No. 12-1,428,000, Dec. 2, 1960) has been sent for the Society for Psychical Research, to cover the full amount of the cost of the work involved in sorting and typing the list of material available.”

This payment was acknowledged on December 22, 1960, by P. Osborn, signing for the S.P.R. on Receipt No. 2197, “To search for Blavatsky material £6.0.0 Received with thanks.”

With the film arriving March 21 last, Sir George Joy wrote, saying, “We will let you know the cost as soon as we receive the invoice from the firm concerned.” This was dated February 27th, 1961.

On April 8th, 1961, my acknowledgement to this was, “I shall await your notice of the cost on the microfilm received, together with any attendant costs.”

Although 75 days have past since it was promised that I would be allowed to “know the cost as soon as we receive the notice,” no such notice has been received. Instead, copies of my microfilm are being advertised for 30/-, as Soper wrote me, “The cost of the microfilm would be approximately 30/-.” Thus I have yet to pay for the film and to make a “contribution” to the Society’s funds, whatever this may be in light of the overall “extra work” on the staff incurred by this.

These facts are, I think, sufficient to prove that (i) the S.P.R. archives file on the case of H.P.B., after being located as a result of my personal petition, was sifted, sorted and a list of the

contents prepared for me at my personal expense; (ii) from this list, I selected a number of items to be reproduced on microfilm for my personal use, a list of these designated items was sent to Sir George Joy, with the mutual understanding that I was to pay for the making of the film and all attendant costs, that this film was thereupon produced (illegible notes) and that at this date I still await the promised notice of costs.

As for the question on the identity of films (mine and that held by The Theosophical Society in England, or a film to which it has access), I replied the same day to Mr. Soper's initial letter, hoping to see whether my suspicion of identity was correct, "As I already have a number of documents on H.P.B., obtained in copy from the S.P.R., before assuming the cost of obtaining those you have, I would appreciate some idea of the contents, simply enough to identify the papers to which you refer. I would also be pleased to hear whether these constitute the extent of the documents so obtained."

On April 26th I received Mr. Soper's reply: "Thank you for your letter of the 19th. In view of what you say we are sending you a list of the papers relating to Mme. Blavatsky of which a microfilm has been made. Would you kindly let us have this back by return air mail, as it is the only copy we have." The "list" sent proved to be a CARBON COPY of the list which had been compiled and typed for me by Mrs. Davidson at the S.P.R. office and for which I had paid Six Pounds!

If it is, as claimed by Soper, truly "a list of the papers...of which a microfilm has been made," that is to say, if the microfilm being sold to Theosophists contains all of the items on the list, it is not the same microfilm as I had made, since a number of items on this list were at my direction omitted from my film. But I think this is an error of statement by Mr. Soper, for if the

film contains all of the listed items it must be longer than 90 ft., the length marked by the maker on the box containing my film (which almost fills a hundred-foot reel), whereas Dr. Smith describes the film supplied to Theosophists as being 90 ft. Moreover, in his letter of April 17th, Mr. Soper added, “We can also let you have, if you wish it, a copy of the microfilm of the First Report of the Society for Psychological Research dealing with the Hodgson Report, or alternatively a print of this; the cost of the first would be £1.4.0...” If this means the Committee’s first Report of 1884, that would be the Preliminary Report, or it means Hodgson’s Report (as generally described, for the 1884 first report did not, of course, deal with Hodgson’s later report), then this report referred to is the final Report of 1885—in either case, Soper is confused here. But if the microfilm offered for 30/- contains all documents in this list by copy, there would be no need for an additional film of the “First Report” (approximately 30 pages for that appearing in 1884) at almost as much cost, for both the Preliminary First Report of 1884 and the final Report of 1885 appear in this List as items 7 and 9 respectively, Section III—but neither of these was copied on to my film. Hence, the evidence seems conclusive that what is being peddled indiscriminately is the film I had made and received, a film prepared according to my precise designation and at my agreed-upon expense, a film made possible only after these documents were sorted and a list made and typed, which alone had cost me Six Pounds!

But, while I was kept ignorant of the fact, one or more carbon copies have been made of the list for which I paid; and, again, without my being asked, one of these carbon copies was given by someone to the General Secretary’s office which in turn is now using the information gained from it to assist my competitors, Endersby and Redfern as well as sundry other persons. Moreover, and again without my prior notification or consent, a copy of my film was—unknown to me—“pirated,” and duplicates of it are being sold (at someone’s profit, if it be only that of the

photography firm), again to my competitors, against my wishes and at a fraction of what the making of the film has already cost me. Needless to say, if the Council of the Society approves of this dubious development and undertakes no action to otherwise rectify the situation or satisfy me, I will have to consider this a violation of elementary business ethics and I shall refuse to pay a penny more than 30/- and postage for the film received.

It was to forestall some such untoward development as this—something which I then considered only the very remotest possibility, not by any stretch of the imagination an immediate danger—a, that I suggested certain precautions in the 7th enumerated point of my letter of August 31st, 1960, which I had hoped to see brought to the Council’s attention: “7. At the desire of the Council, any documents (all being by copy, of course) not so approved for use or unwanted would (at my expense) be returned by registered mail to the Council (no reproductions of them in whole or in part having been made while in my possession, in accordance with the promise, 4 above) and thereupon destroyed, the Council furnishing notice of this fact (since these copies so destroyed would be my property—though I would have the right to make use of them only as the Council saw fit—, they would be so returned only as to insure no future improper use of them on my part, and would be destroyed only to prevent later researchers from profiting at my expense).” Italics now added.

If The Theosophical Society in England, or some member thereof, wanted a list and copies of these documents, or if there was a desire to supply such a list and copies to The Theosophical Society in England or to some of its members, it seems plain to me that the ethical procedure would have been either to request permission for the use of my list and film or to have another list and another film made at separate cost.

It would, I venture to say, be a sorry tale to have to tell my readers—that after five anxious years of solitary effort on my part, encouraged by no one and put off by delay, red tape, and denials, official and unofficial, that such documents existed or could be found—that, when these were at last located, were sorted and indexed at my personal expense, and filmed only after I had agreed to pay for the filming and any attendant costs (and was promised the bill), then pirated copies of my film, together with a secretly-prepared carbon copy of my list, were turned over to my competitors without apparent restrictions, without acknowledgement of the credit due me, and without my prior knowledge or permission.

(F)

Having with one exception exhausted all known sources of unpublished information on this case, as I have, I regret to see that the hope of getting at this final remaining source, viz., the archives of The Theosophical Society in India, may have been jeopardized by this action. I am especially impressed by the unfairness to our Society, should it develop that, while its own private case file on HPB is opened to Theosophists, the equally private and important papers on the case still retained in the archives at Adyar (and at perhaps London, also) are not to be released on the same basis to members of the Society for Psychical Research. Judiciously managed, the proper release of these documents by our Society might well have assured Psychical Researchers of reciprocal access to like documents held by the Theosophical society. But—unless there are facts and agreements unknown to me—, it would seem that the bargaining factor in such a trade of information is being irretrievably lost if the film copy in question passes into Theosophical hands. If that is true, any progress towards acquiring this additional information will have to be accomplished by private individuals.

If so, I am happy to report that there still remains a good possibility that at least one member of the S.P.R. may yet gain copies of the complete case file on H.P.B. in the archives of the Theosophical Society . In February, 1960, while notifying President N. Sr. Ram of The Theosophical Society that I was intending to make one last effort to obtain access to the S.P.R. case file on H.P.B., if it existed, I expressed to him the desire that I might also receive permission to copy all unpublished documents connected with this research which his Society may have preserved (much as I had expressed the same request to the previous President of that Society, the late Mr. Jinarajadasa, in 1947). Having received no acknowledgement from him in more than a year, I again wrote early last month, stressing the fact that I was now in receipt of a microfilm of the unpublished documents relating to H.P.B. still possessed by the S.P.R. I hoped that this news would serve to impress upon him the necessity that The Theosophical Society should, with equal fairness, open their files to me. Of course, it must now be realized that any weight which might be attached to this fact has been considerably diminished since that Society has itself been put into possession of a copy of my film.

Fortunately, however, I now have received President Sr. Ram's reply to my letter of April, and he writes, "I felt of course, as I still feel, that any assistance we could give you...with copies of material from our Archives, should be placed at your disposal, because I fully realize the importance of your work" (April 20, 1961).

Needless to say, I would be glad to keep the President and Vice Presidents of the Society for Psychological Research posted confidentially on any progress I may make in this direction, just as I have kept the President and Vice President of the Theosophical Society informed of developments in my effort to obtain copies of the S.P.R.'s case file on H.P.B. I cannot stress too

strongly that it is my unqualified opinion that the first duty of any Psychological Researcher is to get the facts, no matter what the facts may be and no matter from what source they may come. One of my initial acts in researching this case was to trace the famous Blavatsky-Coulomb letters to their last known possessor. And whatever I have accomplished on this order, however modest, is something which, I suspect, will be welcomed and treasured by future historians in Psychological Research.

Having obtained a copy of a confidential index prepared from the Adyar archives and listing the files of still unpublished, still-existent documents on this case, I can assure you that there is a mass of untapped material, such as firsthand accounts of witnesses, letters from the Coulombs, etc., which no independent person has, so far as I know, yet seen. And in this connection, it must be pointed out that the only proof of fraud—and the best kind of proof (though it has not yet been exploited by anyone)—which has come to light against Madame Blavatsky in recent years, has come from this source. See, e.g., Letters from the Master of the Wisdom, Second Series, Transcribed and Annotated by C. Jinarajadasa, published by The Theosophical Press, 1926, pp.128-131 (cf. Hodgson's Account, p. 313 and pp.363-4).

(G)

I do not recall any previous instance in which the Society for Psychological Research has opened its archives to a like degree on such an unrestricted basis or has similarly released its most private papers. Whatever good intentions there may have been behind this action, I think that surely there must be some kind of a bad blunder involved in the release which is leading to the resale of the microfilm, willy-nilly. I say this for two reasons: (1) because of the apparent lack of any precaution which would prevent irresponsible persons from rushing into print with

these documents, mangling or misrepresenting the contents, or exploiting the material to satisfy an animus against the S.P.R.—and the record proves that copies are going to such persons; (2) because, after cursory examination and in light of my knowledge of the details, I can give assurance that parts of these documents convey certain new and far-reaching implications concerning the investigation of Madame Blavatsky, facts which should be treated with the utmost accuracy and with respect for the reputations of those concerned, particularly of the S.P.R. itself.

(1)

With respect to this first point, let me say that in fourteen years of conversation and correspondence with Theosophists in the course of my research on this case, I have never met one who volunteered admiration for the work of the S.P.R. or who showed any appreciation for the real importance and value of Psychological Research. The attitude generally encountered, on mentioning the name of our Society, is one of ignorance mixed with indifference or hostility. Some years ago I endeavored to interest the leaders of the five major Theosophical centers in the possibility of purchasing for their libraries one of the few last remaining sets of the Proceedings and Journal of the American Society for Psychological Research (of which I am a member also) on grounds that these constitute the single most important fund of reports in Psychological Research ever published in this hemisphere—but not one even acknowledged the suggestion.

Another more personal illustration of this is, that on learning I was a member of the S.P.R., Mr. K.F. Vania, the latest defender to publish a book for Madame Blavatsky, who had approached me for the possible loan of certain old pamphlets on the case, urged me to resign; and, failing this, pointedly alluded to me in the preface to his work: “The present work,

therefore, is not a plea for withdrawal of the so-called Reports of the Society for Psychical Research on H.P. Blavatsky—let this blot on the record of the S.P.R. remain. But no gentleman, worthy of being so called, will associate himself with an organization that resorted to conspiracy to denounce an almost defenseless lady..” (p. xiv, MADAME BLAVATSKY Her Occult Phenomena and The Society for Psychical Research, Bombay, 1951).

I do not think that there are more than one or two Theosophists in the world even fairly acquainted with the history of developments in Psychical Research. (The only previous acquaintance I have had with an individual Theosophist known as a Member of the S.P.R. was with Dr. L.J. Bendit, who wrote me that he had resigned from the Society because he found it “boring”—!) All of this contrasts, of course, with my own keen interest in the subject, for, as I in 1947 told Dr. Hereward Carrington (who nominated me for membership), to my way of thinking, the single most important activity in which man can engage is Psychical Research. And to call oneself a Psychical Researcher means something greater and of greater obligation than to assume the title of Theosophist or Spiritualist, for a Theosophist or a Spiritualist is one committed to the beliefs of Theosophy or Spiritualism, but a Psychical Researcher is committed to one thing only—the search for facts whatever their nature and whatever their source.

Yet Theosophists make the charge that they themselves are more competent to examine “occult” phenomena than are Psychical Researchers. Thus the late Mrs. Josephine Ransome, Vice President and official historian of The Theosophical Society, in her book, A Short History of The Theosophical Society (p.211), exemplifies that almost universal attitude of Theosophists towards Psychical Research when she states: “In May 1884, the Council of the S.P.R. appointed a Committee for the purpose of taking such evidence as to alleged phenomena connected with

The Theosophical Society...It should be kept in mind that these were persons of literary, academic and other distinctions, some of whom were accustomed to spiritualistic investigations; but none knew anything of the rationale of Occultism, or of unusual yogic powers. Yoga was to them a completely unknown science. They had no qualifications whatever which would render them competent or reliable judges of such matters.”

Quite aside from the inaccurate claim that “none knew anything of the rationale of Occultism”—see Myers’ special Note in the Committee’s Preliminary Report—, I reject without reserve the idea that the declared principles of Psychological Research, as expounded by the founders of the S.P.R., are incompatible with a true enquiry into or a rightful resolution of any physical question on the reality of any phenomenon. I reject without qualification the idea that competent students of Psychological Research cannot from that fact alone qualify as just appraisers of the testimonial and material evidence on Theosophical or “occult” phenomena. It appears to me to be a self-evident and fundamental axiom that the tangible evidence for any phenomena must be amenable to the requirements of scientific examination, subject only to the limits of human detection. If any phenomenon can ever be shown, by a thorough and scientific consideration of all related evidence, to be the proven product of known physical processes, that phenomenon would gain no psychical value by whomever examined nor by whatever hypothesis explained. If one must subscribe to some occult philosophy or practice certain occult disciplines in order to be able to determine the physical reality of some “paraphysical” alteration of matter, or if one must entertain some occult hypothesis as the sole alternative to the hypothesis of fraud or illusion, then, in the first instance, the phenomenon is not worthy of intelligent discussion, and, in the second, the phenomenon—whether fraudulent and illusionary or not—is not worthy of public presentation.

If any query should ever be made as to why, after 75 years, the followers of the Theosophical movement and the devotees of Madame Blavatsky have made no appreciable progress in re-examining this case, it will have to be answered that, more respectful of occult hypotheses than the writer, they have not shared his profound appreciation for the declared methods of Henry Sidgwick and his fellow co-founders of the S.P.R.

While showing deference to “occult” hypotheses (generally presented as dogma), what kind of respect can we expect will be shown the Society for Psychical Research by Messrs. Endersby, Redfern, et.al.?

We have seen some hint of Dr. Bendit’s role in the distribution of this microfilm. In 1956 it was apparently his view that the best authority on the case of H.P.B. had been the late Beatrice Hastings, for he then wrote me, “Mrs. Hastings has done all that can be done to rehabilitate her reputation.” (Perhaps he is not so sure of this now, if one is to judge by the zeal with which he is advertising copies of my microfilm!)

Mrs. Hastings’ deplorable and much-publicized attitude towards the Society is well known. Examples:

“The S.P.R. fought the Theosophical Society through the person of H.P. Blavatsky and, as the modern student sees it, won by a succession of fouls. The S.P.R. can never clear itself...”

“Professor Sidgwick, Mrs. Sidgwick (this coup[le along with the Coulombs, probably did more to retard psychical research than all the other inquisitioners and their tools together)...”

“Conclusion: the Govt. knew that the Coulomb-Missionary-S.P.R. conspiracy was a conspiracy...” “Hodgson’s prepossessions in favor of Madame Blavatsky...! Why, his whole report contradicts him. Professor Sidwick [sic], the materialist, the medium-hunter, did not pay

this young sleuth's expenses to India to have Madame Blavatsky vindicated if possible but to have her condemned if possible; and he knew his man." From New Universe, July 1937, February 1938, April 1938. (With Respect to this last allegation, I have found that there exists an important piece of firsthand evidence on this, previously overlooked by historians. This is a letter, appearing in the July 1912 issue of the Journal of the A.S.P.R., which proves that Hodgson's prepossessions were very definitely in favor of Madame Blavatsky!).

"But Hodgson had behind him, actually paying his way privately, one of the most inquisitional characters who ever hunted, and who, alone, would have sufficed to set back psychic research for a century: Professor Sidgwick. There were also others on that Committee who regarded psychic persons as wild game" (Defence of Madame Blavatsky, ii. P.53).

Like Dr. Bendit, Mr. Redfern appears to have an inside track to this new-found fund of information from the S.P.R.; and, if one is to judge by the fact Redfern has already published one or more canards on the Society, he will make the most of it in his own distinctive way. Example:

"When she went to India in 1878 [six], the British thought she might be a Russian spy, and trailed her for a time...The British authorities came to the conclusion that she was doing what she purported to be—working to further The Theosophical Society—and desisted. Yet, The Society for Psychical Research decided that they did not know their job and she really had been a spy all the time!" (The Work and Worth of Mme. Blavatsky, p. 16, Theosophical Publishing House London Ltd., 1960).

Mr. Redfern here simply ignores the fact that in its official "Statement and Conclusions," the Committee paid no attention whatever to this charge of Hodgson's; and he appears ignorant of the fact that at least three of the leading members of the Committee did not adopt Hodgson's

explanations for H.P.B.'s motive (as is proved by Myers' Preface to Phantasms of the Living, published the following year). If I mistake not, the name Hodgson does not even appear in Redfern's work (published and republished)—everything is charged to the Society itself.

As for Mr. Victor A. Endersby, Civil Engineer, with "something of an international reputation," as he reports himself in publicly announcing a forthcoming book to defend Madame Blavatsky, he wrote me on January 16, 1961, asking, among other things, for extracts from the Coulomb pamphlet. It seems that he had seen a quotation taken from Hodgson's paper of 1893, "The Defence of the Theosophists" (Proceedings, vol. ix, pp. 129-59); and, confusing this with Hodgson's Account in the Report of 1885 (Proceedings, part ix, pp. 201-400), Mr. Endersby thought that he should have found this particular quotation in his volume iii of the Proceedings...! He declared: "This year I secured a copy of the same Proceedings from the London headquarters, which begins at p. 201 and gives the impression that this is the whole story. Not only that, but shortly after I got my copy the Proceedings were withdrawn from sale. It was not stated that they were out of print; just 'unavailable.' This looks very suspicious to say the least. I have met with repeated indications that these Proceedings may have been doctored from time to time as to text also, although it is stated that they have never been changed. (The omission of all the text back of 201 is certainly a 'change' in my opinion!)...The suppression of this section, and the publication of only 201 plus section as Hodgson's Report, is as damaging and direct evidence of crooked work on the part of the SPR as one could imagine, and I want to crucify them with it."

While I see no prospect of completing my own re-examination of this case and making public use of these new-found documents in much less than three years, it is clear that Mr.

Redfern and Mr. Endersby and others who give no sign of being slowed down by completeness or by painstaking attention to truth and detail, would not lose time in publicly exploiting this new information in any way they see fit.

The question, therefore, is, In view of this illustrated bias and irresponsible reporting, does the Council of the S.P.R. want the initial presentation of the Society's file on the case of Madame Blavatsky to appear under this kind of auspices?

(2)

More especially, is such a course as this desirable when some of the material now brought to light, and in particular that part of it which would delight any defender of H.P.B., is of such a critical nature that it must be handled skillfully and prudently in order to protect—and I say this candidly—the good name of the Society for Psychical research and the reputations of the illustrious members of this Committee of 1884-1885 (undoubtedly the most distinguished committee in the annals of the Society)?

I doubt very much that Sir George Joy, or whoever released a copy of this microfilm to Theosophists, had any clear understanding of the significance of some of these documents. However, on study, one ought to readily recognize the crucial import of some of these contents, merely from the fact this microfilm reveals that, unknown to previous historians and unsuspected by the public, a report by the Committee and another by Hodgson had actually been written and set into type before being rejected, the latter even before the Committee's public verdict in June 1885.

The greater part of each report was later incorporated in, respectively, the Preliminary

Report of 1884 and Hodgson's Account of 1885. But deletions were made, and it is evident that these suppressed portions are in a number of instances especially significant as conveying facts which would have appreciably strengthened the case for H.P.B. had they appeared in the reports as finally issued. A few examples will suffice to prove this:

(a) We learn that, contrary to general presumption, Madame Blavatsky did not decline to perform "occult" phenomena for members of the Committee, but that in the original unissued Preliminary Report both Mr. Myers and Mr. Gurney were counted as witnesses for Madame Blavatsky, having witnessed in company with Sir William Barrett a phenomenon in her presence which they could not explain by normal means (and which, in fact, does not accord with Hodgson's final attempt at explanation). Moreover, in these documents it is possible to trace the history of this suppression, made at the instigation of J. H. Stack and approved by Professor Sidgwick.

(b) We also learn for the first time that the famous "Billing letter" which Mr. Massey brought to the Committee's attention as evidence of fraud by H.P.B. (see the Report, pp. 207, 397-400), and which she charged was in part "occult forgery," was offered in evidence only by copied content, so that the handwriting, instead of being authenticated by experts, was apparently not even seen by any Committee member.

(c) From Hodgson's report prepared for The Contemporary Review but unissued, it appears for the first time that he intended to obtain if possible expert opinion additional to that which he had reported in support of his charge that Mahatma letters were written by H.P.B. in a disguised script—but as no such addition appeared later, we must suppose that he met with failure.

(d) Again, in Hodgson's first printed description of the "Shrine's" location (a position critical by inches), there appears a passage missing from his later Account, and this passage by its content and the fact of its deliberate suppression tends to support the objection that his "estimate" of the Shrine's position was willfully inaccurate.

(e) Indeed, among these documents we now see what appears to be Hodgson's original sketch of the shrine with Surroundings, annotated in his handwriting; and both in representation of the Shrine's location and construction, this diagram differs considerably from his later published plan. Conflicting as the two do in important points, one is left to conjecture that certain critical structural details of the Shrine, as represented in the published plan and essential as these are to Hodgson's case against H.P.B., are no more than evidences of artistic license.

But these are by no means the most important or crucial facts brought into historical view for the first time by my request for the Society's unpublished record of the case. Here is another, still more disagreeable to anyone who may mistakenly suppose that the S.P.R. rides on the shoulders of Dr. Hodgson:

What discoveries offered the strongest physical evidence cited by Hodgson in support of the Coulombs' claim that the Shrine at Adyar was a conjuror's box? Undoubtedly, these were, first, the discovery of a moveable panel at the back of the shrine (see his Account, p. 224); and second, the later discovery of what Hodgson calls "the traces of the hole" (Ibid., p. 224-5). As he puts it, "The defense originally offered by the Theosophists was that M. Coulomb had made the trick apparatus after Madame Blavatsky's departure from Adyar, but had not had time to complete his tricks, and as one of the proofs of this they pointed out that there was no hole in the

wall immediately behind the Shrine. When it was afterwards discovered that not only did the Shrine have a sliding panel in the back, but that a hole had once existed in the wall, thus completing the required communication between the Shrine and Madame Blavatsky's bedroom, it became obvious that the defence originally put forward was very unsatisfactory; so unsatisfactory indeed that Mr. Judge and Dr. Hartmann to 'save the situation,' suppressed the discoveries and destroyed the Shrine. (See Report, pp. 340-1) ” (Proceedings, vol. ix, p. 140).

Dr. Hodgson tells us that H.P.B. herself “admitted” to him that the Shrine was made with three sliding panels at the back; and, though his report does not say when this admission was made, one would naturally think that, accompanied as it was by her explanation or alibi, it must have been extracted under duress as a byproduct of his personal investigation. Moreover, Hodgson gives no indication that H.P.B. offered any explanation for the “traces” which had been found “on moistening the wall behind the Shrine with a wet cloth...” (as Hartmann admitted).

Since the discoveries had been suppressed and the Shrine destroyed before Hodgson arrived on the scene, the critical question is, how did Hodgson learn of the moveable panels and of the “traces”? His Report does not say. But new devastating light is thrown on this obscurity by comparing his remarks in 1893 with certain of H.P.B.'s annotations in his copy of the Coulomb pamphlet, which I obtained in 1955. I quote from mss. Prepared for my book:

“The Results of My Investigations”

Remarking the failure of Theosophists to sue Madame Coulomb for forgery, slander, libel, extortion and criminal conspiracy, Dr. J. N. Farquhar, in his book, Modern Religious Movements in India, writes: “What was it that choked the bluster of the Theosophists and stilled the last threat of prosecution?...the real cause of their terror, without any doubt, was the

searching examination made by Hodgson. Until he came and subjected them to his trained scientific mode of inquiry, they doubtless believed they had an irrefragable case. But that ordeal made everybody at headquarters realize that no Theosophic leader could stand cross-examination for a quarter of an hour, and that many of the phenomena could be shown to be fraudulent by a few carefully directed inquiries. To go to court would be black ruin. The following quotation will make this plain... (Op. cit., p. 250)—and Dr. Farquhar proceeds to quote from Hodgson's reply of 1893 in which the latter says:

“Mr. Sinnett speaks of my disguising my ‘unfavorable conclusions while staying as a guest at the Theosophical headquarters.’ In the first place I had no ‘conclusions’ at the time referred to. I reached Madras on December 18th, 1884, went to stay at the Theosophical Headquarters on December 25th, and left on January 3rd, though of course I made frequent calls there afterwards until the end of my stay in India, March 26th, 1885...In the second place, when I did reach my final conclusions, I communicated them at Adyar with some interesting results, of which Mr. Sinnett is manifestly ignorant. On February 23rd I left Madras for Bombay. There I obtained much important evidence by my own inquiries, and made the personal acquaintance of Mr. A.O. Hume, who gave me much assistance then and afterwards. On March 11th I returned to Madras...In the course of the next few days I discussed the results of my investigations with the leading Theosophists at Adyar. It was on the evening of March 13th, at a conference between Dr. Hartmann, Mr. And Mrs. Cooper-Oakley, Mr. Hume and myself, that Dr. Hartmann finally confessed that ‘nobody was allowed to touch that d—Shrine,’ and he then related the incident described on p. 224 of my Report, concerning the discovery of the sliding panel of the Shrine and the subsequent destruction of the Shrine itself. I had learned from A. D. Ezekial, in Bombay, that he had discovered independently that there had once been a hole in the wall behind

the Shrine, but that it had been carefully blocked up. Dr. Hartmann than admitted that traces of this hole had been discovered previously, but the discovery was kept a secret” (Proceedings, v. ix, p. 134).

After adding that on the following morning, Mr. Hume drew up a proposition “that Hartmann’s [Defence’ pamphlet...as well as the [T.S. Council’s Committee’s] Defence pamphlet...should be withdrawn, as being founded on an imperfect knowledge of the circumstances,” Hodgson continues: “It was decided...that the pamphlets should be withdrawn. The circulation of these pamphlets was therefore stopped...” And, he concludes, “what I desire the reader at present to note is that the pamphlet was thus officially disowned in consequence of my communicating to the leading Theosophists at Adyar the results of my investigations.” (Ibid., p. 135).

So, by Dr. Hodgson’s account, “Mr. Judge and Dr. Hartmann, to ‘save the situation,’ suppressed the discoveries and destroyed the Shrine”—but he himself went to Bombay, and there” obtained much important evidence by my own inquiries,” there he met Mr. Ezekial who told him “that there had once been a hole in the wall behind the Shrine, but that it had been carefully blocked up...” And Hodgson returned with this information to Adyar, where for a “few days” he “discussed the results of my investigations with the leading Theosophists” who seem to have taken fright—“Dr. Hartmann finally confessed” and the Defence pamphlets were “officially disowned.” So the attempt “to ‘save the situation,’” was thwarted, the “defense originally offered by the Theosophists” was overturned, and the “suppressed” discoveries were made public—thanks to Richard Hodgson and what he calls “the results of my investigations”!

Now, as Dr. Hodgson makes it appear, the chief “results” of these “investigations” were

that, sometime after “February 23rd,” the agent of the S.P.R., by his “own inquiries,” learned of “important evidence” which Theosophists themselves had “suppressed,” viz.:

- i.) The existence of “the sliding panel of the shrine”
- ii.) And “that there had once been a hole in the wall behind the Shrine,” “traces of this hole” having remained.

(i)

As if this hero had not thus chosen the strongest, most lurid colors in which to picture himself triumphant over Madame Blavatsky and her Theosophists, his devotees have done their best to repaint their idol in even more flattering tones. Thus his biographer, Mr. A. T. Baird, in the book, Richard Hodgson (a work bearing the Preface of Sr. E. N. Bennett, Member of the S.P.R. Council), reshapes the history of this affair thusly:

“At first Dr. Hodgson had some difficulty in setting foot in the so-called Occult Room, and permission was refused him, the absence of Col. Olcott and Mme. Blavatsky being made the excuse, but on the return of the latter he obtained his wish. Dr. Hodgson discovered several panels in the Shrine of the Occult Room through which, from Mme. Blavatsky’s bedroom, immediately behind, the astral Mahatmas’ letters were conveyed. The Theosophists replied with swift action, the Shrine was burned and destroyed” (Op. cit., p. 8).

All this about the S.P.R. agent having himself “discovered several panels in the shrine” so that the Theosophists “replied with swift action” and later “burned” it, is a concoction of Mr. Baird’s distorted imagination...In fact, there is reason to believe that Madame Blavatsky’s admission of the “three sliding panels at the back” of the Shrine was information she gave Dr.

Hodgson with much else in the 7 ½ pp. Or so which he denotes B. Replies and which he received sometime in “the first few days of 1885” and which he suppressed almost in toto. In her Marginal Notes (likewise suppressed), among the obvious directives to the explanations in B. Replies, and where the marginal annotations do not yet replace these, Mme Blavatsky has copiously marked p. 51 of the Coulomb pamphlet belonging to Dr. Hodgson. There are brackets and underlinings as well as “N.B.,” suggesting that she certainly gave him some explanation at this point and at this early date.

It may not be as strange as it would first appear that Hodgson is singularly silent on three related questions: first, when did Mme Blavatsky tell him about the three panels; second, when did he first learn that the panels at the rear of the Shrine were removable; third, how did he learn this? Of course, nothing he could have discovered as “results” of his “investigations” after February 23rd would have been required to make H.P.B. finally “confess” that “the Shrine was made with three sliding panels at the back.” Before he left Adyar, Hodgson knew and Madame Blavatsky also knew that Madame Coulomb had published the fact that the Shrine had been designed with removable panels at the back and that it had been built at Deschamps’ local cabinet shop—so that any investigator could ascertain the facts there. Did the S.P.R.’s “investigator” see Mr. Deschamps?—what did he ask?—what was he told? Certainly nothing of any use to his charges of fraud, or the world would have heard a lot about it indeed! But, instead, he suppressed this admission by Mme Coulomb and let his reader think that the Shrine was another piece of “trick apparatus” constructed in secret by the “confederate,” M. Coulomb!

(ii)

Why is it, one must ask, that Hodgson’s Report shows no evidence at all of any reply or

explanation whatever by Mme Blavatsky concerning the so-called secret of the “hole in the wall behind the Shrine”? What would she have said in reply to what Hodgson “learned from Mr. A. D. Ezekial, in Bombay”—? See how boastful this great detective is about what he calls “important evidence” obtained “by my own inquiries”—“the results of my investigations”! Ah, but his put the Theosophists on the run, and frightened the Theosophical Society’s Council—“confessions” were elicited and the Defence pamphlets “officially disowned”! How the “leading Theosophists at Adyar” must have trembled “on the evening of March 13th” 1885 when this all-wise sleuth told them of the “secrets” he had uncovered!

But as the S.P.R. agent admitted in his Report (p. 290), Mme Blavatsky wrote B. Replies and her annotations in his copy of the Coulomb pamphlet (what he calls “the Marginal Notes,” Ibid., p. 282) “in the time covered by the last few days of 1884 and the first few days of 1885,” in other words, long before he “learned” anything from Ezekial in Bombay, and more than two months before the date of Hartmann’s “confession” and of his own “communicating to the leading Theosophists at Adyar the results of my investigations.” These annotated explanations were provided for the agent of the S.P.R. when he was, if he is to be believed, “anxious to know what answer Madame Blavatsky had to make to the pamphlet written by Madame Coulomb.”

And on page 75 of Hodgson’s annotated copy of this pamphlet, in a reply to the author’s assertion that her husband in January 1885 had “closed” the “hole in the wall behind the shrine” by “leaving no perceptible trace of its ever having existed” (a claim Hodgson ignored), Madame Blavatsky with her own hand wrote for Richard Hodgson’s enlightenment:

“A hole made once upon a time by a nail [at?] the corner of the cupboard [shrine] passing through it can be seen to the present day. How is it that the coulombs saw nothing no trace of a

hole when looking behind”

After this, what can be said? Only that: (a) these explanations had been given freely for Hodgson’s own information and guidance, at the very beginning of his investigations in India; and (b), by this Mme Blavatsky not only told him a “hole” had been made in the wall behind the Shrine, and how it had come about, but she told him that evidence of it (the “trace”) remained “to the present day” (though he certainly did not permit his readers to know anything about his search for this evidence); and (c), she told him this in writing when “the traces” were still a “secret” with Hartmann and his fellow confidants; and (d), at a time when Hodgson himself had not yet gained the “important evidence” by his “own inquiries” in Bombay, when he had not yet obtained the “results” of what he calls “my investigations,” when he had not yet “learned from Mr. A. D. Ezekial that the latter had “discovered independently that there had once been a hole in the wall behind the Shrine”—in fact, when it was yet weeks before his departure for Bombay. And finally (e), Dr. Hodgson altogether omitted any intimation of the important fact that, before anyone else, Madame Blavatsky herself had told him candidly about a “hole” in the wall previously behind the Shrine, about traces which remained there; and he hid the fact she freely gave him this information weeks or months before he “learned” from Mr. Ezekial or from Hartmann’s “confession” anything about “traces” on the wall or evidence of a hole. He pretends to have remained ignorant of these things until after his journey to Bombay when he uncovered “much important evidence by my own inquiries,” while the truth is that when this “new discovery” was still a “secret” with Dr. Hartmann and Ezekial and one or two others, Hodgson himself knew about the “hole” and “traces” because he, unlike the others, had the special confidence or regard of Madame Blavatsky. And how was she repaid for her honesty and for her faith in this man, her “friend,” Richard Hodgson?

When she saw to what use he put this information, when she read what he had written for the world “about the ‘new discover’,” she found it “more damnable than all the rest.” For what was most reprehensible of all in this resort to deceit—what was the most treacherous and inexcusable betrayal of personal and public confidence—was that this agent of the Society for Psychical Research not only concealed the fact Madame Blavatsky herself had given him this information and had been the first to do so at a time when he knew nothing about it and when, if guilty, she should have done all possible to conceal it from him, but he also utterly disregarded and suppressed her explanation for the cause and nature of these “traces.” Indeed, it may well be a fact that Hodgson “learned” what he did from Ezekial and from Hartmann concerning this, only because he had secretly misused the information H.P.B. had herself given him, had used it to frighten the less-informed Theosophists and used it to pry out “much important evidence” he could palm off as “results of my investigation.”

In fact, we have seen that Hodgson went to special trouble to misrepresent the facts and discredit Mr. Damodar in order that in 1885 he might conceal knowledge that from the recess behind the Shrine he had inspected the disputed wall and so had disproved or verified H.P.B.’s explanation of nail damage. He not only hid the fact he had been able to test this explanation during his stay at Madras, and kept back the results of that critical test, he not only suppressed the nature of her explanation of early January 1885, he even concealed the fact any explanation at all had been given on this point by Madame Blavatsky—all the while making his readers believe that he learned about “secret” traces of “a hole in the wall behind the Shrine” only after February 23rd, 1885, and first at Bombay not Madras, and first from Ezekial and never from Madame Blavatsky.

(End of ms. Quotation)

It ought to be noted here that, whereas the Coulombs claimed a thorough aperture had been secretly opened behind the Shrine by removing 35 to 48 square inches of plaster and brickwork, and afterwards repaired, Mme Blavatsky claimed that parts of the wall had been replastered only to repair nail damage incurred in hanging the shrine (see also H.P. Blavatsky: Collected Writings, vi, p. 415). Had Dr. Hodgson not suppressed H.P.B.'s explanation given him, his readers would have at once recognized the necessity of removing both whitewash and plaster in order to examine the disputed brickwork (and why did not Hodgson ask for this examination?), and the public would have seen that signs of replastering could not alone be evidence in the Coulombs' favor.

But while Dr. Hodgson in his published remarks cited the discovery of "traces" as proof that the Coulombs' "hole in the wall" had existed, his Report nowhere reveals just what the traces were nor why they should be taken as evidence of any thorough passageway as described by the Coulombs. And it is not until we consult his original unissued Report in The Contemporary Review that we discover these "traces" were not evidence of any displacement of brickwork but only signs of replastering, for there he says only that they were found upon removal of the whitewash, and this is an admission which he prudently suppressed and omitted from his later, final published Report!!

It should be said that such facts as I have here delineated represent only a small portion of new and original findings I have made, and these only as they are pertinent to an appreciation of the newly-found documents in possession of the S.P.R. If for any reason, more is wanted, I can supply it. It may be believed or not—and, of course, it is certainly not something to be

welcomed—, but I make the flat statement that Dr. Hodgson’s trustworthiness as a reporter is so far disproved now as to be beyond hope of rehabilitation.

This does not mean that we now have to recognize the phenomena of Madame Blavatsky as being authentic psychic phenomena. Far from it. Aside perhaps from some instances of “raps” or “astral bells”—which may be as well evidenced as anything of that sort (and it is to be noted that, prudently enough, Hodgson spent very little space discussing these)—, there is not, I think, in the record of her phenomena any incident sufficiently well reported to compare favorably with the standards demanded by rigorous laboratory experiment. With the Hodgson-Coulomb explanations discredited, the skeptics will find their “positive” case against H.P.B.’s phenomena pretty well shot to pieces, and they will be forced to fall back on “negative” anything, for if a phenomenon cannot be proved out as “psychic” or “paraphysical,” what comes of it?

Moreover, it can be said—and I think I know as much about the record as anyone—that there is not a single phenomenon reported in the case of H.P.B. which cannot, on one hypothesis or another, however tenuous, be discredited. (And I must confess, parenthetically, that I myself am far from being convinced that psychic phenomena, mental or physical, have occurred with anyone at any time; certainly nothing in my own experience proves they do—and, in the end, one always reverts to personal experiences, however illogical that may be!).

Unfortunately, the most far-reaching implications of these discoveries is that all of Hodgson’s work is called into serious doubt; and it must be realized that this applies especially to his reports on Mrs. Piper and his conduct of her sittings and the attendant investigations, which were the chief focus of his activity during his last years of life. This famous case, since its

beginning, has gained for our Society some of its greatest recognition. Perhaps the chief reason for this is that before this no one has bothered to re-examine all of its published evidence with a view to considering Hodgson a prime suspect (and I do not ignore the fact that Mrs. Piper was on occasion investigated in England while Hodgson was absent). Mr. Myers once said in reference to the record on Theosophical phenomena, “No one interested in psychical research could hear with satisfaction that so great a mass of apparently well-attested phenomena were, in fact, referable to fraud and credulity” (Journal, I, p. 420). How much less welcome then should be the news—the claim, however undocumented just at this juncture—that careful study and re-examination of all the reports on the Piper case published by the S.P.R. shows that they contain not a single allegation of psychic ability which can withstand the assault of certain new hypotheses (supported as these theories are by evidence hitherto ignored, and involving no more than one or two suspected confederates aside from Dr. Hodgson).

For someone to whom Dr. Richard Hodgson stands as a hero, these statements must appear either blasphemous or simply idiotic. On the other hand, it is well established that his reputation was founded on his “exposure” of Madame Blavatsky, and was crowned with his successes with Mrs. Piper, receiving impetus in both start and finish from public segments which were intrinsically biased, chiefly Spiritualists. His colleagues of the S.P.R. did not hesitate to call his judgement into question in his own day—I need only cite the case of the medium, Mrs. Thompson, who was denounced by Hodgson as an utter fraud, a verdict against which even Frank Podmore protested. Again, there was the case of Eusapia Paladino, whose physical phenomena convinced Myers and other leaders of the S.P.R. and impressed and almost convinced the Sidgwicks, but who was readily “exposed” by Hodgson in a most peculiar manner. We know of course the subsequent denunciations heaped upon Hodgson by those who

had experimented the most with this medium, as well as the final official turnabout which resulted in Paladino being “vindicated” by a committee of the Society.

Although the surprising fact is not so well known, Mr. Podmore—who might perhaps be called the godfather of modern Parapsychology’s hyper-skeptical “believers”—did not agree with Hodgson’s verdict on Madame Blavatsky. In his classic work, Modern Spiritualism (ii, p. 268), Podmore classes Madame Blavatsky with D. D. Home as having produced phenomena which instead of being dismissed as products of physical illusion, might perhaps best be explained on the theory that both of these unique mediums possessed what he calls “some power” capable of causing persons to “see visions and dream dreams.”

(H)

I cite these particulars only to illustrate the serious import of the Hodgson-Blavatsky Annotations and the H.P.B. Case File in possession of the S.P.R., and to emphasize the need for judicious care with which they should be handled if the Society and the cause of Psychological Research is not to suffer irreparable damage.

While not thinking for a moment that any such proposal would ever be adopted, it should be noted that whatever decision the Council may arrive at with respect to the question of publication or initial publication of these documents, nothing would be served by someone proposing that the contents should be kept private. As a matter of fact, when granting permission for making my copy of the more important material, the Hodgson-Blavatsky annotations from Hodgson’s Coulomb pamphlet, the Honorary Secretary, Mr. W. H. Salter, conceded my right of publication when he wrote Mr. Groves in 1955, “If Mr. Carrithers is including any of these notes in any publication he will of course make the usual

acknowledgement to the Society.”

How then are these facts to be so treated that the interests of the Society, the standing of the cause, and the reputations of the Society” chief founders (who sat beside Hodgson on this Committee) may be served and protected with the maximum fairness and respect? Clearly, this presents a delicate, difficult, and dangerous task.

As I anticipated in my letters to the Honorary Secretary during 1960, documents such as these, especially any coming into the light of day only after 75 years of preservation in the archives of a society like the S.P.R., merit a special kind of care and respect; and, I suggest, should initially be entrusted only to someone who, grounded in the methodology of Psychological Research, can treat them with accuracy and prudence, keeping in mind at all times the effect their use or misuse might have on the reputations of the Society and of its illustrious authorities directly involved. This is not to say that anything should be suppressed—I am in favor of suppressing nothing, nor do I think that anything can be successfully suppressed—, it is simply that such documents as these ought not to be released for publication first by someone who lacks proper respect for the worth of Psychological Research or someone without a fine appreciation for the obligations and difficulties in Psychological Research, especially in reporting controversial facts and allegations.

I submit then that for very important reasons it is to the best possible advantage of this Society if provision is made that first public notice and initial publication of these documents (the Hodgson-Blavatsky Annotations and the H.P.B. Case File and any part thereof) be undertaken by the writer. These reasons are:

- (1) If these documents are to be published, initial publication and notice ought to be

by, not only someone whose interest in their possible existence first brought them to the view of historians, but also by someone who has an exhaustive understanding of the case, who is grounded in a firm knowledge of Psychological Research, its history, records, methods and obligations, and who, possessing sympathetic perspective, will give the documents fairest possible treatment.

(2) If the Hodgson Report and the Committee verdict of 1885 condemning Madame Blavatsky is to be discredited by anyone, by all means it should be by a long-standing Member of the Society for Psychological Research, so that the resultant credits and debits, whatever they may prove ultimately to be, will continue to balance decisively in favor of the Society.

As one who prides himself on being called a Member of the S.P.R., and who has never been a member of or affiliated with any Theosophical, occult, or mystical organization, I, unlike Theosophists, have no obligation to protect the interests of any other group, and am in no way interested in downgrading the S.P.R. While realizing that the well-being and good-standing of our Society is one of the best guarantees of public respect for Psychological Research with all of its great potentialities for mankind, I am intent only on upgrading this Society's practices (I will not say rules) in reporting, so long as I remain a Member (and, I might add my opinion that, while Members may at times disagree violently, dissident resignations, such as those of Mr. Sinnett and other Theosophists in 1886, are simply shortsighted and unfortunate).

(3) Moreover, the choice for initial publication of these documents should be dictated by the kind of treatment which the Society itself is to receive therefrom. And in this, I think I have some unique proposals which should be of interest.

Just supposing that my conclusions concerning Hodgson's honesty, especially in the

Blavatsky case, are correct—what do these mean to the Society? First, of course, it means that anyone in the S.P.R. can, if they wish, persist as long as they wish in the belief that Dr. Hodgson was “perhaps the greatest investigator in the history of Psychological Research” (as he has been advertised); and, that he not only proved that Madame Blavatsky’s phenomena were faked but that Mrs. Piper’s were genuine. But, more important, it would also mean that the Society must take cognizance of the fact that it can no longer profit itself by leaning on the reputation of Richard Hodgson, nor can it continue to class him with Myers and Gurney and the Sidgwicks and its other great leaders of the past; it can no longer with pride and safety bask in his glory nor share in what have been his credits. Specifically, in the case of its investigation of Madame Blavatsky, and by reason of the identity of the Committee Members and because of the unparalleled publicity of that case (which alone has brought the name of the Society into practically every standard encyclopaedia), it will find a precarious situation arise if in the public mind a clear demarcation is not at this point established.

Some tentative efforts towards this disestablishment have been made already, first, by a former official of the Society, Mr. T. Besterman (writing in an obscure Theosophical journal, The Aryan Path, for May 1931), and, again by Mr. Salter as Honorary Secretary, in a reply given many years ago to a demand by Theosophists for official “withdrawal” of the so-called Hodgson Report. On both occasions the position taken was that what Hodgson had published was his own doing and, in accordance with its published declaration of neutrality, accounts appearing in the Proceedings are not the responsibility of the Society.

Unfortunately, this premise is wrong, for it overlooks the fact that Hodgson’s Report was incorporated as Part “2” of the official Report of the Committee appointed to Investigate

Phenomena Connected with the Theosophical Society, Part "1" being the "Statement and Conclusions of the Committee," and the Constitution of the Society then and now requires that reports of official Committees cannot be published without official consent of the Council.

This fact was apparently not realized in this case until it came to my attention, it is evidently not yet known to Theosophists, and is something which will demand special consideration in due time. But, if I may be permitted to make a suggestion here, it would be that at this time, and in light of all facts presently known to me, the Council should very definitely not favor any request for official "withdrawal" of the Committee's Report on Theosophical phenomena. Such a withdrawal would be a retraction, a tacit admission of responsibility and error. Worthless as the report might be, I have in mind a better solution to the problem, one which, if not contrary to facts yet undisclosed, would permit the Society to finally absolve itself of any official responsibility for the publication of that Report, and accomplish this with need of neither retraction nor any kind of compensatory action, and in a manner to which no Theosophist could object.

As a Member of the S.P.R., I would like the opportunity at some future date to submit my unique proposal on this, together with a petition that the Council explore the legal and procedural groundwork for it. In the meanwhile, I mention it only as another possible dividend of my research and as a token of my sincere solicitude for the interests of the Society.

(4) Next to the Society itself, there is the question of fair treatment for the reputation and memory of those early leaders of the S.P.R. who were themselves involved in this investigation, especially, Myers, Podmore, Gurney, and Professor and Mrs. Sidgwick. Except perhaps for some early remarks at the time by Colonel Olcott, Mr. Sinnett and, perhaps, Madame

Blavatsky, I do not think any apologist for Theosophical phenomena has, down through the years, taken the least trouble to divide responsibility between Hodgson, the active agent, investigator and reporter on the one hand, and the rest of the Committee on the other. Thus, in his recent booklet, *Redfern* never once, I believe, mentions Hodgson but seems to heap all the blame on “the S.P.R.” ! One must differentiate, first, between the Society and the Committee; second, between the Committee and Hodgson. This is an important point which has been slurred over, but which must now be distinctly and directly emphasized.

For example, the aforementioned official historian of The Theosophical Society, in her book (p. 230), treats this point in the customary manner: “Theosophists in general accepted H.P.B.’s assurance the [Blavatsky-Coulomb] letters were partly forgeries, and laughed at Hodgson’s hypothesis of her unlimited skill in organizing conjuring devices. The leaders of the S.P.R. accepted Hodgson’s views as final.” This is untrue; and it is untrue to an extent no one has even guessed before. For one thing, of course, the Committee excused itself in one special regard: “as to the correctness of Mr. Hodgson’s explanation of particular marvels, they do not feel called upon to express any definite conclusion...they are not in a position to endorse every detail of this explanation...” (See Report, p. 205).

Every charge and every claim that Hodgson made in reporting his investigation of this case, up to and including the “Russian spy” accusation, has at one time or another been fathered on the Committee or even on the Society itself! Perhaps the most universal of all these errors has been the idea, adopted by practically every writer (pro or con) on the subject—and heretofore questioned by no one—, that the Committee adopted Hodgson’s charge that Mahatma letters were written by Madame Blavatsky in disguised script. Until my original discovery of the

contrary fact, apparently no one realized that in its “Statement” the Committee not only failed to adopt this charge, it was simply ignored altogether!

But the Committee was not so gullible as to found their decision and their condemnation of H.P.B. on what the Coulombs had said nor on what Hodgson reported. They were too far committed to personal experiment and to personal examination (which, as shown by Professor Sidgwick’s inaugural address, was their primary demand in investigation), they were too cautious to be taken in merely by opinions of other persons. Instead, as I alone am prepared to show for the first time, after H.P.B. left for India to “prosecute” the Coulombs, thus precluding intended experiments by which the Committee had hoped to test her alleged powers, they undertook to secure incriminating specimens of the disputed Blavatsky-Coulomb letters, feeling, as Mr. Myers expressed it, that, “The field covered by the Blavatsky-Coulomb letters was surely wide enough” (Journal, i., p. 457)—wide enough to settle the issue of Madame Blavatsky’s guilt or innocence. This tangible evidence, which they could subject to their own personal examination and inspect at firsthand, was for them in itself sufficient, more especially so when they were told that the professional opinion of handwriting experts confirmed their own private judgement. Contrary to all previous speculation, this then was the one primary and decisive determination which persuaded the Committee to condemn H.P.B. “as one of the most accomplished, ingenious, and interesting imposters in history.”

That this is so, a demonstrable fact though one previously overlooked, is evident from the official “Statement” of the Committee, where, I disclosing their four enumerated “conclusions,” the Committee advances only two of these as positive accusations, the third and fourth being only “a very strong general presumption” (3), and a negative “opinion” on the

insufficiency of “the testimony to these marvels” (4). The first of the four “conclusions” was that the specimens of Blavatsky-Coulomb letters which they “had the opportunity of themselves examining, and of submitting to the judgement of experts” were “undoubtedly written by Madame Blavatsky...”; and the second was that the Shrine at Adyar had been designed and used for fraudulent purposes “by Madame Blavatsky or her agents,” a conclusion necessarily to be true if the incriminating letters were genuine, involved as it was in their content.

From this it follows inevitably that if Madame Blavatsky was innocent of the charges brought against her by the Coulombs and Hodgson, the Committee itself was guilty of only two fundamental mistakes, which anyone in their position might have made. These were firstly, that they believed Dr. Hodgson was honest and were deceived by him to the extent of allowing his personal report to be incorporated as a part of the Committee’s official Report; and, more important, secondly, that, after personal examination, they were convinced that specimens of Blavatsky-Coulomb letters with incriminating passages were genuine. In these judgements, who might not have erred?—for, before now, who could show that Hodgson was consciously dishonest, and who might not have been fooled by forgery? The famous cases of Panell and Dreyfus and others in that day, founded on notorious professional verdicts in handwriting analysis, remind us of the ease by which even experts slipped into the worse possible blunders. Even after beginning an intensive study of the evidence on the overall case, it took more than eight years before I comprehended the deliberate depth of dishonesty in Hodgson’s reporting (and I might never have realized this had it not been for my examination of the Hodgson-Blavatsky Annotations); and I then required an additional two and one-half years to dig out what to me constitutes the first definite proof (heretofore unsuspected by any student of the case) that the incriminating portions of the Blavatsky-Coulomb “correspondence” were forgeries and that

Richard Hodgson knew it (having, as he had, the personal help of H.P.B. in discerning the spurious parts). Far be it from me to condemn the Committee for not discovering in a year what it took me ten years and more to find out!

(I-i)

During the last six years I have pursued my research and writing, despite the delay of diverting financial ventures, at a loss of \$20,000 in relinquished income (having voluntarily given up on 11-year-old job for this cause). I am presently subsisting on about \$200 per annum, with assistance from family charity—merely out of a long-standing determination to be the one to write and publish the first comprehensive, definitive study of this case. My work is now at the point where I have perhaps the largest fund of public and private material on the case in private hands; and I should judge that something like 90 percent of the ground is well-covered in notes and annotations, leaving only the not-inconsiderable task of converting these into paragraphs and chapters. I have consequently set a deadline of three years to complete this book.

Therefore, if I am to be the first to publish contents of the Hodgson-Blavatsky Annotations and the HPB Case File in possession of the S.P.R., one of two things is necessary—either these documents in original or copy should not come into possession of other potential publishers (which, so far as I know the situation, seems now impossible), or: a three-year moratorium should be placed on publication of these documents. It would seem to me that such a moratorium could be arranged in one of two ways: either by mutual agreement of all parties in knowledge of the documents or by the Council exercising its jurisdiction over the right of publication and refusing to grant anyone the right to make public use of the documents (in whole or in part) during the next three years (“no use of them or of any extracts from them can be made

without the previous consent of the Council,” Sir George Joy, August 24, 1960).

As for the first possibility, moratorium by mutual consent, the documents in question consist of (a) the Hodgson-Blavatsky annotations; (b) the H.P.B. Case File. With respect to the former, though, as I have shown, Mr. Salter’s letter of 1955 placed no reserve on public use (beyond the customary acknowledgement) and, in fact, presupposed publication by me, I have made no public reference to nor quotation from the Annotations, and I have made no public reference to nor quotation from the Annotations, and I propose to do my best to see that they do not fall into irresponsible hands prior to publication nor appear in print prematurely. As has been seen, the President of The Theosophical Society, Mr. N. Sri Ram, has expressed his intention to cooperate in this respect concerning the copy on file at Theosophical headquarters in England, and I have also received the promise of Mr. De Zirkoff (the only other private party I know to have seen them) that he will reveal to no one his photocopy of the Annotations. If all goes well, I shall reserve my own presentation of them so that it will appear in the best possible interests of the Society.

As for the H.P.B. Case File (including the documents microfilmed), in my letters of April 27th to the President and Vice President of The Theosophical Society, I protested the fact that the microfilm prepared at my direction and expense was being distributed indiscriminately and on a not-confidential basis, without proper credits being given, by the London office of their Society, and I suggested that (i) The Theosophical Society “rescind this unwise action of the Headquarters Office of The Theosophical Society in England, on grounds of error, ignorance, or misinformation, and do so by reason of previous commitments on higher levels;” and (ii), “secure the promise of each and every person who, by reason of this unwise action, has been or

will become the recipient of this microfilm or of knowledge of its contents, so that they will, out of respect for their benefactors, The Theosophical society and the undersigned who first brought these documents to light, refrain from any and all public notice of the film and its contents for three years;" and (iii),"use its authority and persuasive influence to secure a similar promise from those who are known to have knowledge of the annotations copied for me by Mrs. Saloman" (from Dr. Hodgson's copy of Mme Coulomb's pamphlet.)

If the response to these requests is favorable, which I anticipate it will be, it may be possible to easily arrive at a voluntary moratorium, as suggested. Otherwise, the Council could exercise its own authority and impose the suggested moratorium or any other restrictions on publication which it may see fit.

(Additional to this, during the past week I have been in correspondence with Mr. Endersby, the only party known to have ordered a copy of the microfilm with the express purpose of making immediate public use of the contents. I have expressed to him my hope to be the first to publish these documents three years from now. At the same time, he has suggested voluntarily relinquishing certain subjects in his book so as to permit me prior publication, thus this is perhaps another indication of cooperation with theosophists on this problem.)

(I-ii)

Now I wish to make it very definite and very clear that I am in no way suggesting that the Council should consider any moratorium on these documents which would preclude their use and publication by someone seeking to discredit Madame Blavatsky or that would prevent their immediate use in a book attacking her. If anyone wishes to use these documents for that purpose tomorrow I would have not the slightest objection, as long as my Petition of 1955 and 1960

would be credited as responsible for their recent discovery and release. It is clear to me that what was suppressed in 1884 and 1885, perhaps with the thought of thereby strengthening the case against H.P.B., is not something which any sensible person would use now in an attempt to enlarge the case against her!

So my present remarks concerning moratorium and option apply only to use of the documents in works defending Madame Blavatsky or, as in the case of my own book, in a work designed to give maximum presentation to both sides of the controversy.

I have to confess that, when writing last August 31st, I was very much tempted to add to my enumerated suggestions one other in which a request would be made that the Council grant me the right of option to make first publication of the documents in the H.P.B. case file. I failed to do so, however, because I felt that, without being more fully informed of the exact character of my project, the Council at that time would consider such a request presumptuous, especially in view of the fact that I was in no position to make a financial offer in exchange for such a favor.

If I kindly petition the Council to consider now such a three-year moratorium (qualified as stated) and to grant me an option (extending for three years, and likewise qualified) to the first publication rights of these documents, I do so only because I think I have shown that this would best serve the interests of the Society and of Psychical Research in general.

In addition to the four reasons for this opinion, set forth as (1), (2), (3), and (4) in (H)—keeping in mind particularly those original proposals by which I suggest to absolve first the Society and then its Committee of 1884-5 from any stigma which time may attach to the work of Richard Hodgson—, there are two additional advantages to be considered by the Council.

Attention is directed to my remarks of October 1955 in which I delineated the scope and forum provided by my projected book (these intentions remaining constant to this day): “It is my hope and expectation to exhaust every conceivable possibility of obtaining published and unpublished material of importance, or possible importance, known, or suspected, to exist, in whatever quarter, upon this matter...It would, however, be of no moment merely to project one’s views on such a controversial and historically important subject—however reasonable those views might appear, nor even however authoritative they might be considered. It is therefore my express and irrepressible design to incorporate with any possible observations a complete transcription of all original and important and hypothetically important documents, testimonies, and observations ever made on the subject to the knowledge of the writer. This will be not only especially valuable in view of the increasing rarity of much of the material—some parts of which, at present in the writer’s possession, constitute the only known and printed copies extant—, but, I hopefully foresee, will be commendable as an example in Psychological Research of the impartial reproduction of contrary evidences.”

First, as I affirmed in this petition, “If my studies in this direction are completed, I hope to present the conclusions of my research, whatever their ultimate nature and final shape, to this Council and Society.” (In elucidation of which, I must add that if now, almost six years later, the “ultimate nature and final shape” appear to be well-formed, that may be merely illusionary, for there is no guarantee that the final die is cast. Given new evidence to show Madame Blavatsky’s phenomena fraudulent in any respect, that proof would certainly go into my book and accordingly modify or overturn my present conclusions, for only one thing is more to be feared than unjust condemnation and that is to be duped!).

To this promise I would now add, that if the Council sees fit to grant the moratorium and option as requested, I will go one step further and guarantee the Society the right to have first opportunity to publish my book or a summary of it (either or both, whichever it may choose, subject only to the condition that publication be within two years of completion and that I have final determination of length and contents of the book—while, of course, such acceptance would in no wise necessarily indicate that the Council or Society or Members thereof in any way approved the conclusions therein presented).

Moreover, if granted such a moratorium and option, I shall return the favor by conceding to the Society for Psychological Research twenty percent of any author's royalties or income I may receive from sale of this book or of any work in which I make first publication of these documents or of any part of them.

Quite naturally, it is to be understood that if the ideas of the Council on any of these questions or points agree in any respect with those of the writer, such agreement does not necessarily signify that the Council has arrived at its conclusions by the same route, nor that the Council recognizes any special value in arguments presented.

However, I trust that these facts, herein extensively set forth in detail and documented, do indicate that not only have I approached the re-examination of the case of Madame Blavatsky with unusual thoroughness and tenacity but that my research has resulted in a number of unique determinations and discoveries—not the least of which are original findings which will serve to shield the Society for Psychological Research from whatever opprobrium history may attach to the name of Richard Hodgson. However immodest the thought, I say with all candor that, if I know more about this subject than anyone since the days of Hodgson, it is equally true that I also think

I know how best to serve our Society by it.

May 12, 1961.

WALTER A. CARRITHERS, JR.