

Obituary

The "Hodgson Report" on Madame Blavatsky

***Re-Examination Discredits
the Major Charges Against H.P. Blavatsky.***

Preface by N. Sri Ram.

Adyar, Madras, India

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“That Mr. Hodgson’s elaborate but misdirected inquiries, his affected precision, which spends infinite patience over trifles and is blind to facts of importance, his contradictory reasoning and his manifold incapacity to deal with such problems as those he endeavored to solve, will be exposed by other writers in due course - I make no doubt.”

Helena Patrovna Blavatsky,

January 14, 1886.

PREFACE

It is a remarkable piece of work which Mr. Adlai E. Waterman has undertaken and carried out with extreme thoroughness and care, the results of which he has in part set forth in this booklet. Those who love and revere H.P.B. (H.P. Blavatsky) and there are numerous such persons all over the world - will be glad to read this vindication of her from certain charges made in the Report of the Committee of the Society for Psychical Research, on phenomena which took place at the time she was here at Adyar. Let us hope it will be read by many and go some way towards clearing the name of our great Leader from the most unjust and unmerited slurs and slanders that have been heaped upon her.

A good portion of this booklet has appeared as articles in The American Theosophist, and appears here with permission from its Editors. Mr. Waterman has been able to arrive at findings of great importance, and he has probably other material which he will be able to present, as he is continuing with the research of which the present booklet is just the first product.

President,
The Theosophical Society,
Adyar, Madras, INDIA

20 April 1961.

INTRODUCTION

“From its very beginning,” observed Mme. Blavatsky, “the world has seen in Theosophy nothing but certain marvelous phenomena, in which two-thirds of the non-spiritualists do not believe. Very soon the Society came to be regarded as a body pretending to the possession of ‘miraculous’ powers. The world never realized that the Society taught absolute disbelief in miracle or even the possibility of such; that in the Society there were only a few people who possessed such psychic powers and but few who cared for them. Nor did it understand that the phenomena were never produced publicly, but only privately for friends, and merely given as an accessory, to prove by direct demonstration that such things could be produced without dark rooms, spirits, mediums, or any of the usual paraphernalia.”¹

“Theosophy believes in no miracle, whether divine or devilish; recognizes nothing as supernatural; believes only in facts and Science; studies the laws of Nature, both Occult and patent; and gives attention particularly to the former, just because exact Science will have nothing to do with them... More than once in the history of its past has Science been made the victim of its own delusions as to its professed infallibility; and the time must come when the perfection of Asiatic Psychology and its knowledge of the forces of the invisible world will be recognized, as were the circulation of the blood, electricity, and so forth, after the first sneers and lampoons died away. The ‘silly attempts to hoodwink individuals’ will then be viewed as honest attempts at proving to this generation of Spiritualists and believers in past ‘miracle-mongers,’ that there is naught miraculous in this world of Matter and Spirit, of visible results and invisible causes; naught - but the great wickedness of a world of Christians and Pagans, alike ridiculously superstitious in one direction, that of their respective religions, and malicious whenever a purely disinterested and philanthropic effort is made to open their eyes to the truth. I beg leave to further

remark that personally I never bragged of anything I might have done, nor do I offer any explanation of the phenomena, except to utterly disclaim the possession of any miraculous or supernatural powers, or the performing of anything by jugglery - i.e. with the usual help of confederates and machinery.”²

As to whether Mme. Blavatsky made “silly attempts to hoodwink individuals,” the opinion is sometimes expressed that it is beside the power; that her occult phenomena, true or false, are not today of any moment or importance in theosophical thought; and that the question of the authenticity of these marvels does not involve the validity of the work she did and left in the shape of her voluminous writings. This parallels the position taken so long ago as 1885 when, confronted with purported proof of frauds executed by Mme. Blavatsky, a leading Theosophist, in London at a meeting of the Society for Psychical Research, objected that, “there was no logical connection between Madame Blavatsky and Theosophy,” and that the latter never rested on phenomena.

To the present writer, it appears that quite the contrary is true, and that anyone crediting Theosophy as expounded in the written works of H. P. Blavatsky cannot - without endangering his philosophical foundations - afford to ignore the far-reaching moral and vital implications of the question of the authenticity of her occult or psychic phenomena. While it is correct that H.P.B. discountenanced any attempt to justify philosophy by occult phenomena alone, nevertheless, it was her claim that, to a degree, the information contained in her famous works, Isis Unveiled and The Secret Doctrine, embodies “knowledge due to the independent researches of long generations of Adepts,”³ among whom were her “Teachers” or “Brothers,” Mahatmas whose occult faculties were said to afford a special penetration into the secrets of time and Nature denied to common man. Moreover, her writings, published initially by Theosophists or by

the Theosophical Society of her day (founded, according to her claims, under the inspiration of these Teachers), represent Theosophy in “its practical bearing” as “purely divine ethics.”⁴ What then becomes of these writings, this “knowledge,” and these “divine ethics,” if once it is conceded that all or some of the phenomena represented as proof of the occult faculties and existence of these unseen Adepts were simply tricks performed by H.P.B., sometimes helped by confederates?

“I,” declared Mme. Blavatsky in 1880, “have lived long enough in this world of incessant strife, in which the ‘survival of the fittest’ seems to mean the triumph of the most unprincipled, to have learned that when I have once allowed my name to appear in the light of a benevolent genius, for the production of ‘cups,’ ‘saucers’ and ‘brooches,’ I must bear the penalty; especially when the people are so foolish as to take the word ‘Magic’ either in its popular superstitious sense - that of the work of the devil - or in that of jugglery.”⁵

Four years later, the “penalty” became evident for all to see. In a missionary journal of Madras, The Christian College Magazine for September and October, 1884, appeared “The Collapse of Koot Hoomi,” written by the editor from materials furnished by two of Mme. Blavatsky’s erstwhile householders, Mons. and Mme. Coulomb, who “confessed” to being “the confederates” behind Mme. Blavatsky’s “marvelous phenomena,” backing their explanation with claims of secret “machinery,” etc.

Two months later, Mme. Coulomb published in pamphlet form her own account of the alleged conspiracy. The following year, after having received the report of its agent, Richard Hodgson, LL.D., of Cambridge, who had been sent to India towards the close of 1884 to investigate these accusations at first-hand, a Committee of the Society for Psychological Research issued its verdict: H.P.B. was neither “the mouthpiece of hidden seers” (Mahatma Koot Hoomi

and other reported Adepts) nor “a mere vulgar adventuress,” but “one of the most accomplished, ingenious, and interesting imposters in history.”

The worst onus that can be fastened upon any school or system of philosophy - aside from direct devaluation of the teachings themselves - is that, “it is well-known” that the school was founded and the system revealed by a “charlatan, a proven imposter” or a master of trickery, plagiarism and forgery. If this is accepted - and, to begin with, most people today are not about to doubt the “impossibility” of genuine occult phenomena and Magic -, there is no use in pleading the high ideals of the school or the logic and beauty of the system, since any tentative desire for independent inquiry will have been killed before the prospective inquirer approaches the philosophic considerations, and even if these latter came forcibly to his attention, there will then be an immense barrier of agitated prejudice to be battered down.

Realizing this, it is apparently thought by detractors that if they only throw sufficient mud at the woman who gave the teachings of Theosophy to the world they are thereby aptly discrediting the teachings themselves. And as if to counter this kind of attack, objection has been made that if anyone wishes to prove that W... S... wrote bad plays, or R... W... bad music, he surely does not do so by endeavoring to prove that the one was a poacher and the other an immoral man. Now this may be so, but, here again, we have to face the unavoidable moral question of H.P.B. 's phenomena. It is unthinkable that a practiced deceiver, stooping low in vile conspiracy to hoodwink her faithful followers by elaborate fraudulent devices, would at the same time be a chosen vessel for the highest kind of spiritual truth and moral guidance, or the occult-endowed associate of such exalted human beings as the Mahatmas of Theosophy! The mind revolts at so monstrous a reconciliation, for if there are “spirit-mediums” of genuine psychic talent who occasionally cheat, is it not said that they are will less automatons driven by un-moral

astral influences? But one of the prime bases of the Theosophy of Mme. Blavatsky was the reputed occult powers of its Adepts; and so, if their acknowledged agent and representative had to rely upon fraud in absence of such powers but in order to “demonstrate” their “existence,” who is there that would be such a fool as to believe that Mme. Blavatsky was the agent of Adepts or, indeed, that there were any Adepts at all?

Faced with these difficulties, and the additional fact that the “destroyer” of Mme. Blavatsky was Dr. Richard Hodgson who is recognized as, perhaps, “the greatest” psychical researcher of “the Golden Age of Psychical Research in England”,⁶ any would be apologist for H.P.B. cannot fall back on philosophical exposition in lieu of specific well-supported replies to what skeptics may bring in guise of concrete disproof and verified accusation against her. That kind of reaction may appeal to a certain type of mind which can voluntarily blind itself to unpleasant short-comings while taking refuge in philosophic abstractions. But such retreat is no substitute for knowledge and courage - or for whatever gratitude the followers of Mme. Blavatsky think they owe to their great Teacher. Neither is it the kind of answer the world respects or that Science demands. What is required in a situation such as this are facts - incontrovertible facts founded on testimony which incredulous critics cannot assail, the testimony not of H.P.B. and her witnesses but of the principal prosecutor and his chief witnesses. Nothing less than this ever satisfied the present writer, nor does he expect the reader to be content with anything else. The commonplace facts of everyday experience seem too much against the possibility of real Magic and genuine occult or psychic phenomena to permit modern man to rely on less.

It is safe to calculate that for every ten thousand persons who have heard and believe that Richard Hodgson “exposed” H.P. Blavatsky as a fraud and imposter, not more than one has read

his “expose;” and, that for every thousand of his readers, hardly one has ever seen Emma Coulomb’s pamphlet. And yet, by logic and every rule of common sense, the latter document takes precedence over all others in standing at the very heart of the controversy raised by the Coulombs, comprising as it does the firsthand unadulterated testimony of the chief accusers, together with documentary “proofs” adduced for their claims. Yet, strange to say, practically no attention was paid to this priceless pamphlet - least of all by indignant Theosophists who put no stock in what Mme. Coulomb might have to say! -, not until, that is, the appearance in 1937 of Mrs. Hastings' booklet, Defence of Madame Blavatsky (Volume II) The “Coulomb Pamphlet”. Unfortunately, Mrs. Hastings did not live to complete her promising study of the case.

Particularly noteworthy is the fact that Dr. Hodgson himself seems to have had very great reluctance to make, by quotation, any use whatsoever of Mme. Coulomb’s printed (prior) explanations. The reason for this odd behavior on his part, with respect to the testimony of his chief witness, becomes readily apparent once we examine the major charges brought against Mme. Blavatsky by Dr. Hodgson, and now, for the first time, compare his allegations detail-by-detail against original, earlier published claims of Mme. Coulomb herself.

Though not a member of anyone of the respective organizations, the writer wishes to acknowledge with gratitude his indebtedness to the following friends and benefactors – among others too numerous to mention here - for their supply of requested research data: the late Mr. C. Jinarajadasa, and Mr. Sidney A. Cook, of The Theosophical Society; the late Mrs. H. Henderson, and Mrs. Edith Fielding, of the H.P.B. Library; the late Colonel Arthur L. Conger, and Mr. James A. Long, of the Theosophical Society with International Headquarters at Pasadena; Mr. Boris de Zirkoff of the Theosophical Information Centre; and Mr. ----- of The Theosophy Company.

Adlai E. Waterman

June 17, 1962,
Arlington Heights
Fresno, California.

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ERRATA

P. 81, line 27: "moveable" correct to "movable" (see p. 38, line 17).

P. 84, line 10: "1883" correct to "1881" (see p. 63, line 9 and p. 64, line 15).

I

THE INVESTIGATION BY THE SOCIETY FOR PSYCHICAL RESEARCH

This year⁷ marks the 75th anniversary of the so-called Hodgson Report branding H.P. Blavatsky an imposter, forger, Russian spy and instigator of frauds. In May, 1884, hardly two years after its formation, the Council of the Society for Psychical Research appointed a committee in England to gather evidence “as to the alleged phenomena connected with the Theosophical Society” (201).⁸ At Madras the same month, Mons. Coulomb, general handyman, and his wife, housekeeper at Theosophical Society Headquarters, were expelled on uncontested charges of extortion, blackmail, slander, falsehood, and squandering household funds (104-09). Having left India the preceding February to visit Europe, H.P.B. by wire ordered the Coulombs to surrender the keys to her rooms and depart (111).

The next day, May 18th, Theosophists and Mons. Coulomb entered the rooms and found a variety of “sliding panels,” etc., the latter admitting he had made these devices but, so he said, only at H.P.B.’s orders. Inspection showed the “panels were evidently new,” and, as later substantiated by S.P.R. and missionary investigators (339-40), “it took a great deal of trouble to open them, and they opened with considerable noise...”⁹ The Theosophists present “unanimously decided” that the trick apparatus, instead of having been available when the relevant phenomena occurred (up to 14 months previously), had been made only “in the absence of Madame Blavatsky” since her last departure from Adyar (340).

Months passed, then at the height of the S.P.R. investigation appeared the “expose” in The Christian College Magazine of Madras, broadcasting the Coulombs’ claim that they knew many of these phenomena were fraudulent, and that they had helped H.P.B. secretly with devices and arrangements to deceive. To support these claims, they had supplied the missionary-editor

with letters ostensibly in her handwriting, portions of which were published and part of which, if genuine, certainly implicated her in fraud. At this, H.P.B. returned to India, “to prosecute these traducers of my character, these fabricators of letters.”¹⁰ Her departure having foreclosed the anticipated “experiments” by which the S.P.R. committee had hoped to “test” her reputed occult powers, an agent of the investigating body, Dr. Hodgson, was dispatched to make an on-the-spot inquiry. Subsequently, in December, 1885, his report appeared as Part “2” (207-380) of the S.P.R.’s official Report of the Committee Appointed to Investigate Phenomena Connected with the Theosophical Society (201-400), Part “1” being the “Statement and Conclusions of the Committee” (201-07).

In drawing up its enumerated “conclusion” - “unanimously arrived at”, the S.P.R. Committee accepted as proven only two positive accusations against Mme. Blavatsky. Essential to both of these decisions were claims and evidence brought forward by Mons. and Mme. Coulomb.

II.

THE “BLAVATSKY-COULOMB CORRESPONDENCE”

In the first of these “conclusions” (204), the S.P.R.Committee accepted as authentic those “letters” of the alleged Blavatsky-Coulomb correspondence “which the Committee have had the opportunity of themselves examining, and of submitting to the judgement of experts,” alleging that these “suffice to prove that she has been engaged in a long-continued combination with other persons to produce by ordinary means a series of apparent marvels for the support of the Theosophic movement” (204).

1. Now the late literary critic and writer, Mrs. Beatrice Hastings, already has shown that, in crucial instances, the portions of this “correspondence” calculated to implicate H.P.B. in fraud - and therefore the parts open to the suspicion of having been forged by the Coulombs - do not stand up to close analysis, neither by literary content nor comparison with known fact.¹¹
2. Such contested passages are not only inconsistent with indisputable circumstance, but contradict other (unquestioned) parts of the incongruous “correspondence”, the latter parts showing, for example, that H.P.B., in writing to Mme. Coulomb (the later self-styled “confederate”), commented knowingly on her own occult powers and treated Theosophical phenomena as genuine psychic occurrences (e.g., 16-17).
3. Other doubted parts even disprove the Coulomb story on some of its most essential points (e.g., see Section IX, Part 1 following).

4. As for the question of the handwriting of the incriminating portions of the “Blavatsky-Coulomb correspondence,” Dr. Hodgson - who, as a self-appointed judge of handwriting, seems to have regarded himself as more expert than his experts (282-83; 297) - here excused himself by saying, “I do not propose to go into any detail in describing the similarities between Madame Blavatsky’s undoubted handwriting and the handwriting of the Blavatsky-Coulomb letters [sic]:” (276-77). Significantly, the calligraphic features of the incriminating letters and parts of letters remain largely unknown, for although the S.P.R. Committee published a photograph of one “Blavatsky-Coulomb document” (B-x in Plate I, following 380), this was not one of the disputed letters, and no specimen of the incriminating handwriting was ever exposed to camera nor subjected to public scrutiny. Nevertheless, neither Hodgson nor anyone else offered an excuse for this suspicious reticence.
5. Moreover, the record does not show that the handwriting experts, consulted on behalf of the S.P.R. in this matter, were ever given opportunity to make any comparison between the script of the disputed passages and the handwriting of the suspected forgers.
6. Neither does the expert’s “Report” (381-82) present any calligraphic proof; no tracings are shown; no examples given, no characteristics cited; while the conclusion is strangely worded and the contents of the “Blavatsky-Coulomb documents” examined are not even identified, an

inexcusable omission, seeing that Mme. Coulomb did receive numerous innocent letters from H.P.B. in the latter's absence.

7. What Dr. Hodgson and the Committee had to show by expert testimony was that incriminating passages of the "Correspondence" were in the genuine handwriting of H.P.B., a simple task if she was guilty—but this was never done!
8. Instead, a thorough dissection (in ms. Since 1958) of all the published evidence goes to prove that Hodgson misled his public by having the expert, F.G. Netherclift, certify the authenticity of certain Blavatsky—Coulomb documents which were genuine but neither disputed nor incriminating (though the identification of which Hodgson contrived to conceal as best he could), this certification afterwards being misrepresented as proof of H.P.B.'s authorship of the incriminating (uncertified) portions of the "correspondence". Even the published title to Netherclift's "Report" is misleading, for, as printed, it is not at all, as labeled, a few which Hodgson, at his own discretion, selected for professional judgment (277).
9. It is clear enough that Hodgson realized the necessity of establishing a reasonable explanation for such foolhardy conduct before he could hope to persuade any intelligent reader that in India Mme. Blavatsky—if one of the most astute tricksters in history—would have voluntarily put herself and incriminating correspondence (so rich in potential blackmail as the damning portions of the "Blavatsky—Coulomb letters")

into Mme. Coulomb's hands. With the passing of years, he must also have come to realize that his report of 1885 had signally failed in this necessity.

And so, in 1893, in his reply to Theosophical critics, Hodgson came forth with an arresting explanation. He remembered (or pretended to "remember") and believed his readers would "remember" (or pretended to believe they would "remember") that in "1872, at Cairo, Madame Blavatsky had been associated with Madame Coulomb in producing bogus 'spiritistic' phenomena" and so "was already in Madame Coulomb's power" before there was written the first of the "Blavatsky—Coulomb letters" used against her in 1884.¹²

One need have little doubt that the majority of Hodgson's readers were ready to join him in this remembrance such is the fearsome power of the will-to-disbelieve, or rather to believe with the un-believer. But neither the readers of the S.P.R. Report of 1885 nor anyone had ever heard this one before. In fact, the readers of Mme. Coulomb's pamphlet could only rightly remember that, by her own admission therein (3, 4), Mme. Coulomb had been no more than an intended victim of these "bogus 'spiritistic' phenomena" which had taken place in Cairo in 1872 (during H.P.B.'s absence, and about which she disclaimed any preknowledge). And how did the Doctor of Laws from Cambridge get past this admission by his chief witness? He simply ignored it. Fatal as it was to his charge, he suppressed and omitted it from his report, as if he were not a scientific investigator making an impartial inquiry but only a common prosecutor obligated to "building a case" at all costs.

Thus, in order to explain H.P.B.'s alleged disregard of self-incrimination, conduct in itself a priori improbable but without which his major charge would have been more than ridiculous, Dr. Richard Hodgson claimed to "remember", and did boldly put forward as fact, an

unverified, uncorroborated, unsupported statement that was and is manifestly false as disproven by the testimony of his own chief witness. After requiring almost two-hundred pages for an elaborate endeavor to convince the world that Madame Blavatsky had been engaged in a criminal conspiracy at Bombay and Adyar, this “nemesis of the Mahatmas”, eight years later, tried to make his readers believe that he could in a single sentence, and with no evidence whatever, actually convict her of the same alleged offence at Cairo! From this alone, it would seem somewhat that his “modes of scientific investigation,” his meticulous prudence and vaunted perspicacity did not improve with the passing years, years devoted to the “exposing” of William Eglinton, Henry Slade, Eusapia Palladino and other “humbugs”!

III

THE SHRINE AND SURROUNDINGS

Of the Committee's two enumerated accusations put forward as proof of fraud by Mme. Blavatsky, the second was that the "Shrine" (cupboard), formerly located in the "Occult Room" at Theosophical Headquarters, Adyar, had been "a Conjuror's Box" (400), in which Mahatma letters and other objects appeared or disappeared when a hidden confederate reached in by a secret passageway at the back of the Shrine (204).

A. THE SHRINE: ITS DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

But Richard Hodgson, who never saw this Shrine, nor acknowledged any plan of it or its surroundings as reliable except his own, lacked the evidence necessary to support his charge.

1. Evidence (suppressed by Hodgson, by reason of omission from his report) shows the Shrine was built not in secret nor by Mons. Coulomb but at a local cabinet-maker's shop, Deschamps' (51); and, was designed for easy dismantling in event of travel (221).¹³ The doors unhinged, a drawer and shelves and a back of three panels came out, while the remaining sides were held only by "corner brackets" (221)
2. While suppressing everything he learned from or about Deschamps, Hodgson asserted that, aside from the three panels at the back, "the rest of the Shrine appears to have been of solid construction" (221). But this "appears" only in his drawing (see Plate II, "Plan of Occult Room, With Shrine and Surroundings"), where, as if to support this allegation, he shows the front as solid, whereas it certainly contained "double doors" (321).
3. Mme. Coulomb, in a passage Hodgson suppressed, says the panels "at the

back”—not in the back, as in his Plan—were “made on purpose to be taken out and slid back when necessity demanded it” (51); and, that to convert the Shrine into a conjuror’s box, it was necessary to: (a) divide the rear middle panel; (b) nail to it a leather handle (51-2). And Mons. Coulomb added, (c) conceal the division between half-panels by a mirror within the Shrine (222).

4. Hodgson gave nothing but the Coulombs’ word for any divided panel, or handle; nor, any explanation for not having these (at the “exposure” of May 18, 1884, the panels as found were all full-size).
5. Hodgson gave no evidence the required existed in the necessarily critical size or position.
6. Hodgson suppressed the fact the Shrine had shelves;¹⁴ nor did he show that the disputed movements within the Shrine could have been made via a specifically positioned aperture in the back.
7. A stick, probing immediately behind the Shrine (suspended on wires), encountered no “handles”, no “hole in the wall”, nor anything suspicious (221, 333)
8. Ignoring inspection from within, Hodgson made the absurd assertion, “no careful examination could ever have been made of the back of the Shrine” unless it was “removed from the wall” (224). But, as no claim was made that the mirror was immobile, it must have been removed when, in presence of witnesses, Damodar Mavalankar regularly took “all the things out of the Shrine” during cleaning (337)—a task substantiated by a “Blavatsky-Coulomb letter” in a passage Hodgson suppressed (55 cf. 212); and, also when visitors

examined the interior, e.g., the one hostile witness to Shrine phenomena (aside from the Coulombs) admits, “No opening of any kind was visible in the back of the Shrine” (341), not merely in “part of the back” (as though part were hidden by a mirror).

9. While showing this “muslin” was behind not “over” the Shrine (221, 327), Hodgson suppressed Mme. Coulomb’s assertion the panel was divided “because by pulling the panel up all one piece it would have shown, notwithstanding the many folds of muslin which hung in festoons over the shrine” (51-2). Analysis of undisputed figures in his own report (height and depth of Shrine cf. height and distance of curtains hanging before the Shrine) shows that any half-panel raised 6 inches (52) at the back would have been visible to an observer either within or without the curtained enclosure (see Plate II). Yet, during Shrine phenomena, no one ever reported seeing or hearing any suspicious movement, though up to fifteen persons were present at once (suppressed by Hodgson).¹⁵
10. No claim was made that the alleged half-panel locked in place; yet, before witnesses, Damodar “used to rub the frame hard with the towel, and if there were any workable panel at that time, it could not but have moved under the pressure” (337); and, as happened, a visitor could test his suspicions by manual inspection of the rear panels (334). Yet, once positioned, no movement was ever detected until the Shrine was later taken down and the back struck by hand (224). Why?
11. Hodgson admits the “upper part” (not “portions of the upper part”, as would

be the case if his Plan of the Shrine were correct) leaned against the wall (221); and he failed to show that, thus tilted, any panel at the back could have been slid up even an inch, obstructed as it was by the covered wall behind.

12. The testimony of Damodar, custodian of the Shrine in H.P.B.'s absence (337), was itself sufficient to destroy Hodgson's accusations regarding the Shrine; hence he ridiculed ("! ") the idea that Damodar spoke truthfully or, during the period of Shrine phenomena, knew nothing of any "hole in the wall immediately behind the Shrine" (341). To sustain this charge, however, Hodgson had to suppress the Coulombs' admission that it was "only on the morning of the 16th May," 1884, that Mons. Coulomb first told Damodar "there was a secret passage behind the 'shrine'"; and, that Damodar—to "reward" them for this "confidential communication," as Mme. Coulomb laments – exposed their "great secret" to Mme. Blavatsky and officials at Adyar, thus bringing about the couple's expulsion and the inspection of the rooms two days later (92, 106, 110).

Not only did Hodgson, in his account of the exposure, misrepresent the sequence of events and the relationship of the principals involved, not only did he distort the testimony of some Theosophical witnesses and suppress that of others concerned with this incident, but he altogether suppressed the relevant testimony of his own chief witnesses and the affidavits and documents which Mme. Coulomb had naively published. Testimony and evidence which prove Hodgson's account of the "exposure" and his main charge against Damodar to be particularly false and extraordinarily

misleading.

B. LOCATION OF THE SHRINE

Equally irresponsible is Hodgson's charge that "the position selected for the Shrine was peculiarly convenient for obtaining secret access to it from the back" (226).

1. That the wall behind it was also the "party-wall" of H.P.B.'s "bedroom is less of a coincidence than that this was the east wall of the Occult Room, and, conformable with occult ritual and Asiatic custom (which Hodgson ignored), the Shrine was to hang in the east.
2. That the Shrine was positioned partly before the wall's "thin" portion, then backing an open recess (220), accords with: (a) the evidence and Hodgson's testimony (221, 327)—not with his Plan—which show the Shrine was positioned symmetrically with reference to this whole wall, their vertical centerlines conjoining this portion; (b) had it, instead, been located before a closed full-depth section of the wall, suspicion would have arisen that the wall concealed a recess enclosing a conjuror, an objection not so easy to put down.
3. As if to enhance this alleged convenience, Hodgson (see Plate II) put in the northwall of the bedroom a "door", appropriately concealed (by curtains) from the Sitting-Room where H.P.B. entertained prospective converts. As if to give assurance that a confederate could pass here unheard as much as unseen, there appears across the doorway the representation of a curtain. Compare this representation with the same appearing at the front of the recess in the northwall of the Sitting Room, denoting "curtains" (346).¹⁶ But Hodgson gave no evidence a doorway was there then, and certainly no

passageway was there before mid-December, 1883, when the bedroom could be entered only by “passing through the drawing-room” (326)—for a confederate’s surreptitious entry into the recess, “peculiarly convenient,” indeed!

4. Having thus provided a “door” for the convenience of Mons. Coulomb, alleged confederate (323), Hodgson forthwith produces a “new room” peculiarly convenient for Mme. Coulomb who, disguised “as a Mahatma,” once “passed away at the east side of the balcony, departing into the new room”, according to this report (243) of her claims. His Plan (see Plate II), showing this structure, purports to represent conditions existing some time between December 15, 1883 and “about or shortly before the middle of January, 1884” (222-23). But this "new room" was only built later, after H.P.B. left for Europe, 1884¹⁷, and on February I, 1884, "the wood required for the new room" was not even yet obtained (77)! Thoughtfully, Hodgson did not bother his readers with this contrary evidence.

C. CURTAIN AND WALL-CLOTH

But it was not enough that Hodgson should claim there had been a secret passageway through wall and Shrine.

1. As he admitted, between this wall and Shrine there was tacked calico wall-cloth and hung muslin curtain (221,327).
2. But Hodgson made no claim whatever that these barriers contained openings corresponding or not to alleged apertures in wall and Shrine (“not the smallest trace,” reported a Member of the Council of the S.P.R., who had been present

at the “exposure”); neither did he intimate that the muslin or calico ever had been disturbed since first put there—even though he questioned the tailor who prepared them (327).

3. While Mons. Coulomb kept discreetly silent on this problem, Mme. Coulomb simply ignored the calico and misrepresented the muslin’s position. How did Hodgson meet this evidence? That he was well aware it presented an imminent, fatal danger to his case appears from the fact that, although his drawing shows the other curtains, Hodgson suppressed and omitted from his Plan all sign of this curtain and wall-cloth. So “peculiarly convenient” was the Shrine position immediately in front of these barriers that, by a typical “vanishing act,” Hodgson caused the muslin and calico to disappear! He well knew that to Science it makes no difference whether a letter or a saucer passes through a brick wall or whole muslin or calico—it would be a “miracle” in any case!

D. INSPECTING THE WALL, MARCH TO OCTOBER, 1883

Even if Hodgson’s Plan were not grossly defective in representing conditions of the Shrine and Surroundings as these existed during the period indicated, it would not cover more than a minor part of the related evidence, for this period is only one month (222-23) of the 14-or-so months during which phenomena occurred in the Shrine. Other and different construction details were in effect during the other 13 months, according to Hodgson’s own admission. Despite this, he altogether failed to present a plan to accord with conditions obtaining within these other periods, by far the major portion of time under inquiry. Why this important omission?

Just as the curtain and wall-cloth behind the Shrine would have proved readily

embarrassing had they appeared in his Plan, so there was another difficulty which was quite as dangerous and had to be done away with, but by less obvious means. Adept at causing “appearances” and “disappearances” by literary legerdemain, Hodgson proceeded to conceal “the hole in the wall” when only he could do so.

1. He tries to have it believed that from March to about November, 1883, a “hole in the wall immediately behind the Shrine” was hidden from view in the bedroom by a sliding panel in a “wooden boarding” nailed “at the back of the recess” while an almirah (wardrobe) with a secret corresponding aperture and panel “stood in front of this recess” (221-22).
2. As only one dissatisfied witness gave any account of inspecting this “boarding,” Hodgson lets pass unchallenged the testimony that the almirah itself “was sometimes removed in the presence of several witnesses, and we all had every reason to be sure that the wall was intact” 337); neither does he dispute testimony the almirah was removed during an inspection by skeptical visitors so far back as April 1, 1883 (333).
3. But Hodgson could afford to do this only because he suppressed Mme. Coulomb’s allegation that from the beginning (March, 1883) the “small breach” in the brick-and-plaster wall had been concealed on the east side only by the almirah which actually stood within the recess and “against the wall” itself (52, 54)!
4. And Mme. Coulomb pretends that no one asked to have the almirah

removed for inspection before it was replaced by the “boarding” during the “heat” of summer, 1883 (54)!

5. But after this, who would believe her claim the “boarding” was erected as early as summer? The earliest evidence Hodgson gave for its presence in the recess (no word of the almirah then) was of October 14, 1883 (341), whereas the previous month the wall at the back of the still-open recess was seen by Dr. Rajamiengar to be “bare and intact” as viewed from H.P.B.’s bedroom (334).

E. THE ALMIRAH

During the period of Shrine-phenomena attributed by Dr. Hodgson to surreptitious entry from the recess, the recess held in turn; firstly, the almirah, brought from Bombay (52); next, the “wooden boarding”; lastly, a “bricked frame.”

Without the necessary sliding panel in the back of the almirah, if for no other reason, such secret access was impossible during most of this time, when the almirah stood within the recess. Besides other requirements, such a panel had to: (a) then exist; (b) be constructed so as to escape or defy inspection; (c) correspond in position with the alleged shrine-and-wall passageway.

1. Hodgson had only the Coulombs’ word that the sliding panel shown by Mons. Coulomb in the almirah, May 18, 1884, had existed in 1883; nor did Hodgson claim his inspection of it in any way discredited previous examination showing the panel was “evidently new”.
2. That this almirah-panel could not have escaped discovery had it existed in the recess is evident from Mme. Coulomb’s assertion (suppressed by

Hodgson, discredited as it was by H.P.B.'s undisputed removals of the almirah when requested) that H.P.B. was fearful lest she be "asked by some one to have the almirah removed to inspect the back of it" (54).

3. At the "exposure," it was found that, pursuant to H.P.B.'s instructions (77), Mons. Coulomb had built a north-south partition separating bedroom and sitting-room,¹⁸ a partition stopping short of where the almirah stood as if permanently situated, beside the northwall with its back and sliding-panel exposed to view from the sitting-room. Strange behaviour if H.P.B. feared lest someone "inspect the back of it"!
4. Ignoring this, Hodgson also failed to explain why such a trick panel, if retired from use by November, 1883 (222), would go neglected until May, 1884, dangerously inviting discovery and exposure, when the alleged conspirators had every motive and opportunity to remove it.
5. Significantly, Hodgson made no claim that either the vertical or horizontal placement of this panel was aligned with the assumed shrine-wall passageway.
6. As if to conceal his own measurements of this panel's size and position, Hodgson also made the almirah "vanish." Unlike the Plan previously published by Hartmann ("absurdly inaccurate," according to Hodgson¹⁹), his own Plan simply omits the almirah.

F. THE "BOARDING" OR DOOR

Mme. Coulomb claimed that the "boarding" was: (a) made only after a decision to substitute it for the almirah in the recess; (b) made to be a "sham door;" (c) made by "carpenters"

who built into it a panel designed to be “slid off about ten inches” (54).

1. Doubtless it was what he learned from these carpenters that caused Hodgson to suppress all of this. But building a “sham door” to be put where any door would only arouse unwanted suspicion—as it soon did (342) - is a self-evident absurdity.
2. While Hodgson ignored the origin of what he called “the boarding,” six witnesses concerned definitely recognized it as a “door” (325, 326, 328, 330, 335). As if to prevent similar recognition by his readers, Hodgson in his Plan illustrated no other door (except that graphically misrepresented as a curtain in the northwall recess of the bedroom).
3. Incompatible though it was with his false juxtaposing of almirah and door, Hodgson did not deny that H.P.B. used this door to hang her clothes upon, in the recess behind the Shrine (332, 341). A spare door, apparently similar to others on the premises, it may well have been used previously for this same purpose in the bedroom’s northwall recess and as a shutter to close off a window originally there, these wall-recesses being used interchangeably as windows or doorways (220). Tiring of the repeated removal of almirah to satisfy skeptical visitors, perhaps H.P.B. simply exchanged positions of almirah and door before October 14, 1883. If so, in the almirah’s new position against the window glass of the northwall recess, how could any sliding panel in its back—recalling Mme. Coulomb’s remark escape being seen from outside? On all this, Hodgson, of course, was silent.

4. At the “exposure,” it was found that one of the four panels of a door (at the back of the northwall recess of the sitting-room, shown in Plate II) could be slid open, the same door, so Hodgson claimed (but did not prove), that had been in the recess behind the Shrine (223). Again, he had only the Coulombs’ testimony that this panel had been moveable before some time in 1884. Even the missionaries’ agent admitted that, as a sliding panel, it was “evidently of recent construction” (339).
5. Hodgson found it could “be opened and shut only with considerable difficulty” (339); and, while concocting theories of “disuse” and “grit” to explain this, he made no claim his inspection showed the panel was designed for easy, silent movement.
6. Neither could he say why H.P.B. would have neglected to nail shut such a panel, if abandon for “about five months” (340), and situated as it was (according to the missionaries’ agent) “without the slightest attempt at concealment” (339), needlessly inviting scandal.

G. RELATIVE POSITIONS OF DOOR AND SHRINE

1. Necessary to his case though the claim was, nowhere did Hodgson maintain that his measurements of this door revealed its “secret aperture” could ever have opened into the alleged wall-Shrine passageway.
2. The door had been “at the back of the recess” (221, 70), “on” (328, 331-32), and nailed “on the east side of the wall” behind the Shrine (333). But thus positioned, as seen in Figure A, Plate I, the sliding panel and

the “hole in the wall” do not align, both being blocked by solid barriers. To correct this, the door is reversed in Figure B, but note that now the door, as taken from Hodgson’s drawing, cannot be “on” the wall nor “at the back of the recess.” Moreover, with the beveled edges of the door reversed against the convergence of the bedroom-recess walls, the “block” (lowest sidepiece of the door), which held the moveable panel in place (340) when in the north recess of the sitting-room, would itself no longer be held in place by recess-walls.

3. The horizontal juxtaposition of door and Shrine, assumed in Figure B, depends entirely on Hodgson’s graphic positioning of the Shrine (critical by inches), a location for which he admitted no firsthand knowledge, named no authority, reported no testimony.
4. Since “The wall” (not “portion of wall”) “immediately” behind the Shrine was “covered” (not “partly covered”) by two widths of white calico which “met in a vertical line passing behind the centre of the Shrine” (221, 327), if Hodgson’s Plan is correct the widths would have been (a) unequal, (b) odd-sized, viz., 4ft. 9in. and 6ft. 9in. wide. But if H.P.B. had made such a peculiar demand upon the tailor (when, otherwise, the same wall could conveniently accommodate two equal widths, each of two yard-wide strips sewn together and overlapped 3in.), and if the tailor had prepared wall-cloth of such specific, troublesome widths to cover asymmetrically a commonplace wall about 12ft. wide, it would have been such an unusual and significant

circumstance that Hodgson could not have resisted exploiting it to prop up his case, after his questioning the tailor (327). But his very silence here disrupts any notion his positioning of the Shrine was correct.

5. Relocated at the only place both logic and evidence suggest, coincident with the joining of wall-cloth and the vertical centerline of the wall behind, the center point of the Shrine back measured 5ft. 9in. from the Occult Room's northwall; and here the south vertical sidepiece (3in. wide) of the door in the recess behind would block one-third of the width of the alleged Shrine-aperture, and would reduce by almost one-half the effective width of the "hole in the wall" (as Hodgson related Shrine and "hole"). Instead of a "sham door" being built to accommodate an already-fixed passageway, we find Hodgson displacing the Shrine one foot northward, as if to move the imaginary passageway (marked by the alleged aperture in the Shrine back) out of line with this obvious obstruction!²⁰
6. Again, Hodgson's Plan denies the reader a view of the vital, vertical dimensions. Despite this, we may approximate the truth, although it is sufficient in itself to merely object that he once again failed to prove his case at a most critical juncture, inasmuch as he omitted to show that the location of the known aperture in this door he examined and measured could have coincided with the alleged position of wall-and-Shrine aperture. Why so serious an omission?

Assuming that, as shown with the vertical crosspiece, the

horizontal crosspiece of the door illustrated as positioned upon the center cross-line of the door and was 4in. wide (like the vertical crosspiece illustrated), the door fitting the back of the recess and being approximately 8ft. in height (222), the lower south panel (as situated within the recess) would then extend 3ft. 10in. to the floor below. If this panel dropped to make an aperture of ten inches below the crosspiece, the aperture would be located vertically 3ft. to 3ft. 10in. above the floor of the recess. This floor was about two feet higher than the floor of the Occult Room (220).

On the opposite side of the wall and within the Occult Room, the Shrine, of equal dimensions in width and height (221, the width being approximately four feet according to Hodgson's Plan), would be situated approximately 3ft. 10in. above the Occult Room floor (328 cf. 334), allowing four inches of this for the drawer and shelf below (221). A division halving the rear middle panel of the Shrine would then be 5ft. 10in. (3ft. 6in. plus 4in. plus 2ft.) above the Occult Room floor or 3ft. 10in. above the recess floor. In fact, as thus arrived at by mean calculation deduced from Hodgson's own Plan and figures, the alleged opening in the back of the Shrine, shown on raising the reported top half-panel, would not correspond with the aperture in the door in the recess but would be blocked altogether by the door's upper south panel and the horizontal crosspiece in the door below this panel. No wonder Hodgson was careful to omit any plan of vertical dimensions!

7. Finally, Hodgson relates, when operated, the moveable lower south

panel in the door had to be forced down “about 10 inches” (222) and into the hole in the terrace made for the panel to sink into: (340). But on examining the floor of the recess behind the Shrine position, did he find there traces of necessary “hole”? Not if his strange silence at this point means anything!

H. THE “RECESS” AND THE “BRICKED FRAME”

The skeptical visitor of October 14th, 1883, having raised “doubt” on finding a door in the recess behind the Shrine, H.P.B. had it removed and the front of the recess closed up by a wall (222).

1. Had this door concealed a secret passageway through the brick-and-plaster wall behind the Shrine, obviously the only way to insure its concealment during these alterations would have been to leave the door in the recess and wall it up. According with Hodgson’s calculations, it could have been removed later in secret, if necessary.
2. Yet, by November 10th, it was gone (325, cf. 236-37). (See Section V). The recess, however, was not closed up by the new, papered, plastered, brick-and-wood wall until “about the middle of December, 1883, or perhaps several days later” (222). Where then was the “secret passageway” during the interim, when carpenters (329) erected the wood frame, when masons (77) laid the brick and plaster (no claim was made that Mons. Coulomb did this work), when Mrs. Morgan arrived to find the bricked frame “being substituted” for the door (325), and when General Morgan “frequently examined the shrine and the wall at the

back of the shrine up to January 1884... “?”²¹ Here, Hodgson’s silence seems to say, “The less said, the better!”

3. On May 18, 1884, a sideboard was found against this new wall, and passage existed between bedroom and recess by way of apertures in sideboard and wall (see Plate II), though nothing but the Coulobms’ word indicated these apertures existed before H.P.B.’s departure in 1884. Although Hodgson examined the sideboard²² and (bricked?) frame (228), he reported nothing to counter the objections that these apertures were newly-prepared, even when he quoted (from Annie Besant) the description by Mr. Judge: “a rough, unfinished hole in the wall... From each edge projected pieces of lath, some three inches, others five inches long... The plaster was newly broken off, the ends of the laths presented the appearance of freshly broken wood, and the wallpaper had been freshly torn off.”²³
4. Hodgson claimed the sideboard was so situated directly after the wall was finished (222); but, instead, the order for the sideboard’s construction was not given until some time afterwards (326), a remarkable oversight if it had been intended to conceal an aperture planned since the door’s removal 45 days or so earlier!
5. “M. Coulobm states that he removed the bricks as soon as the sideboard was in position” (223), which, according to Hodgson, was just before “the anniversary” or Convention time at Adyar, 1883. Dr. Hodgson credited Mme. Coulobm’s allegation that, about mid-January, 1884

(223), her husband could not close up this aperture because it was “near Madame’s departure” twenty-five days prior thereto (77)!—and “visitors were constantly coming and going” (76). Yet, he ignores the absurdity of Mons. Coulomb in the sideboard, noisily knocking and ripping through the new wall, with the Morgans looking on, as Theosophists arrive for Adyar’s biggest event, the Convention!

6. The “Shrine-phenomena,” says Hodgson, “which were in abeyance during these alterations, began again immediately after their completion” (223). Why should this be so if, as he insinuated (248), sleight-of-hand was sometimes used at the Shrine with impressive results? As a matter of fact, restrictions on phenomena were put in effect as early as October 8, 1883, due to H.P.B.’s “physiological enfeeblement.”²⁴
7. That Mme. Coulomb knew such Shrine-phenomena were not “in abeyance” until “the sideboard was in position” is shown by her contrary claim (suppressed by Hodgson) that the bricked frame aperture preceded the sideboard which was made later and, “In order to conceal the hole which had been made in the new frame” (71). Apparently, only her imagination—or lack of it concealed “the hole” before this!
8. That Hodgson claimed he “entered a space through a hole the dimensions of both of which were at least an inch less than the dimensions given by Dr. Hartmann” (229) in describing the recess and bricked-frame aperture, proves nothing. Hodgson failed to claim: (a)

that the spatial relation of this “hole” to “space” duplicated the actual relationship at issue as found at Adyar; (b) that both had to be entered under 27in. from floor-level; (c) that to enter by duplication he had to “crawl in,” as through an adjacent sideboard, before he “stood upright” (229); nor (d) does he say how much difficulty he had getting in. He even fails to tell whether he got out the same way!

9. Witnesses objected that the narrowness of the hollow left between the front and back walls of the recess was insufficient to house anyone performing trickery. How reliable Hodgson was in answering this appears in his Plan where, as if to widen this space for a trickster, the thickness of the back wall “of bricks” (220)—which had fronted on two rooms and so bore two layers of plaster as against one for the new wall—is graphically reduced to no more than the thickness of the front wall “of half-size bricks” (222).
10. Moreover, Hodgson’s references to his inspection of the (bricked?) frame are overshadowed by his conflicting claims that (a) he found it “stowed away in the compound” (228); and (b) “lying in the dust-heap of the compound.”²⁵
11. But that the bricked-frame was not designed, as claimed (71), to provide a secret aperture, is evidenced by: (a) the aperture having to be hacked out from the framework, and not “properly” so (76), leaving lath projections, broken haphazardly²⁶; and, (b) had the bricked-frame and sideboard been built with coincident apertures in mind, the wall

aperture would not have been restricted to 27in. X 14in. (228) or less, for the sideboard, “about 3ft. high and 34in. wide” (22), could have accommodated and concealed an opening almost thrice that area and would then have agreed with Mme. Coulomb’s false description, “a sideboard... one of the wings of which covered a little more than the space of the aperture” (71).

I. THE “SIDEBOARD”

As for the sideboard, since Mme. Coulomb claimed that all Shrine-phenomena occurring “during the last [1883] Anniversary were performed through this channel” (71), Hodgson had to show it had been situated then exactly as when found at the “exposure”.

1. In trying, he resorted to such ambiguous terms as “in its position,” “remained there,” “in that place,” “against the wall,” etc. He reported no firsthand testimony (aside from Coulombs’) that, before H.P.B. left in 1884, it had been at the precise location illustrated in his Plan.
2. Instead, Hodgson claimed Mrs. Morgan gave “explicit testimony that it was placed in its position [?] before the anniversary,” and this was “confirmed by the statements” of Hartmann, S. Row, P.S. Row, Rathnavelu, and by “testimony” of Ramaswamier and C. Iyer (331). But his reported interview with Mrs. Morgan (325-26) contains no such “explicit testimony” (she only testifies that it “remained in that place [the bedroom?] during the time of the anniversary”); neither is it “confirmed” by any quotation from five of the six additional witnesses named!

3. Aside from the Coulombs, and against Damodar's denial (337) and his self-supporting citation of another demurring witness, C.S. Chetty (327), whose testimony Hodgson consistently suppressed,²⁷ only one witness, Subba Row, said the sideboard came before the anniversary (327). If Hodgson ascertained that Mr. Row here spoke as an eye-witness, he does not say so—a pity, since Hodgson confessed to being misled in a similar situation (329).
4. Dr. Hodgson declared, “Mr. Damodar states that the sideboard did not come into existence till January, 1884, when the phenomena were no longer produced in the Shrine” (230). But what Damodar said was that, “It was only in January, 1884, when Madame Blavatsky began to dine in the room next to the Occult Room, that the cupboard was put to the wall, so that ²⁸dishes, plates, &c., might be put in it. But this piece of furniture came into existence after the phenomena were no longer produced in the Shrine” (337).
5. Evidently, the sideboard appeared “during the anniversary” but after the date (December 2828) of the last Shrine-phenomenon attributed by Mme. Coulomb (73) to “this channel,” though Hodgson pretended that these phenomena continued into 1884 until about the date (223) when, it was claimed, Mons. Coulomb removed the alleged half-panel from the Shrine (76). As if to prevent recognition of this possibility, Hodgson represented “the anniversary” of 1883 as being confined to “December 27th” (230, 327), whereas that “anniversary” was December 27-30.²⁹

6. What Hodgson did not prove was that the sideboard was on hand before the anniversary; and what neither he nor Mme. Coulomb claimed was that it was ready to conceal an entranceway to the recess when Shrine-phenomena occurred December 26th, 25th, and earlier, as testified to by S. Subramania Iyer, High Court Vakil, Madura³⁰, by Col. Olcott (376), or by Dr. Hartmann.³¹
7. While omitting to say the sideboard in 1884 was found nailed to the wall—he says only that in 1883 it was “close against” the wall (222)—, and while suppressing Mme. Coulomb’s claim (71) this was done lest some skeptic should “want to remove it and inspect the back” (as though finding it nailed down would not be enough to excite curiosity!), Hodgson joins the Coulombs in silence on the question of examining the sideboard’s interior. What did H.P.B.’s dinner servants (326) say about it holding “dishes, plates, etc.”? Did it originally have shelves, preventing bodily entrance? Whatever Hodgson learned here he kept to himself and let Damodar’s account of its use go unchallenged.
8. Mme. Coulomb³² claimed “the back” of the sideboard “was taken out, and turned into a door” (71); and Hodgson gives a report that, “The carpenters say that Coulomb told them only to glue the back” (329). Hodgson himself describes it as a “movable back” (327). Despite all this, it was not the back that moved (as advance design would dictate for convenience in case of trickery), but only a “hinged panel” later inserted “in the back” (222-23), and of different thickness of wood, if

Hodgson's Plan is credited (see Plate II).

9. Nowhere did Hodgson give evidence his inspection of this panel in any way contradicted previously published testimony by Hartmann and Judge that it appeared to have been made hastily and slipshod.
10. No evidence is given that in December, 1883, the part described as "the back" had stood against any wall. Mrs. Morgan testified that, together with "a shelf," the sideboard was made "as a resting place for the dishes which might be passed through the upper part of a closed door" between bedroom and north terrace (326). How could a servant, outside the serving door, place dishes on the sideboard if it had been as Hodgson showed it, five feet away at the nearest corner (see Plate II)?
11. Mme. Coulomb (in a passage Hodgson suppressed) admitted that the sideboard was built as "a corner buffet" (71), but in Hodgson's Plan it was no corner buffet at all, being situated nearer to the center-point of the wall behind than to the corner.
12. By May 18, 1884, Coulomb had moved it down along the wall, evidently removing the shelf (since it appears in neither the Hartmann nor Hodgson plans). Re-orientated and relocated at what must have been its intended position, together with suggested shelf area, the position and peculiar shape of the sideboard fully accords with Mme. Coulomb's designation, i.e., "a corner buffet" (see Figure C in Plate I). Note especially the position of its original (front) door, and back (consisting of two sides).

13. Hodgson did not say when the serving-door was prepared, nor when the shelf was added. Hence the assumption that, though the sideboard was finished before 1884, the shelf and special door were delayed, so that Damodar was right and it was “only in January, 1884” that (all parts of the combination being ready) “the cupboard was put to the wall” for use—in the corner for which it was designed.

J. “TRACES OF THE HOLE IN THE WALL”

Having discredited Hodgson’s claim a “hole between the recess and the Shrine” would have been both accessible and concealed, there remains his allegation it had “manifestly existed and had been blocked up,” because Dr. Hartmann and others discovered “its traces” (224-25).

1. He gave no evidence these “traces” agreed in size (52) or vertical placement with the alleged aperture.
2. While his Plan makes the “Hole in wall” coincide horizontally with “the middle panel of Shrine,” Hodgson admitted no firsthand evidence of this,³³ and, in lieu of pertinent, particular testimony, cited only Hartmann’s inadequate assertion that the “traces” were found on “the wall behind the Shrine” (not specifying “that portion of wall behind the Shrine”).
3. These “traces” were discovered “on moistening the wall behind the Shrine with a wet cloth” (225) - which would only remove whitewash and reveal a re-finished surface, insufficient evidence on which to base a conclusion “that an aperture had existed, which had been plastered up.” Hodgson had no evidence to show that 35 to 48 square inches of

brickwork had been “knocked out” (52) together with plaster (and lathwork?) and replaced or repaired.

4. This would have twice entailed disturbance of at least bricks, plaster, whitewash, tacked calico and hanging muslin—difficulties both Hodgson and the Coulombs ignored.
5. H.P.B.’s written explanation, unpublished until the 1930’s³⁴ was that these “traces” had been left when Mons. Coulomb had replastered where his nails damaged the wall in a first futile attempt to hang the too-heavy Shrine—an explanation supported by Hodgson’s finding that the cabinet, of heavy wood, had to be held up both by wires above and shelf below and still did not rest level (221).
6. That the whitewash at point of repair matched the surrounding wall-finish (327)—as it would not have done if applied separately in 1884—indicates this was done early in 1883, before the white calico was first tacked on (331). What, if anything, H.P.B. told Hodgson about this, we shall never know, but if he heard any explanation he suppressed it.
7. In contrast to repair of nail-damage confined to the west-face of the wall behind the Shrine, the repair of any thorough aperture would have left corresponding “traces” on both surfaces of the wall. But Hodgson had no such finding to report.
8. It is inconceivable that Mons. Coulomb, working in the dark, cramped recess early in 1884, could have re-bricked, re-lathed (?), re-plastered, re-finished, and re-whitewashed on the east face of this wall so as to

match the surrounding, deteriorated surface, “leaving no perceptible trace” (75). There was no reason why he should have tried it, for the east-face was concealed within the recess, and, if his wife’s story was true (75-6), the bricked-framed aperture, sole entranceway to the recess, was intended to be sealed next against all discovery!

9. As if covering his tracks, Hodgson declared, “Now, with respect to the sideboard aperture and the recess, these were, as I afterwards found, still in existence when I arrived at Adyar, though Mr. Damodar stated to me that the recess had been blocked up. This last statement of Mr. Damodar’s I can regard only as a deliberate misrepresentation. Had I know that the recess still existed, I should of course myself have endeavored to enter, and should at once have discovered the untruth of Mr. Damodar’s account of his own entrance” (228).

But what was the “deliberate misrepresentation”? That “the recess had been blocked up”? Later, Hodgson let pass unchallenged the remark of Annie Besant concerning the opening in the bricked-frame, that, long before Hodgson's arrived at Adyar, “Mr. Judge then sent for a man, who ‘in my presence bricked up the aperture, replastered it, and then repapered the whole space.’”³⁵

10. But Hodgson, master of word-jugglery, was too clever to say explicitly that Damodar had prevented his entering the recess by way of the opening in the wall, the bricked-frame aperture; nor did he deny that Judge had had it “bricked up” and “replastered...” Instead, Hodgson diverted his reader by insisting “the sideboard aperture” was “still in

existence when I arrived at Adyar...” And, doubtless, it was still in the sideboard when he “saw it last, in the ‘New Room’...”³⁶ But, without one of Mme. Coulomb’s typical miracles, crawling out the back of the sideboard in the “New Room” would not have put Hodgson through the already-bricked-up-and-replastered bedroom wall and into the recess! Neither does Damodar’s account (336) “of his own entrance” says he entered through the sideboard aperture, for when he tested the recess the sideboard or “cupboard attached to the hole was removed” (336).

11. Dr. Hodgson’s clever substitution of “sideboard aperture” for “bricked-frame aperture”—at the expense of the absent Mr. Damodar—can be regarded “only as a deliberate misrepresentation” to conceal from the public of 1885 the fact that Hodgson had seen the east face of this wall. Either years later, in his reply to Theosophical critics, he let slip the admission that, after all, he had entered and examined the recess, “as the bricked frame was removed during my stay at Madras.”³⁷
12. No one can doubt that, of all who inspected the east-face of “the wall immediately behind the Shrine,” Richard Hodgson would have been the most likely to discover “traces” of any “hole in the wall” had these existed—and the least likely to suppress such a discovery if made. That, till the last, he remained careful not to say what he found there, and that, for so long by devious means, he tried to hide the fact he had been there at all, is sufficient proof that the Coulombs’ secret passageway at the back of the Shrine had never existed.

The question is whether there was a hole behind the Shrine, nor hardly a question of what made the holes in this S.P.R. Report—but one of, what concealed these lacunae from the leaders of the S.P.R. for seventy-five years?

IV

THE MAHATMA LETTERS

A major part of Dr. Hodgson's report was an attempt to prove his charge that the “Brothers” of Mme. Blavatsky, the Mahatmas K.H. and M., did not exist, and that their letters, received through the Shrine and in other ways, were mere and fabrications.

1. This charge afterwards was effectively countered by Mr. C. Jinarajadasa, using the record of circumstances together with photo-facsimiles of the original handwritings.³⁸
2. Furthermore, it has since been noted that, contrary to general presumption, no professional handwriting expert has ever publicly proclaimed the Mahatma letters—or any specimen thereof—to be forgeries or in “feigned handwriting.”³⁹
3. In fact, the only published professional reports concerned with this question show that H.P.B., could not have written the specimens of Mahatma calligraphy submitted for examination (the judgment after analysis by “the foremost German expert in handwriting,” Herr Ernst Schutze, Calligraphist to the Court of H.M. the Emperor of Germany).⁴⁰
4. But as if this were not enough, it is now for the first time in seventy-five years appropriate to point to the very strange fact—scarcely to be believed by the critics of Mme. Blavatsky—that, contrary to all previously published opinion of skeptics and believers alike,⁴¹ the S.P.R. Committee of 1884-5, in its official “Statement and Conclusions,” did not adopt, did not approve, did not even deign to

acknowledge Dr. Hodgson's charge that H.P.B. wrote or instigated the writing of Mahatma letters "in a feigned hand." The prosecutor did not convince the jury on this one, prejudiced though it was at the last-it doubtless had heard more from his experts, Netherclift and Sims, than the public was ever allowed to hear!

THE SITTING-ROOM BOOKCASE

PHENOMENON

One of the stories by Mme. Coulomb - taken up by Hodgson in his report—was that on one occasion a Mahatma letter was delivered by the hand of a household servant, which was mistaken for that of a Mahatma (in apparition). She claimed (71) that the “massive sham door,” after being removed from the recess (see Section III. Part H-2), was made to serve as the back of a bookcase in the recess in the north wall of the Sitting-Room (see Plate II, where Hodgson purports to illustrate this); and, that it was “utilized” on November 24, 1883, when S. Ramaswamier, in presence of several witnesses, received a letter dropped into the room by “an astral hand” which, issuing from this bookcase, “was visible for a few seconds, and then vanished into air right before our eyes” (344-45).

1. Immediately after the phenomenon, a “careful examination” by the chief witness, V.C. Iyer, showed the back of the bookcase to be “a thick wooden plank” (344), whereas the door, found there at the “exposure,” had four planks with cross and-sidepieces. Although we may be sure that Hodgson tried to resolve this discrepancy and persuade Mr. Iyer to identify the door with crosspieces as the “plant,” Hodgson omits to say he succeeded.
2. Despite his efforts to show the “hand” was that of a servant reaching through a “sliding panel” Hodgson: (i) failed to show that the door found at the back of the bookcase in May, 1884, had been there before H.P.B. left Adyar that year; (ii) failed to show that in 1883 the

bookcase had been built or altered after the door was removed from the bedroom recess; (iii) failed to show that the panel as constructed could ever have been opened and shut without the “considerable difficulty” encountered by his own operation of it (339); (iv) failed to show that any opening had existed by which a suspect could have reached through the “oil cloth” (345) which had ornamented the back of the bookcase interior.

3. The oil cloth in the back of the shelf, as described in the original account of November, 1883, has (like the muslin and calico behind the Shrine) disappeared from Hodgson’s Plan; and, in his written and graphic reporting two years later (Plate II and cf. 345, 346), has become transformed into “curtains” at the front of the bookshelf!

VI

THE LETTER “TRAPS”

Besides arriving within enclosures, such as the Shrine, bookcase, etc., Mahatma letters sometimes appeared falling down from the air at Theosophical Headquarters at Adyar, as at Bombay earlier. A good example of Dr. Hodgson’s employment of ridiculous “evidence” is his preposterous citation (254) of holes in the ceiling of an old, dilapidated, apparently abandoned, house in the latter city as evidence Mahatma letters were dropped into a room below by “a secret contrivance” there five years previously.

1. On his own showing (253), the testimony of his chief witness here reveals the condition of the garret and ceiling as found by Hodgson and the conditions there existing during the time at real issue were quite different.
2. Why Hodgson would misdirect his reader’s attention to “holes” in the floor of an old abandoned garret (when there may have been holes there large enough for him to jump through) is plain to see when one realizes that he found there no evidence whatever of any letter “trap” having been “fixed” for trickery, thus failing to substantiate the Coulomb claim (33).
3. Having so woefully failed to establish the previous existence of any letter “trap” at former Theosophical headquarters in Bombay, Hodgson resorted to bolder tactics to “prove” their use at Adyar. In his reply of 1893, he put forward the singular and unsupported charge that, at Adyar, a Mr. A.D. Ezekiel had in fact “detected in the ceiling the

‘screw-rings’ which had been used in the production of a spurious letter-phenomenon intended for his benefit (Report, p. 249).”⁴²

4. But in his original account, Hodgson had quoted the testimony of Mme. Coulomb that, far from detecting any such thing, Mr. Ezekiel in December, 1883, had only “formed the natural supposition that it must have been pulled down by some contrivance” (249), a report which Hodgson had then stated was “quite justified” according to Mr. Ezekiel.
5. Having gone thus far, Hodgson goes a step further and adds the direct insinuation that these “screw-rings” had been removed surreptitiously by William Q. Judge (then Secretary of the American Section of the Theosophical Society, who, he charged, had endeavored to “save the situation” by any means) during the latter’s visit to Adyar Headquarters in mid-1884, and that the marks of their previous location were then covered with “fresh paint”.⁴³
6. But, in order to do this, Hodgson found it necessary to ignore the contradictory allegation by Mme. Coulomb, an allegation which Hodgson himself had credited and quoted in 1885 (249), viz., that, months before Judge’s arrival there, her husband had taken out the “screw-rings” and had applied this paint “to remove all traces” of the alleged letter trap!
7. While we need not suppose anything more than that these paint marks were deliberately falsified in 1884, before the Coulombs’ expulsion, to discredit H.P.B., this goes to show that Richard Hodgson—far from

being a trustworthy reporter—was as ready to trample underfoot his own previous published testimony and Mme. Coulomb’s reputation, if it happened to get in the way of his “building a case” against H.P.B.”

VII

THE OCCULT ROOM BOOKCASE

PHENOMENON

In the northwall recess of the Occult Room, Hodgson's Plan (see Plate II) purports to show a bookcase or cupboard as it was found on examination, May 18, 1884. It had a moveable panel within the back and, as viewed from the hallway outside, was described by the missionaries agent, a Mr. Gribble, as having also "two doors which open into a kind of book-shelf" (339). Mme. Coulomb claimed that this arrangement had been in secret existence when, on May 26, 1883, Col. Olcott received a pair of vases which mysteriously appeared in the cupboard.

1. Like the aperture in the bricked-frame, inconveniently small for the use trickery required (though it need not have been so, if planned beforehand for trickery, as alleged), this aperture was ridiculously large for the surreptitious passage of a vase—large enough, in fact, to admit "even a person," confessed Mme. Coulomb (53-4).
2. Despite the fact that incriminating "Blavatsky-Coulomb letters" called for trickery to take place "in the presence of respectable persons besides our own familiar muffs" (55) and before "a larger audience than our domestic imbeciles only" (56), and though not attributing any other phenomenon to this arrangement, Hodgson did not try to explain why H.P.B. would have gone to such trouble and danger merely to impress the President of her Society who, he said, was anyway subject by "blind obedience" (311) to H.P.B., "who herself regarded him as the chief of

those ‘domestic imbeciles’ and ‘familiar muffs’.

3. Neither did he explain why, with the vases delivered, this “sliding panel” (if it had then existed) would have been left in disuse, unlocked and open to casual discovery, concealed only by the “two doors,” for practically a year.
4. As if to counter Gribble’s significant remark that this sliding panel was “made without the slightest attempt at concealment” (339), Hodgson does his best to make the “two doors” disappear, and to replace them with something more ingenious and substantial to conceal the “sliding panel” within. He (a) charges that Gribble’s “account of the ‘two doors which open into a kind of book-shelf’ suggests, moreover, at the double-backed cupboard (see Plan, No. 8) had been altered in some way since the dismissal of the Coulombs, before it was shown to Mr. Gribble: (330); and he proceeds to give Hartmann’s incomplete description of what was found at the “exposure.” And (b), in Hodgson’s Plan, to which the reader is referred as though in disproof of what Gribble saw, the “two doors” have vanished, being replaced by a solid back.
5. But at the same time, Hodgson—to accomplish this feat—has to suppress Mme. Coulomb’s admission (53) that the “inner back” (“sliding panel”) was concealed on the outside only by “simply shutters painted grey,” i.e., only by Gribble’s “two doors”!
6. Similarly, Hodgson suppressed her additional admission that this “inner

back” was unfinished, “not painted and not varnished” (53), as if the word had been interrupted, as indeed the Theosophists at Adyar claimed it had—in 1884.

7. Dr. Hodgson declares that Mons. Coulomb “would have performed a feat which I should find more difficult of explanation than all Madame Blavatsky’s phenomena together” if, under the circumstances and “during the interval assigned to M. Coulomb for his secret work,” he “could, without the knowledge of any persons at headquarters, have constructed the double-backed cupboard” among other things (340). Yet it was never denied that this cupboard had originally existed since long before 1884, the defence claim merely being that the sliding panel within had been made after H.P.B. left Adyar in 1884.
8. Moreover, Gribble’s remarks suggest that the sliding panel did not appear to have been a device built in the secret but as “having been constructed so as to place food on the shelves inside without opening the door” (339). This would solve the problem previously encountered by H.P.B. when having to dine in the bedroom (See Section III, B-3 and I-10); and, according to construction plans left by H.P.B. at her departure for Europe in 1884, this part of the Occult Room was evidently intended to be “the cabinet that will remain for writing, for Damodar or one of my Secretaries” (77)—a piece of evidence Hodgson suppressed.
9. As for the origin of the vases themselves, Hodgson charged (324) that,

as if to throw him off the scent, Mme. Blavatsky: (a) “alleged” that Mme. Coulomb “had tried to obtain vases like them, but had failed,” though purchasing one pair of vases afterwards which “differed in shape, from those received by Colonel Olcott;” and (b), that H.P.B. made a rough sketch of the vases the Colonel had received, but this differed “greatly” from the description of the vases Madame Coulomb had purchased at Hassam’s.” But “exactly tallied” with whose description? Hodgson fails to say. The manager at Hassam’s had been unable to show Hodgson a pair identical with Col. Olcott’s (supporting H.P.B.’s claim that Mme. Coulomb—apparently quite fixed on the acquisition—had failed to find another pair), but it is not recorded that he gave Hodgson a “description” of the originals—only that he “showed me a pair of vases somewhat similar, as he alleged...”

How then do we know H.P.B.’s “roughly” made “sketch” was not more accurate than the Colonel’s verbal description “as far as it went”? But is Hodgson’s narrative itself even as reliable? Significantly, he fails to claim that his inquiry at Hassam’s showed Mme. Coulomb had not purchased a third pair “afterwards.” So, he did find that Col. Olcott’s description of his vases, “as far as it went, in shape, height,” etc., “exactly tallied with the description of the vases Madame Coulomb had purchased at Hassam’s”—but this could not be, for Hodgson has omitted to tell his readers that, according to Mme. Coulomb’s own description (suppressed by Hodgson), these vases were not all alike in shape or size, the two pair she had purchased together at Hassam’s made “four, 2 large and 2 small” (66)!

10. There is little doubt that, as the sales entries and receipt disclosed, two

pair of vases were purchased by Mme. Coulomb at that shop on May 25th, 1883, one pair answering—we must suppose—to those Col. Olcott received in the new bookcase (cupboard) at Headquarters the next day. The explanation? These items appear in the account to Madame Coulomb, but have been struck out. Madame Coulomb's explanation of this is that she wished them not to appear in the bill rendered to headquarters, and she therefore paid cash for them" (324). And where did she get the case—from the headquarters' housekeeping funds? Note that by her own confession, it was "she" herself (not H.P.B.) who did not want the sale known at Headquarters. One can only guess that she was here indulging a practice for which she was ultimately expelled (105). If she was stealing from the Society, secretly trafficking in such things as vases for private profit, the Mahatma (who is reported to have made a gift of this pair to the Colonel) quite rightly claimed the vases for the President of the Society—and did so in her presence, Mme. Coulomb being present at the phenomenon, to teach her a good lesson. But Mme. Coulomb seems to have been a poor pupil for the Mahatma, because, after her departure, it was found that all the vases in question had disappeared "mysteriously" (324).

VIII

THE “ASTRAL BELL” PHENOMENON

It has been said that Mme. Blavatsky’s “astral bell phenomenon has no parallel, taking all the varied circumstances, places and conditions under which it has been produced, in the entire history of Spiritualism.”⁴⁴ In his famous book, The Occult World, Mr. A.P. Sinnett, then Editor of India’s leading newspaper, The Pioneer, recalls in detail how, so far back as September, 1880, in his home in Simla, he and his quests heard the “astral bells” during H.P.B.’s visit. For example, these sounds were heard “one evening after dinner while we were still sitting round the table, several times in succession in the air over our heads, and in one instance instead of the single bell-sound there came one of the chimes...”⁴⁵ The comparable evidence for her “astral raps” is so impressive that it once led an editor of the American Society for Psychical Research to concede grudgingly that, in H.P.B.’s case, “there seems to be a possibility of some mediumistic ability.”⁴⁶

1. Though venturing no explanation of the “astral raps,” Mme. Coulomb in her pamphlet of November, 1884, “explained” the “astral bells” in a statement (71) that by no means covered the evidence but which was, on the face of it, so idiotic, so totally inadequate, that it has never been repeated since by any critic of Mme. Blavatsky. It was that the sound of the “astral bells” came from the tolling of a bell suspended in “the vacuum” between the bricked walls behind the Shrine at Adyar, this tolling being effected by a long string. And what was the proof of this? A box “kept in the occult room” (evidently a waste-paper box by H.P.B.’s writing desk—see Hartmann’s Plan) for use in “the vacuum” to raise the operator up to the bell!

2. While giving consideration to not so much as a single sentence of firsthand testimony in witness to the “astral bells” or (aside from his own account) to the “raps,” Hodgson in his Report, pretending as it were to be ignorant of this or any previous explanation by Mme. Coulomb, offers as from Mme. Coulomb herself (whom he did not see until some time in January, 1885) a new and altogether different “explanation” and one which intrinsically invalidates her earlier claim.
3. This new one is that the bell-sounds were produced secretly by “a small musical-box, constructed on the same principle as the machine employed in connection with the trick known under the name ‘Is your watch a repeater?’,” this instrument having been operated under Mme. Blavatsky’s clothing (263).
4. By good fortune, however, one is able to trace this new “explanation” to its original source, which certainly was not Mme. Coulomb. Shortly before Hodgson arrived to question Mme. Coulomb, one of the local Madras Christian missionaries, coming to Mme. Coulomb’s aid, republished in a pamphlet issued at Madras an account from a Madras newspaper quoting the London periodical Knowledge for July, 1884: “‘Madame Blavatsky’s trick of causing a bell to sound in the air may be bought at Hamley’s the Noah’s Ark, Holborn; Bland’s, New Oxford Street; or at any good shop where conjuring apparatus is sold, under the title, ‘Is your watch a repeater?’”

“A musical box can also be employed.”⁴⁷

IX

THE DOLL, “CHRISTOFOL”, AND APPARITIONS OF MAHATMAS

The Theosophical phenomena which first attracted official attention of the S.P.R. were the reported apparitions of Mahatmas at Adyar and elsewhere.

1. Mme. Coulomb in her pamphlet charged that these were faked, a “doll, Christofolo” playing the role of Mahatma (31, 42). But in this allegation, she tripped herself up, for she claimed this alleged doll⁴⁸ played the part of Mahatma during December, 1881, (34) and later (243-44, 370-71), whereas this doll already had been incinerated by the 25th of October, 1881, according to the definite dating of one “Blavatsky-Coulomb letter” she published. Mme. Coulomb (41) shows the letter indicated was addressed from “Simla” by Mme. Blavatsky some time before the “25th of October” and when “headquarters” were at “Bombay” (42), which places the authentic portion just prior to October 21, 1881, as H.P.B. was then in Simla as guest of A.O. Hume (later to be “Father of the Indian National Congress”), whereas in October, 1882, she was not in Simla but in Darjiling,⁴⁹ and in October, 1883, she was at Adyar.⁵⁰
2. Dr. Hodgson in 1885, without letting his readers know of this important contradiction, tried to bail his witness out of her predicament by claiming that she told him she “afterwards made another” doll (213-14).
3. But his display of ingenuity was futile, for, after describing the making

of the one and only doll mentioned in her account, Mme. Coulomb proceeds to state in explicit and irrevocable terms that “this doll” (not another, nor any second doll) had been the Mahatma seen on the balcony of the Bombay headquarters building in December, 1881, in act of dropping a letter of reply to Mr. Ramaswamier (34).

Our conclusion, therefore, must be that, finding herself having destroyed the doll too soon in a forgery (by reason of the fact that the original letter, to which this forgery was attached, had not been dated as to year), when this document had left her hands and the contradiction brought to her attention after publication of her account - by reason of Hodgson’s inquiries? -, Mme. Coulomb by necessity had to then fabricate another doll in her imagination.

4. That she seems to have been so ready to prop up one lie with another was perhaps because in this instance she was satisfied by Dr. Hodgson would do all he could to keep his readers in ignorance of this conflict in dates. If this was her anticipation, it was soon justified, for, in quoting this “Blavatsky-Coulomb letter,” Hodgson published the (forged) portion bearing the lament for the incinerated “Christofolo” but he suppressed the genuine portion of text by which the document could be dated and Mme. Coulomb's falsehood detected.
5. In fact, he was ready to do more than this for Mme. Coulomb. In her pamphlet, she had declared (35) that the letter dropped to Ramaswamier on the above occasion had been “handed” by Mme. Blavatsky “to Mr. Coulomb” with instruction for its delivery. But when interviewed months later by Hodgson—it being established in the meantime that

Mme. Blavatsky had been under constant observation from the time she received Ramaswamier's enquiry until the time he received this reply, and that Mme. Blavatsky had had no opportunity to write such a reply nor hand it to Mons. Coulomb unobserved (362)—Mme. Coulomb gave a quite different account (363) of this alleged chicanery. According to Hodgson, she now claimed that the reply had been written by Mme. Blavatsky in “the bath-room” and there handed not to Mons. Coulomb but to Mme. Coulomb herself!

6. In his report, when reaching this incident, Hodgson pretends that, on bringing it up at their interview, he was ignorant as to whether Mme. Coulomb “knew anything of this letter”—despite the fact that her printed statements concerning it appeared in his copy (282) of her pamphlet, a copy he had obtained some time in 1884 (290). This pretence of ignorance was, of course, merely a cunning subterfuge to keep his readers ignorant of the fact Hodgson was suppressing Mme. Coulomb's first account and its contradiction with her second story.

By this and similar tactics on like occasions, Richard Hodgson felt safe in telling his readers, “I finally had no doubt whatever that the phenomena connected with the Theosophical Society were part of a huge fraudulent system worked by Madame Blavatsky with the assistance of the Coulombs and several other confederates, and that not a single genuine phenomenon could be found among them all. And I may add that though, of course, I have not, in coming to this conclusion, trusted to any unverified statements of the Coulombs, still neither by cross-examination nor by independent investigation of their statements wherever circumstances

permitted, have I been able to break down any allegations of theirs which were in any way material” (210).

A QUESTION OF MOTIVE

As for the Coulombs' motive in all of this, one deduces that it was progressively three-fold:

1. As originally conceived, it seems to have been a half-baked scheme to convert the Shrine into a conjuror's box for the delivery of forged Mahatma notes framed to part the faithful from their Rupees and to enrich the scheming pair after H.P.B.'s then-forthcoming departure from India. This idea was probably born at the Convention of December, 1883, when 500 Rupees passed out of the Shrine and into possession of Mr. P.S. Row.⁵¹ And the idea of adapting the Shrine may have been conceived in Mons. Coulomb's ruminations during his repair work in H.P.B.'s rooms that same month. Here the incentive factor was surely the arrival at Headquarters, between November, 1883, and H.P.B.'s departure, of "the millionaire, Mr. Lane-Fox" (81) and wealthy Prince Harrisinghji Rupsinghji, from whom Mme. Coulomb, without losing time, admittedly tried to get 2,000 Rupees (74-5, 79-80) not to forget Dr. Hartmann from Colorado with "silver-mine stock" in his pocket.
2. When this idea failed, seeing that the use of the Shrine for fraud proved to be not only too impractical but the work of conversion too dangerous to complete, there remained the possibility of extorting sums of money from the wealthy Theosophists present and others, by threatening a

public “exposure” of Theosophical phenomena, using the devices worked up in H.P.B.’s rooms just for this purpose (sliding panel in almirah, freshly-repaired marks of “screw-rings” in the ceiling, etc.). Mme. Coulomb (in a passage Hodgson prudently suppressed) admits that, at the last, hoping to go to America, she demanded “our journey paid and 3,000 Rs. in hand”—though “this was not for the sake of money, but to have means to come back in case Madame Blavatsky accused us of having done the sliding-panels, etc., in her absence” (112) -!

3. When the preparation of trick apparatus required by this scheme was cut short by Damodar Mavalankar’s exposure of the Coulombs’ “confidential communication,” given him only to stall for time and completion of the secret work, and when Damodar’s exposure of the Coulombs was backed up by Mme. Blavatsky’s telegram of adamant farewell, “Sorry you go, prosper” (111), nothing was left except for the conspirators to throw themselves on the mercy and generosity of the Christian missionaries, for what little profit that might meant. It did not prove to be much, only 150 Rs., which was a pity, since Mme. Coulomb, her greed unsatiated, set about on her own to publish her story in saleable form, with the result that her pamphlet of the following November remains the best answer one could conceivably give to any critic of Mme. Blavatsky - by anticipation, a calamitous exposure of the “Hodgson Report”!

And Hodgson's motive? We may confidently leave that to the future and to the inexorable verdict of history.

XI

A QUESTION OF INTEGRITY

In her published reply to Hodgson's report, a reply largely ignored at the time, Mme. Blavatsky wrote: "There is no charge against me in the whole of the present Report that could stand the test of an impartial inquiry on the spot, where my own explanations could be checked by the examination of witnesses. They have been developed in Mr. Hodgson's own mind... These charges are now brought forward supported by the one-sided evidence collected by him... Mr. Hodgson having thus constituted himself prosecutor and advocate in the first instance, and having dispensed with a defence in the complicated transactions he was investigating, finds me guilty of all the offences he has imputed to me in his capacity as judge, and declares that I am proved to be an arch-impostor."⁵²

Moreover, Mme. Blavatsky counter-charged, while Hodgson gave out "in his Report nought but the evidence of malevolently disposed witnesses - bitter enemies for years; gossips, and long standing falsehoods invented by the Coulobms and his own personal inferences and made up theories," at the same time "he has unjustly suppressed every tittle of evidence in my favour and where he could not make away with such testimony he has invariably tried to represent my witnesses and defenders as either dupes or confederates."⁵³

Furthermore, H.P.B. gave as her opinion that all this betrayed the work of an "unfair inquirer," and she proceeded to put on record her denial of belief that Hodgson's report was an "expression of the writer's great integrity, of his mistaken, yet sincere and honest views..."⁵⁴

Now concerning the question of "integrity" or of the relative veracity of accuser (R.H.) and accused (H.P.B.), it is rather astonishing to find that, although the former, in his report, tries by every means to show the latter guilty of all manner of deceit and fraud, it is only in

exceedingly few instances that he actually purports to demonstrate by direct comparison of word and testimony that she lied or verbally misrepresented any fact. His “conclusion” (312, ff.) accuses H.P.B. (and others) of having “deliberately made statements which they must have known to be false;” and it is claimed that his investigations found “much conscious exaggeration and culpable misstatement;” but here no example is quoted or cited.

It was not until eight years later that Hodgson felt the necessity of writing, “When Madame Blavatsky was likely to have anything to say of any importance whatever, I questioned her on the matter. Her replies consisted chiefly in the trumping up of ex post facto documents, in deliberate falsehoods, and the suborning of false testimony.”⁵⁵

We would expect that if these “ex post facto documents” were of any value in disclosing H.P.B.’s alleged guilt, Hodgson would have lost no time in subjecting them to public exploitation, but instead in his report they seem to have been either ignored or almost altogether suppressed, along with H.P.B.’s replies to portions of the Coulomb pamphlet, given to him in the form of certain marginal annotations and “about 7-1/2 pp. footscap” (282) together with her numerous additional, previously-published comments on the controversial aspects of the phenomena and Coulomb-claims under investigation.

By 1893, when accusing her of “deliberate falsehoods,” etc., Hodgson, under pressure of counter-criticism, had managed to find a few alleged instances in his report, but no more than these: “For references to Madame Blavatsky’s statements see my Report, pp. 211, 221 note, 292 note, 318-321, 324, 331, 335-6, 346.”⁵⁶ Of these eight references, only four are found to be attempts to convict H.P.B. of falsehood or self-contradiction as a consequence of her own alleged statements. Two of these (292 note, and 346) depend upon the verisimilitude of secondhand testimony received by Hodgson, but in neither instance does the critical passage

appear in quotation marks nor is the testimony of the witness confirmed in writing or said to be written—the net effect being that we are restricted to no better evidence than Hodgson’s own dubious rendering of unverifiable (alleged) statements. Of the remaining two instances referred to, one (324), concerning the descriptions and “sketch” of Col. Olcott’s phenomenally-received vases, now has been discredited (see Section VII, Part 9).

The last remaining one (331) finds Hodgson taking H.P.B. to task because, on his bringing to her attention Mme. Coulomb’s use of the term “massive sham door” (see Section III, Part F-1, 2, 3), H.P.B. asserted (to use his words), “that there never had been a boarding.” Then, on his having next (again, in his words) “pointed out to her that by denying the existence of the boarding she was irretrievably damaging her own evidence, inasmuch as the statements of Theosophic witnesses clearly established that such a boarding had been against the wall behind the Shrine, she pretended she had misunderstood my questions...”

Assuming—merely for the sake of argument—Hodgson’s own sincerity at this point, the real question is, was Mme. Blavatsky misunderstood? Was she denying that “such a boarding” as Mme. Coulomb described, a “massive sham door,” had been “against the wall behind the Shrine” (something which, we have seen, “the statements of Theosophic witnesses” had not “clearly established” despite Hodgson’s claim here made to the contrary), or was H.P.B. saying there had been no door or “boarding” at all? The story, being entirely in Hodgson’s own words, reverts to the question of his use of terms and his accuracy in reporting. For the former—additional to all that has come before-, we find him here employing the terms, “a boarding,” “the boarding,” and “such a boarding” as though all were synonymous with Mme. Coulomb’s “massive sham door”! And for an evaluation of his accuracy in reporting statements of others at this juncture, we have only his quotation (331) from the Coulomb pamphlet by which to judge. On comparing it with

the latter, we find that in transcribing less than a sentence from black and white print before his very eyes, Hodgson made no less than five errors! There is no particular reason to suppose that, in transcribing from the dim tablet of memory, he succeeded in maintaining even that high standard of accuracy 0 when he wanted accuracy-, especially where and when his readers were in no position to check on him.

Thus, of the only eight references cited by Hodgson to support his claim of having detected Mme. Blavatsky “in deliberate falsehoods,” not one indicts her by her own undeniably personal or printed word.

In impressive contrast to this, we may examine only some of the more important false indications, false statements and false accusations of which Richard Hodgson—by his undoubted word or illustrated Plan—was manifestly guilty in his attempt to destroy Mme. Blavatsky, as shown in even the limited scope of the foregoing analyses.

His “Plan of Occult Room, With Shrine And Surroundings” (Plate II) is perhaps the best single example of Hodgson’s concentrated use of false indication and misrepresentation. To begin with, as we have seen, what it purports to represent in limited measure (the equally important vertical dimensions being absent) are conditions existing for a period of approximately thirty days about January 1st, 1884, constituting only a fraction of the fourteen-month period during which Shrine-phenomena occurred (though interrupted for a time beginning towards the end of December, 1883). But the Plan itself (see titles, legend and Reference, etc., in Plate II) does not bear any indication whatever that would on examination warn the reader of this time restricted representation. Of the many misleading signs Hodgson put into his plan—the better to strengthen his “case” against H.P.B.—the following are just a few shown to be disproven by evidence in the course of this present short-study. (Section and Part numbers to the foregoing

analyses are indicated for reference, while the number of false indications by Hodgson in each instance are found in parentheses).

Section III, Part A-2 (1 false indication). Falsely represents all four sides of the Shrine as solid except middle panel in the back.

III, B-3 (1). Falsely represents a curtain as hanging in the door (way) in the northwall of the bedroom.

III, B-4 (1). Falsely represents the “New Room” as existing in December, 1883.

III, C-3 (3). Falsely omits the curtain and wall-cloth between Shrine and the wall behind. Moreover, to further this false impression, “3” in his Reference to this Plan (see Plate II) falsely places the “recess immediately behind Shrine,” whereas the curtain was immediately behind the Shrine.

III, H-3 (2). Falsely omits the lath-projections; and the bricked-frame aperture is falsely described as having been “formed by removing bricks from one partition of the bricked frame” (see “5” in Reference accompanying his Plan, see PlateII), whereas Mme. Coulomb shows that, besides bricks, lathwork had to be improperly removed (III, H-11) testimony suppressed by Hodgson.

III, H-9 (1). Falsely represents the thickness of front and back walls of recess (behind the Shrine) to be the same.

III, 1-12 (1). Falsely omits the shelf, though Hodgson’s evidence proves it was “made and placed” at about the same time-period as the sideboard (326).

V, 3 (1). Falsely omits the oil-cloth in the back of Sitting Room bookcase shelf, showing instead a curtain at the front (unmentioned in the original report of phenomena or in any authenticated record).

VII, 4 (2). Falsely omits from the Occult Room bookcase the back consisting of Gribble's "two doors" or Mme. Coulomb's "simple shutters;" instead, falsely substituting a back represented by heavy solid, unbroken line.

Turning next to Dr. Hodgson's written indications, we find:

II, 9 (2). False charge regarding a Blavatsky-Coulomb conspiracy at Cairo; and false pretension the reader will "remember" same (accompanied by suppression of Coulomb statement disproving the charge).

III, A-8 (1). False claim that the back of the Shrine could not be carefully examined if Shrine not removed from wall (ignores inspection from within, and suppresses that portion of a "Blavatsky-Coulomb letter" in support of testimony discrediting this objection).

III, A-12 (3). False charges that Damodar (a) knew of "a hole in the wall immediately behind the Shrine" during Shrine phenomena; (b) lied in denying such knowledge; (c) tried to prevent discovery of the alleged hole. Suppresses Coulombs' joint testimony and documentation (92, 106, 110) which prove it was Damodar who exposed them and their "great secret" which would have discredited the charges.

III, B-4 (1). False pretension that the "New Room" existed as early as December, 1883 (during course of crediting a false Coulomb story, see IX-1), while suppressing a Blavatsky-Coulomb document that disproves its construction before times indicated (77).

III, C-1 (1). False assertion (in agreement with his Plan) that "the wall" (with alleged passage-way) was "immediately behind the Shrine" (341), self-contradicting the admission that "the muslin" was immediately behind the Shrine.

III, D-1 (2). False pretensions that the almirah stood in front of the recess (suppresses 52, which disproves same), and was backed up by the "boarding" (suppress 54, which disproves

same).

III, H-4 (2). False claims that the sideboard already had been constructed and was placed close against the bricked frame directly after this new wall's completion (ignores 326 to the contrary, and suppresses 71).

III, H-6 (2). False assertions that Shrine-phenomena stopped during alterations (ignores 376 and suppresses testimony of S.S. Iyer and Hartmann discrediting same); and then began again immediately after their completion (suppresses 73 which, in conjunction with 337, shows the last Shrine-phenomenon attributed to “the hole in the wall” occurred before the sideboard was “put to the wall...”). Compare with III, H-7, III, 1-5, and III, 1-6.

III, H-19 (1). Contradictory statements of found the (bricked) frame for examination. where he found the (bricked) frame for examination.

III, H-11 footnote (2). False accusation against B.D. Nath's description of lathwork-construction of bricked-frame (suppress 76, and fact the frame did contain lathwork), and falsely refers the witness's remark to the “boarding” whereas the witness called the latter a “door” if Hodgson's reporting of this is correct (330).

III, I-2 (2). False claims that his locating the sideboard close against the bricked frame “before the Anniversary” was supported by Mrs. Morgan's “explicit testimony” (not found therein, 325-26), and was “confirmed” by “statements” and/or “testimony” of six other witnesses—but of whom, as shown in Hodgson's report, only one said anything confirmatory (suppresses whatever the other five did say on this; and ignores contrary testimony of Damodar, 337, and Chetty, 327). See also III I-3 and footnote 27.

III, 1-4 (2). False accusations of lying charged to Damodar, concerning the time sideboard was made and time Shrine phenomena stopped (suppressed 73; and see III, H-6, and

III, I-5).

III, 1-5 (2). False claim that the Shrine-phenomena continued until “about or shortly before the middle of January, 1884” (Hodgson made no attempt whatever to substantiate this); and equally false pretension, as part of a “cover-up,” that the Anniversary of 1883 was merely “December 27th.”

III, 1-8 (1). False assertion that the sideboard had a “moveable back” (whereas all that moved was a “hinged panel” later inserted “in the back”)—as if to give credence to the idea that the order for the carpenters to glue the back, when making it in December, 1883, had been to facilitate its future adaptation for trick use.

III, J-9 (3). False accusation that Damodar lied about the recess being blocked-up; and false pretensions that, therefore, Damodar had prevented him from attempting to enter it and so test Damodar’s “account of his own entrance” (with concurrent suppression of the facts it had been blocked-up and so could not be entered as it had been by Damodar).

III, J-10 (1). False substitution of “sideboard aperture” for “bricked-frame aperture” (a deliberate misdirection to bamboozle his readers with false grounds for a lying charge of falsehood against Damodar, H.P.B.’s chief witness).

III, J-11 (1). The false pretension that Hodgson had been unable to personally inspect the recess interior (a pretension devised to put off any question why he was in his report unable to say he had found there any traces of the alleged hole in the wall or any sign of a hole in the floor that would have been required for the sliding panel found in the back of the Sitting-Room bookcase, III, G-7) is exposed by his later admission that he had entered and inspected the recess as the bricked-frame had been removed when he was at Adyar.

VI, 3 and 4 (1). False accusation that “screw-rings” had been “detected in the ceiling” at

Theosophical Headquarters by Mr. Ezekiel.

VI, 5 and 6 (1). False charge by insinuation that these “screw-rings” had been removed and the marks freshly painted over by Mr. Judge.

VII, 4 and 5 (1). False charge by insinuation that Theosophists at Adyar had secretly tampered with evidence and “altered in some way” the double-backed cupboard, an accusation disproven by Gribble's testimony concerning the “two doors” in conjunction with Mme. Coulomb’s description of the “simple shutters” (suppressed by Hodgson).

VII, 7 (1). False pretension that anyone had charged Mons. Coulomb with making the “double-backed cupboard” in 1884 during H.P.B.’s absence.

VII, 9 (1). False claim - set against the veracity of H.P.B.’s rough “sketch”—that, as far as it went, in regards to “shape, height,” etc., Colonel Olcott’s description of vases he had received through the Occult Room bookcase, “exactly tallied with the description of the vases Madame Coulomb had purchased at Hassam’s.” Disproven by Mme. Coulomb’s testimony (therefore, of course, suppressed by Hodgson) that, while the Colonel received only one pair, she had purchased two pair at Hassam’s, one large pair and one small pair.

VIII, 2 (1). False pretension that Mme. Coulomb gave only one explanation (the “musical-box” claim) of the “astral bell” phenomenon (suppression of her original story of the bell in the “vacuum”, known to him by her pamphlet).

IX, 5 and 6 (1). False pretension that he knew of only one explanation by Mme. Coulomb as to how Mons. Coulomb allegedly obtained a Mahatma reply to be dropped from the balcony to Ramaswamier, December, 1883 (suppressing, of course, her contradictory explanation known to him by her pamphlet).

In view of VIII, 2 and IX, 5 and 6, if for no other reason, it is clear that no credence

whatever can be put in Hodgson's fervent affirmation he was not "able to break down any allegations" of the Coulombs "which were in any way material." The fact that, in these and innumerable other instances, he found it necessary to suppress the Coulombs' testimony (even so far as we know it) when it would have exposed the base falsity of his accusations if not so omitted from his report, is enough to prove he was fully aware of their abundant inconsistencies.⁵⁷

As for Dr. Hodgson's pretension that, in coming to his conclusion (that the Theosophical phenomena "were part of a huge fraudulent system worked by Madame Blavatsky" helped by the Coulombs and others), he "of course" had not "trusted to any unverified statements of the Coulombs," one has only to note a few examples to the contrary in order to unmask the preposterous falsity of this disclaimer. In connection with no more than the Shrine, Hodgson had nothing but the Coulombs' "unverified statements" to show that the alleged leather handle and divided panel (III, A-3, 4) ever had existed; or that the sliding panel in the almirah (III, E-1) and the hinged panel in the back of the sideboard (III, 1-8) and the sideboard aperture and the bricked frame aperture (III, H-3) had existed before H.P.B. left Adyar in 1884. Neither had he anything but the Coulombs' "unverified statements" to show that before this departure the panel in "the boarding" (III, F-4) had been moveable, or the sideboard sat against the bricked-frame (III, 1-1). Each and everyone of these things was necessary to his "case;" he built his "conclusion" upon them; and without them the whole of that fragile edifice of charges against Mme. Blavatsky would have collapsed at first sight. And yet, to protect his "conclusion" and "clinch" his arguments at these and other most critical turns, Hodgson had nothing to call upon but the unsupported word of these two self-confessed liars—little wonder that at the start of his report he wished his readers to think he had not "trusted to any unverified statements of the Coulombs..."⁵⁸

Certainly one can find in Hodgson's report nothing more emphatic, culpable and misleading than this sanctimonious disclaimer.

But what a record! More than half an hundred clever misconstructions, all wonderfully calculated to further the destruction of Mme. Blavatsky; all skillfully executed, buttressing each other or prudently protected by the suppression of contrary testimony or evidence wherever threatened; and almost everyone requiring discriminating, conscious design, cautious framing or phrasing, and careful, cunning introduction and use. What an amazing record all this is when set against Dr. Hodgson's vain and futile attempt to demonstrate Mme. Blavatsky's "deliberate falsehoods," to convict her of lying!

Upon noting Dr. Hodgson's marvellous "mal-observations" and remarkable "lapses of memory," misconstructions errantly set up as evidence against Mme. Blavatsky, the present writer—in a critique written in 1946—scorned his many "fantasies" and condemned his "profound and gross incompetence."

But fifteen years and more of closer scrutiny have resulted in a new understanding and have compelled a radical revision of judgement –against all initial anticipation concerning the nature of Hodgson's "exposure" of Mme. Blavatsky. No longer is it possible to defend his misconstructions as evidence of honest error, for the multiplicity, similarity, cogency and ramifications of these "lapses of memory" and "mal-observations" are too striking, too consistent in method and pattern, altogether too symptomatic to be excused and forgiven as naive blunders by "perhaps the greatest psychical researcher of all." Honest mistakes do not confine themselves to the distortion, misquotation, misrepresentation, suppression and fabrication of evidence and testimony so as to found and sustain a single thesis. The works of Hodgson are singularly free of errors, mistakes, misquotations and omissions (and almost devoid of obvious self-contradiction,

the bane of the unwary liar) except where the fate of his “case” is at stake. Where the testimony or evidence is of little or no use to the accused, it is quoted freely and presented accurately; it is only at those critical points where Hodgson’s claims and theories are endangered by what a witness says, that his quotations fall short, that he begins to expunge and suppress. It is only when the evidence threatens, that his perception lapses into “mal-observation;” it is only when the recollection of some especially pertinent piece of proof would demolish his accusation, that his memory fails and his readers are left in the dark—and this is so even when the proof has been published beforehand and when, but for the protection granted by blind incredulity, its omission would seem to have been an invitation to certain and prompt embarrassment.

These kinds of performance betoken less of a mental than of a moral deficiency.

Whatever one may think of the conduct of the Committee “Appointed to Investigate the Marvellous Phenomena Connected with the Theosophical Society”—and it is easy to see that in these matters they were no match for their dear friend and trusted colleague, the much-admired Doctor of Laws from Cambridge-, it is no longer possible to imagine that Richard Hodgson did not know what he was doing in the case of Madame Blavatsky.

XII

SPECIAL NOTE

Information only recently obtained reveals new evidence concerning the investigation of the Theosophical wonders in 1884-885 by the Committee of the Society for Psychical Research. See the July, 1962, issue of The Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research,⁵⁹ for a significant article, "Madame Blavatsky: 'One of the World's Great Jokers'," by Walter A. Carrithers, Jr., a Member of the A.S.P.R. Ostensibly a review of John Symonds' biographical work, Madame Blavatsky: Medium and Magician,⁶⁰ this article appears as an indictment of lax scholarship and feeble research; and, as the first non-committal study of H.P.B. ever published in an official organ of a recognized Society for Psychical Research (though the A.S.P.R. accepts no responsibility for individual contributions appearing in its Journal), it provides new and subtle insight into some problems confronting parapsychologists in their approach to this case.

Mr. Carrithers, for some years also a Member of the (British) Society for Psychical Research, in October, 1955, addressed a petition to the Council of the S.P.R., requesting that he might be granted permission to obtain, with all costs chargeable to himself, photographic facsimiles of as many unpublished documents from that early investigation as might still have been retained by the Society. A preliminary search revealed nothing; but in August, 1960, as the result of a renewal of this petition and search, there was brought to light "a large packet" containing what probably constitutes the last original source of information on this case. Among the documents photographed for Mr. Carrithers on 90ft. of 35 mm. negative microfilm, by permission of the Council and at his specific instruction, are several of unique importance, a number of which have been unknown to historians heretofore—and one of which is quoted at some length in his article. Copies of the film taken for Mr. Carrithers were later sold to "a Miss

H---, resident of India” and to Dr. L.J. Bendit (ex-Member of the S.P.R. and formerly General Secretary of The Theosophical Society in England) who, in 1956, had been informed privately by Mr. Carrithers concerning this petition. Later, the Executive Committee of The Theosophical Society in England acquired Dr. Bendit’s copy, from which 3rd-generation copies were then made for distribution and sale.

An analysis of this promising new evidence is underway and presumably will be published in due course.

A.E.W.

ENDNOTES

¹ The Key to Theosophy, being a Clear Exposition in the Form of Question and Answer, of the Ethics, Science, and Philosophy for the Study of which the Theosophical Society has been Founded, with Copious Glossary of General Theosophical Terms, by H.P. Blavatsky; Second Edition, 1890, The Theosophical Publishing Society, London; pp. 273-4.

² The Complete Works of H.P. Blavatsky, edited by A. Trevor Barker, 1933, Rider and Co., London; vol. 2, p. 207.

³ The Secret Doctrine, the Synthesis of Science, Religion and Philosophy, by H.P. Blavatsky; 1888, The Theosophical Publishing Co., Ltd., London; vol. I, p. 612.

⁴ The Theosophical Glossary, by H.P. Blavatsky; 1892, The Theosophical Publishing Society, London; p. 328.

⁵ The Complete Works of H. P. Blavatsky, vol. 2, pp. 206-07.

⁶ Richard Hodgson, The Story of a Psychological Researcher and His Times, by A.T. Baird; 1949, The Psychic Press Ltd., London; pp. xxvii, xv.

⁷ A major portion of the following analysis was published in the November 1960 and January 1961 numbers of The American Theosophist, under title, "The Hodgson Report, 1885-1960."

⁸ Unless otherwise indicated, all page references (bracketed numbers) above 200 are to the Report of this committee (in Vol. III, Part ix, Proceedings, Society for Psychological Research), while those below 113 are to Mme. Coulomb's pamphlet of November, 1884, Some Account of my Intercourse With Madame Blavatsky From 1872 to 1884; with a number of additional letters and a full explanation of the most marvellous Theosophical phenomena (1885 printing, London).

⁹ Report of Observations made during a nine months' stay at the Head-Quarters of the Theosophical Society at Adyar (Madras), India, by Franz Hartmann, M.D., (Madras, 1884), p. 43.

¹⁰ H.P. Blavatsky: Collected Writings, compiled by Boris de Zirkoff; Los Angeles, 1954; vol. vi, p. 312.

¹¹ Defence of Madame Blavatsky, Volume II, The "Coulomb Pamphlet", by Beatrice Hastings; Worthing, 1937; pp. 70-71, et al.

¹² "The Defence of the Theosophists," by Richard Hodgson, LL.D., Proceedings, S.P.R., vol. ix, part xxiv, 1893, p. 146.

¹³ H.P. Blavatsky: Collected Writings, vol. vi, p. 415.

¹⁴ Report of Observations, etc., p. 12.

¹⁵ Report of the Result of an Investigation into the Charges Against Madame Blavatsky, brought by the missionaries of the Scottish Free Church at Madras, and examined by a committee appointed for that purpose by the General Council of the Theosophical Society; 1885, Madras; p. 63.

¹⁶ Attention was first drawn to this misrepresentation by the remark of a friend, an Engineer, expert in reading architectural diagrams, who, taking Hodgson's Plan at face value, pointed to this "door", saying, "There was a curtain over that doorway."

¹⁷ A Guide to Adyar, by Mary K. Heff and Others; 1934, Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, Madras; pp.5-7.

¹⁸ See the Plan published by Hartmann, Report of Observations, etc., p. 42.

¹⁹ Proceedings, S.P.R., vol. ix, p. 138.

²⁰ Since its Hodgson Report, publication, only one author's error in "The 1885-1960" has been brought to notice. Mr. Victor A. Endersby, C.E., whose own study of the subject has been influenced by the present writer's help and limited correction since June, 1960, has called attention to the fact that there was a superficial error in the original, here reading, "we find Hodgson displacing the Shrine two feet sidewise..." As the fundamental calculations show (4ft. 9in." in F-10 cf. "5ft. 9in." in F-11, also as originally published), this simply means that, instead of cheating "two feet" in his Plan in order to match Shrine and door apertures horizontally, Hodgson had only to fudge twelve inches.

²¹ Report of the Investigation, etc. p. 98 Result of an (testimony Hodgson suppressed).

²² Proceedings, S.P.R., vol. ix, p. 137.

²³ Ibid., p. 142.

²⁴ The Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett from the Mahatmas M. and K.H., transcribed and compiled by A. T. Barker; 1926; London; p. 396.

²⁵ Proceedings, S.P.R., vol. ix, p. 137.

²⁶ One reason why his report ignored the existence of this lathwork may be that, by so doing, Hodgson could charge a key witness, B.D. Nath, with "deliberate falsification" when reporting Nath described "the boarding on the east side of the Occult Room wall behind the Shrine" (interpreted by Hodgson as the door) as "like" a Venetian window (330-31).

²⁷ See Report of the Result of an Investigation, etc., p. 99. C. S. Chetty, Engineer, was a chief supplier of building materials for Adyar (77), a fact suppressed by Hodgson.

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 63-64.

²⁹ The Golden Book of the Theosophical Society, edited by C. Jinarajadasa; 1925, Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar; p. 222.

³⁰ Report of the Result of an Investigation, etc., p. 63 (published early in 1885 and suppressed by Hodgson).

³¹ Report of Observations, etc. pp. 13-14, cf. p. 11.

³² Proceedings, S.P.R., vol. ix, p. 137.

³³ Proceedings, S.P.R., vol. ix, p. 137.

³⁴ H.P. Blavatsky: Collected Writings, vol. vi, p. 415.

³⁵ Proceedings, S.P.R., vol. ix, p. 142.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 137.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 140. If guilty, H.P.B., would never have permitted this removal. Why then was it ordered? "Every facility," wrote Madame Blavatsky, "was given to him for investigation—nothing concealed from him, as everyone felt and knew himself quite innocent of the absurd charges made. All this is now taken advantage of, and presented in an unfavourable light before the public" (H. P. Blavatsky: Collected Writings, vol. vii, p. 4).

³⁸ Did Madame Blavatsky Forge the Mahatma Letters?, by C. Jinarajadasa; Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, 1934.

³⁹ The Truth About Madame Blavatsky, An Open Letter to the Author of "Priestess of the Occult" Regarding the Charges Against H.P. Blavatsky, by Water A. Carrithers, Jr.; The Theosophical University Press, Covine, California, 1947; p. 21.

⁴⁰ Incidents in the Life of Madame Blavatsky, By A. P. Sinnett; 1886, George Redway, London; pp. 323-24.

⁴¹ Among the latter who conceded too much on this point may be mentioned H.S. Olcott, A.P. Sinnett, A. Besant, W. Kingsland, C. Jinarajadasa, C.J. Ryan, B. Hastings, J. Ransom, K.F. Vania, V. Endersby, and the Editors of The Theosophical Movement, 1875-1950.

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- ⁴² Proceedings, S.P.R., vol. ix, p. 143.
- ⁴³ Ibid., p. 143, footnote.
- ⁴⁴ Hints on Esoteric Theosophy, No.1, by H---- X----, F.T.S. (A. O. Hume), Reprinted 1909, Theosophical Publishing Society, Benares; p. 42.
- ⁴⁵ Op. cit., Fourth edition, 1884, Trubner and Co., London, p. 40.
- ⁴⁶ Journal, A.S.P.R., vol. xxxiv, no. 2, p. 60.
- ⁴⁷ Theosophy Unveiled, by J. Murdoch, January, 1885, Madras; p. 31.
- ⁴⁸ A Short History of the Theosophical Society, compiled by Josephine Ransom, with Preface by G. S. Arundale, P.T.S.; 1938, Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar; p. 162.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 173
- ⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 184.
- ⁵¹ Report of the Result of an Investigation, etc., p. 64.
- ⁵² H. P. Blavatsky: Collected Writings, vol. vii, pp. 8, 9.
- ⁵³ Ibid., pp. 4-5.
- ⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 6.
- ⁵⁵ Proceedings, S.P.R. vol. ix, p. 133.
- ⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 133.
- ⁵⁷ Examples of Hodgson's omission and suppression of evidence which was already in print or otherwise certainly known to him (supposing he had any detective ability whatever), and which would have discredited his report at important and crucial points had it been admitted, may be found in-the following: Section II, 2, 8, 9; Section III, A-1, A-2, A-3, A-6, A-8, A-9, A-12, B-4, D3, E-2, E-3, E-6, F-1, F-2, G-6, G-7, H-7, H-11, 1-3, 1-5, 1-6, 1-7, 1-11, 1-13, J-4, J-6, J-12; Section VII-6, and 8; Section VIII, 1 and 2; and Section IX, 1, 4, and 6.
- ⁵⁸ But even their testimony was not enough—even they had never explained, for example, how the alleged half-panel ever could have been raised from the tilted Shrine (constructed as the evidence shows it to have been) against the obstructing wall behind (though Mons. Coulomb demonstrated the “operation” of other devices at the “exposure” of May 18th); and even the Coulombs made no claim that the curtain and wall-cloth between wall and Shrine ever had been displaced before the “exposure”. On that occasion, Mons. Coulomb, though anxious to “vindicate” himself when exposed, was unable to show a single indication that curtain, wall-cloth or wall had ever offered secret passageway. His wife excused this total lack of evidence by saying that, in closing the alleged wall passage, he had left “no perceptible trace of its ever having existed” (75), though she didn't explain how this was done—but then miracles are supposed to be inexplicable, and this seems to have been one of the lesser Coulomb miracles. Although pretending to have saved for years evidence against H.P.B.—even to snips of thread (377)!-, Mme. Coulomb was also left with “no perceptible trace” of such important (alleged) items as the half-panel with handle, the “second” doll, bell-box, a single letter-trap, or even one incriminating telegram from H.P.B., of which there should have been a number according to the test of “Blavatsky-Coulomb letters” Hodgson did not permit his readers to see (15, 18)!
- Clearly, not even the Coulombs had the necessary evidence and answers; and what they did have amounted to nothing except a farrago of nonsense, self-contradicting and contradicted. They left their defender in the lurch, and he had to shift by his wits and by dint of imagination. Consequently, on a great many occasions, his report falls short of giving evidence necessary to sustain its author's claims, a few instances of this deficiency being found in: Section II, 7; Section III, A-4, A-5, A-6, A-11, C-2, D-2, E-1, E-4, E-5, F-4, F-5, F-6, G-1, G-3, G-7, H-2, H-

3, H-7, H-8, 1-1, 1-3, 1-6, 1-9, 1-10, J-1, J-2, J-3, J-7; Section IVJ 2, 4; Section V, 1, 2; Section VI, 1, 2; Section VII, 2, 3.

⁵⁹ Vol. LVI, Number 3, pages 131-39. “The First American Society for Psychical Research” was formed in 1885, in consequence of a visit by Sir W.F. Barrett to this country, and Prof. Simon Newcomb became its President. In 1887 the Society invited a man of signal ability, Richard Hodgson, A.M., LL.D., sometime Lecturer in the University of Cambridge, to become its Executive Secretary, and he accepted.

“This organization later became a branch of the English Society under the very able guidance of Dr. Hodgson until his death in 1905. The American Society for Psychical Research was then re-established with James H. Hyslop, Ph.D., formerly Professor of Logic and Ethics in Columbia University, as its Secretary and Director” (from Prospectus of the A.S.P.R.).

⁶⁰ Odhams Press Limited, London, 1959; and, as The Lady With the Magic Eyes: Madame Blavatsky—Medium and Magician Thomas Yoseloff Publisher, New York 1960.