

XXI

On the same day that Mrs. Besant wrote to Mr. Leadbeater from Benares, Mr. Leadbeater also wrote the following letter to Mrs. Besant from England :—

10 East Parade,
Harrowgate, England,
May 17th, 1906.

MY DEAR ANNIE,

I telegraphed to you yesterday in brief the report of the meeting of the British Committee. I talked over the matter with the Colonel before the members of the Committee arrived, and he strongly counselled me to put a written resignation in his hands before the meeting commenced, so that he could use it at the right time. He dictated to me the form which he suggested that it should take, expressly mentioning that I resigned in order to relieve the society from the possibility of any embarrassment. I doubted somewhat whether you should approve, because you advised against resignation in the first place ; but circumstances have changed so much since then, and the vindictiveness of the American persecution has shown itself so clearly, that I hoped you would agree that as matters now stand it was the best course. Burnett, sent over as Commissioner, formally presented the charges before a full meeting of the British Executive Committee : a considerable mass of additional matter was included beyond that which was sent to us at Benares : also copies of your letter to Mrs. Dennis and of mine to Mr. Fullerton—both of which were distinctly private and would not have been used in this way by any person possessing even the rudiments of honour or decency. Many of

the Committee seemed friendly towards me, and the Colonel especially so ; but Mead showed exceedingly bitter hostility, and Bernard, though silent for the most part, asked one very nasty question obviously intended to implicate you in the matter. I appealed to the Chairman as to whether such a question was permissible and the opinion of the majority clearly was that it was not, so I left it unanswered. After two hours of discussion and cross-examination, and then an hour and a half of stormy debate at which I was not present, the Committee recommended the Colonel to accept the resignation, which I had previously placed in his hands ; he formally did so, and so the matter stands at present.

This being so, to what work should I now apply myself ? It is, of course, obvious that I cannot, at any rate for a very considerable time, do anything in the way of public lecturing. I think that Burma might perhaps still be possible : or is there any other piece of work in India which I could undertake ? I could not take the Head-Mastership of a school, because of the want of the University degree, but I might nevertheless be of use in giving English lessons at some such school, or something of that sort. I want a quiet time in which to do some writing, but naturally I should prefer to spend that time in the tropics rather than in England. As far as we know at present Basil and Fritz will continue to be with me and to act as secretaries just as they have been doing so, though during this time the former at any rate will be preparing for his University course with my assistance, as we arranged in India. So if there is any work that I can do, please let me know of it. Please continue to wire to this address as I shall stay here or in this neighbourhood until I hear from you.

I met Martyn in Rome, and told him of this accusation. I found that he had already received a letter from Dennis giving it in a wildly exaggerated form, but had simply put the letter in his pocket and kept silence. (It is possible, by the way, that I might find an opportunity to be useful in Australia or New Zeland). Martyn seemed to feel a little difficulty with regard to the circulation of the last E. S. notice. He asked whether it would not be wiser to send it only to those whom you might choose for the inner school, as if it were sent to members obviously unfit for admission, it could only arouse in them sense of jealousy and wounded pride. He instanced such old members as Mrs. Crozier and Pascoe—both good people in their way, yet always involved in quarrels with others, so that to admit them would be to foredoom the experiment to failure. Mrs. Wilhelmena Hunt is another case in point. He thought that it would make the work much easier if no one knew of the existence of the inner school except those whom you choose as eligible for it. Considering the condition of affairs in Australia there does seem reason in this, and Martyn is so eminently a man of common sense that I always feel disposed to allow great weight to any suggestion which he ventures to make. His earnest desire was that you should yourself personally select members for the inner school when you visit Australia; would it be possible to allow the majority of Australian members to wait until then? Martyn himself and John are, I should think, fully worthy of immediate admission and I think that I should feel sure of three others in Australia but hardly more than that. Martyn also mentioned that you had one time told him that to save time he might receive his E. S. papers for distribution direct from you,

instead of through Mrs. Mead, but that up to the present that promise had not come into effect, as everything still reached him *via* London, and thereby much time was lost. He further says that in sending out such papers Mrs. Mead fails to give any instructions as to how they are to be used, and that in this way he is sometimes left in doubt as to exactly what you wish.

Technically my resignation from the T. S. removes me from the E. S. also, so that I ought not to speak at or even attend any E.S. meetings. Of course if some of the same people, meeting not as an E. S. group but merely as friends, should invite me to meet them and should ask me questions I know of no reason why in that unofficial capacity I should not reply to them. The Colonel saw clearly that if I had declined to resign and had thereby forced the Committee into advising that I be expelled, there would certainly have been a split in the ranks of the society, a catastrophe which you will agree that we must at all costs avoid. Please let me know what is going on, for down here I shall have but little opportunity of hearing. I need hardly say that though not officially a member I am as utterly at your service and the Colonel's as ever.

With very much love from us.

I am ever,

Yours most affectionately,

(Sd.) C. W. LEADBEATER.