

## XXII

On May 23, 1906 Mrs. Besant wrote the following letter to Colonel Olcott, then in England :—

Shanti Kunja,  
Benares City, May 23, 1906.

MY DEAREST HENRY,

You will have seen Mrs. Dennis' letter to me about Charles, and my answer. I understand that you and a large number of people have seen definitely formulated charges, with the evidence of the boys concerned. I have not been allowed to see anything of these but am receiving hysterical letters demanding that I should denounce and ostracise Charles, and abusing me for not having done so already. Now I have seen nothing but Mrs. Dennis' letter, and a copy of a note from Charles to a boy named Douglas. As I said to Charles and to Mrs. Dennis, I entirely disagree with the advice he gave, and think it likely to lead the boys into a very vicious practice ruinous to health. But I believe he gave it with good intent and in good faith. It *may* be that the formulated charges disprove this view of mine; but until I see them, I cannot judge, and they have been withheld from me. As a member of the T. S. Council, these charges should be laid before me, if I am urged to take action. Has any first-hand evidence—the statements of the boys themselves—been submitted to you? Have these boys been questioned by some one free from bias and not determined to prove charges already believed? Has there been any semblance of impartiality and fair dealing? Or have you only one-sided statements by hysterical people and their report of

statements forced from frightened boys by people determined beforehand to convict?

Mead threatens me that I cannot appear on any English platform if I do not denounce Charles. I would not condemn an enemy, much less a friend, and ruin him for life, without evidence—and I do not call Mrs. Dennis' letter evidence. It is a serious thing to destroy one of our best workers, and the procedure should be grave and judicial not a mere chorus of howls. You may have the evidence; I have not and till I have, I shall do nothing beyond what I have done—counselling the putting in by him of his resignation, and an appeal to you for investigation.

I think the Americans have behaved disgracefully in making all this public without waiting for you to see the evidence and give your decision. No one is safe, if he is to be condemned on evidence wrung from frightened boys without cross-examination. Charles had far better challenge a legal investigation, where some semblance of justice would be granted.

It would have been easier for Fullerton to have sent you the charges, and for you, if you thought it best, to have asked Charles for his resignation. The whole thing would have been done quietly and the T. S. would have been safeguarded. Now God knows what will happen. I had advised Charles to tell you the whole thing and take your advice. Any sane person, caring for the T. S., would have acted thus, instead of shrieking all over the place.

Knowing of this, I advised Charles not to go to Paris and when Zipernovsky telegraphed me asking if he could go to Hungary, I telegraphed him that I did not think he could go; but I gave no reason, as I thought no rumour of trouble should get about until you had been consulted.

Charles only wishes to keep the Society clear of his troubles, and for the sake of the Society will no doubt forego self-justification. But I have written him that he should draw up a statement saying how his life as a clergyman forced him to face this problem, how he came then to his present position and advised young men on this line, and had given similar advice to a few lads in the T. S. This statement should go to those who know of the accusations.

The loss of Charles, if so it must be, is a terrible blow to the Society. Still worse is the readiness to jump at the foulest ideas and hound a man to ruin without ruth or justice.

Will you please order a copy of the charges and evidence to be sent to me? From Mead's letter it would seem that charges of malpractices are made, not only of bad advice. But in a letter I have this week from Fullerton it is said that no graver charge is made than that of advising what may be called a regulated self-abuse. (This is my phrase not Fullerton's). It is certainly not fair that I should be asked to act, without any evidence being shown to me.

Ever affectionately yours,

(Sd.) ANNIE BESANT.

P. S.—Please do not show this letter as it may only increase bad feeling, but I wish you to know what I think of the matter.