

Mme. Blavatsky In Cambridge, England, August 1884

Laura C. Holloway writes:

“The Society for Psychic Research at Cambridge invited...[Madame Blavatsky] to visit that university town and to give the officers of the society an opportunity to witness the phenomena which many persons had seen occur in her presence....she was invited to Cambridge, there to have opportunity to exhibit before the Society of Psychic Research the proof she could give of the existence of "Mahatmas," or "Great Souls" and her power to hold psychic communication with them. Her circle of immediate friends...gladly went upon this journey with her....The start was made from London one beautiful...[August] morning and the party was one of the happiest imaginable....

Being in Cambridge at the time and in the same hotel with Madame Blavatsky, I called upon her and was ushered into her room by one of her London friends. She was sitting at a table smoking the inevitable cigarette, with her box of Turkish tobacco open before her and materials for writing beside it. She was dressed in a loose, flowing black silk gown with some lace about her neck, and her beautiful hands were covered with jewels....her sad expression at once attracted my attention. Inquiring the cause of her depression, she said: — "Ah, my child, you little know what is to follow this Cambridge trip...the Karma of the Theosophical Society

cannot be changed by any display of psychic powers on my part. I am here to select the instrument through which the society is to suffer."

Visitors were announced, and in came Madame Novikoff, the London correspondent of St. Petersburg *Court Journal*, and several officers of the Society for Psychical Research....She spoke Russian to Madame Novikoff, French to a Parisian present, and her general conversation...delighted and charmed every one. Professor Sidgwick and his gifted wife,....Frederick W. F. Myers,...Edmund Gurney, Professor Browning, Mr. Hodgson, and many others were among the acquaintances she made, and the few days she remained in Cambridge she was the center of attraction for its most intellectual university circle....

She turned to me as she was leaving the parlor after the departure of several visitors, and said: "Hodgson will be the man the S. P. R. will select to go to India." The remark made little impression at the time...for I did not know what she meant. It struck me as rather singular that she should associate Mr. Hodgson with anything disagreeable, for he seemed sincerely interested in her and friendly to her...

When, months later, the Society for Psychic Research selected Mr. Hodgson to go to India to investigate the claims of the Theosophical Society regarding the existence of the Mahatmas and the psychic powers of Madame Blavatsky, these strange...remarks made at Cambridge by her regarding Mr. Hodgson's selection for the part he afterward played, recurred to me. I never saw him after that time, but when Mr. Hodgson's report was given to the world I could but regret that he had not known that

she predicted that he would be selected to do what he did, and that he would do it in the way he did.”

[Quoted from: [Mrs. Holloway and the Mahatmas](#), pp. 13, 15-16.]

Professor Henry Sidgwick in his personal journal writes:

“*August 9 [1884]* — ...After dinner we all go to a meeting of the Cambridge Branch of the S. P. R. [Society for Psychical Research], where Madame Blavatsky, Mohini [Chatterji] , and other Theosophists are to show off. The meeting is in Oscar Browning’s spacious rooms: which are crowded to overflowing — all the members of the Branch, and more than as many outsiders. There must have been over seventy; I should not have thought that such a crowd could have been got together in the Long Vacation.

[F.W.H.] Myers and I had the task of ‘drawing’ Mme. B. by questions, Mohini taking a share of the answers. We kept it up better than I expected for a couple of hours; the interest of the miscellaneous throng — half of whom, I suppose, came with the very vaguest notions of Theosophy — being apparently fairly well sustained. On the whole I was favourably impressed with Mme. B. No doubt the *stuff* of her answers resembled [her book] *Isis Unveiled* in some of its worst characteristics; but her manner was

certainly frank and straightforward — it was hard to imagine her the elaborate impostor that she must be if the whole thing is a trick.

August 10 [1884] — We all went to a Theosophic lunch with Myers. Madame de Novikoff was there; certainly she has social gifts, but she does not interest me. Our favourable impression of Mme. B[lavatsky] was sustained; if personal sensibilities can be trusted, she is a genuine being, with a vigorous nature intellectual as well as emotional, and a real desire for the good of mankind.

This impression is all the more noteworthy as she is externally unattractive — with her flounces full of cigarette ashes — and not prepossessing in manner. Certainly we like her, both Nora [Eleanor Sidgwick] and I. If she is a humbug, she is a consummate one: as her remarks have the air not only of spontaneity and randomness but sometimes of an amusing indiscretion.

Thus in the midst of an account of the Mahatmas in Tibet, intended to give us an elevated view of these personages, she blurted out her candid impression that the chief Mahatma of all was the most utter dried-up old mummy that she ever saw. She also let us behind the scenes of all the Transcendental Council. It appears that the desire to enlighten us Westerns is only felt by a small minority of the Mahatmas, who are Hindoo: the rest, Tibetans, are averse to it: and it would not be permitted, only Koot Hoomi, the youngest and most energetic of the Hindoo minority, is a favourite of the old mummy, who is disposed to let him do what he likes. When the mummy withdraws entirely from earth, as he will do shortly, he wants Koot to

succeed him: but Mme B. thinks he won't manage this, and that a Thibetan will succeed who will inexorably close the door of enlightenment.”

In the First Report of the Committee of the Society for Psychological Research on Madame Blavatsky, one finds this account:

“...Madame Blavatsky attended a meeting of the Cambridge branch of the Society for Psychological Research on August 9th [1884]. There she declared that she saw Damodar astrally present; and she herself suggested that she should try to impress on him to send her three mango-leaves as a test of his presence. It was, however, suggested by Mr. Myers that the number should be five instead of three, and it was agreed (on Madame Blavatsky's suggestion) that the leaves should be sent to Mr. Sinnett. This text would of course have been evidentially valueless, as it was suggested by Madame Blavatsky herself, and made on an occasion whose date had been fixed some time previously. Madame Blavatsky professed herself uncertain as to whether Damodar understood her request.

Up to the present writing (October 2nd) these leaves have not appeared. From one point of view this may be thought satisfactory, inasmuch as it indicates that no plot had been formed to the effect that Damodar was to despatch the leaves on a pre-arranged date. For in that

case Mr. Sinnett would probably have received three leaves about the end of August.”

[Quoted from an unpublished Oct. 1884 draft of the *First Report of the Committee of the Society for Psychical Research, Appointed to Investigate the Evidence for Marvellous Phenomena offered by Certain Members of the Theosophical Society* preserved in the Archives of the Society for Psychical Research.]

“Into this class of [Mahatma] letters falls the only one which a member of our Committee has received. On August 11th, 1884 [in Cambridge], Mr. Myers was talking with Madame Blavatsky and others on the Kiddle incident, when Madame Blavatsky said that she felt Koot Hoomi’s presence. She left the room, and in two or three seconds returned with a letter, which she said had fallen on a slab outside the door. This formed no test, of course. The letter [for Myers] was in the Koot Hoomi handwriting, and alluded to what had just passed in conversation....”

[Quoted from the *First Report of the Committee of the Society for Psychical Research, Appointed to Investigate the Evidence for Marvellous Phenomena offered by Certain Members of the Theosophical Society*, December, 1884.]

Bertram Keightley writes:

“Cambridge, August 12, 1884

On Sunday, August 10th, at 2, St. Mary's Passage, at 6.30 p.m., the following occurrence took place: —

We were sitting around the table having just finished tea, when a note fell bearing the initials of Mahatma K.H. The note was found under Mrs. X.'s [Laura Holloway's] chair, near whom it fell and whom it especially concerned. Something was seen to fall by Mrs. X. [Laura Holloway] and Mohini, and on searching, the following note was found on the floor, where I saw it lying. It was picked up by Mohini.

[Copy]

'You came together --- why should you separate before you are all ready. You are all wanted here for a purpose.'" (Signed) K.H.'

Mrs. X. and myself had intended leaving Cambridge on...Monday, but in consequence we did not do so. There were present in the room: Madame Blavatsky, Mr. Finch, Miss Z. [Miss Francesca Arundale], Mrs. Z [Mrs. Arundale], Mohini and myself.

I am acquainted with the handwriting of Mr. Sinnett's letters [from Master K.H.] and others having the same initials, and this note was in all

respects in the same handwriting. Further, the paper is unlike any I have ever seen in England.

Bertram Keightley, B.A., Cantab.

The facts as stated are correct.

Miss Z.

Mrs. X.

Mohini M. Chatterji

H.P. Blavatsky”

[Quoted from: [Mrs. Holloway and the Mahatmas](#), pp. 96-97.]
