

The Masters of Wisdom

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MAN hath no fate except past deeds,
No hell but what he makes, no Heaven too high
For those to reach whose passions sleep subdued.

[Page 3] AN attempt will be made in this essay to remove from the minds of fair and unprejudiced inquirers into the truths of Theosophy some at least of the misconceptions and false ideas that now generally cluster around the names of its Great Teachers in the thoughts of the public. This task once accomplished to the best of our ability, we have no further concern with it, the results, whether great or small, will be in the hands of Karma.

On the sufficiency or otherwise of the evidence we are about to offer in favour of the existence of the Mahatmas, readers must themselves pronounce, and all our efforts will be directed to setting it forth in such order, that a fair decision may be reached; we can do no more. The great Occult Brotherhood, the custodians of the Sacred Wisdom of the ages, first came publicly into notice this century through the establishment of the Theosophical Society in 1875, and through whom their philosophy has been given to the world. As soon as their agents announced the present existence of a body of men living in the East, possessing certain remarkable attributes which we hope to describe in the course of this essay, and endowed with great wisdom, the statement was received with derision and general incredulity, and, except on the part of a few individuals, no desire was manifested to inquire into the truth of the matter at all. Considering the nature of the subject and the character of the age, this conduct was not surprising if we look below the surface. To bigoted sectarians the idea of the existence of such beings seemed too absurd to think about, much less discuss, because, as we shall presently see, the views of sectarian Christianity and materialistic science as to the meaning of Life and man's future destiny are vastly different from those of Occult Philosophy, and that it is only by a proper comprehension of the latter that accurate and clear views, from an abstract standpoint, respecting the Mahatmas (Great Souls) can be attained, [Page 4] Protestant Theology, as everyone knows, awards all individuals, at death, according to their deserts of faith, elevation to a higher or fall to a lower spiritual condition for ever; a sudden unreasonable leap from finite to infinite life. Roman Catholicism, although approaching closer to Occultism in its doctrines respecting human post-mortem states, yet affords, on the whole, no room in its conceptions for such persons as the "Adepts", especially as they are outside the orthodox pale. The scientists of the evolutionary philosophical school are in no better plight than theologians, so far as viewing the matter impartially at the outset is concerned. For their conceptions of human evolution are confined to the physical, mental, and moral progress of successive generations of mankind, whilst individuals are ruthlessly sacrificed in its attainment. This imperfect and mutilated view of human destiny is presented through lack of knowledge of the law of Karma and Re-Incarnation, and an ignoring of the

spiritual element in man. In contrast to the foregoing, Occult Philosophy teaches that each individual Ego passes through great cycles of experiences, obtained through incarnation in some hundreds of personalities, serving as masks for it, and gathering, as it evolves upward in its spiral course, fresh knowledge, powers, and attributes. At the head of this great chain of differentiated human progress stand the "Adepts", the flower of humanity; each the outcome of a mighty struggle "against himself, against all the evils and opposing wills, against all the elements, against all the previous causes whose effects he has destroyed by labours of which those of Hercules are only a pale symbol". Such are the great Masters of Wisdom, the Leaders of the world. The reason therefore of the general disinclination to believe in the existence of the Mahatmas, no matter how good the evidence, lies in the prevailing character of present Religious and Scientific thought; its great difference on this matter, from the teachings of Theosophy, leading to inability to understand the real and proper place of the Adept's nature. As a minor cause, also, the recognition of the existence of such beings as the Arhats necessarily involves the displacement of many popular religious and scientific authorities now looked up to as almost infallible, a mental change for many hard to undergo. Having glanced at the abstract view of the matter, we may now come to the evidence and proofs by which everything must ultimately be judged, apart from all prepossessions either for or against.

THE ADEPTS IN HISTORY

There are several clues by which the presence and influence of the Adepts and their disciples can be traced in History. The mysteries, for instance, now so much misunderstood, and little known, of all ancient [Page 5] races, were invariably presided over by Initiates, and formed the medium through which pupils were instructed in Occult Wisdom, and such teachings given out to the masses, as their development and circumstances would safely permit. We know that the doctrine of Re-Incarnation was secretly taught by the Adepts in all ages, and appeared masked in exoteric form, as the Transmigration of Souls. The Arhats have from the earliest times called themselves Serpents or Dragons. Thus a Commentary on the Book of Dzian speaks of the "Serpents of Wisdom whose holes are now under the triangular stones, *i.e.*, the Pyramids. Why is this? " In every ancient language the word dragon signified what it now does in Chinese (lang), *i.e.*, "the being who excels in intelligence", and in Greek "he who sees and watches". [Secret Doctrine. Vol II, page 210] The earth in the Aytareya-Brahmana is called the "Queen of the Serpents," referring to the fact that the fire-mist as a long trail of cosmic matter animated by spirit or force once moved writhing like a serpent in space, before becoming egg-shape. The ancient Adept Hermes regarded the serpent as the most spirit-like of all reptiles. The serpent biting his tail was the symbol of Wisdom and immortality in the Mysteries.

According to the Archaic records, the lost continent of Atlantis was inhabited by two distinct classes of "Adepts", those of the Right and those of the Left hand: White and Black Hierophants. We are told of the Adept astronomers Narada and Asuramâya who lived at Romakapura in Atlantis, also of those White Adepts who instructed the early Aryan race after the destruction of this continent; the high table lands of Thibet have been inhabited for ages past by the "Arhats". Thibet, called Si-dzang by the Chinese, is mentioned in the oldest books preserved in the province of Fo-kien (the headquarters of the aborigines of China) as the great seat of occult learning in the archaic ages. According to these records it was inhabited by the Teachers of Light, the Sons of Wisdom. The Emperor Yu the Great (2207 B.C.), a pious mystic, is credited with having obtained his Occult Wisdom from Thibet. Chinese literature from Las-tze down to Hiouen-Thsang is filled with allusions and references to Scham-Bhala, the Happy Land, and the wisdom of the Himalayan Adepts. The "Catena of Buddhist Scriptures from the Chinese" mentions the

"Great Teachers of the Snowy Mountains, the school of the Haimavatas", and a rule relating to "the great professors of the higher order who live in mountain depths remote from men". A Japanese Cyclopaedia in the book of Fo-kone-ky places a Brotherhood of Adepts on the plateau of Pamir, between the highest peaks of the Himalayan ranges. According to tradition the [Page 6] Vedas came from the Mansarawara Lake in Thibet, and the Brahmans from the north, the latter claiming descent from the great ancient Rishis (sages). The eminent writers, Strabo, Lucan, Plutarch, Cicero, and Pliny, refer to the Adepts, whom they called Indian Gymnosophists. These great Initiates led a secluded life according to Ammianus Marcellinus, and proofs of their great learning are preserved in numerous volumes in Hindu libraries to this day. Indian literature teems with references to the Rishis and Mahatmas; these terms are interchangeable. The Magi of Persia, who derived their name from the Sanscrit *Mahaji* (the great or wise), have left some deep marks in history. They were not Persians or Chaldeans, and, in the opinion of Orientalists, came to Persia from the *East*. Their schools were divided into esoteric and exoteric sections; the former were devoted to the teachings of practical occultism. There were three classes of Magi, Herbeds (disciples), Mobeds [Sippara, in Chaldea, was the City of the "Sun"] (masters), Destur Mobeds (complete masters). Initiation consisted of awful and mysterious ceremonies, preceded by a long purification of the candidate. Darius Hystaspes, the monarch who reformed and purified the Persian mysteries, and who was an Adept himself, is said by ancient historians to have been taught by Brahmans. The Akkadian Adepts, who taught Occultism to the Babylonians, came from Upper India according to the archaic records. It should be remembered that at that time Aryan India did not extend southwards beyond the Punjaub. There is no doubt that the Jews acquired all their esoteric knowledge from the Egyptians and Chaldeans. According to Maimonides, the great Jewish theologian, Chaldean Magi were always employed by the Adepts in performing their occult phenomena. Manetho says that Moses was a hierophant of Hieropolis, and a priest of the sun-god Osiris, and that his name was Osarsiph. Jethro the priest, his guru (spiritual guide), gives him Zipporah, [From the Meh-ab, meaning great and noble] the esoteric wisdom. (Siprah means the shining or resplendent, from Sapar to shine) [Moses, being an ascetic, could not be married] Justin Martyr, giving as his authority Troguus Compeius, shows that Joseph learnt magic from the Egyptian Adepts.

The Tanaim were the first Initiates amongst the Jews, and the Books of Ezekiel, Daniel, Enoch and the Revelation of St. John are purely Occult works. The famous Hillel [This Adept had a regular school for teaching Occultism, so had Samuel and Elisha at Ramah and Jericho] was an Initiate. Gibbon demonstrates that the Pharisees believed in the doctrine of the Transmigration of Souls; this shows the Occult influences at work among the Jews. [Page 7] The Sohar teaches practical occultism, through secret signs on the margin. Let us now consider the "Adepts" of Egypt.

According to Herodotus, Orpheus, an "Adept", brought the ancient mysteries from India. Philostratus makes the Brahmin Tarchus say that the Egyptians were originally an Indian race compelled to emigrate from the mother-land for sacrilege and regicide. Diogenes Laertius traces Theosophy to an epoch antedating the Ptolemies, and founded by a Hierophant, Cot Amun (name being Coptic meaning priest consecrated to Amun, god of Wisdom). In both India and Egypt there was a sacred succession of hierophants. " In Egypt each was a Piromis, the son of a Piromis. As in India, at Sringeri "each hierophant is a Sankarâcharya, the son of a Sankarâcharya". [Lucifer, September, 1889. Art Traces of Ancient India in Egypt] The Egyptian Adepts taught that the soul was re-incarnated after an interval of 3,000 years. The Essenes and healing Therapeutes were followers of the ancient theurgic Mysteries. The Essenes furnished a refuge for the hierophants of Egypt, when the latter from fear of a profanation of the sacred mysteries came amongst them. The Essenes had their greater and minor mysteries at least two centuries before our era. "They rejected pleasures, despised riches, loved one another, and deemed the

conquest of the passions to be virtuous", says Dunlap. Over five centuries before the Christian Era, the great Greek Pythagoras journeyed to Upper India for the purpose of studying under the "Wise Brotherhood". On returning, he taught at Croton a system of philosophy identical with that expounded by the "Adepts" today. We know the Greeks obtained the Eleusinian Mysteries from Egypt. "All these things", said Zonaras, "came to us from Chaldea to Egypt, and from thence were derived to the Greeks". The great Grecian sages are found constantly travelling to Egypt for instruction, including Plato the great Initiate, whose philosophy contains so many of the ideas of the Eastern sages. We will now cross the Atlantic Ocean in search of traces of the "Serpents of Wisdom". In the Popol-vuh, the sacred book of the Gautemalians, there is sufficient evidence to prove the close relationship of the religious customs of the ancient Mexican, Peruvian, and Egyptian nations. The ancient hieratic alphabets of the Maya and Egyptian languages are nearly identical. In de Bourbourg's work, Votan, the Mexican hero, says that he is the son of a "Serpent", and had visited a serpent's catacomb, like those of Egypt. We find that the Mexicans had their magicians from a remote period. The Popol-vuh mentions a race of men who knew all things at once, and whose sight was unlimited. In the Scandinavian Edda we find the great Earth Serpent Midgard, with its tail in its mouth. The archaic [Page 8] records teach that Odin was one of the "Sons of Wisdom". The Norse cosmogony is the same as the Indian. Who were the Druids? The Secret Doctrine says: "Like the Hindus, the Greeks, and Romans (we speak of the Initiates), the Chaldees, and the Egyptians, the Druids believed in the doctrine of a succession of worlds and transformations of the face of the earth, and in a seven-fold night and day. Wherever the Serpent with the Egg is found, there this tenet was surely present. Their *Dracontia* are a proof of it". [Secret Doctrine. Vol II, page 756] Pliny calls them the Magi of the Gauls and Britons. "I am a Serpent, I am a Druid", they exclaimed. The Egyptian Karnac is twin-brother to the Carnac of Bretagne, the latter meaning the serpent's mount. We will now turn again to the East.

Near the commencement of the Christian Era, we find *Apollonius of Tyana* travelling to the abode of the Sages of Upper India. It is related that he found a community of Adepts, wanting nothing, and possessing everything, and wielding marvellous powers. Justin Martyr is a witness to the occult powers of Apollonius, acquired by him as a pupil of the Adepts. "The Christian Gnostics sprang into existence towards the beginning of the second century, and just at the time when the Essenes most mysteriously faded away, which indicated that they were the identical Essenes". [Isis Unveiled. Vol II, page 324] The Secret Doctrine states that the various Gnostic sects were founded by Initiates. They believed in metempsychosis, and the sacred serpent appears on many Gnostic gems. The strong Buddhistic element in their teachings has been noticed by many scholars. As the terms nazar and nazaret meant Adept in ancient writings, the connection between the Initiates and the sect called Nazarenes is apparent. In fact, the secret doctrines of the Magi, of the pre-vedic Buddhists, of the hierophants of the Egyptian Hermes, and of the Adepts of every age and nationality, including the Chaldean Kabalists, and the Jewish Nazars were identical from the beginning. [Isis Unveiled. Vol II. page 142] Every nation had two languages; that of the masses and that of the Initiates, which was secret and universal. About the 3rd century of this era, Ammonius Saccas founded the school of the Neo-Platonists, or Eclectic Theosophists. "They united the mystic theosophy of old Egypt with the refined philosophy of the Greeks; nearer to the ancient mysteries of Thebes and Memphis than they had been for centuries; versed in the science of soothsaying and divination, as in the art of the Therapeutists; friendly with the acutest men of the Jewish nation, who were deeply imbued with the Zoroastrian ideas, the Neo-Platonists tended to amalgamate the old [Page 9] wisdom of the Oriental Kabala with the more refined conceptions of the Occidental Theosophists". The spiritual illumination of the Neo-Platonists, the ecstatic trance of mystics, the Samadhi of Hindoos are identical in nature. After the downfall of the principal mysteries, which began in Plato's time, the Eastern esoteric societies instituted a kind of international universal Freemasonry amongst their esoteric societies. Finally, through the fanatical persecutions of the Emperor Justinian, the

last remnant of the Neo-Platonists fled to the East, comprising the seven wise men, Hermias, Priscianus, Diogenes, Eulalius, Damaskius, Simplicius, and Isidorus. Henceforth the archaic wisdom was represented in Europe by a few secret societies and persons, the great Initiates had all departed for remote places of the Earth. The secrecy preserved by these small lodges, and by the great chief lodge, has always been proportionate to the activity of religious persecutions. From the descendants of the Magi, the Sufis, the mystics amongst the Mahometans derived their knowledge of astrology, medicine, and of esoteric doctrines. In 1118 the order of the Temple was founded, nominally for the protection of pilgrims, but really for the restoration of the primitive mysteries. The red cross on the white mantle, the vestment of the order, pointing to the four quarters of the compass, was the emblem of the universe, a well-known sign to the initiated. In the 16th century we find the famous physician and alchemist, Paracelsus, travelling to the *East*, and instructed in various occult sciences by an Oriental Adept. An examination of his writings and teachings shows their similarity to the philosophical system now given out by the Masters of Wisdom. The 17th century shows the presence of the mysterious Rosicrucians, over whom many modern scholars have spent much time and labour in vain. Why this secrecy? Because, to be known as a kabalist in that age was to court death from furious religious bigots. We may here quote Swedenborg. "Search for the Lost Word amongst the Hierophants of Tartary and Thibet", said he. According to proofs existing today in the archives of St. Petersburg, more than one Russian mystic, at the beginning of this century, travelled in search of knowledge to the esoteric schools in Central Asia; returning, years later, with a rich store. In this age, "Travellers have met Adepts on the shores of the sacred Ganges, brushed against them in the silent ruins of Thebes, and in the mysterious deserted chambers of Luxor. Within the halls upon whose blue and golden vaults the weird signs attract attention, but whose secret meaning is never penetrated by the idle gazers, they have been seen but seldom recognised. They have been encountered again on the arid and desolate plains of Great Sahara, as in the caves of Elephanta. They may be found everywhere, but make themselves known only to those who have devoted their lives to unselfish study and are not likely to [Page 10] turn back. [Isis Unveiled. Vol I, page 17] The travelling Adepts who from time to time visited Paris during this century were termed by the unsuspecting natives, Boyards, Indian Nabobs, Hungarian Margraves, and *nobles étrangers*. At the present time a mysterious sect, called the Druzes of Mount Lebanon, exists in the East, presided over by initiated wise men called Okhals. [From the Arabic *akl*, intelligence or wisdom] This body is descended from the ancient esoteric societies of the East, and although their mystic doctrines are carefully concealed from outsiders, yet it is known that they closely resemble those of the ancient Gnostics. [See Letter from Initiate, Isis Unveiled. Vol II, page 313] In the East, now, there are many esoteric societies, sects within sects, all possessing more or less occult knowledge, in addition to the Grand Lodge of Thibet; thus the archaic mysteries have been continued in the East to our day. It should be remembered, however, as stated in Esoteric Buddhism, that Thibet was not always the great centre of Adept habitation that it is now, although always a centre. In the 14th century the great Thibetan Adept reformer, Tsong-ka-pa, introduced a new code of rules for the occult schools, and the Mahatmas began to gravitate towards this region from various parts of the earth. For far more widely was occult knowledge found to be spread than was consistent with the safety of mankind. We have been compelled for want of space to leave the work of the great Indian Adepts unnoticed, even that of the "Great Master", Buddha, who taught "Nirvana and the Law". At the present time in Japan and Siam there are two orders of priests, of which one is public and deals with the people, the existence of the other is known but to a few natives, never to foreigners. The latter are Initiates. Before coming to the evidence of modern eye-witnesses to the existence of the Mahatmas, it will be well to call attention to some special points brought out in the course of our historical survey. We have seen that the ancient mysteries gradually declined, degenerated, and expired in all Western countries, as foretold by the great Adept, Hermes:— "Alas, my son, a day will come when the sacred hieroglyphics will become but idols. *The world will mistake the emblems of science for gods*, and accuse Grand Egypt of having worshipped monsters. But those who will calumniate us thus will themselves worship Death instead of Life, folly in place of wisdom; fill their

temples with dead men's bones as relics, and waste their youth in solitude and tears. Their virgins will be widows (nuns) before being wives, and consume themselves in grief; because men will have despised and profaned the sacred mysteries of Isis". [Hermes' Tresmegistus xxvii] What was the [Page 11] cause of this decadence of the ancient schools of the Sacred Science ? The following extract from the "Ceylon Gem" may help to explain the matter: "In Ceylon the Adepts counted over thousands in the reign of Dutugamunu. They have gradually ceased to exist, as the keys of those mysteries are lost by the degeneracy of the Buddhist monks of subsequent times, who sought more after worldly renown and glory than the higher spiritual developments". "Men have become wild and wretched by the awful lusts of the flesh, and have consequently lost the secrets of the Law. But those immortal and divine gems of truth were not destined to disappear altogether from the habitation of man, as it was decreed by the departing Arhats to be safely and sacredly kept by the Adepts of the trans-Himalayan depths until man's condition be adapted to receive it. That time is now drawing nigh; and the custodians of the secret doctrine have thought it fit to send missionaries among mankind to divulge it to them". Throughout our historical survey we succeeded in tracing the connection, direct or indirect, of every ancient school of Occultism, with the great Tibetan Lodge, existing now as then, thus making the existence of the Initiates of today quite comprehensible. It is now necessary to review the testimony of modern eye-witnesses respecting the existence of the Mahatmas. From the mass of evidence available in this matter, we can only provide space for a few accounts. In "Five Years of Theosophy". a Hindoo gentleman, Damodar K. Mavalankar, relates the several occasions on which he has seen various Adepts both physically and in astral form. There is also an account, written by himself, of the perilous journey through Sikkhim undertaken by S. Ramaswamier, an Indian official, for the purpose of seeing the Mahatmas, which was successful. We have also the evidence given by Sundook, a pedlar of Thibet, who, on being questioned by several gentlemen, said that there were men living in the mountains beyond Tchigatze and near the city of Lhasa, possessing extraordinary powers distinct from and far higher than the regular lamas of the country. These men, he said, produce many and very wonderful phenomena, and some of their Chelas (pupils) cure the sick by giving them to eat the rice which they crush out of the paddy with their hands, etc. In the presence of a number of respectable witnesses a young Bengali, Brahmachari, gave the following account. On the 15th of the Bengali month of Asar in 1882, he met some Tibetans, called the Koothoompas, and their guru (Teacher), in a field near Taklakhar, a place about a day's Journey from the Lake of Manasarawara. The "Master" and most of his pupils wore sleeveless coats over under-garments of red. The complexion of the "Master" was very fair, and his hair, which was not parted, but combed back, streamed down his shoulders. The Master saluted him, and asked [Page 12] him where he was coming from. On finding that he had not had anything to eat, the guru commanded that he should be given some ground grain and tea. As the Brahmachari could not get any fire to cook food with, the Master asked for and kindled some fuel by simply blowing upon it. The Brahmachari also said that he had often witnessed the same phenomenon produced by another "Master", at Gauri, a place about a day's journey from the cave of Tarchin, on the northern side of Mount Kailas. The keeper of a flock, who was suffering from rheumatic fever, came to the guru, who gave him a few grains of rice, crushed out of paddy which the Master had in his hand, and the sick man was cured then and there.

The undersigned severally certify that, in each other's presence, they recently saw at the headquarters of the Theosophical Society a brother of the First Section. The circumstances were of a nature to exclude all idea of trickery or collusion, and were as follows. We were sitting together in the moonlight about nine o'clock, upon the balcony which projects from the front of the bungalow. Mr. Scott was sitting facing the house, so as to look through the intervening verandah and the library, and into the room at the further side. This latter apartment was brilliantly lighted. The library was in partial darkness, thus rendering objects in the further room more distinct. Mr. Scott suddenly saw the figure of a man step into the space opposite the door of the library; he was clad in the white dress of a Rajput, and wore a white turban. Mr.

Scott at once recognised him from his resemblance to a portrait in Colonel Olcott's possession. Our attention was then drawn to him, and we all saw him most distinctly. He walked towards a table, and, afterwards turning his face towards us, walked back out of our sight. We hurried forward to get a closer view, but when we reached the room he was gone. We cannot say by what means he departed, but that he did not pass out by the door which leads into the compound we can positively affirm; for that door was full in our view, and he did not go out by it. At the side of the room towards which he walked there was no exit, the only door, and the two windows in that direction, having been boarded and closed up. Upon the table at the spot where he had been standing, lay a letter addressed to one of our number. The handwriting was identical with that of sundry notes and letters previously received from him in divers ways — such as dropping down from the ceiling, etc. The signature was the same as that of the other letters received, and as that upon the portrait above described. Ross Scott, B.C.S., Minnie J. B. Scott, H. S. Olcott, H. P. Blavatsky, M. Moorad, Ali Beg, D. K. Mavalankar, B. S. G. Mullapoorkar. We now come to the remarkable experience of Mr. Eglinton on board the *S.S. Vega*, the vessel being a long distance from land, which is worthy of notice on [Page 13] account of this gentleman being a thorough disbeliever in the existence of the Adepts before this incident. He relates that one of the Mahatmas suddenly appeared in his cabin, and after some conversation disappeared, taking with him a letter which Mr. E. had written. The letter was as follows:—

" *S.S. Vega*, Friday, 24th March, 1882.

" MY DEAR MRS. GORDON, — At last your hour of triumph has come. After the many battles we have had at the breakfast-table regarding K. H.'s existence, my stubborn scepticism as to the wonderful powers possessed by the 'Brothers', I have been forced to a *complete belief* in their being living distinct persons, and just in proportion to my scepticism will be my *firm, unalterable* opinion respecting them. K. H. *appeared* to me in person, and what he told me dumbfounded me."

The above letter was received the *same day*, according to the following statement by Mrs. Gordon: — "At nine o'clock on Friday, 24th, Col. Olcott, Col. Gordon, and myself, sat in the room which had been occupied by Mr. Eglinton. We had a good light, and sat with our chairs placed to form a triangle. In a few minutes Col. Olcott saw outside the open window, the two 'Brothers', whose names are best known to us, and told us so. He saw one of them point his hand towards the air over my head, and I felt something at the same moment fall straight down from above on to my shoulder, and saw it fall at my feet in the direction *towards* the two gentlemen. Col. Olcott and Col. Gordon both saw and heard the letter fall. Col. Olcott had turned his head from the window for a moment, to see what the Brother was pointing at, and so noticed the letter falling from a point about two feet from the ceiling. When he looked again the two 'Brothers' had vanished. There is no verandah outside, and the window is several feet from the ground". In a back number of the **New York World** there is a long account of a reporter's experiences in Forty-seventh Street. The eight or ten persons present saw an "Adept" pass by the window and return. The room was on the second story of the house, and there was no balcony to walk on. The President of the Theosophical Society has publicly declared that he knows fifteen of the Adepts personally. To finish this testimony we may add the following letter: —

"Madras, August 7, 1889.

Dear sir, — In reply to your inquiries I may say that I certify on my word as a *Sanyassi* that I have twice visited Thibet since the year 1879; that I have personally become acquainted with several Mahatmas, among whom were the two known to the outside world as Mahatma 'M.', Mahatma 'K.H.'; that I spent some time in their company; that they told me that they and other Mahatmas were interested in the work of the Theosophical Society; that Mahatma 'M'. told me he had been the (occult) guardian of Madame [Page 14] Blavatsky from her infancy. (Signed) SRI MANSWAMY, Hon. Sec. Cow Memorial Fund of Allahabad." A lady relates that she saw on one occasion, at a meeting in Paris, one of the Adepts standing for a short time behind the chair of one of the party. It will be noted in an examination of the foregoing accounts that witnesses have seen the Mahatmas under very different conditions, viz., both in physical and astral forms. Their absolute identity, however, in all cases is proved by the immediate recognition by the eye-witnesses of the exact likeness between these forms and the portraits of Adepts in possession of the Theosophical Society. Mention of the ability of the Arhats to transport themselves long distances in astral form brings us to the vexed question of the existence of occult powers, or practical magic. Such, however, is the character of this age, the materialistic education and tendencies of Western minds, that it is difficult to obtain an impartial hearing on this subject. Nevertheless we must try, and commence by showing that occidental science is not in possession of a single *fact* that enables it to deny the possibility of the existence of Practical Occultism. What, for instance, does Physical Science know of Matter and Force ? Professor Huxley says, "It is in strictness true that we *know nothing* about the composition of any body, whatever, as it is". Another authority remarks, "What do we know of the atom *apart from its force?*" Does not Professor Agassiz say, "Outside of mathematics the word impossible should never be pronounced?" The Atomic Theory, the very base of gross materialism, has received its death-blow at the hands of Mr. Herbert Spencer. Such confessions of ignorance on the part of eminent scientific authorities, of Nature in its lowest aspect open the door to the possibility of the existence of Practical Magic or Wisdom, understanding the latter to mean, dealing with natural forces of superior power. That such forces exist is the belief of many eminent scientific authorities, of various nationalities, such as the Baron von Reichenbach, Professor Gregory of Edinburgh, Professor Hare of the United States, Thury, Flammarion, Zollner, Butlerof, Aksakoff, Crookes, and A. R. Wallace. And it should be remembered that the opinions of these authorities are founded on many and careful experiments, extending over a long period of time. No doubt to persons unacquainted with the principles of practical Occultism the power of an Adept to transport himself in astral form to remote places, whilst his physical body remains behind, appears a miraculous one, and thoroughgoing Materialists naturally ridicule the idea. But, as the latter on their own confession know nothing of the phenomenon of human consciousness, how it arises, and what it is in itself, suspense of judgment would be more creditable in the matter, especially considering the excellent evidence in existence proving its truth,

No Occultist has ever credited the Adepts with miraculous powers. They have been certainly said to be practical magicians, but never miracle-workers. Miracles are an impossibility. The exercise, however, of rare powers due to a knowledge of occult natural laws is quite another thing. As Professor A. Wilder observes, "The very capacity to imagine the possibility of thaumaturgical powers is itself evidence that they exist. The critic as well as the sceptic is generally inferior to the person or subject that he is reviewing, and therefore is hardly a competent witness. *If there are* counterfeits, somewhere there must have been a genuine original. Let us see, then, what are the principles of this Occult Science.

(1.) There is no miracle. Everything that happens is the result of law — eternal, immutable, ever active.

(2.) Nature is triune; there is visible objective nature; and invisible, in-dwelling, energizing nature, the exact model of the other, and its vital principle; and above these two, *spirit*, source of all forces, alone eternal and indestructible.

(3.) Man also is triune; he is composed of body, soul, and spirit.

(4.) Magic, as a science, is the knowledge of these principles and of the way by which the omniscience and omnipotence of the spirit and its control over nature's forces may be acquired by the individual while still in the body. Magic, as an art, is the application of this knowledge to practice.

(5.) Arcane knowledge misapplied is sorcery; beneficently used, true magic, or wisdom.

(6.) Mediumship is the opposite of adeptship; the medium is the passive instrument of foreign influences, the adept actively controls himself and all inferior potencies.

(7.) All things that ever were, that are, or that will be, having their record upon the astral light, or tablet of the unseen universe, the initiated Adept, by using the vision of his own spirit, can know all that has been known or can be known.

(8.) Races of men differ in spiritual gifts as in other qualities; among some peoples seership naturally prevails, among others mediumship. Some are addicted to Sorcery, and transmit its secret rules of practice from generation to generation, with a range of psychical phenomena, more or less wide, as the result.

(9.) The corner-stone of magic is an intimate practical knowledge of magnetism and electricity, their qualities, correlations, and potencies. There are occult properties in many other minerals equally strange with that in the loadstone, which all practitioners of magic *must* know, and of which ordinary science is wholly ignorant; plants have like mystical properties in a most wonderful degree, and the secrets of the herbs of [Page 16] enchantments are only lost to European science. Magic is spiritual wisdom; Nature the material ally, pupil, and servant of the magician. [“Isis Unveiled”. Vol II, page 590]

Occult Philosophy asserts that magical powers are not the exclusive property of a few persons and unattainable by the great majority, but are, on the contrary, the natural gifts which the human race will attain as a whole in the course of its future development. The Adepts are men of advanced capabilities, having attained their high position by merit only, and passed by immense efforts unscathed through the fierce fires of experience on this plane during many successive lives.

From the point of view now reached by some of the foremost scientists of the age, the dividing space betwixt ordinary and Occult science is not extensive, taking into consideration the lower powers of the latter, and the proficiency of the worldly men of science in ancient Atlantis [We refer here to those of the strictest school of Materialism who deny even now the reality of all Occult phenomena (page 75)] may be

soon approached again by our own. At the present time no scientific authority [*Esoteric Buddhism*] worth naming would deny that natural forces, finer for instance than electricity, may be discovered any day, and, if so, we see how naturally the ordinary and occult sciences join hands. More than one chemist is hunting after the universal substance, believed by many to be that into which all metals can be resolved, along the lines pursued by the ancient Alchemists; nor are these cases by themselves. If time and space permitted, a volume could be filled with reliable accounts of the magical achievements of Ancient Indian, Egyptian, Jewish, and Grecian Adepts and Initiates; of these we have only space for a few. We must here note, however, that the entire history of magical phenomena, from the dawn of history until now, shows their essential oneness throughout, whether they are those ascribed to the Rishis of old India, or of the Egyptian magicians of the time of Pharaoh, or the feats of Simon Magus, Apollonius of Tyana, and Christ [In Talmudic literature Christ is accused of performing his miracles, not as a Jewish prophet, but as an Initiate of the heathen temples] down to the exploits of the Initiates of today. In the 13th century we find some testimony as to the magical powers of the Adepts, coming to Europe from Kublai-Khan, ruler of Tartary. He said, "You see the idolaters (*sic*) can do anything they please, insomuch that when I sit at table, the cups from the middle of the hall come to me full of wine or other liquor, without being touched by anybody, and I drink from them. They control storms, causing them to pass in whatever direction they please, and do many other marvels; whilst, as you know, their idols speak, and give them predictions on whatever [Page 17] subjects they choose". [Book of Ser Marco Polo. Vol II, p 340] The magical phenomena of the present day now deserves some attention. Take the feats of the so-called Hindoo jugglers, although as these, be it remembered, are performed for selfish motives (money, etc.), it is the practice of black magic, and note how they transcend all the performances of conjurors. Are not such exploits as the following magical ? (1) To transform a rupee, firmly clasped in the hand of a sceptic, into a living cobra, the bite of which would prove fatal, as an examination of its fangs would show. (2) To cause a seed chosen at random by the spectators and planted in the first semblance of a flower-pot, furnished by the same sceptics, to grow, mature, and bear fruit in less than a quarter of an hour. (3) To stretch himself on three swords stuck perpendicularly in the ground, sharp points upward, and after a short interval the swords removed, and the juggler lies suspended in the air on nothing, a yard from the ground. Such occurrences are not rare in the East, and have been witnessed by hundreds of persons whose veracity is above suspicion. Sir J. Fayrer [*Nineteenth Century*, December 1889] admits that the Indian serpent charmers can handle harmlessly cobras with fangs intact, although he is evidently at a loss to account for it. The scholar and traveller, Jacolliot, remarks, "Let it suffice to say that in regard to magnetism and spiritism, Europe has yet to stammer over the first letters of the alphabet, and that the Brahmins have reached, in these two departments of learning, results in the way of phenomena that are truly stupefying". The Eastern Occultists gave him this explanation, " You have studied physical nature, and you have obtained through its laws marvellous results — steam, electricity, etc.; for 20,000 years or more we have studied the intellectual forces, we have discovered their laws, and we obtain, by making them act alone or in concert with matter, phenomena still more astonishing than your own". To this day certain Persian sects, the Yakuts of Eastern Siberia, and the Yezidis of Asiatic Turkey, practise Sorcery with horrible and disgusting rites, as Lady Hester Stanhope found out to her cost. Truly the East appears to be the home of magic.

In the West, notably in America, the rise and progress of the Occult phenomena known as Spiritualism has caused a fierce battle, which still continues to rage between the believers and non-believers. On the one hand, some millions of supporters of the phenomena, which they know really occurs; on the other a great mass of sceptics, very few of whom have investigated, or take the trouble to inquire closely into the matter. It is not here necessary to discuss the attitude of Theosophy [Page 18] towards so-called Spiritualism, that is well known; we merely wish to call attention to these magical occurrences, as these bear on our subject. We can certainly find, however, in Mesmerism, now called hypnotism, a justification

for the views on magic held by Occultists; it is here, on this point, that opponents and deniers of Practical Occultism must incur complete defeat. For who, in his senses, knowing anything of this subject, will now deny its reality? And what is Mesmerism but the ancient art of enchantment so long derided by sceptics, but which they must now admit without reservation? The victory is therefore won. Practical Magic is. This long digression on the Occult Arts has been necessitated through their intimate connection with the Adepts; no proper view, in fact, of them and their mission could be taken, until the gross misconceptions generally prevailing about Magic had been swept away, and its real character defined. This has now been done. Inquirers into the truths of Theosophy naturally ask many questions, and seek for information respecting the nature and character of its Great Teachers. We shall, therefore, endeavour to deal now with these matters, and solve the various problems arising in connection therewith to the best of our ability.

It has been shown that the high mountain plateau of Thibet, 12,000 to 15,000 ft. above the sea level, has been inhabited by the Adepts for an immense period of time. The question is often asked, Why do the Masters of Wisdom live in such a barbarous country remote from civilization? Those who put this query have much yet to learn respecting both the nature of the Mahatmas and their teachings. In the first place, those who call Thibet a barbarous country do not know whether it is or not, as foreigners are excluded. Into that part of Thibet where the Adepts reside not even a native can penetrate. The Masters of Wisdom, on their part, do not think very highly of Western civilization, with its reeking slums, jails and workhouses, and whole nationalities armed to the teeth for mutual destruction. These concomitants of advanced Western progress are certainly lacking in the land of the Sages. "Remember the difference we make between material and spiritual civilizations", says a "Master" in Esoteric Buddhism. The reason why the Mahatmas live in remote mountain regions is easily stated. In such high places the atmosphere is naturally the purest and most refined on the earth's surface, and therefore suitable to the cultivation and development of psychic powers. The powerful magnetism engendered and thrown off by ordinary humanity, especially when crowded together in cities, is extremely trying to the sensitive natures of the Adepts. "What to our physical senses are the odours that hang about sewers and slaughter-houses, that and worse to their spiritual senses are the aura that hang about us". It has been [Page 19] objected that if the Arhats are thus compelled to live remote from ordinary humanity, that they can do nothing by direct means for its elevation. This is an error. The Adepts all work for the progress of the human race, on the spiritual and mental planes, subject to Karmic Law. That they can do this is easily recognised, when we reflect that time and space exist not in the same form on these higher planes of being as they do on the physical; as the "*Key to Theosophy*" remarks, the difference between mind and mind can be only one of *state*, not of time or place. It is easy, however, to exaggerate the powers and influence of the Adepts on humanity at large. Hear what one says on this matter: "We are not omnipotent, nay, we are as nothing before the mighty tide of cosmic powers. We can do things to you inexplicable, miraculous, but they are but as the moving of a single mote floating in a wandering sunbeam. Our lives are spent in endeavouring to benefit mankind, but it is only to a limited extent that we can influence the tide of human affairs. As well might one weak human arm seek to stay the rushing waters of the mighty Ganges in flood as we feeble band of Adepts to stem the resistless stream of cosmic impulses. All we can do is, by some groin here, some few hurdles there, somewhat to alter the set of the current, and so avert, here and there, catastrophes that we see impending; or, again, by tiny canals, here and there, to lead off minute portions of the stream to fertilize tracts that, but for our efforts, would have remained deserts. You have asked how it is that, if this be so, the world knows nothing of us and our deeds? Like Nature, in harmony with whose laws and inherent attributes all our operations are carried on, we work in silence and in secret. Like Nature, unthanked and unknown, our work must ever be. All earthly rewards for our work — name, fame, the applause of wondering senates — 'are to us, like the rest of this world's toys, mere illusions, powerless even to *please* those who have once looked behind them into the eternal truths above which

they float; for, as your great apostle, himself an initiate, grandly said, 'The things that are seen are transitory, but the things that are unseen are eternal'. And well for us that it is so, since our records afford too many instances of men, well on the upward path we tread, who, their feet caught in these very snares, have fallen irrevocably as regards this life". [Letter from an Adept] We have stated the difference between the narrow and imperfect views held now by the foremost school of Physical Science, and the wide and comprehensive conceptions of Occult philosophy, on the subject of Human Evolution. But even a fair survey of the former will lead to a recognition of the perfectly natural position occupied by the Mahatmas in a world of progress. We see, for instance, [Page 20] that the advance of Mankind is accompanied by an immense differentiation among its units. Great indeed is the moral and intellectual gap separating the highest and lowest members of even one race from each other. Assuming, then, as consistent evolutionists are bound to do, that human progress is limitless on this plane, and that the powers and capabilities of ordinary men in the distant future will far exceed those possessed at present, with what show of reason can the possibility of the present existence in the East or elsewhere of highly-advanced men such as the Adepts be denied ? The long chain of human progress is in this case lengthened at the top, that is all. We readily grant, however, that profound Western conceit often attempts the task. If space permitted it would be easy also to show, from every point of view, excluding that of gross materialism, that the Mahatmas occupy a definite and clear place in Nature, forming a necessary link between ordinary humanity and the intelligences of higher planes of existence, without whom the continuity of the great system of Universal Evolution would not be preserved.

From time to time it has been asked by inquirers why the Adepts do not give us more of their wisdom. Since the publication of the "Secret Doctrine" this question has lost much of its point. But, apart from this, certain formidable difficulties stand in the way of their teaching, especially Western people, what they know. Firstly, the great difficulty everyone encounters who is ignorant of Sanscrit and the metaphysical refinements of Occult Philosophy, in grasping its real meaning; secondly, the great danger of giving to present selfish mankind the secrets of occult forces, which, if abused, would wreck society. Nor have the Adepts any desire to aid the human race on the path of material progress, which it is now so much inclined to follow on the contrary, they desire to assist in the spiritual evolution of Mankind alone. The following statement from them may throw further light on the matter. " There is very little chance of their opinions being accepted by the general public under present circumstances, unless they are supported by such evidence as is within the reach of the outside world. As it is not always possible to procure such evidence, there is very little use in publishing the information which is in their possession until the public are willing to recognise and admit the antiquity and trustworthiness of their traditions, the extent of their powers, and the vastness of their knowledge. In the absence of such proof as is above indicated, there is every likelihood of their opinions being rejected as absurd and untenable; their motives will no doubt be questioned, and some people may be tempted to deny even the fact of their existence, It is often asked by Hindus as well as by Englishmen why these Adepts are so very unwilling to publish some portion at least of the information they possess regarding [Page 21] the truths of physical science. But, in doing so, they do not seem to perceive the difference between the method by which they obtain their knowledge and the process of modern scientific investigation, by which the facts of nature are ascertained and its laws are discovered. Unless an Adept can prove his conclusions by the same kind of reasoning as is adopted by the modern scientist, they remain undemonstrated to the outside world. It is, of course, impossible for him to develop in a considerable number of human beings such faculties as would enable them to perceive their truth; and it is not always practicable to establish them by the ordinary scientific method, unless all the facts and laws on which his demonstration is to be based have already been ascertained by modern science. No Adept can be expected to anticipate the discovery of the next four or five centuries and prove some grand scientific truth to the entire satisfaction of the educated public after having discovered every fact and law in nature required for the said purpose by such process of

reasoning as would be accepted by them". ["Five Years of Theosophy", page 298] "The Adept has no favour to ask at the hands of conjectural science, nor does he exact from any member of the society blind faith, it being his cardinal maxim that faith should only follow inquiry. The Adept is more than content to remain silent, keeping what he may know to himself, unless worthy seekers wish to share it. He has done so for ages, and can do so for a little longer. Thus he leaves his audience to first verify his statements in every case by the brilliant though rather wavering light of modern science, after which his facts may be either accepted or rejected, at the option of the willing student. In short, the Adept has to remain utterly unconcerned with and unmoved by the issue. He imparts that which it is lawful for him to give out, and deals but with *facts*". ["Five Years of Theosophy," page 345] We stated just now one cause for the isolation of the Mahatmas, but it has been asked: Why do they not appear at intervals, and thus confute all disbelievers in their existence ? This query has been well answered in the *Key to Theosophy*: "The world is neither ready to recognise them, nor to profit by their teaching. Of what use would Professor Clerk Maxwell have been to instruct a class of little boys in their multiplication table?" Again, "an important reason is the inevitable uselessness of any attempts on their part to deal directly with people not spiritually purified. Though one went to them from the dead they would not believe. If an Adept were to visit an ordinary man a dozen times, would he believe ? If the Adept came in the flesh he would think him an impostor; if he came in his astral form, and the man's eyes were opened so as to see him, he would persuade himself it was a trick of his own fancy, or of someone [Page 22] else's devising. No, the mass of mankind, even the mass of the more highly educated Theosophists, who have in no way purified their spiritual natures, possess that spiritual sense or insight which alone renders *conviction* possible, still only in a potential or dormant state". ["Hints on Esoteric Theosophy." page 40]

"A moment's reflection will show that they could not come boldly out face to face with the ignorant and superstitious masses of mankind. Did they do so, preach their doctrines and exhibit their powers, then you will admit that, *especially* in this country (India), nine-tenths of the population would protest as the Adepts might — treat these as gods, worship them, and add another, and most rampant one, to the gross superstitions that already cover the fair fields of human souls with a deadly jungle. Of all things they seek to avoid creating any delusions of this kind". ["Hints on Esoteric Theosophy", page 35]

It is widely supposed by the Western public that the whole body of Adepts is composed of individuals of the same nationality. This is a mistake. In the early part of this century, for instance, an Englishman obtained high rank in the Occult Brotherhood. All ages, all creeds, have produced men with extraordinary powers, through their Divine Selves being partly released from material bonds.

Since the suppression of the archaic mysteries, the Mahatmas make, at stated periods, active efforts on the physical plane to aid the upward progress of mankind through appointed agents. These epochs occur now in the last quarter of each century, and in accordance with the cyclic laws, governing, according to Occult Philosophy, human progress, the "Masters of Wisdom" act. For, as Mr. Judge observes, "during any one cycle the rate or quality of progress appertaining to a different cycle is not possible", [*Epitome of Theosophical Teaching.*] and the Mahatmas are the servants of Karma, and always work in harmony with Nature. Bearing these facts in mind, many incidents in the history of Occultism which appear otherwise inexplicable can be cleared up.

Objection is often raised by critics against the idea that such exalted and wise Beings as the Mahatmas are connected with the Theosophical Society, on the ground that the actions of its Leaders do not seem to be guided by the highest wisdom, at all times, in the conduct of its affairs. This argument shows a

misapprehension of the case altogether. No Occultist has ever said that the Mahatmas guide the Society or its Leaders. They watch over and protect it, that is all, foiling every effort made to destroy it, throwing back on the originators every evil influence directed against it. For they look to the future, to the period that must soon come, when the now flowing tide will ebb, and their efforts cease until 1975 [Page 23] is sounded from the watch towers of time and a new mystic era commences again.

One more link in the chain of evidence proving the existence of the "Masters of Wisdom". Whence comes this stupendous system of Cosmic Evolution, dwarfing all others; as a great critic and sceptic says of the Secret Doctrine: " What Mahatma from his lofty eyrie dictated these volumes of archaic lore, of multitudinous erudition, of Nirvanic teteology, redolent with mammoth strength ? "

We predict that, despite the present attitude of bigoted and prejudiced minds, and that of sundry self-appointed leaders of the unthinking multitude, before the next century passes the pre-eminence of the Old Wisdom Religion will be recognised, and the Sages of the Snowy Himavat receive their due from the truth-seekers of every clime.

It is obvious, the Adepts being but mortal men, that the gaps in their ranks caused by death must be filled up from some other source. This supply comes through the promotion of their pupils, of whom there are several classes. Naturally there are many inquirers who wish to know how those willing to qualify can enter the small old path trod by the sages, and finally attain the exalted plane on which the Masters sit. "The Adept becomes, he is not made", says Eliphas Levi. Hard the task, long the way, steep the ascent to that high eminence. True, the beacon light shines from above, but know, O aspirant, that it is from a monster-haunted shore. " The way to it is enveloped with the black cloud of the soul's despair". " No one knows, until he really tries it, how awful a task it is to subdue *all* his evil passions and animal instincts, and develop his higher nature", says One who is on the Path. Great indeed is the conqueror of Self. Many are called, but few are chosen; so must it always be.

But little more now remains to be said. The great sceptic Voltaire says: "A Testimony is sufficient when it rests on — (1) A great number of very sensible witnesses who agree in having seen *well*. (2) Who are sane, bodily and mentally. (3) Who are impartial and disinterested. (4) Who unanimously agree. (5) Who solemnly certify to the fact". Tried by this canon, the evidence we have been able to bring forward, culled from many sources, is enough and more than enough to prove our case. We are content. We have wished that this important task had fallen to abler hands than ours. It has, however, come to us; we have accepted it, remembering Krishna's words —

This is better, that one do
His own task as he may, even though he fail.
To die performing duty is no ill,
But who seeks other roads shall wander still.

[Page 24] From their mountain home the Masters of Wisdom watch the tides of human affairs ebb and flow. Mighty races come and depart. They view Mankind ardently pursuing the bubbles of the hour, oblivious of the future; mistaking transient illusions, the froth thrown up from the seething sea of life, for realities. Thus will it be until the life cycle of the Aryans must close. When that dread hour, appointed by Great Karma, arrives, and the waves of ocean again roll over the site of our boasting civilization, chanting

a solemn dirge for the dead past, then the accounts of the Fifth Root Race will have been balanced by Eternal Justice.