

A Mahatma's Visit to a Medium

Compiled by Pedro Oliveira

Neither Madame Blavatsky nor her Teachers were normally favourable to Spiritualism and Mediumship. On the contrary, their writings point out the inherent dangers involved in the central spiritualistic practice of mediumship. For example, in writing about dreams, HPB said:

Q. Can there be any connection between a dreamer and an entity in "Kama Loka"?

A. The dreamer of an entity in Kama Loka would probably bring upon himself a nightmare, or would run the risk of becoming "possessed" by the "spook" so attracted, if he happened to be a medium, or one who had made himself so passive during his waking hours that even his higher Self is now unable to protect him. This is why the mediumistic state of passivity is so dangerous, and in time renders the Higher Self entirely helpless to aid or even warn the sleeping or entranced person. Passivity paralyzes the connection between the lower and higher principles. It is very rare to find instances of mediums who, while remaining passive at will, for the purpose of communicating with some higher intelligence, some ex-terrestrial spirit (not disembodied), will yet preserve sufficiently their personal will so as not to break off all connection with the higher Self.

(H. P. Blavatsky Collected Writings, vol. 10, p. 262)

Writing about Stainton Moses, a well-known English medium at the time who wrote under the pseudonym of 'M. A. Oxon', one of the Mahatmas had this to say in his letter to A. P. Sinnett:

When helped to get free from his too material body, absent from it for hours and days sometimes, his empty machine run during that period from afar and by external, living influence, — as soon as back, he would begin labouring under the ineradicable impression of having been all that time the vehicle for another intelligence, a disembodied not embodied Spirit, truth never once flashing across his mind. "Imperator," he wrote to her, "traverses your idea about mediumship. He says there should be no real antagonism between the medium and the adept." Had he used the word "Seer" instead of "medium" the idea would have been rendered more correctly, for a man becomes rarely an adept without being born a natural Seer. Then again. In September, 1875, he knew nothing of the Brothers of the Shadow — our greatest, most cruel, and — why not confess — our most potential [powerful] Enemies. In that year he actually asked the old lady whether Bulwer [-Lytton] had been eating underdone pork chops and dreaming when he described "that hideous Dweller of the Threshold." "Make yourself ready," she answered — "in about twelve months more you will have to face and fight with them." In October, 1876, they had begun their work upon him. "I am fighting" — he wrote — "a hand to hand battle with all the legions of the Fiend for the past three weeks. My nights are made hideous with their torments, temptations and foul suggestions. I see them all around, glaring at me, gabbling, howling, grinning! Every form of filthy suggestion, of bewildering doubt, of mad and shuddering fear is upon me... I can understand Zanoni's Dweller now... I have not wavered yet... and their temptations are fainter, the presence less near, the horror less. . . ."

One night she had prostrated herself before her Superior, one of the few they fear, praying him to wave his hand across the ocean, lest S.M. should die, and the Theos. Soc. lose its best subject. "He must be tried" was the answer. He imagines that + Imper. had sent the tempters because he S.M. was one of those Thomases who must see; he would not believe that + could not help their coming. Watch

over him he did — he could not drive them away unless the victim, the neophyte himself, proved the strongest. But did these human fiends in league with the Elementaries prepare him for a new life as he thought they would? Embodiments of those adverse influences which beset the inner Self struggling to be free and to progress, they would never have returned had he successfully conquered them by asserting his own independent WILL, by giving up his mediumship, his passive will. Yet they did.

(The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett, letter no. 18)

In spite of the above mentioned statements, there was one medium that did find extraordinary favour with both HPB and her Teachers. He was William Eglinton (1857-1933), a respected English medium who had lived in India between 1881 and 1882. Although he never met Col. Olcott and Madame Blavatsky while in India he eventually did meet them in London in 1884. Writing in *The Theosophist* (April 1882), HPB gives the reasons why the Founders decided not to contact Eglinton in India:

The enemies of Spiritualism and Theosophy can rejoice and triumph, and the Calcutta bigoted and dyspeptic fogies—old or young—are invited to render thanks to their respective gods. Mr. Eglinton is gone having left for England on the S.S. Vega on the 16th ult. And now, for some time to come at least, they are allowed a respite and can draw a long breath of relief. Newspaper accounts of levitations, of materialization and direct writing, of instantaneous transfer of articles and letters through distances of thousands of miles, and many other weird and inexplicable phenomena may trouble their dreams no longer. The nightmare of a new religious belief—with its genuine, palpable, demonstrated “miracles” to support its claims; a belief arresting the progress, if not entirely superseding the religions based upon blind faith and unverifiable traditions no better than fairy tales, has vanished and dissolved behind the great ocean mists, like one of Macbeth’s unclean witches. . . .

Well, time alone will show which of the two now prevailing superstitions is calculated to survive. Whether it is occult phenomena—based upon actual, though yet undiscovered, correlations of natural forces; or—belief in Divine and Satanic “miracles.” Methinks, faith in the “miracles” of an Infinite, personal NOBODY, and in those of his hereditary foe—the cloven-footed, horned, and caudated gentleman, the Lord of the hot regions—is more calculated to disgrace our age of agnosticism and blank denial, than belief in the spiritual agencies. Meanwhile, Mr. Eglinton is gone, and with him the best opportunity that was ever offered to India to investigate and vindicate the claims of her old world-renowned sages and philosophers—is also gone. Thus for some time at least, will the assertions of the Hindu Shastras, the Buddhist and Zoroastrian books of wisdom, to the effect that there exist occult powers in man as well as in nature—be still held as the unscientific vagaries of the ancient savages.

Since the appearance of the editorial, “A Medium Wanted” (*The Theosophist*, May, 1881), in which Mr. Eglinton was mentioned for the first time, and our readers shown that the wonderful phenomena produced through him were attested to over the signature of such witnesses as Mr. A. R. Wallace, Sir Garnet Wolseley, General Brewster, Mr. Robert S. Wyld, LL.D., Edin., M. Gustave von Vay, and a host of others—from that day to this one we never met him personally, nor even held a correspondence with him. We refused going to Calcutta to meet him, and felt obliged to deny ourselves and our numerous members the instructive pleasure of seeing him here, as was several times proposed. We have done so intentionally. Feeling that we had no right to subject him to insulting suspicions—such as we had ourselves to suffer from, and which once we were brought together would be sure to follow in our trail—we abstained from seeing him, and spoke even of his work but casually, once or twice in this journal and only for the purpose of giving publicity to some wonderful phenomena of his. Our cautious policy inspired by a natural feeling of delicacy—more for his sake

than our own—was misunderstood and misinterpreted by our best friends, who attributed it to a spirit of opposition to everything connected with Spiritualism or its phenomena. No greater mistake was ever made, no more erroneous misconception ever set afloat. For now that Mr. Eglinton is gone, and with him every danger from malicious slanders has disappeared, we give our reasons publicly for such a “policy of noninterference,” on our part, and gladly publish a full recognition of the good that gentleman has achieved in India. If he has failed to convince the general public and the masses, it is because, knowing of him, they yet knew nothing of his wonderful gifts, having never had an opportunity of witnessing his phenomena. The séances given were limited to a small fraction of the Anglo-Indian Society, to educated ladies and gentlemen—worth convincing. And so much Mr. Eglinton has most undoubtedly achieved with great success. During the several months he passed in Calcutta, and notwithstanding the determined and ferocious opposition coming from ingrained sceptics as much as from religious Zealots, no one who came to his séances ever went away with a shadow of doubt but that what he had seen was pakkâ genuine phenomena, which to whatsoever agency it might be attributable was no sleight of hand or clever conjuring. The life of a medium—especially that of a genuine and honest medium, born with the instincts of a gentleman—is a hard and a bitter one. It is one of daily mental tortures, of deep-felt and everlasting anxiety, lest through the brutal interference and precipitation of the first dissatisfied sceptic, who imagines he detects fraud where there is but the manifestation of a weird genuine phenomenon, his hard-won reputation for honesty should be ruined in a few moments. This is an agony that few of the investigators, even among the Spiritualists are able to fully realize. There are so few genuine, honest mediums among the professionals of that class, that accustomed to the feigned agitation—as easily soothed as exhibited—and to the feigned indifference, manifested at the first symptoms of suspicion by the mediums of the tricky crew, the Spiritualists themselves become insensible to the degree of mental suffering inflicted upon the true sensitive who feels he is unjustly suspected. And such an insufferable state of mind, we suspect, must have fallen to the lot of Mr. Eglinton during his stay in India. Notwithstanding that he lived under the strong protection of devoted friends, we have reasons to believe that it was that, which made him hasten the day of his departure. At all events, it would have been in store for him had he remained much longer in Calcutta. While disgusting intrigues were set on foot by the public enemies of truth, who plotting secretly, as they always do, wrote unguarded letters to Bombay (which we have seen and read); in Calcutta, peremptory clamouring for séances more open to the public than was thought advisable, was becoming with every day louder, and all his watchful friends could do was to keep the curious mob at arm’s length. They have done well; for that mob—which in many cases may include so-called ladies and gentlemen—would have surely brought in with the tide Calcutta Lankesters, Dr. Beards, and other like benefactors of “deluded” humanity. Therefore, for Mr. Eglinton’s sake, we are glad he has left just at the right time. No greater misfortune could have befallen the Theosophical Society, and with it Spiritualism, in the present psychologically undeveloped state of mind of the Anglo-Indian Society, were its ignorant, but would-be all-wise areopagus to take it into its clever head that a medium was exposed, when de facto he would be perhaps only suspected, and very unjustly too. Sad experience has taught us in the past that it is not sufficient that a medium should be all that is honest and fair, but that he had yet to so appear. The supposed cheating of Dr. Slade owing to the undoubted one of Mr. Lankester and Co. has now crystalized itself in India into an axiomatic truth. The fact that the great American medium, has never yet been proved guilty on any incontrovertible testimony, disappears from the memory of the scoffer, the fool and the sceptic, to leave instead but the one vivid recollection—that of his unjust trial and disgraceful sentence in London.

Alive to the above, we would never advise a professional medium, unless he is a coarse-fibered charlatan, to bring to India his “angel-guides.” No gentleman ought to ever run such a risk. Yet we

must say that in the case in hand the loss is decidedly India's, and not Mr. Eglinton's. Some hope to see him back in June, but we doubt whether it will be so. Many will be those who will regret his departure, and the opportunities lost unless he returns. But it is too late in the day for useless regrets. If his friends are really worthy of that name, and if they are anxious to show themselves above mere phenomena-hunters, who regard the medium in no better light than an instrument they have hired at so much per hour, let them now use their influence to get Mr. Eglinton into a position which would place him above every risk and peril of professional mediumship. Among his proselytes we have heard of many an Honourable, and of more than one official in high and influential position, for whom it would be an easy task to undertake. — It now remains to be seen whether any one of them will lift up a finger for the sake of SCIENCE, TRUTH and FACT.

(BCW vol. 4, pp. 83-87)

Below are several passages from The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett regarding Eglinton and the Mahatmas' perception of him. They make for quite interesting reading:

And now, to your laugh in September last as to the imaginary dangers to him who produces phenomena, dangers growing in size in proportion to the magnitude of the phenomena so produced, and the impossibility to refute them. Remember the proposed test of the Times to be brought here. My good friend, if the trifling phenomena (for they are trifling in comparison with what could and might be done) shown by Eglinton provoked such bitter hatred, evoking before him scenes of imprisonment owing to false witnesses, what would not be the fate of the poor "Old Lady"! You are yet barbarians with all your boasted civilization.

And now to Morya. (This strictly between us and you must not breathe it even to Mrs. Gordon). Eglinton was preparing to depart leaving on poor Mrs. G.'s mind the fear that she had been deceived; that there were no "Brothers" since Eglinton had denied their existence and that the "Spirits" were silent as to that problem. Last week then M., stalking in, into the motley crowd took the spooks by the skin of their throats and, — the result was the unexpected admission of the Brothers, the actual existence and the honour claimed of a personal acquaintance with the "Illustrious." The lesson for you and others, derived from the above, may be useful in future — events having to grow and to develop.

(ML no. 54)

I will try my best to make of him a vegetarian and a teetotaler. Total abstinence from flesh and liquor are very wisely prescribed by Mr. Hume, if he would have good results. In good hands E. [Eglinton] will do an immense good to the T.S. in India, but for this he has [to go] through a training of purification. M. had to prepare him for six weeks before his departure; otherwise it would have been impossible for me to project into his atmosphere even the reflection of my "double." I told you already, my kind friend, that what he saw was not me. Nor will I be able to project that reflection for you — unless he is thoroughly purified. Therefore, as the matter now stands I have not a word to say against Mr. Hume's conditions as expressed in his last "official" letter, except in congratulating him with all my heart. For the same reason it is impossible for me to answer him and his questions just now. Let him have patience, pray, in the E. matter. There are dirty conspiracies set on foot, germinating in London, among the spiritualists; and I am not at all sure that E. will resist the tide that threatens to submerge him unless they obtain from him at least a partial recantation. We departed from our policy and the experiment was made with him on the "Vega" solely for the benefit of some Anglo-Indian theosophists. Mr. Hume had expressed his surprise that even E.'s "spirits" should know nothing of us, and that despite the interests of the cause we did not show ourselves even to him. On

the other hand, the Calcutta spiritualists and Mrs. Gordon with them were triumphant, and Colonel G. followed suit. The “dear departed ones” were for the short period of his stay at Calcutta in odour of sanctity, and the “Brothers” rather low in public estimation. Many of you thought that our appearing to E. would “save the situation” and force Spiritualism to recognise the claims of Theosophy. Well, we complied with your wishes. M. and I were determined to show to you that there was no ground for such hopes. The Bigotry and Blindness of the Spiritualists fed by the selfish motives of professional mediums are rampant and the opponents are now desperate. We must allow the natural course of events to develop, and can only help on the coming crisis by having a hand in the increasing frequency of exposures. It would never do for us to force events, as it would be only making “martyrs” and allowing these the pretext for a new craze.

(ML no. 63)

Good friend, I will not, in sending forth the letter, reiterate again the many remarks that might be made respecting the various objections which we have the right to raise against Spiritual phenomena and its mediums. We have done our duty; and, because the voice of truth came thro’ a channel which few liked, it was pronounced as false, and along with it — Occultism. The time has gone by to argue, and the hour when it will be proved to the world that Occult Science instead of being, in the words of Dr. R. Chambers — “superstition itself,” as they may be disposed to think it, will be found the explanation and the extinguisher of all superstitions — is nearby. For reasons that you will appreciate, though at first you will be inclined to consider (in regard to yourself) unjust, I am determined to do that, for once, which hitherto I have never done; namely, to personate myself under another form, and, perhaps — character. Therefore, you need not grudge Eglinton the pleasure of seeing me personally, to talk with me, and — be “dumbfounded” by me, and with the results of my visit to him, on board “The Vega.” This will be done between the 21st and the 22nd of this month and, when you read this letter, will be a “vision of the past,” — if Olcott sends to you the letter to-day.

(ML no. 55)

Virginia Hanson, the American Theosophist who was a lifelong student of The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett, had this to say in her notes on the above mentioned letter which were included in the chronological edition of the book, originally published by The Theosophical Publishing House in Manila, The Philippines, in 1993:

In a letter written to Sinnett by Eglinton from England dated April 28, 1882, Eglinton says: “I am certain if I were in any other position than that of a medium gaining his living by his gifts, the Bros. would be enabled to manifest with great clearness and certainty.” The Mahatma K.H. inserted a note in this letter, in transit, saying: “This — to prove that living men can appear — thro’ such excellent mediums — in London, even tho’ themselves at Tsi-gadze, Tibet.”

In view of the above, it is not surprising that when C. W. Leadbeater decided to write a letter to one of the Mahatmas, offering himself as a pupil to him, he asked William Eglinton for help. This is what CWL wrote in his short autobiographical book *How Theosophy Came to Me*:

Mr. Eglinton

In the course of my inquiries into spiritualism I had come into contact with most of the prominent mediums of that day, and had (as I have said before) seen every ordinary phenomena about which one reads in books upon that subject. One medium with whom I had much to do was Mr. Eglinton; and although I have heard stories told against him, I must bear witness that in all my own dealings with

him I found him most straightforward, reasonable and courteous. He had various so-called controls—one a Red Indian girl who called herself Daisy, and chattered volubly on all occasions, appropriate or inappropriate. Another was a tall Arab, named Abdullah, considerably over six feet, who never said anything, but produced remarkable phenomena, and often exhibited feats showing great strength. I have seen him simultaneously lift two heavy men, one in each hand.

A third control who frequently put in an appearance was Ernest; he comparatively rarely materialized, but frequently spoke with direct voice, and wrote a characteristic and well-educated hand. One day in conversation with him something was said in reference to the Masters of the Wisdom; Ernest spoke of Them with the most profound reverence, and said that he had on various occasions had the privilege of seeing Them. I at once enquired whether he was prepared to take charge of any message or letter for Them, and he said that he would willingly do so, and would deliver it when opportunity offered, but he could not say exactly when that would be.

I may mention here that in connection with this I had later a good example of the unreliability of all such communications. Some considerable time afterwards some spiritualist wrote to Light explaining that there could not possibly be such persons as the Masters, because Ernest had positively told him that there were not. I wrote to the same newspaper to say that I had it on precisely the same valueless authority that there were Masters, and that Ernest knew Them well. In each case Ernest had evidently reflected the thought of the questioner, as such entities so often do.

To return to my story, I at once provisionally accepted Ernest's offer. I said that I would write a letter to one of these Great Masters, and would confide it to him if my friend and teacher, Mr. Sinnett, approved. At the mention of this name the "spirits" were much perturbed; Daisy especially was very angry, and declared that she would have nothing to do with Mr. Sinnett under any circumstances; "Why, he calls us spooks!" she said, with great indignation. However, I blandly stuck to my point that all I knew of Theosophy had come to me through Mr. Sinnett, and that I therefore did not feel justified in going behind his back in any way, or trying to find some other means of communication without first consulting him.

Finally, though with a very bad grace, the spirits consented to this, and the séance presently terminated. When Mr. Eglinton came out of his trance, I asked him how I could send a letter to Ernest, and he said at once that if I would let him have the letter he would put it in a certain box which hung against the wall, from which Ernest would take it when he wished. I then posted off to Mr. Sinnett, and asked his opinion of all this. He was at once eagerly interested, and advised me promptly to accept the offer and see what happened.

A Letter to the Master

Thereupon I went home and wrote three letters. The first was to the Master K. H., telling Him with all reverence that ever since I had first heard of Theosophy my one desire had been to place myself under Him as a pupil. I told Him of my circumstances at the time, and asked whether it was necessary that the seven years of probation of which I had heard should be passed in India. I put this letter in a small envelope and sealed it carefully with my own seal. Then I enclosed it in a letter to Ernest in which I reminded him of his promise, and asked him to deliver this letter for me, and to bring back an answer if there should be one. That second letter I sealed in the same manner as the first, and then I enclosed that in turn with a short note to Eglinton, asking him to put it in his box, and let me know whether any notice was taken of it. I had asked a friend who was staying with me to examine the seals of both the letters with a microscope, so that if we should see them again we might know whether anyone had

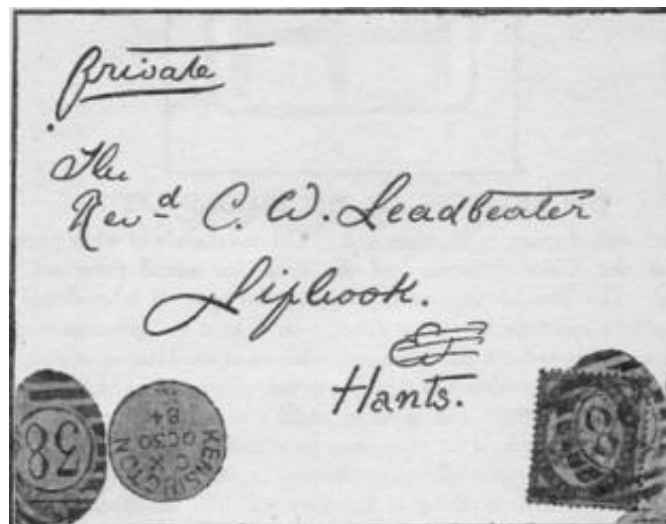
been tampering with them. By return of post I received a note from Mr. Eglinton, saying that he had duly put the note for Ernest into his box, and that it had already vanished, and further that if any reply should come to him he would at once forward it.

A few days later I received a letter directed in a hand which was unknown to me, and on opening it I discovered my own letter to Ernest apparently unopened, the name "Ernest" on the envelope being crossed out, and my own written underneath it in pencil. My friend and I once more examined the seal with a microscope, and were unable to detect any indication whatever that any one had tampered with the letter, and we both agreed that it was quite impossible that it could have been opened; yet on cutting it open I discovered that the letter which I had written to the Master had disappeared. All that I found inside was my own letter to Ernest, with a few words in the well-known handwriting of the latter written on its blank page, to the effect that my letter had been duly handed to the Great Master, and that if in the future I should ever be thought worthy to receive an answer Ernest would gladly bring it to me.

I waited for some months, but no reply came, and whenever I went to Eglinton's séances and happened to encounter Ernest, I always asked him when I might expect my answer. He invariably said that my letter had been duly delivered, but that nothing had yet been said about an answer, and that he could do no more. Six months later I did receive a reply, but not through Ernest, and in it the Master said that though He had not received the letter (nor, as He remarked, was it likely that He should, considering the nature of the messenger) He was aware of what I had written and He now proceeded to answer it.

Mahatma K.H.'s reply to CWL's letter can be seen at:

http://www.cwlworld.info/html/letters_from_master.html



Facsimile of the envelope of the first letter from the Master to CWL.

Source: *The "K.H." Letters to C. W. Leadbeater*, with a commentary by C. Jinarajadasa