

C. W. Leadbeater's Letter to a Correspondent, Adyar, mid-1931:

On Annie Besant, the HPB Centenary issue of *The Theosophist* and the 'Back to Blavatsky Movement'

Compiled by Pedro Oliveira

[This letter by CWL is a handwritten copy of a letter he sent to one of his correspondents. Internal information in the text suggests that it was written sometime in July 1931, while he was at Adyar. In it he makes reference to the "Back to Blavatsky" movement. Several exponents of this movement charged C. W. Leadbeater and Annie Besant with not pursuing the original teachings given out by Madame Blavatsky. Interestingly enough, HPB declared that 'Orthodoxy in Theosophy is not possible nor desirable'. The letter also contains a touching description of the elderly Annie Besant interacting with guests at tea party at Adyar, two years before she died. Also included in this text are the cover and table of contents for the August 1931 special issue of The Theosophist, plus a reproduction of the Blavatsky Centenary Celebrations at Adyar, which took place on 11 and 12 August 1931. One of the speakers on that occasion was Mr Bertram Keightley, who had acted as one of the 'prosecutors' at the Advisory Board meeting in London, on 16 May 1906, when charges against Mr Leadbeater were considered.]



Annie Besant in 1931

Our President made another attempt last Sunday to attend her weekly tea party, and this time she was successful. Without making any announcement beforehand, she rose and dressed herself, and then called upon us to help her down the stairs. The proceeding was unexpected, the doctor was not there, but Raja, Sri Ram Lakshman and I managed between us, for of course she rejected the chair. Naturally even with such assistance as we could give, the descent fatigued her, but after a few minutes' rest at the bottom of the stairs she was able to walk across Hall and climb laboriously into her car, which then

took very slowly to the Banyan-Tree, and even under its special trilithon into the very heart of it. We suggested that she remain in the car, but she preferred to alight, and we put her in her customary armchair at one of the tables. She was received with demonstrations of joy, the people clapping their hands and cheering enthusiastically.

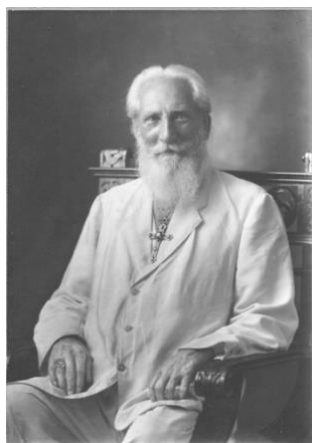
A cup of coffee and sandwiches were promptly provided, and after resting and after resting for awhile she rose, took Ranga Reddy's arm, and walked very slowly round among the quests, speaking a word or two to each, and patting the children's heads in blessing. Altogether she stayed there about three-quarters of an hour, and then departed amidst renewed enthusiasm. By that time the doctor had arrived, so he was on hand to help I the ascent of those thirty-three stairs. As might be expected, she was very tired at the time, but next morning she showed not the slightest trace of any ill effects, and in fact seemed distinctly more sprightly than usual, and very proud of her achievement.

I hear that an engineer has at last been found capable of setting up a temporary man-power lift for her, such as we had a few years ago, and I hope it will be erected in a week or two. As soon as Ijuurman (sic) returns from Holland we shall have something more civilized and permanent, worked either by electricity or water-power. She repeated that tiresome climb up and down on Monday in order to go for a short drive in her car, so we may say that she is to some extent resuming her ordinary life.



Madame Blavatsky in 1888

We are all very busy correcting the proofs of the August Theosophist, which will be rather a remarkable number; it ought to reach you by the next mail after this. It is issued in commemoration of the centenary of Madame Blavatsky's birth, and is to consist almost entirely of her own words. All sorts of early letters and articles of hers, most of them hitherto unpublished, have been dug up out of our archives, and a very curious mixture they make. Raja [C. Jinarajadasa] has taken the greatest care to have them reproduced exactly as she wrote them, and as in those early days her English was very imperfect, there are all sorts of misspellings, wrong words and mistakes in grammar and punctuation, so that some of the sentences are hardly intelligible. Readers will probably think that is all due to careless proof-reading, but it isn't. You have it all just in its original form. Some of it is controversial, perhaps not specially edifying; but it all helps to show her as she was. One of the articles is a very fine defence of Colonel Olcott, and that is valuable, because she so often had occasion to find fault with him.



CWL at Adyar 1930

During the last few years many people have been accusing us of inventing a new Theosophy, and departing widely from the original teachings, and they have even raised a war-cry: "Back to Blavatsky!" In reading over these very early pronouncements I was very much impressed by exactly the opposite idea, for I saw how closely we are still following the lines which she indicated. Even the scheme of forming groups of students bound together by the strongest ties of affection is clearly enunciated from the beginning, though it was only of late years in Sydney and Huizen that we began to put it into practice. A certain number of men and women were gathered together into one household in Avenue Road last century, but they were constantly squabbling among themselves, and there was no attempt to form a real group. I prefer Harold's form of the slogan – not "Back to Blavatsky", but "Forward with Blavatsky"! I don't know that the August Theosophist will exactly interest you, but it contains useful material.

With very much love

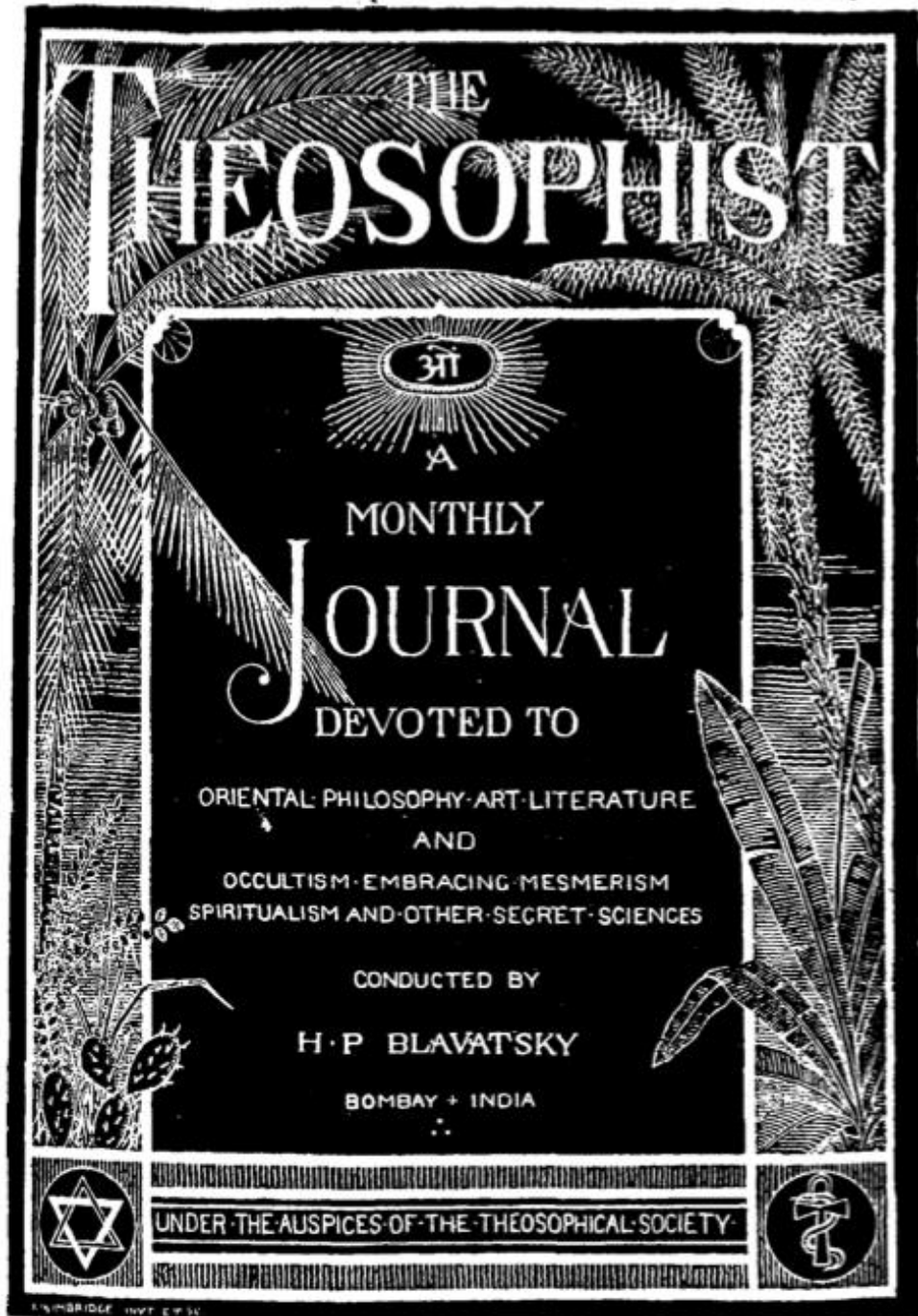
I am ever

Yours most affectionately

Registered M. 91



H. P. B. Centenary Number



ORIGINAL COVER OF THE THEOSOPHIST, 1879

August, 1931

THE THEOSOPHIST

A MAGAZINE OF BROTHERHOOD, ORIENTAL PHILOSOPHY, ART, LITERATURE AND OCCULTISM

Founded by H. P. BLAVATSKY and H. S. OLCOTT

with which is incorporated LUCIFER, founded by H. P. BLAVATSKY

Edited by ANNIE BESANT, P.T.S.

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PROGRAMME OF THE
BLAVATSKY CENTENARY
CELEBRATIONS



ADYAR
11 AND 12 AUGUST, 1931

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BLAVATSKY CENTENARY
CELEBRATIONS



ADYAR
11 AND 12 AUGUST, 1931

TUESDAY, 11 AUGUST

- 9-10 a.m. GRATITUDE TO H. P. B., by the President and General Secretaries of National Societies.
- 2.30-3.30 p.m. EXHIBITION OF H. P. B. MEMENTOES, etc., and Escorted Tour of Headquarters.
- 4-5 p.m. PRESIDENT'S TEA PARTY to Residents and Visiting Members and Friends, under the Banyan Tree.
- 5.30-6.30 p.m. RECOLLECTIONS OF H. P. B. and THE SECRET DOCTRINE. Mr. Bertram Keightley.
- 8-9 p.m. THE LIFE AND WORK OF H. P. B.—Lantern Lecture by Mr. C. Jinarajadasa.

WEDNESDAY, 12 AUGUST

- 7.30 a.m. UNIVERSAL PRAYERS.
- 8 a.m. E. S. GENERAL—E. S. room, upstairs.
- 9.15-10.15 a.m. READINGS FROM H. P. B., by various members.
- 11 a.m. CENTENARY BANQUET (Indian Style)—Bhojanasala.
- 12-1 p.m. DINNER TO THE SOCIETY'S EMPLOYEES—Damodar Gardens.
- 2.30-3 p.m. INAUGURATION OF THE BLAVATSKY MUSEUM, in the new Museum Rooms, near the Publishing House.
- 3-3.40 p.m. THE SECRET DOCTRINE—Lecture by Mr. Ernest Wood.
- 5-6.30 p.m. PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS OF H. P. B., by various speakers.
- 8-9 p.m. TO BE ANNOUNCED.

All the Meetings will be held in the HEADQUARTERS HALL, except as otherwise mentioned.