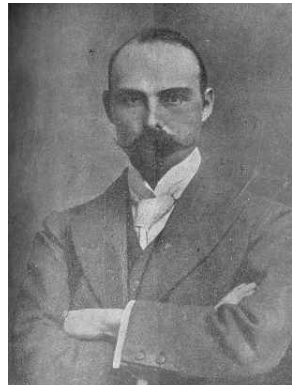


Two Leading Students of H. P. Blavatsky Review CWL's Books

Compiled by Pedro Oliveira



Bertram Keightley



G.R.S. Mead

Madame Blavatsky settled in London in 1887, where she concluded the writing of her magnum opus, The Secret Doctrine, published in 1888. The brothers Archibald and Bertram Keightley were pivotal in the editorial preparations for that epoch-making book.

G. R. S. Mead was personal secretary to HPB and a scholar in his own right. His writings focused on Platonism, Neo-Platonism, the Ancient Mysteries and, above all, Gnosticism. Both Bertram Keightley and G.R.S. Mead were closely associated to HPB.

We include below two book reviews. Bertram Keightley reviews C. W. Leadbeater's book The Astral Plane and G.R.S. Mead reviews CWL's The Devachanic Plane. Both were published in Lucifer, the journal founded by HPB in London in 1887: Bertrand Keightley's review of The Astral Plane was published in the May 1895 issue and G.R.S. Mead's review of The Devachanic Plane appeared in the November 1896 issue of the same journal.

The value of these two reviews lies in the fact that each writer assessed CWL's books on their own merits, free from the bias of the 'received tradition' about him, and of the so-called 'Neo-Theosophy' ideology, created by 'Blavatskyan' fundamentalists in the early part of the twentieth-century, which insisted – and still insists – that books by Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater are not Theosophy.

Both reviewers sincerely welcomed CWL's contribution to the investigation of subtler planes of existence and commended his efforts that enriched the wide horizon of Theosophical research, which cannot be limited by any book, by any author or by any formulation of its core principles. As HPB wisely said, 'Orthodoxy in Theosophy is a thing neither possible nor desirable.'

THE ASTRAL PLANE.

By C. W. Leadbeater. [Transactions of the London Lodge T. S., No. 24. Theosophical Publishing Society, 7, Duke Street, W.C. Price 1s. net.]

It is a long time since any contribution, even approaching in value to these ninety pages, has been made to our literature in the special department to which they relate. We have had various manuals, pamphlets and tracts, articles showing abundance of learning and scholarship, works of great metaphysical ability, and lectures illuminating the deeper meaning of the ancient Hindu scriptures. But since H. P. B. left us, we

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have had few, if any, contributions based on the first hand study of the subtler realms of nature, not mere compilations full of book-learning drawn from the works of the ancient mystics, or from those of our revered H. P. B., their modern interpreter.

I do not pretend that this Department of Knowledge is in any sense most necessary, or a comprehension of it vitally important to the *true* progress of the Theosophic student, until in the course of his orderly education he comes to investigate it for himself. On the contrary, I desire most distinctly and emphatically to guard myself against being so misunderstood. But I do maintain that in the effort to obtain a competent, accurate and intellectually sound understanding of the universe, wherein we form a part—and this surely is a part of Theosophy—such work as this is of the very greatest value and assistance. And more, the manner in which the results of this research into nature's subtler aspects is brought forward, the moderation, modesty and care which are everywhere shown, deserve the praise and the imitation of all our workers.

The place occupied by Mr. Leadbeater's present paper is that of one of the few real efforts that have been made to do actual work upon the lines of the third object of our Society; and it must not be overlooked that the demands of scientific method have been so far satisfied that every statement made and fact given has been verified and checked by at least two independent observers, as well as by reference to students more advanced in practical familiarity with this region of nature.

After a few introductory pages, Mr. Leadbeater plunges *in medias res*, and gives one of the best and most carefully worked out sketches of the essential characteristics of the scenery of the astral plane hitherto attempted. He then proceeds to deal with its inhabitants, whom he classifies into three main divisions: human, non-human, and artificial. The last class, strange as its name may seem, is a well-marked one, and the name chosen for it is sufficiently descriptive to indicate the nature of the difference marking it off from the human and non-human classes. The human denizens of Kâmaloka naturally divide themselves into such as possess a living physical body on this terrestrial plane, and such as do not, *i.e.*, into what may roughly be called the living and the dead; each of these again having various sub-divisions. Of the non-human inhabitants of the astral world, Mr. Leadbeater recognises, as belonging to our own system of evolution, four sub-divisions, viz., the Elemental Essence, the Kâmarûpas of animals, Nature Spirits, and the Devas. There are three main sub-

divisions among the artificial class, viz., Elementals formed unconsciously, Elementals formed consciously, and what are here termed Human Artificials. The student must be referred to the book itself for details as to the exact bearing and significance of these various classes and subdivisions. Here they can only be mentioned to show how orderly and careful Mr. Leadbeater has been in his work, in which, too, will be found a large amount of quite new information, as well as practically the whole of the information on the subject of the astral world which may be picked up from other writers. Indeed, to the well-read student, it will be strong evidence of the accuracy and reliability of the direct observations upon which the statements here made depend, when he finds how much of what he will find there can be corroborated and confirmed from his previous reading.

The concluding pages are devoted to a brief but clear and very instructive analysis of the various ways in which different classes of phenomena can be produced; both those ordinarily met with at spiritualistic *séances*, and those more peculiarly associated with the higher developments of human faculty and power falling under the head of Occultism.

All students will be grateful to Mr. Leadbeater for so admirable an exposition of a very difficult and complicated subject, and will feel that the London Lodge is worthily keeping up the reputation for good work and earnest study which it has enjoyed since the days when the late Dr. Anna Kingsford was its President.

B. K.

REVIEWS.

THE DEVACHANIC PLANE.

By C. W. Leadbeater. [T. P. S., price 1s. net.]

THE intensely interesting and instructive series of articles on the Devachanic Plane which appeared in our pages from the pen of our valued colleague, C. W. Leadbeater, have been issued as "Theosophical Manual No. VI." Every serious student of occultism who has made a careful analysis of the literature of modern "spiritualism," and is familiar with researches into comparative religion and ancient psychology, will at once recognize the importance of the first-hand investigations of some of our members, which Mr. Leadbeater has combined and systematized in *The Devachanic Plane*. We have now not only for the first time in Theosophical literature a clear and comprehensible exposition of the nature of the first two subjective states of existence, but also, and above all, we have at last a few instances on record of the application of scientific methods to mystical research. The results arrived at are not the chance visions of a solitary mystic, but the checked investigations of several trained students of occultism. Needless to say, this little book is absolutely indispensable to every student.

G. R. S. M.