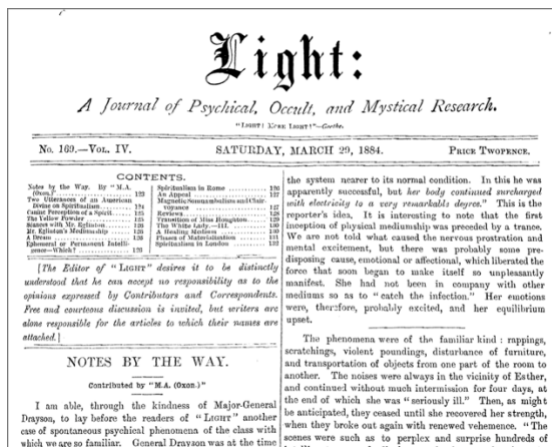


When CWL met HPB in London

Compiled by Pedro Oliveira

This article presents the historical background of the brief meeting between Madame Blavatsky and C. W. Leadbeater in London, in April 1884. She and Col. Olcott were in London to address serious problems in the London Lodge of the TS. At the centre of the crisis was a dispute between Dr Anna Kingsford and A. P. Sinnett, caused by their ideological divide. The brief meeting with HPB would have far reaching consequences for CWL's life as well as for the work of the Theosophical Society.

In his short memoir, *How Theosophy Came to Me*, originally published in 1930, CWL reminisces about that first contact:



Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott both accompanied our party to Mr. Sinnett's house, and stayed there until a late hour, Madame Blavatsky expressing vigorous condemnation of the inefficiency of the officials in not managing the [London Lodge] meeting better. I was of course presented to her, and Mr. Sinnett took occasion to tell her of my letter to the spiritualistic journal *Light* [which HPB later incorporated into her Scrapbook; it is reproduced at the end of this article.] on the subject of the spirit Ernest's disavowal of our Masters. When she heard that

little story she looked at me very searchingly and remarked: 'I don't think much of the clergy, for I find most of them hypocritical, bigoted and stupid; but that was a brave action, and I thank you for it. You have made a good beginning; perhaps you may do something yet.' (*How Theosophy Came to Me* by C. W. Leadbeater, The Theosophical Publishing House, Madras, India, 2001, pp. 43.)

Col. Olcott, the President-Founder, put on record his thoughts about the inevitable split in the London Lodge:



H. S. Olcott

"The annual election of officers by the London Lodge was to come off on the following day, so I had no time to lose. I made Mrs. Kingsford the offer to give her a charter for a separate Branch of her own, to be called The Hermetic T.S., first having discussed it with Mr. C. C. Massey, her sincere friend and mine. The offer was accepted, and the election passed off harmoniously; Mr. G. B. Finch being chosen President, Mr. Sinnett, Vice-President and Secretary, and Miss Arundale, Treasurer. Things were proceeding smoothly, in the usual manner, when they were interrupted by the sensational appearance of H.P.B., whom I had left in Paris, but who took a flying trip so as to be present at this meeting. The Kingsford-Maitland party, who had notified me in advance that they would not be candidates for re-election to office in the London Lodge, T.S., presented me, before leaving, a

formal application for a chapter for the new Branch, which I promised to grant. On the 9th (April) the meeting for organisation was held at the chambers of Mr. Massey, and the “Hermetic Lodge, T.S.” became an established fact. Besides Mrs. Kingsford, Mr. Maitland, Mr. Kirby, and Mr. Massey, there were present Lady Wilde, her sons Oscar and William, and the wife and daughters of the late Dr. Keneally. These three ladies applied for, and were admitted into, membership. Mohini M. Chatterji accompanied me, and made one of the excellent addresses on the occasion.” (*Old Diary Leaves*, Third Series, by H. S. Olcott, The Theosophical Publishing House, Madras, India, 1972, pp. 97-98)

Dr Archibald Keightley (1859-1930), a prominent member of the Society and one who helped Madame Blavatsky to edit *The Secret Doctrine*, added his reminiscences of that period:



Dr Archibald Keightley
([Theosophy.Wiki](#))

The first time I ever saw Mme. Blavatsky was in 1884, shortly after I had joined the Theosophical Society. A meeting had been called and was being held in the chambers of a member in Lincoln’s Inn. The reason for the meeting lay in differences of opinion between Mr. Sinnett on the one hand and Mrs. Kingsford and Mr. Maitland on the other. Colonel Olcott was in the chair and endeavored to adjust the differences of opinion, but without success. By him were seated the contending parties, Mohini M. Chatterji and one or two others, facing a long narrow room which was nearly filled with members of the Society. The dispute proceeded, waxing warm, and the room steadily filled, the seat next to me being occupied by a stout lady who had just arrived, very much out of breath. At the moment some one at the head of the room alluded to some action of Mme. Blavatsky’s, to which the stout lady gave confirmation in the words “That’s so.” At this point the meeting broke up in confusion, everybody ran anyhow to the stout lady, while Mohini arrived at her feet on his knees. Finally she was taken up to the end of the room where the “high gods” had been enthroned, exclaiming and protesting in several tongues in the same sentence and the meeting tried to continue. However, it had to adjourn itself and so far as I know, it never reassembled. Next day I was presented to Mme. Blavatsky, who was my stout neighbor of the meeting. Her arrival was totally unexpected and her departure from Paris was, she told me long afterwards, only arranged “under orders” half an hour before she left. She arrived at Charing Cross without knowing the place of meeting, only knowing she had to attend it. “I followed my occult nose,” she told me, and by this means got from the station to Lincoln’s Inn and found her way to the rooms on foot. Her arrival was singularly opportune, for it broke up a meeting which declined to be peaceful, in spite of all the oil which Colonel Olcott was pouring on its troubled waters. (...) That autumn circumstances caused Mme. Blavatsky to take rooms in Victoria Road shortly before she left London for Birkenhead, to go to India. I then had the privilege of staying in the house with her and others, and each evening we had great times of talk and queries, the detail of which I do not remember. So I did not make use of opportunities and advantages which were mine and cannot relate things which would be of very great interest to this narrative. I remember travelling with the party by the Great Western Railway to Birkenhead to see them off and vaguely recall hearing of some traitorous people who were attacking Mme. Blavatsky and whom she had trusted. This evidently was the earlier rumbling of the storm which was so soon to burst.

(‘Reminiscences of H.P.B.’ by Archibald Keightley, *Theosophical Quarterly*, October 1910, p. 110)

indeed he had become convinced of this necessity in his own case. So he tried another question, "What they thought themselves to be?" and he answered "Gods," and when he went on to ask him "Why?" he said "Because we are good men." This answer appeared to Apollonius so replete with wisdom that he told it afterwards to Domitian in his speech in his own defence.

Yours truly,

Oxford, January, 1884.

ST. GEORGE STUCK.

To the Editor of "LIGHT."

SIR,—I am permitted by a friend, for whose absolute trustworthiness I give you my own personal guarantee, to forward you the following statement, addressed, in the first instance, to myself.—Yours truly,

A. P. SINNETT.

No doubt you have seen Dr. Wyld's letter in this week's "LIGHT." I do not at all like its tone and style, and I do not know whether you will consider it worth answering; but I think I can supply you with material for a reply if you care to make it, for I happen to have had slate-writing, through Mr. Eglinton's mediumship, on the subject of the Mahatmas, and it certainly differs widely from that given to Dr. Wyld—a fact which surely strengthens the Theosophical position that the "spirit guides" usually echo what they see in the mind of the questioner.

On the afternoon of a day you will remember, I had a slate-writing séance with Mr. Eglinton, as I told you. Before the séance commenced, I asked Mr. Eglinton about the visit paid to him on board the *Vega*, and understood from him that although at the time he was greatly impressed and fully convinced that his visitor was what he represented himself to be, he had since begun to suspect that what he saw was merely an ordinary materialised form personating the Master; so that for the present he simply suspended his judgment in the matter and waited for further enlightenment. We then sat down at the table and soon obtained, under the usual test conditions, among other communications, a message from "Ernest," saying that he saw there was a great work to be done by co-operating with me, whatever that may mean. Soon after Mr. Eglinton passed into the trance-state, and was (to use the Spiritualistic phrase) controlled by a spirit giving the name of "Daisy," who at once referred to the previous conversation, and told me that I must not be influenced by the medium's doubts about the Mahatmas, since "we" (the spirits) "are perfectly aware of their existence, and Ernest is in constant communication with them." I then asked whether Ernest could take a letter from me to the Master and bring back an answer. Daisy thought it probable, but said I had better write a letter to Ernest making the request, and he would, no doubt, reply. She also told me to form a circle at home, and she would try to communicate with me there. I was asked to tell no one of the promise to take my letter to Thibet lest an inconvenient number of similar applications should be made, but I insisted on having, and at last obtained, permission to tell you all about it, which I did the same evening. On reaching home the next day I wrote a letter, of which the following is a copy:—

MY DEAR SIR,—I pardon me if through ignorance of your true style and title, I am not addressing you properly; correspondence with the spirit world is at present a novelty to me. I have to thank you for the communication written on a slate at Mr. Eglinton's on Thursday. I am as yet uncertain as to the nature of the great work in which you so kindly promise me co-operation and support, but I shall be heartily glad of your assistance as it develops itself. I am writing to you now, as you, no doubt, know, by the instruction or advice of one of Mr. Eglinton's guides who announced herself to me as "Daisy." I understood from her that you might possibly be able to put me in communication with the Himalayan Adepts known as "The Brothers," and especially with that member of this august fraternity named Koot Hoomi. Can you and will you do this? Could you convey a letter from me to the gentleman in question, and bring back his answer to me? If so, I shall be extremely obliged to you. One other point. Daisy suggested that I should form a circle down here and hoped that if I did you and she might be able to communicate with me direct. Can you give me any directions as to who should form this circle, when and where it should meet, &c.? There are considerable difficulties in the way of such a thing here.—With kind regards to Daisy and yourself, believe me, &c.

A few days afterwards I received this letter back *unopened*, but on cutting it open found the following answer written in pencil under my signature:—

I am willing and able, should you prove yourself worthy, to endeavour to bring your desire before our friend K.H., but we can promise nothing. Write the letter and we will, if the conditions favour the manifestation, endeavour to convey it to the august person with whom you seek to enter into correspondence. Regarding the other matters your own judgment will be better fitted to answer them than any advice we could give you.

(Signed) ERNEST.

The above was in the same handwriting as the letter on the slate. Hardly the same in tone as Dr. Wyld's communication, is it? But there is more to follow. About six weeks later I took some friends to Mr. Eglinton's and the subject came up again. "Ernest" was engaged elsewhere, but "Joey" conveyed his regrets to me that he had not yet been able to obtain an answer from the Brothers. Mr. Eglinton, becoming inter-

ested, then asked, "Are there really such persons as the Brothers?" and the answer, given with more emphasis than usual, was "Yes." The following communication was then written between two slates, Mr. Eglinton holding one corner and I the other. The slates were held about six inches above the table, and as there was full sunlight the test conditions were perfect. The handwriting is neither "Ernest's" nor "Joey's," but a remarkably bold, firm hand. When I asked afterwards by whom it had been written, Joey wrote, "I am not permitted to say."

We are glad you are giving your undivided attention to the grand philosophy and teachings of the great Mahatmas, your Masters. The true principles governing this and other existences can only be sought in reverence from them, and your prayers will one day be answered.

I should think we had better have that glazed to compete with Dr. Wyld's specimen! I have the slate and also Ernest's letter and can send them up to you. . . . I can, of course, certify the exact truth of every detail stated above.

Theories of Slate-Writing.

To the Editor of "LIGHT."

SIR,—The question as to the *modus operandi* of slate-writing raised by the Hon. Mr. Wyndham is of much psychological importance.

My first impression, when I sat with Slade, some six years ago, was that the intelligence present *might* be that of Slade's entranced soul acting as a disembodied spirit.

This autopsychic action I still believe is not only a possible but a probable method in certain cases, but it does not explain the method in Mr. Eglinton's presence, for he assures me that he is in no way entranced during the operation.

The "spook or elementary" theory I dismiss at once, because the intelligence is not only often beyond that of a Madame Blavatsky spook but sometimes beyond that of all present, and sometimes even beyond that of ordinary well-educated gentlemen.

I thus find myself more and more forced to admit that the operator is usually a spiritual being, a disembodied human soul, although the question of identity still remains difficult to solve.

One message I got through Slade was most *apropos*, and was signed with the Christian names of my father and mother.

The nature of the message was in no way previously in my thoughts, and the structure and tone of the message were quite unlike Slade's, and equally unlike my own modes of expression; but they were exactly like what my father and mother would have used on such an occasion, and yet I did not feel that they came direct from my parents.

These feelings or instincts are worthy of much consideration in spiritual matters, but must, of course, themselves be subjected to a discriminating reflection.

With regard to theories based on the idea that our actions and thoughts are photographed on the "astral light," I think it would be well in these days, to discard misleading terms founded on unscientific views.

The term *astral light*, as applied to spiritualistic facts, has no foundation.

When the term was first used, light was regarded as a substance, but it is now known to be a mode of motion, and motion cannot fix on itself a photographic-like impression of the mind.

The Babbage theory, that our thoughts may remain as eternal vibrations of the ether, would afford a more scientific basis in that direction, but that theory is quite unnecessary as an explanation of the Thought-reading theory of slate-intelligence, if we admit that departed souls live as *spirits*, and *thus* see and know the thoughts of like spirits in the flesh.

With regard to the ether itself it is important to know that some authorities regard it as a substance having a quality immensely more solid than that of so-called solid matter.

If so, then the spirit-world, if it exists in the ethereal medium, must partake of that solidity, and in this direction it may be a significant fact that some seers have said to me, "We know spirits from human beings by the fact that they seem to us, and the world that surrounds them seems to us very much more *solid* and real than the world of the senses."

So indeed one might say it must be; because so-called solid matter is heterogeneous and patulous, while the spirit-world of mind is a homogeneous unity, and thus, not only more consistent, but incapable of disintegration; and thus, "The things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are unseen are eternal."

GEORGE WYLD, M.D.

"Bringing it to Book."

To the Editor of "LIGHT."

SIR,—In your last impression I notice a communication from "C. C. M.," under which initials I think I am probably justified in without any claim to Thought-reading—in recognising Mr. C. O. Massey, whose very interesting communications on the subject of Psychography have, I am sure, afforded to your readers generally as much pleasure as they have to myself individually.

Mr. Massey dissents from my expressed "assurance," that the same evidence which convinced me of the truth of the