

# What H.P.B. Thought of C. W. Leadbeater

By C. Jinarajadasa

*The Theosophist*, February 1927.

Pages 515-520

## INTRODUCTORY

C. W. Leadbeater, whose eightieth birthday falls on February 17th, joined the Theosophical Society in 1882. (1) He was then a clergyman of the Church of England. On October 31, 1884, he received his first letter from the Master K. H. The letter came to him through the post to his residence in Liphook in Hampshire. This letter is published as Letter No. VII in "*Letters from the Masters the Wisdom – First Series*". In that letter, the Master offered him the opportunity of going to Adyar "for a few months". At this time a terrific attack was being launched on H.P.B. [H. P. Blavatsky] by the Christian missionaries of Madras, and what was known as the Coulomb "exposure" of H.P.B. had begun. Many professed ardent Theosophists had dropped away from the Movement in England.

Note (1) Owing to the long delays in issuing diplomas in these early days of the T.S., his diploma however bears the date November 20, 1883. (C.J.)

C.W.L. came up at once to London and showed the letter to H.P.B., but she refused to give him any advice whatsoever regarding its contents. However, by the evening, he had decided to go out to India, and throw himself completely into the work of the T.S. As H.P.B. was sitting in front of the fire that evening, and C.W.L. and Miss Laura Cooper (the late Mrs. G. R. S. Mead) were facing her, he noticed that suddenly H.P.B.'s right hand seemed to be pulled out with a jerk, as if by some invisible hand. Immediately over the palm of the extended hand there appeared a white cloud, which the next instant condensed and fell flat on H.P.B.'s palm. It was a letter addressed to C.W.L. from the Master. It was a very brief letter, and appears as Letter No. VIII. In it, the Master noted C.W.L.'s decision to go to India and, approving of it gave him precise directions as to travel. These directions were to start, if possible, on the 5th of the following month, and join H.P.B. at Alexandria. It was impossible for C.W.L. to travel with H.P.B., because she was leaving that same night when this second letter arrived.

C.W.L. was living at this time at Liphook, where his uncle the Rev. W. W. Capes, Reader in Ancient History at Oxford, was the Rector. He arranged with his uncle to cease from his clerical work immediately. All his affairs were quickly wound up, and

on November 4th he left London for Marseilles. From Marseilles he took a steamer to Alexandria, and so joined H.P.B. in Cairo. With her he travelled to Colombo, where he formally took Panchasila from the High Priest Sumangala. The party arrived at Adyar on December 21.

Early in 1885 he accompanied Colonel Olcott to Burma. When the General Council decided that H.P.B. should leave India, he offered to accompany her to Europe. But his services were required at Headquarters. His work was of many kinds; when a worker was needed he did whatever was required. He was by turns one of the Recording Secretaries of the T.S., manager of the book business, and acting editor of THEOSOPHIST. In January, 1886, the Colonel sent him to develop the Buddhist educational work in Ceylon.

It was during this period of work for Buddhists that he did things which astonished the Sinhalese Buddhists. He wrote a children's Buddhist Catechism and organised Buddhist Sunday Schools round Colombo. He wrote Buddhist carols and trained boys to sing them. He made a great point of training Sinhalese boys so that they might, as they grew up, take the Buddhist work in hand. I knew of these activities of C.W.L., though I was not one of the first band of the boys in Colombo whom he gathered round him; my elder brother was one of the first to be drawn to him. C.W.L. taught all the boys to swim, and each Saturday morning took them to swim in Colombo harbour. I recollect how my elder brother threw himself with enthusiasm into C.W.L.'s work, and tramped with him on Sundays from Sunday school to Sunday school. When the carol singing was organised, I was one of the choir boys, and I remember one year, at Wesak festival night, how we went in a decorated cart to several temples singing carols. C.W.L.'s aim was to rouse the Buddhists from their lethargy, to take hold of the development of their own religion.

Needless to say, the Sinhalese people being like all other peoples in this regard, stories were whispered of questionable conduct on the part of C.W.L. because he was the companion of boys; for wherever he was busy at work, a good many of them were round him helping him. Even when I was twelve and had not come into any prominence among this band of young people, I heard some of these vague whispers in 1888. Towards the end of 1889, he had established the Buddhist English High School, now grown into the famous institution in Ceylon, the Ananda College. It was about this time, that he finally was certain without question that I was his brother Gerald who had been killed in South America. On November 28, 1889, I left with him for England, and he thus ceased his connection with Ceylon. I might remark that, the Buddhists of Colombo being just as fond of gossip and malice as people in other lands, the innuendos about C.W.L. were quite well-known to Colonel Olcott. I mention this fact, because H.P.B. could be not so unpsychic as to be ignorant of a

man's true nature, and would be the first to know whether they were true or not. That she knew they were not is shown by her regard for C. W. L.

#### WHAT H.P.B. SAID

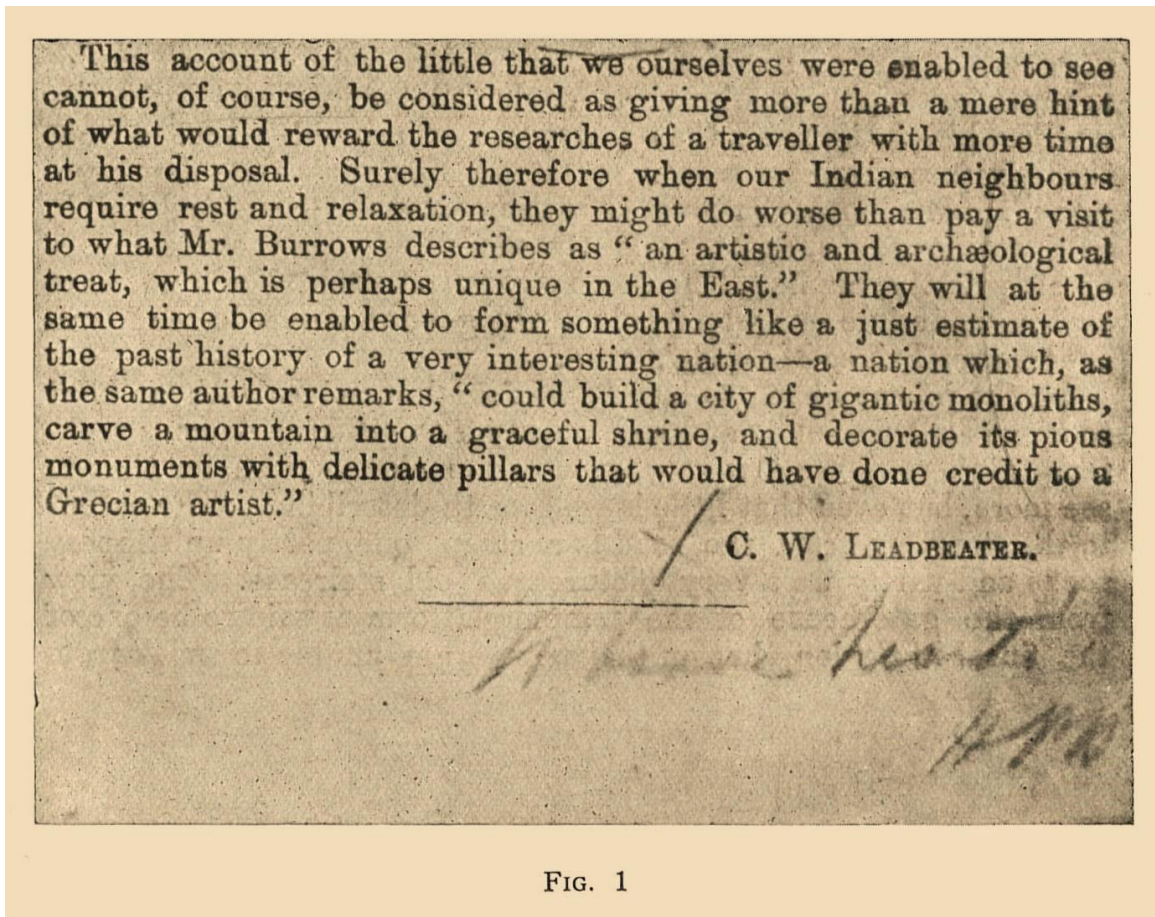


FIG. 1

"A brave heart! H.P.B."

What H.P.B. thought of C.W.L. is evidenced by three statements of hers which I give. The first, Fig. 1, is from her copy, now at Adyar, of THEOSOPHIST, Volume VII, August, 1886, p. 686. The volume is bound, and has her name stamped on it, and is one of the volumes which belonged to the European Section Library after her death. At the end of C.W.L.'s article on "Anuradhapura and Mihintale," two famous Buddhist places of pilgrimage, H.P.B. has made a cross in blue pencil and written in her own hand and signed with her initials, "A brave heart! H.P.B."

To my sincerely appreciated  
& beloved brother & friend  
W. C. Leadbeater  
H P Blavatsky

FIG. 2

"To my sincerely appreciated & beloved brother & friend M.(mr) C. Leadbeater  
H P Blavatsky"

The second illustration is what she wrote in the copy of *The Voice of the Silence* which she presented to C.W.L. as soon as he arrived in England.

To my old & well-beloved friend  
Charles Leadbeater,  
from his fraternally  
H P Blavatsky.

London  
1891.

THE KEY TO THEOSOPHY.

FIG. 3

"To my old & well-beloved friend Charles Leadbeater from his fraternally H P  
Blavatsky"

The third illustration is what she wrote on the copy of *The Key to Theosophy*, which also she presented to him in 1891.

## CONCLUSION

We must note the fact that the particular advice on the sex problem for which C.W.L. has been censured had been given by him long before he joined the T.S., when he was a clergyman in the Church, he himself hearing of it from clerical sources, as he explained to the committee of enquiry in 1906. When in 1906 there was a furious indignation against him, he stood perfectly calmly by his advice, explaining that he had given it in individual and special cases as a prophylactic, and as preferable to the advice not infrequently given by medical men. What most amazed me was that all those Theosophists, who had known and admired C.W.L.'s services to Theosophy for twenty-two years, should suddenly consider him as having lapsed morally all at once. They seemed utterly unable to remember that, during those twenty-two years, during which he had not thought fit to revise his ideas, he was doing excellent work, and was without the slightest doubt the centre of the force of the Masters. They knew and admitted his spiritual eminence in the past; but he "fell".

This whole matter of the sex difficulties of youth and the best line of solution will no doubt be solved by the wisdom of the coming generations. I had not, and have not anything to contribute to that solution. But though the whole problem came startlingly before me in 1906 I feel immensely grateful that C.W.L. opened my eyes to the biggest problem which confronts us men—a problem which is being constantly shirked by Theosophists as by all others. Since 1906, I have tried to keep my eyes open to this most perplexing problem, and to gain information about it. What roused my indignation in 1906 was the sudden fury of Theosophists who considered him as "fallen," merely because they happened to discover for the first time ideas which he had been holding for about a quarter of a century. I was not championing C.W.L.'s ideas; but I did fight to maintain that C.W.L. had not changed in his nature, or in his value to the Theosophical movement, merely because some Theosophists thought they had "found him out".

The three illustrations of H.P.B.'s high regard for C.W.L. will, I think, be sufficient for most people, who believe that H.P.B. was not an ordinary woman, but one who had deeper perceptions. She did not call every Theosophist round her a "well-beloved friend". If she regarded C.W.L. as worthy of her high regard, during these years when he held his particular views on sex matters, and in spite of the slanders about him in Ceylon, I think many of us are not likely to make a mistake in following her example and holding him in a similar high regard.

C. Jinarajadasa