



To the Members of the Theosophical Society :

For Private Circulation among Members only.

THE LEADBEATER CASE

THE SUPPRESSED SPEECHES

OF

HERBERT BURROWS

AND

G. R. S. MEAD

AT THE

ANNUAL CONVENTION

OF THE

BRITISH SECTION

OF THE

THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

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THE LEADBEATER CASE

At the 1908 Annual Convention of the British Section of the Theosophical Society a resolution was moved by Mr. DUNLOP, the second paragraph of which was used throughout the discussion as a justification for the return of Mr. C. W. Leadbeater to the Society. To Mr. Dunlop's resolution the following amendment was moved by HERBERT BURROWS, and seconded by G. R. S. MEAD:—

This Convention of the British Section of the Theosophical Society, while affirming its loyalty to the first Object of the Society—namely, “to form a nucleus of the universal brotherhood of humanity”—strongly protests against evoking the sentiment of brotherhood to countenance what is wrong.

Whereas Dr. Weller van Hook, the present General Secretary of the American Section and so a member of the General Council of the Theosophical Society, in a recent Open Letter which he has subsequently stated to have been “dictated *verbatim* by one of the Masters,” has publicly claimed that the corrupting practices the teaching of which determined the resignation of Mr. C. W. Leadbeater, are the high doctrine of Theosophy and the “precursor of its introduction into the thought of the outer world”:—

This Convention declares its abhorrence of such practices, and, in view of the incalculable harm to Theosophy, and of the disgrace which this teaching must inevitably bring upon the Society, earnestly calls upon all its members, especially the President and members of the General Council, to unite in putting an end to the present scandalous state of affairs, so that the repudiation by the Society of this pernicious teaching may be unequivocal and final.

This resolution was generally supported by A. P. Sinnett, C. J. Barker, J. S. Brown, Dr. C. G. Currie, H. R. Hogg, B. Keightley, W. Kingsland, W. Scott-Elliot, W. Theobald, B. G. Theobald, L. Wallace, C. B. Wheeler, H. L. Shindler, A. P. Cattanch, Dr. A. King, Baker Hudson, W. H. Thomas,

A. B. Green, J. M. Watkins, E. E. Marsden, H. E. Nichol, by the delegates of the London and Blavatsky Lodges, and by many others.

After long discussion this amendment was carried by 38 votes to 4. Twenty-two delegates declined to vote.

MR. BURROWS'S SPEECH.

In moving the amendment HERBERT BURROWS said :—

To-day I have to perform one of the most responsible and painful duties of my life. On behalf of the signatories and of a considerable number of other members of the British Section of the Theosophical Society, I have to move the resolution which stands in my name. We move and support that resolution because we firmly believe it to be in the best interests, not only of the members of the Section, but of the whole Theosophical Society throughout the world, and, what is more important still, of Theosophy itself and of the great spiritual ideas which are its root and foundation. We believe it also to be in the interests of the best and truest morality.

Contrary to my usual practice I have written all that I intend to say. It is not too much to affirm that on what we do here to-day and on the decision at which we shall arrive by our votes depends largely the future of Theosophy in this country. It is all-important, therefore, that our thoughts and our words shall be weighty and well-advised—free from heat, passion, prejudice, and rhetoric. I know that among us there are diverse views on this subject, but I am sure we shall all agree that it is so grave and far-reaching that our wisest counsels are needed and that each and all of us should give to the matter our calmest and most anxious consideration.

One or two points at the outset I wish to make clear. The whole subject is a most difficult one to discuss—difficult, because it is one of those matters which are not generally talked about, even by grown men and women. It deals with an evil which, as is well known,

is rampant in many quarters, especially in schools, both boys' and girls', but over which a veil is drawn not only by society, but also by teachers and medical men. The subject in all its aspects is more than painful to us because it deals with the conduct of one who for many years has been honoured and followed in Theosophical circles on account of the other teaching he has given. But the point that I wish to make here is that it is not *we* who are responsible for the discussion. It is not *we* who have promulgated these teachings—it is not *we* who are at the bar of Theosophical judgment—(a judgment which now bids fair to become also that of the outside world), it is not *we* who have brought about this intolerable scandal in the Theosophical Society. *We* did not initiate the matter, and we would have been only too thankful if, after Mr. Leadbeater's resignation from the Theosophical Society two years ago, the whole subject had been allowed to sink into well-merited oblivion. For those two years we have held our tongues publicly, and our tongues would have been silent still, but for the extraordinary and incalculably harmful attempts which have since been and are now being made in India, America, and here, to rehabilitate Mr. Leadbeater under the guise of brotherhood—to associate him with Theosophical work and propaganda—to allow him to pose as a teacher in Theosophical journals—to press for his readmission (without public recantation) into the Society—to hold him up in respect to these very practices as a moral teacher whom we are practically incapable of understanding, and, above all, to set forth to the Society and the world that these doctrines and practices are to be one of the foundations of the Theosophy of the future.

The next point I wish to make is that we have absolutely no personal animus whatever against Mr. Leadbeater. No one mourns more than we do the fact that he has placed himself in this position, and that he has, as we honestly believe, proved untrue to real Theosophical teachings. But we also believe that there is something much higher than Mr. Leadbeater, and that is Theosophy itself, and it is because we

believe that his action, teaching, and practices in this respect are harmful to Theosophy, and that the advocacy by and action of his friends and upholders will, if continued, wreck and ruin—not Theosophy, for that is impossible—but the Theosophical Society throughout the world, and will render the public propaganda of Theosophy impossible, that we move this resolution here to-day. We ask the British Section of the Theosophical Society in Convention assembled to affirm clearly and unequivocally, by its voice and vote, that it will have no lot nor part in this incalculably harmful doctrine, teaching, and practice.

And here I may say that if, as I cannot suppose, *if* the vote of the Convention should go against us, we who are proposing this resolution, speaking as we do in the name of many other members of the Section, men and women, old and young, some of whom have given the best years of their lives to Theosophy and its work, are irrevocably determined that, as far as regards ourselves, the whole matter will be fought out down to its very roots—first in the Section generally, then, if necessary, in the whole Society, then, if still necessary, at the bar of outside public opinion. At all costs we are determined to do what in us lies to rid the Theosophical Society of this foul blot on its name and fame.

The difficulty which faces me here is that, as I am aware, many of you who are present to-day, including some of the delegates, are entirely ignorant of the real facts of the case, and, as we know, this ignorance is prevalent in the Section at large. It was impossible to publish the facts broadcast, and you have therefore had necessarily to rely on purposely vague statements, and have thus been unable to come to any decision on the matter. Ideas, I know, have been circulated that Mr. Leadbeater's enemies (if such there be—personally I do not know of any) got up a deliberate campaign against him, backed by false accusations. We who know the real state of affairs believe that the time has now come to speak out frankly and clearly, and to give the actual facts. This I propose to do calmly and

quietly, as a mere recital for the information of those who, up to now, have been ignorant of them.

The actual charge against Mr. Leadbeater was that he deliberately taught masturbation or self-abuse to boys in his care, under a pledge of secrecy and unknown to their parents. That is the literal charge. I put on one side for a moment any evidence for this charge or defence against it. Both these I will come to later. I am now giving the bare fact, which no one disputes, because no one of course denies the fact that the charge was made.

The trouble initiated in the American Section, and I cannot do better than read to you some portions of a document which was issued on May 18th, 1906, by Mr. Alexander Fullerton, the then General Secretary of that Section, to its members. It is a literal recital of circumstances, and those initial circumstances have never, as far as I know, been disputed, although others have. This is the part of the circular to which I refer :

After stating how rumours, afterwards proved to have been current for years in India, Ceylon, and England, reached America, that one of our most eminent Theosophical lecturers and workers (referred to as X) had been deliberately teaching masturbation to boys in his charge, and the rumours having been verified by direct testimony from boys in the States, the narrative part of the circular thus proceeds :

“ A memorial was then addressed to Mrs. Besant containing the testimony up to that date, and signed by the Heads of the Esoteric Section and the Theosophical Society in this country, a duplicate being sent to X. Mrs. Besant replied to the Head of the Esoteric Section and X replied to Mr. Fullerton. X admitted the facts and explained that he taught masturbation to boys as a protection against relations with women. Mrs. Besant utterly repudiated such doctrine and such practice, but considered X's motive as sincere. Mrs. Besant's own sincerity of course cannot be questioned, but the appearance of later testimony utterly demolishes her stand. [See NOTE a, page 27.]

“ It was very clear that teaching and practice of this kind could not be tolerated in a teacher, more especi-

ally because access to the boys had been obtained through a deceptive assertion made to the parents. The assertion was that it was the practice of X to explain to boys in his care the nature of the sex function and the danger of its abuse, though without the slightest hint that he gave masturbation as a remedy. If this had been stated, the boys would not have been entrusted to him. The boys thus approached were from thirteen to fourteen years of age.

“No direct action has been hitherto possible by other Sections because of the absence of proof, but the proof existed here from testimony and from X’s own admissions, and it was felt that immediate action by the American Section was obligatory. A meeting of the Executive Committee was therefore called for April 13th in the City of New York. All the members were present save the one from San Francisco, who was unable to come but telegraphed approval of the step. The Committee sat all day, and was assisted in its deliberations by representative Theosophists from Philadelphia, Boston, Toronto, and Chicago. The unanimous outcome was as follows: First, that X should be presented for trial to the Lodge whereto he belongs; Second, that a special delegate should proceed as quickly as possible to England and personally see Colonel Olcott, the General Secretary of the British Section, the authorities of the defendant’s Lodge, and the defendant himself. This delegate, Mr. Robert A. Burnett, of Chicago, sailed on April 28th, armed with much discretionary power as to the settlement of the case. It was understood that if X agreed to retire absolutely from all membership in or connection with the Theosophical Society and its work, the prosecution before his Lodge would not be pressed. Successive telegraphed reports by the delegate were that the local sympathy with him in his mission was very strong, and that Colonel Olcott had telegraphed X to come at once from Italy to attend a meeting of the British Executive Committee on May 16th. On the evening of that day the delegate telegraphed that his mission had been wholly successful, and that X had retired utterly from all connection with the Theosophi-

cal Society. Thus a painful trial and an increased danger of publicity have happily been avoided."

The Committee of Inquiry met in London at the Grosvenor Hotel, on May 16th, 1906. Its members were Colonel Olcott (in the chair), Mr. Sinnett, Dr. Nunn, Mr. Mead, Mrs. Stead, Miss Ward, Miss Spink, Mrs. Hooper, Mr. B. Keightley, Mr. Thomas, and Mr. Glass, who acted as Secretary. There were also present, Mr. Burnett, as representative of the Executive Committee of the American Section, and M. Bernard, as representative of the Executive Committee of the French Section.

To the fairness and impartiality of such a Committee I am quite certain no member of the Society would raise the slightest objection.

A full shorthand report of its proceedings was taken by Mr. Glass, and of the manuscript of that report there are several copies in existence. We have one here this afternoon. Mr. Leadbeater was, of course, present at the Committee and had the fullest and amplest opportunity of explaining, defending, and justifying himself. He admitted that the charge which was brought against him of teaching self-abuse to boys was true and also admitted something else which both here and in America would bring him within the pale of the criminal law.

Mr. Thomas put this question to him: "There was definite action?"

Mr. Leadbeater: "You mean touch. That might have taken place."

That of course is nothing less than indecent assault.

Mr. Leadbeater had asked Colonel Olcott what he had better do, and the Colonel told him he should resign. A few minutes before the Committee opened Mr. Leadbeater wrote a letter of resignation to Colonel Olcott to be used if necessary. At the end of the Inquiry the Committee deliberated as to whether Mr. Leadbeater's resignation should be accepted or whether he should be expelled from the Theosophical Society. There was a close division of opinion, but in the end

the resignation was accepted in the terms of the following resolution :—

That having considered certain charges against Mr. Leadbeater, and having listened to his explanation, the Committee recommend the acceptance by the President-Founder of his (Mr. Leadbeater's) resignation already offered in anticipation of the Committee's decision.

Now that should have been the end of this indescribably painful matter. If it had been I should not be speaking here to-day. But immediately in America, here, and in India a campaign in favour of Mr. Leadbeater was instituted which took two aspects. The first aspect was that he had not had a fair trial (as far as I know he himself has not complained of its fairness). Accusations were made of forged documents, and other matters with which I will presently deal. But to show the line which is taken by some of Mr. Leadbeater's defenders, I will quote to you what is said by one of them, Mr. Warrington, a member of the American Section.

The extract is taken from what is known as the Holbrook pamphlet :

“ As to the Committee's recommendation that the resignation should be accepted, my comment is that this body so far disclosed its clouded vision, and therefore its incapacity to act in consonance with the real facts, as against the more partial and obvious ones, as to take an action which is diametrically opposed to the principles on which membership in the Society rests, and practically set the destructive precedent, so far as an unofficial body could, that a member might become ineligible by reason of an opinion held which did not deny the doctrine of Universal Brotherhood, a precedent which, if thoughtlessly followed, would narrow the Society down from its broad universality to the grade of a sort of intolerant sectarianism. One can but reflect that it was not Mr. Leadbeater who was on trial !”

On this I may first remark that if it were not Mr. Leadbeater who was on trial, who was it? According to Mr. Warrington, the Committee of Inquiry! And this because of “ Universal Brotherhood.” Now, as

we affirm in our resolution, we hold strongly to the first object of the Theosophical Society, to form a "nucleus" of brotherhood, but I, for one, do not hold and never have held that because of that object any man or any woman should be thrust upon the members of the Society in the name of Brotherhood irrespective of every other consideration. Brotherhood has two sides—the clean-liver has to be considered as well as the evil-doer, and if to object to the teaching of self-abuse to boys, from however high and lofty a motive that self-abuse is professedly advocated, is to be intolerantly sectarian, then I frankly avow myself an intolerant sectarian. But of course it is not so.

I need not labour the point of documents. Mr. Leadbeater's friends who *do* labour it entirely forget that the case depends on his own admissions and on the open and avowed advocacy of his teachings by his supporters. Last year at the private meeting of Convention delegates which was held previously to our public meeting, it will be remembered that one of Mr. Leadbeater's friends in a speech which I characterised as infamous, endeavoured to destroy the case against him by talking of documents and insufficient evidence. He was reminded by a delegate, who was a member of the Committee of Inquiry, that Mr. Leadbeater was judged on his own confession. And that is so. He himself has admitted the teaching and practice, notably in his letter of February 27th, 1906, to Mr. Fullerton, which I will quote *in extenso* if necessary, or if my statement is challenged by anyone, and especially did he admit it before the Committee. And some of his friends now justify and glorify that teaching. It has been prominently asserted in America that in twenty years such teaching will be the teaching of the Theosophical Society.

After all this we shall hear no more of insufficient evidence as to the nature and truth of the charges.

Here I wish to quote a most important letter by Mrs. Besant, which in itself is more than amply enough to destroy the idea that there is any doubt whatever about the actual facts, but which of course has a much wider bearing. The letter was written in

1906, to the Secretaries and Wardens of the Eastern School. It would therefore at first sight be a private document, but Mrs. Besant, in the following words, gave permission for her views to be used:

“You can use my opinion on the harm done by the teaching, publicly if need arise.”

The need has arisen long ago.

But even if that were not so the letter has been openly printed and circulated. It is now a public document and as such I received it in the ordinary everyday way. I want further to say that in this whole matter there must now be nothing secret, private, or subterranean. The question is far too grave and important for that, and those—if there are any—who would advocate such secrecy are doing Theosophy an infinite harm.

Here is the portion of the letter to which I refer. (Mr. X is Mr. Leadbeater.):

“Mr. X appeared before the Council of the British Section, representatives of the French and American Sections being present and voting; Colonel Olcott in the chair. Mr. X denied none of the charges, but in answer to questions very much strengthened them, for he alleged that he had actually handled the boys himself and that he had thus dealt with boys before puberty as a prophylactic. So that the advice supposed to have been given as a last resort to rescue a boy in the grip of sexual passion, became advice putting foul ideas into the minds of boys innocent of all sex impulses; and the long intervals, the rare relief, became twenty-four hours in length—a daily habit. It was conceivable that the advice as supposed to have been given had been given with pure intent, and the presumption was so in a teacher of Theosophical morality; anything else seemed incredible. But such advice as was given, in fact such dealing with boys before sex passion had awakened, could be given with pure intent only if the giver were, on this point, insane. Such local insanity, such perversion of the sex-instinct too forcibly restrained, is not unknown to the members of the medical profession. The records of a celibate priesthood and of unwise asceticism are only

too full of such cases, and their victims, on all other points good, are on the sex question practically insane. Let me here place on record my opinion that such teaching as this given to men, let alone to innocent boys, is worthy of the sternest reprobation. It distorts and perverts the sex impulse, implanted in men for the preservation of the race; it degrades the ideas of marriage, of fatherhood and motherhood, humanity's most sacred ideals; it befouls the imagination, pollutes the emotions, and undermines the health. Worst of all is that it should be taught under the name of the Divine Wisdom, being essentially 'earthly, sensual, devilish.' " [See NOTE b, page 27.]

Now that letter brings me to the very heart of the second aspect of the campaign in favour of Mr. Leadbeater—in favour of his being restored to membership of the Theosophical Society as a moral teacher whose ideals, in the case we have to consider, are too lofty for common people to appreciate and understand.

Perforce, the first contention that the charges are false has had to be given up, in face of his own admissions and those of his friends. It is now contended that his teaching to boys of self-abuse was given from pure, holy Theosophical standpoints and from the loftiest motives. I do not know where there is the slightest proof of that, it is only an assertion, but I will take that argument for the sake of hypothesis. It is said that some of the boys at any rate were in the grip of evil (although what evil is not stated) and that Mr. Leadbeater gave them this teaching in order to rescue them from something which is not defined, and those who oppose him are threatened that with regard to these boys the veil of "merciful silence" may be lifted. We await the lifting of that veil not only with a legitimate curiosity, but with perfect confidence and equanimity. Is it conceivable that these boys were so morally depraved that self-abuse was the only thing which could be taught them as cure by a high and lofty Theosophical teacher? Will any father in this audience dare to stand up and assert that if he discovered that his own boy was sexually depraved he would thereupon recommend to him further sexual abuse as a

remedy? The contention is an insult to intelligence and morality. Rather would he, by complete changes in mental surroundings, proper physical training, careful diet, change of scene, and above all, wise moral teaching, try to wean his son from everything sexual, by turning all his thoughts in an entirely opposite direction. And here he would be in exact consonance with every high medical authority and every teacher who has had the training of boys. But if we take the other side of the case it becomes infinitely worse.

Take it that most of the boys were innocent, and there is no proof whatever that they were not. In his letter of February 27th, 1906, Mr. Leadbeater distinctly advocates the teaching of self-abuse to such boys *before* "the danger of entanglement with women or bad boys later on." (I use his own exact words.) So we have the terrible fact of these innocent boys being taught self-abuse, unknown to their parents, under a pledge of secrecy and because the teaching was Theosophy, by a Theosophical teacher who is claimed as a seer and an Initiate, under whose charge their boys were. [c, p. 28.] Well may Mrs. Besant say that "such advice as was given, in fact such dealing with boys before sex passion had awakened, could be given with pure intent only if the giver were on this point insane"—and well, indeed, may she go on to say that "worst of all is that it should be taught under the name of the Divine Wisdom, being 'earthly, sensual, devilish.'" Those members of the Theosophical Society, men and women, on whose behalf I am speaking to-day, are entirely at one with Mrs. Besant in this wise pronouncement, and we repudiate, unequivocally and absolutely, the immoral idea that any scintilla of Theosophical training for the young (or for the adult) should be given on the lines of sexuality in any shape or form.

I may say here, by way of parenthesis, that if once admitted this teaching will inevitably affect both sexes. All teachers who have any knowledge of the question know perfectly well that in girls' boarding schools the subject is of very grave importance. Once admit that self-abuse is to be the cure for any sexual

abnormality, or that it may be used for training, and a vista is opened which is nothing less than sexual demoralisation of both sexes.

So far, I believe, I shall have carried with me all right-thinking people as far as regards the general aspects of the question. I now come to the grave and enormously important aspect of the subject as it more immediately affects us as members of the Theosophical Society.

That gravity and importance is clearly set forth in the second and third paragraphs of our resolution. It would at first sight seem incredible that inside the Theosophical Society such a resolution should have had to be framed, but unfortunately the facts are of such a nature as to leave no doubt and no alternative. The bare facts are that Mr. Leadbeater's friends and upholders are now not only vehemently asserting that in teaching what we rightly call these "corrupting practices" he was actuated by the highest moral motives, and that he taught them in the name of Theosophy—the Divine Wisdom—but that "the introduction of this question into the thought of the Theosophical world is but the precursor of its introduction into the thought of the outer-world."

Dr. Weller van Hook is the General Secretary of the American Section of the Theosophical Society. He is a comparatively young member of the Society, but was elected American Secretary last year in succession to Mr. Fullerton, who with others was displaced because of his opposition to Mr. Leadbeater. As American General Secretary Dr. van Hook is also *ex-officio* a member of the General Council of the Theosophical Society, which is the ruling body of the whole Society. He is therefore one of the highest officials of the Theosophical Society.

Now here we have the really appalling fact that I stated, that this high official declares that masturbation, self-abuse, as taught and practised with boys by Mr. Leadbeater, is actual high Theosophical teaching, and more, that the Theosophical Society is the pioneer through which such teaching is presently

to filter into the outer world. That there may be no mistake about this I will quote to you his exact words.

There was circulated in the American Section two months ago what is known as the Holbrook pamphlet, which consists of "Open Letters," including one from Dr. van Hook, and there are two subsequent addenda, also by him. I have them here. I am informed that some portions of these documents have been circulated here to some members of the British Section by Mr. Leadbeater's English friends.

These are Dr. van Hook's words :

"Now it was most easy for Mr. Leadbeater with clairvoyant vision to see what thought-forms were hovering about certain other boys not yet addicted to this degrading practice.* He could see that these thought-forms would soon discharge themselves upon their creators and victims and he could easily picture the disastrous consequences. Do not we, better than those unacquainted with the truths of Theosophy, know that the thought is pre-existent to the deed, that the act is only the precipitation of the thought on the physical plane? In advising the practice by such a boy, no new thing was proposed.* It was only suggested in order that the thought-forms might be discharged before their force became overwhelming and involved the victim in the commission of some act, the karmic consequences of which might demand many incarnations for their solution. For sexual associations involve the use or misuse of the greatest spiritual force entrusted to undeveloped Man and karma engendered about associated sexual acts demands solution by both parties to the act in simultaneous physical incarnation. And every Theosophist knows that, owing to the varying lengths of extra-physical life-periods, simultaneous incarnations cannot occur to undeveloped individuals in regular succession, but take place only after long cyclical intervals which must be filled with physical lives of no particular value or consequence. Hence the

* Note here that Dr. van Hook admits that Mr. Leadbeater advised the "degrading practice" by certain boys not yet addicted to it. This confirms the case against Mr. Leadbeater up to the hilt.

“crime” or “wrong” of teaching the boys the practice alluded to was no crime or wrong at all, but only the advice of a wise teacher who foresaw an almost limitless period of suffering for his charge if the solution for his difficulties usually offered by the World, were adopted and relief obtained by an associated instead of by an individual and personal act.

“The introduction of this question into the thought of the Theosophical World is but the precursor of its introduction into the thought of the outer-World. Mr. Leadbeater has been the one to bear the persecution and martyrdom of its introduction. The solution of the question can only be reached by those who study it from the Theosophic standpoint, admitting the validity of our teachings in regard to thoughts and their relations to acts. Hence the service of Theosophy to the world in this respect will be of the most far-reaching consequence, extending into the remote future of the progress of Man.

“No mistake was made by Mr. Leadbeater in the nature of the advice he gave his boys. No mistake was made in the way he gave it. Nor did he make any mistake in the just estimation of the consequences of any other solution of the terrible problem which was presented to him.”

I believe it is asserted here in England (not in America, where they know better), asserted by those of Mr. Leadbeater’s friends who are now driven to see the *impasse* into which they have been led, that those words do not refer to Mr. Leadbeater’s practices. But English words are not mere counters to be juggled with at will, and you are not infants who cannot appreciate what language means. I leave those words to you, and ask you to fully realise what their promulgation by one of the ruling body of the Theosophical Society really means in relation to the Theosophical Society, to Theosophy, to its public propaganda, and to the world at large. I ask you to picture to yourselves the position of Theosophical lecturers when faced on a public platform with these words and the whole of their attendant circumstances, as inevitably they will be faced. In thinking that you will begin

to realise the terrible position in which every member of the Theosophical Society is now placed. For this is certain, that pushed to their logical conclusion, and they are being so pushed by Mr. Leadbeater's friends, his teaching must inevitably become one of the bases of Theosophical doctrine and propaganda, and further, in common fairness to intending members, especially young people, it will have to be clearly and publicly stated what this new base of Theosophical teaching really is and what it means. The day for secrecy and subterranean methods is gone for ever. On that we are fully and irrevocably determined.

But Dr. van Hook has done something else; he has made an audacious and scandalous attempt to associate Mrs. Besant with all this and to tie her body and soul to Mr. Leadbeater. In the opening sentence of his Open Letter he says: "It must be clearly seen by all that the defence of Mr. Charles W. Leadbeater is closely associated with, and indeed involves, the defence of Mrs. Annie Besant, President of the Theosophical Society," and in the same letter he further says: "It must have been seen by all that it is Mrs. Besant's desire to stand or fall with Charles W. Leadbeater." I need not comment on this audacious statement, except to say that you now know what this so-called "defence" of Mr. Leadbeater really means—and to ask you to realise that Dr. van Hook, the General Secretary of the American Section, a member of the General Council of the Theosophical Society, this defender of the teaching of self-abuse, is striving with might and main to involve Mrs. Besant, the President of the Society, in this wretched controversy, and to drag her into this foul masturbation abyss.

But further, Dr. Weller van Hook, in a letter to Dr. Moore, of which we have a certified copy, declares that these letters of his were dictated to him *verbatim* by one of the Masters! Realise what that still more audacious statement means, and you will again realise the danger the Theosophical Society is in and the miserably parlous state into which it is now attempted to place it.

In a letter from Colonel Olcott to Mr. Leadbeater, of January 12th, 1907, the Colonel says: "The Masters have told both Annie and myself that your teaching young boys to relieve themselves is wrong."

Now we have Dr. van Hook's defence of the teaching and practice of self-abuse dictated *verbatim* by one of the Masters! Words fail me. I appeal to those of you who have heard from H. P. B., from Mr. Sinnett, from Annie Besant, and from others of the lofty planes of pure morality on which the Masters dwell, to realise what this last scandalous assertion means and to make up your minds that the last vestige of this foul teaching which audaciously calls in the Masters to its aid, must absolutely disappear from the Theosophical Society.

But we are told that this teaching is given from the purest and loftiest motives. To that I can only say that I, and those in whose name I speak, absolutely decline to accept any such morality—Theosophical or otherwise—as this. Better that the world should blunder along in its old halting way than that the teaching of the Divine Wisdom should be befouled by the doctrine that the way to escape from the lusts of the flesh is by the path of self-abuse.

But we are further told in the Holbrook pamphlet, that Mr. Leadbeater (and this in preparation of his once more becoming a teacher among us) is "an Initiate of the Great White Lodge," that he "holds a commission from the Great Spiritual Teachers of the race and bears their message into the outer worlds." Of that I know nothing and I take it that those who talk like this know nothing either. Initiates do not proclaim themselves to the world. But if I do not know that, I am at least certain of this—that the teaching of self-abuse to young boys is not part of the commission and the message of the Great Spiritual Teachers of the race. If it were so then I say here deliberately to you, my fellow Theosophists, that those Spiritual teachers are but frauds and the Theosophy which is founded on their teaching is a lie. But of course we know it is not so. But it is further asserted that Mr. Leadbeater is exceptionally pure and stainless, that he is too much

above the littleness of our human nature to care to clear himself from the unjust and untrue accusations that are made against him. [d, p. 28.] Again I do not know. It may be so. I have said nothing to-day against Mr. Leadbeater's moral character. He may, for aught I know, be on a plane of morality to which neither I nor you can lift our dazzled eyes. I have simply given you a recital of plain facts with their consequences, and am asking you to affirm by your vote that whatever empyrean morality may be, those facts and their consequences are fatal to the real physical and spiritual progress and evolution of mankind, and that the man or men who teach them, do so against the best interests of Theosophy and of humanity at large.

But, it is said, Mr. Leadbeater has promised to abstain from again teaching these particular doctrines, and therefore he is again to become a teacher in our Theosophical periodicals, especially in those devoted to the training of children! for instance, the *Lotus Journal*, here. I meet that fairly and squarely by saying that we do not intend to be put off by that. It is not enough. That is but preparatory to his reinstatement in the Theosophical Society *without recantation*. At this moment preparations are being made in America for his reinstatement without a word, not only as to his recantation, but even as to his promising to abstain. I have here the original letter which is doing this. It is from Mr. Martin, one of Mr. Leadbeater's supporters and a member of the American Section, and it has been sent round to the American Branch Secretaries. Mr. Martin says:

April 28th, 1903.

Miss Lilian Kelting,
Secretary, Hyde Park T.S.

Dear Miss Kelting,—Will you kindly advise your Theosophical Society of the fact of my intention to offer a resolution at Convention to the effect that Mrs. Besant be requested to invite Mr. Leadbeater to rejoin the Society?

Yours fraternally,

F. E. MARTIN,
Member Kans. City T.S.*

* The American Convention has since passed this resolution, at a stormy meeting, at which Mr. Leadbeater's opponents were practically refused a hearing.

Now I ask you to remember that in April, 1907, the Council of the Blavatsky Lodge sent a telegram to Mrs. Besant in these words: "Would you as President permit X's (Leadbeater's) readmission?" To that Mrs. Besant wired: "If publicly repudiates teaching, two years after repudiation on large majority request of whole Society would reinstate, otherwise not." Mr. Leadbeater has *not* repudiated, he has *not* recanted. In a letter to Mrs. Besant published in the *Theosophist* of February this year, but written last year, he says:

"You ask me to write a formal letter which you can show, if necessary, to say what is my present position in regard to the advice which I gave some time ago to certain boys.* I need hardly say that I adhere to the promise I gave you in February of last year (that was February, 1906) that I would not repeat that advice as I defer to your opinion that it is dangerous. I recognise as fully as you do that it would be so if promiscuously given and I had never dreamt of so giving it."

Now see what that means. Mr. Leadbeater neither regrets nor recants—he shelters himself behind Mrs. Besant's opinion. He defers to her opinion that his teaching is dangerous, but—and this is the point—according to him it is only dangerous when given promiscuously. Again I repeat this is a most lamentably insufficient declaration. This teaching is dangerous and hateful if given at all, even more so if given secretly. That is our position and from it as Theosophists we do not intend to recede. Mr. Leadbeater's American supporters are logical and boldly and openly adopt the teaching and recommend it as high Theosophy.

I may further say with reference to this reinstatement that in August, 1906, Mrs. Besant wrote as follows from India to America:

"Any proposal to reinstate Mr. Leadbeater in the membership of the Theosophical Society would be ruinous to the Society. It would be indignantly re-

* (Surely we shall hear no more now of insufficient evidence.)

puddiated here and in Europe and I am sure in Australia and New Zealand, if the facts were known. If such a proposal were carried in America—I do not believe it possible—I should move on the Theosophical Society Council, the supreme authority, that the application of membership should be rejected. But I am sure that Mr. Leadbeater would not apply.”

But unfortunately we have the fact that in India, America, and here, Mr. Leadbeater, without recantation, is being slowly but surely readopted. Here, as I have said, he is to contribute to the *Lotus Journal*, [e, p. 28] while in America you have heard of Mr. Martin's letter what is contemplated, and he has been appointed official editor of correspondence in their sectional organ *The Theosophic Messenger*. It is a remarkable and significant fact that one of the first questions was on the best way of teaching Theosophy to children! To show how the virus (for there is no other word) is spreading in America I may say that this appointment was made by referendum in the American Section; 2,380 members were entitled to vote, 850 did not vote, 1,245 were in favour of Mr. Leadbeater's appointment, and 285 against. The effect of the whole matter has been that in America there has been a loss to the Section of between 400 and 500 members, while here, as we all know, we have lost a number of old and valuable members, including two ex-General Secretaries of the Section and one ex acting-Secretary. In America again, some of the oldest officials, including Mr. Fullerton, the close friend of H. P. B., have been dismissed because of their opposition to Mr. Leadbeater's teaching. Such are some of the outward effects, but serious as they are they are of course in no way comparable with the inner consequences.

The extreme, nay overwhelming importance of this matter to the Theosophical Society, its members, and generally to Theosophy has compelled me to trouble the Convention at this length, but the subject is one which cannot in any way be scamped or lightly passed over. As I said at the beginning the question has to be discussed and thrashed out down to its very roots and a definite decision come to one way or the other.

I believe that now that the facts are known only one decision is possible. Nothing will make me think, till I see it in actual fact, that you fathers and mothers who are here to-day, decent English men and women as you are, would for a single moment dream of supporting in any way whatever this foul teaching which we attack and condemn—would dream of letting it go forth to the world that the Theosophy you hold dear must contain within its borders the degrading doctrine that any part whatever of the training of the young shall consist of self-abuse. The contention that this self-abuse is only dangerous when taught promiscuously must be killed—absolutely and entirely—and the foul thing banished from our midst.

And so in the last part of our resolution we ask you to assist in that task, to assist by your votes to-day and by your future action in your Lodges in pressing home upon the President of the Theosophical Society, on its General Council, and generally on members everywhere that what the British Section demands, and has a right to demand, is a clear, definite, unequivocal, official public repudiation by the Society as a whole of this self-abuse doctrine, teaching and practice, and a declaration that on no consideration whatever shall it be even the smallest part of Theosophical teaching, so that what we term this scandalous state of affairs may come to an end, and the Theosophical Society, cleared from this foul stain, may go forward unhampered to its great work of the spiritual regeneration of the race.

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MR. MEAD'S SPEECH.

In seconding this very important amendment on which the honour and well-being of our Society depend, I have thought it wiser to put down in writing what I have to say.

It is incredible that a single vote in this Convention should be cast against the amendment, for we are voting as representatives of Lodges and not as individuals.

Though difficult to believe it may possibly be that there are one or two here who privately endorse this detestable teaching, as assuredly there are in the American Section those who shamelessly force it publicly on the Society, and that, too, without protest save from a small minority; if there be such among the delegates I would remind them that they are now voting for their Lodges and not for themselves.

Fellow-members of the Theosophical Society, we are on the brink of an abyss into which the Society—to which so many of us have devoted our best thoughts and energies, will inevitably be plunged, if an imperative halt is not instantly called.

For if such monstrous statements are allowed to be made without the most emphatic repudiation, if we permit the most sacred authority to be evoked in support of such ruinous teaching, this Society which is so dear to us, will become—and rightly become—a by-word throughout the world; all will point the finger of scorn—and of just scorn—at it; people will say—and say without any means of contradicting them: “There goes a member of that wretched Society, whose ‘Initiates’ and ‘Masters,’ forsooth, teach children self-abuse!”

Even in an association composed of out and out materialists and thorough-going Malthusians this corruption of children could not possibly be tolerated. What, then, has brought about this perversion of natural instinct in our ranks?

It is no new thing. Every movement of a similar nature to our own, every movement that contacts the Sacred Mysteries, has been defiled by the perversion of them. The evil dogs the steps of the good.

The reason why such a practice has for a moment met with defenders in our body, is because psychism is with some enthroned above morals. Had any member other than a widely-known psychic been detected in teaching such practices in this Society, the matter would have been settled at once with no dissentient voice; the condemnation of the teaching would have been universal.

It is, then, owing to the fact that many believe too unquestioningly in the psychic pronouncements of this or that individual, that some of our number who would not dream of putting this teaching into practice, are overawed by their belief in the "knowledge," as they suppose, of their special psychic into giving a mental assent to what would otherwise be abomination to them.

But where will this stop? Will not practice before long follow on the heels of theory? What of the future if this is not instantly checked?

We have history to guide us. It is all very old; and, therefore, does not so much surprise those of us who are students of history; indeed, we might almost expect it.

At all times of great spiritual revival, the foul reflection, the distortion, the perversion of the most Sacred Mysteries accompanies it; at all such times the true Mysteries have been surrounded and besmirched with the foulest of sex-crimes. For the high Mysteries have to do chiefly with the Mystery of Regeneration.

Such and far more detestable practices will, I fear, become only too widespread in the near future—but let us hope to High Heaven—outside our body and not within it.

It is, therefore, *peculiarly* imperative on the Theosophical Society, that it should assert its purity. As it values its life, as it longs to keep in the great spiritual movement of which it is a member, it should stand wholeheartedly for what is clean and pure, and show the conscious or unconscious perversion of the holiest mysteries as the deadliest of poison.

They who teach such doctrines, whether knowingly or unknowingly, are blasphemers of the Divine Mysteries of the Immaculate Conception, the bringing of oneself to spiritual birth, the Mystery of the Alone-begotten.

I therefore call on you all most solemnly to have no traffic, directly or indirectly, with this thing, in any shape or form, even in thought, and to let it be known

by a unanimous resolution that the British Section of the Theosophical Society utterly repudiates and abhors the teaching of such practices.

If we do not do this unequivocally, no decent man or woman can be asked to join us. For if they were they would be asked to join under false pretences; they would be invited into an atmosphere of corrupting influences—if indeed such a tainted body could for a moment hold together and keep the knowledge of its propaganda of such debasing teaching from the public.

But this it will not be allowed to do; the subterranean propaganda of such views is at an end in our Society; it is now forced to the surface; the matter must be decided publicly. It is for this Section now to decide.

As an addition to part of Mr. Dunlop's resolution Mrs. SHARPE, General Secretary, moved, and Mr. WOOD (of Manchester) seconded the following:—

Welcoming its President's policy of collaboration with Mr. C. W. Leadbeater in any work which he is willing to do for the Society.

This was lost by 33 votes to 31.

Towards the close of the proceedings Mr. W. BELL (Harrogate) moved, and Mr. WILKINSON (of Nottingham) seconded:—

This Convention looks on the teaching given by C. W. Leadbeater to certain boys as wholly evil, and hereby expresses its judgment on this matter.

This was carried *nem. con.*

A Special Committee was unanimously appointed by the Convention to edit for publication that part of the Convention proceedings which had to do with the Leadbeater case. An account of the work of that Committee appears in *The Vâhan* of October, 1908. The editing did not, of course, in any way whatever commit any member of the Committee to any approval of the phrasing, opinions, or arguments contained in the Report. The final Report was unanimously agreed on by the Committee as a correct

record, but the General Secretary of the Section then refused to issue it to the members of the Section.

Before the final form of the Report was agreed on, a member of the Committee took exception to certain passages in the first proof of Mr. Burrows's speech, as not having been read at the Convention. Mr. Burrows did not admit this, but in order to remove any excuse for non-publication, he consented to withdraw the passages. (An account of this will be seen in the October *Vâhan*.) The report of his speech as it appears here is as agreed on by the Committee, but below are given the passages in question:—

NOTE a

This is in part the testimony of still another boy, but even more emphatically the discovery of two notes from X to two boys. It is impossible to put such writings in print; but their pruriency, their cold-blooded injunctions as to methods and times of indulgence, and the personal satisfaction expressed in the remark "Glad sensation is so pleasant," all make impossible the defence that the prescriptions were given from honest desire to save the victims from sex relations.—*Mr. Fullerton's Circular*.

NOTE b.

Needless to speak of my sorrow for the loss of one with whom I have worked for so many years with never a jar or a cloud, and with whom I can now work no more. My life is the sadder and poorer for his loss; but the Theosophical Society must stand clear of teaching that pollutes and degrades, and it is right that Mr. X is no longer with us. Frankly, it would be far easier for me if I could say to you: "Your conventional ideas of morality do not blind the occultist. It is hard to side with the crowd against a friend." But on my conscience I cannot say that. I am bound to say to you: "I have blundered badly in my judgment and my insight, and must bear the Karma of it. I dare not believe that the White Lodge could ignore such ill thoughts and deeds in the Temple open only to the pure in heart." (And further on) "If the day of my fall should come; I ask those who love me not to shrink from condemning my fault, not to attenuate it or say that black is white, but rather let them lighten my heavy Karma, as I am trying to lighten the Karma of my friend and brother, by proclaiming the unshaken purity of the ideal, and by declaring that the fall of an individual leaves unshattered their trust in the Masters of Purity and Compassion."—*Mrs. Besant's Letter*.

NOTE c.

And who regularly took them to sleep with him, although they strongly objected, and begged for a separate room, as I have actual proof.

NOTE d.

That is the line that Miss Ethel Mallet takes in her letter of resignation from the Council of the Blavatsky Lodge.

NOTE e.

In my manuscript and read by me were these words:—
“And in one of the occult groups here, of which one of his firm supporters is the chief, members have been told that they must accept him as their spiritual teacher.” Mr. Wedgwood, the supporter in question, objected to this statement as untrue, and at his request I took out those words. I have since had an opportunity of questioning the member referred to, and am informed that she was told that she must support Mr. Leadbeater—which, in my opinion, is, if correct, worse than the other phrase.—*H. B.*
