

PRIVATE.

For Members of the Theosophical Society only.

THE PRINCIPLES INVOLVED IN
THE INVITATION VOTE

J. J. VIMADALAL,

Member of the Council of the Indian Section

PRIVATE.

For Members of the Theosophical Society only.

THE PRINCIPLES INVOLVED IN THE INVITATION VOTE.

The minds of Members of the Theosophical Society are now being exercised over a very grave question affecting the welfare of their beloved Society. Our revered President has sent round a letter to the members; this has been speedily followed by a message from the Vice-President; and close upon the heels of both has come a letter to Secretaries of the Branches from Brother B. P. Wadia, quoting the President's wishes in the matter, and paving the way for their fulfilment, by providing the branches with a ready-framed resolution, and asking them to pass it. The Adyar Branch started the running by passing the resolution, and sent it round to the branches, evidently with the object of stimulating them to similar prompt action. Many Lodges, especially in the south, have followed suit; the Lahore Branch has passed a strong resolution on the opposite side, the Kashi Branch has called for a fresh inquiry, while others are evidently deliberating and waiting. Our respected General Secretary has expressed his views freely, so have several officers of the Indian Section; and we have also had the benefit of the opinions of individual members like the Dreamer and Mr. Sutcliffe.

In her letter the President, after expressing strongly her views on the question at issue, has stated that Mr. Leadbeater has not asked to return; that she is not at liberty to ask him to take his place in the Theosophical Society without a vote of the latter, and that she would rejoice to invite Mr. Leadbeater to return, if the Society wished to undo the wrong done to him; and the Convention of each Section asked her to invite him back to its ranks. The Vice-President states he never believed Mr. Leadbeater guilty of the charges brought against him, takes the view that he was

innocent, entirely endorses the President's opinions and statements on the matter, and suggests to each member taking the same view to join in inviting Mr. Leadbeater back to the Society. Mr. Wadia in his letter and in the resolution circulated by him states—(1) That Mr. Leadbeater abstained from defending himself owing to his fear of injuring others; (2) that partly because of this the charges against him were taken as true and his resignation accepted; and (3) a great injustice was done to Mr. Leadbeater; and asks the branches to redress the wrong done to him by passing his resolution. The Adyar Branch in passing the resolution of Brother Wadia has evidently agreed with the views of the President, the Vice-President, and Mr. Wadia.

It thus appears that at the Headquarters of the Society there is a strong feeling that Mr. Leadbeater has been wronged, an equally strong desire that the wrong should be righted, and strenuous efforts are made to see this desire fulfilled. The President wishes to have her hands strengthened by a vote of the Theosophical Society, and those that support her are endeavouring to see this done.

The branches and members are thus called upon to vote on the proposed invitation to Mr. Leadbeater to rejoin the Society, and have thus thrown upon them the grave and serious responsibility of deciding questions of vital importance to the latter. They have been asked to vote for Mr. Leadbeater's reinstatement on the grounds that grave injustice has been done to him, that he has been wronged, and that the T. S. should undo the wrong, and do justice to a respected member, who rendered such signal services to the cause so dear to us all.

The first thing that every member is bound to bear in mind in this connection is, that what he is asked to do is no other than actually to reverse unconditionally the decision on the matter passed by our late reverend President-Founder, when he accepted Mr. Leadbeater's resignation on the unanimous advice of a Board of 12 members, given on due deliberation, after an inquiry into the charges levelled against Mr. Leadbeater, and above all after hearing fully whatever he had to say in self-defence. It must also be remembered that amongst these members were some of the oldest and ablest, as well as most balanced and earnest members of the Society; and that after the inquiry closed, and Mr. Leadbeater had heard their decision, and in answer to a question from Col. Olcott as to whether Mr. Leadbeater thought he (the President-Founder) had acted impartially in the matter, Mr. Leadbeater replied: "Absolutely! If you should consider later I can do anything, let me know." Further, in reply to an inquiry by Mr.

Mead whether Mr. Leadbeater meant to continue the course of teaching objected to, he said: "Seeing there is such a feeling on the matter by people whose views I respect, I do not."

Here then we have the following facts: (1) That certain grave charges were levelled against Mr. Leadbeater. (2) That Col. Olcott called an Advisory Board of 12 members to advise him. (3) That Mr. Leadbeater tendered his resignation before the inquiry began, not, as he stated, with any idea of confessing to evil intent, but simply to relieve the Society from any supposed complicity. (4) That Mr. Leadbeater was given ample opportunity to defend himself, and did state whatever he wished to state in defence. (5) That after hearing him the Board deliberated for some time and unanimously voted for 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 Mr. Leadbeater's resignation already offered in anticipation of the committee's decision." (6) That the Colonel followed this advice as there was nothing in his mind against it, and he fully agreed with the Board. (7) That Mr. Leadbeater at the close of this trial admitted that the Colonel had acted "absolutely impartially" in the matter. And (8) that he said he respected so much the views of the Board that he would not thereafter give the advice which they objected to.

As against these facts it is now contended—(1) That Mr. Leadbeater, through fear of injuring others, abstained from self-defence. (2) That the trial was a travesty of justice, because four out of the twelve members of the Board had previously expressed passionate opinions adverse to him, and he was condemned on points in the documents produced which were unsifted and unproven, and which were declared by him to be untrue and distorted. (3) That Mr. Leadbeater has a simple explanation to give, which the President has set out in her letter. (4) That this explanation proves Mr. Leadbeater innocent of the charges against him. (5) That he has been gravely wronged, and (6) Justice ought to be done by asking him to return to the Theosophical Society.

The members are asked to decide between these conflicting views and to vote for his return. In justice to those that ask for such a vote, we are bound to assume definitely that they wish each member to exercise his own mind, to deliberate carefully over the whole question, and to form his own independent judgment in the matter after thorough examination and patient thought. They certainly do not wish him merely to nod "yea"

to what is said on the question by others, whether on the one side or on the other. Nor must they be taken to suggest that what the President has said is to be taken as the last and final word on the question, and that further deliberation is not called for. If these assumptions are not justified, then the whole process of asking the Sections to vote on the question would be a huge farce, a hollow and a mischievous formality.

Such being the case, it will be at once apparent to every member on a little thought that—involving as it does the necessity of sifting a very intricate matter so far as the facts are concerned, of forming an opinion upon a grave question like the sex-problem, and, above all, of deciding on a point connected with morals that is bound to have the most far-reaching influences, for good or for evil, on the future of our beloved Society—the task set before him would be a most responsible, difficult, and delicate one, even if all available materials were placed within his reach. As it is, however, the task is not merely responsible, difficult, and delicate—it is absolutely impossible, the task, viz., of coming to a conscientious, independent, and unbiassed or un-influenced opinion on the points involved in the question at issue. For in the midst of the conflicting views above set out, what are the materials that have been supplied to the members in order to render it even possible for them to undertake the task and to perform it with any degree of satisfaction? Let us inquire.

The President only makes certain statements of facts in her letter, but does not tell us what the source of her information is as to those. Further, she discusses part of the evidence at the trial, expresses certain opinions, and draws certain conclusions. The Vice-President merely echoes the views of the President. The exact charges laid against Mr. Leadbeater have not been given out; the report of the trial has not been made open to the members; copies of the documents and other evidence produced at the trial (including the cipher letter referred to by the President in her letter) are not furnished to them; what admissions Mr. Leadbeater made at the trial (and he made several very important admissions) are not set out for their information, they are not even told that he did make those admissions; what evidence, for or against, has been discovered since Mr. Leadbeater's trial has not been made known; Mr. Leadbeater's letter to Mr. Fullerton (a most important communication) is not published; what the President wrote from Benares, when she first heard of the charges during Mr. Leadbeater's stay at the same place and after hearing what he had got to say, is not disclosed to the members; what Mr. Leadbeater himself has now got to say the members are

kept ignorant of. How can it be expected that the members and the branches should be able, under those circumstances, to exercise independent judgment on a question of such grave import, and to upset the decision of the late President Founder and of twelve respected members of our Society? It is no wonder that, as matters stand, several leading members have protested against calling for a vote in the absence of requisite materials.

It is claimed, and it may be rightly claimed, that some of the material above set out, like the stenographic report* of the trial and Mr. Leadbeater's letter to Mr. Fullerton, are confidential and private documents, involving moral wrong in their publication. But the fact nevertheless remains that they are important and vital documents in the case, and that a reversal of the decision of the late Colonel and the Advisory Board is impossible without a perusal of the proceedings of the original trial and of all the evidence produced thereat. We are asked to do justice to a wronged brother; but it is forgotten that in asking us to decide on the question in the absence of complete material indispensable for forming an independent opinion, we are being asked to do an act of the gravest injustice to the late revered President Founder and to the twelve respected members of the Advisory Board—nay, the gravest injustice is being done to the members themselves! To ask the members of our Society to express an opinion on this question and to upset a former decision without their knowing what the charges exactly were, what the material was on which the Board and the Colonel formed their opinion, what admissions Mr. Leadbeater then made, and what his present position exactly is—all this is against the very first principles of justice and common sense, and should find little countenance in a sober association like the Theosophical Society. But one must go further. Even if all this material were before the members, it would not be right for them to decide. Now that it is pleaded that Mr. Leadbeater abstained from self-defence to save others, those that led the charges and those that wish to defend should have another and ample opportunity of leading all the evidence they have and of fully thrashing out matters, which by reason of Mr. Leadbeater's admissions might have been left partly discussed at the original trial, before a most representative and independent body (with the President at its head); and Mr. Leadbeater should be given an opportunity of putting in his defence

* It was unanimously resolved by the Advisory Board, where the Colonel was present, that a record of all that took place be placed in the archives of the Society. Has not the stenographic report thus become part of the Society's records?

fully, and should also answer such pertinent questions as might be asked. Nothing short of a full and complete inquiry before such a representative body as aforesaid, at which Mr. Leadbeater was present and either side had the amplest opportunity of producing evidence and being heard, could meet the ends of justice. If Mr. Leadbeater and his friends have reasonable grounds for asking that the case be reopened, by all means let them do so. But let there not be this unheard-of procedure, this most summary of all summary ways, of arriving at a decision on absolutely insufficient material—a procedure which, if followed, can do justice to no one, not even to Mr. Leadbeater, and would work injustice to every one, to the Colonel, to the Advisory Board, to the members themselves, and to the Society as a whole, whose interests are vitally concerned in the matter.

So far as regards the question of doing justice. But there is another and most vital principle involved in this matter that calls for prompt attention and careful consideration. It is plain that those that ask the members to vote for Mr. Leadbeater's return, wish them to do so on the strength of the President's letter to the members. This letter no doubt gives expression to the President's valued opinion on the question, and states what she considers were the real facts of the case; but it does not contain nor is it accompanied by the material above set out, which is indispensable for right and independent decision. It follows therefore that the Branches and members are practically told—"Here are the views of our much loved and respected President. She knows the whole case and has seen the whole evidence. She has formed her opinion after full knowledge and deliberation. She wishes to see the wrong which she believes has been done to Mr. Leadbeater redressed. You who have the fullest faith in her, and who hold her in such reverence, can do no better than to follow her opinion and help the fulfilment of her wishes." A large number of our Branches seem to have accepted this advice immediately, and have passed resolutions requesting her to invite Mr. Leadbeater to rejoin our ranks, evidently on the strength of the President's letter. They do not seem to have cared to inquire whence the President derives her information as to the facts stated by her, to have asked for a statement of the case as it was presented to the late President Founder and the Board, or for the documentary evidence;—have not, to be brief, applied a judicial mind to the matter. It has been merely a consenting and passive mind that has been brought to bear on the question, and has, soon after the President's letter, and in the absence of requisite material, agreed that injustice was done, decided to upset

the decision of the late President Founder, in short has echoed the views and opinions of the President on an occasion when an independent vote was called for. No one would be more delighted than the writer to be assured that he is wrong in the view he takes, and he freely and unreservedly apologises if he is doing injustice to any branch or to any member. But if the view he takes, which seems to be justified by the events as they have happened, is correct, we have an extremely undesirable state of things indeed, and one that constitutes a grave danger to the life and progress of the Theosophical Society; and emphatic protest should be made against the same by all those who love the Society and who could wish its high principles and ideals ever maintained in practice. Liberty of thought, according to our revered President, is the very life breath of the Theosophical Society; and over and over again has she taught us that mental growth is possible only when one thinks for himself, and not merely takes in the thoughts and views of others. In a body like the Theosophical Society, whose platform is so wide and where the utmost liberty of thought and speech is allowed constitutionally—and ought ever, in practice, to be enjoyed by the members—any step which would interfere with this liberty and directly or indirectly lead the members, without independent thinking, to adopt the views and opinions of another, however respected that other might be, should be noted and pointed out to the members as one that turns the wheels of the Theosophical Society backwards, and saps at its very life. It is therefore the duty, however painful it might be, of every member who considers the manner in which this question has been approached and dealt with, as destructive of the best traditions of the Theosophical Society, and as creating a harmful precedent for the future, to speak out plainly on such occasions and point out to his brothers such dangers as he may see ahead, so that they might be averted by proper and timely attention.

It is a fact that cannot be gainsaid that the members of the Theosophical Society have the very highest respect and reverence for our beloved President. She possesses such remarkable qualities of head and heart, all of us owe so much of what we most prize in life to her, and she has, above all, rendered during the last two decades such signal services to our beloved cause, that there is rightly in our hearts the deepest love, the utmost gratitude, and the highest respect for her. Nay, more; as Outer Head of the E.S.T., those that belong to the latter revere and honour her from a still deeper stratum of their consciousness. It is no wonder, therefore, that we may be and are naturally anxious, inspired as we are by our grateful and reverential feelings towards

her, to take her slightest wishes as more than commands, and to do our best to see them fulfilled. *But it is for these very reasons* that the greatest care should be exercised—not only, it is humbly submitted, by the President herself, but also by all those that love and honour her and love and honour the Theosophical Society—to see that these very proper and natural feelings do not tend directly or indirectly to hinder the progress of our movement by leading the members into yielding their independent thinking on a subject where such thinking is called for, and into subordinating their judgment in a matter in which their independent judgment is asked, to the judgment of the President, however well considered and respected that judgment might be.

There can be no doubt that our revered President is the object of reverential feelings on the part of our members; and it will also be admitted that where they exist so powerfully, these are bound to interfere with independent thinking and to prompt those that are inspired by them, to follow unreservedly the lead of the object of their reverence and to make her views and opinions their own. *And here exactly comes the danger which it is the purpose of the writer humbly yet clearly to point out.* For he has heard it stated that if, in this matter, we have not proper materials for a rational decision, we should adopt completely the President's views; he has heard inquiries made as to whether it is allowed to members of the E. S. T. to go against the views of the President; he has seen his brothers stare in dumbfounded silence, even grow quite angry, at the expression of any opinion different from that of the President's; nay, it is declared that all promotion in spiritual life would be stopped for those that are heretical enough to decline to express an opinion in the absence of material other than the President's letter! The writer has no doubt that similar experiences will be reported by all those who have in this matter had the misfortune to differ from the President's views, or to consider that further material is requisite before voting.

Under the circumstances it becomes one's duty respectfully to draw the attention of the President and the officers of the Society, as well as of all members, to these facts, and humbly to ask for a strong declaration from the President of the attitude that members ought to maintain on such an occasion, if the glorious ideals of the Society are to be preserved. Such a noble declaration in beautiful language such as our revered President alone can command was made by her in 1904, and is well worth quoting at this juncture.*

* The underlining in the quotation is the present writer's.

Benares City, Feb. 17, 1904.

My Dear Friend,—I am told, on what ought to be good authority, that there is a growing tendency in the T. S. in London to consider me as a “sacrosanct personality, beyond and above criticism.”

Frankly, I cannot believe that any claim so wild and preposterous is set up, or that many know me so little as to imagine that, if it were set up, I would meet it with anything but the uttermost condemnation. Even a few people, holding and acting on such a theory, would be a danger to the Society; if any considerable number held and acted on it the Society would perish. Liberty of opinion is the life-breath of the Society; the fullest freedom in expressing opinions, and the fullest freedom in criticising opinions, are necessary for the preservation of the growth and evolution of the Society. A “commanding personality”—to use the cant of the day—may in many ways be of service to a movement, but in the Theosophical Society the work of such a personality would be too dearly purchased, if it were bought by the surrender of individual freedom of thought, and the Society would be far safer if it did not number such a personality among its members.

Over and over again I have emphasised this fact, and have urged free criticism of all opinions, my own among them. Like everybody else, I often make mistakes by abstaining from criticism. I would sooner never write another word than have my words made into a gag for other people's thoughts. All my life I have followed the practice of reading the harshest criticisms, with a view to utilize them; and I do not mean, as I grow old, to help the growth of crystallization by evading the most rigorous criticisms. Moreover, anything that has been done through me, not by me, for Theosophy, would be outbalanced immeasurably by making my crude knowledge a measure for the thinking in the movement, and by turning me into an obstacle to future progress.

So, I pray you if you come across any such absurd ideas as are mentioned above, that you will resist them in your own person and repudiate them on my behalf. No greater disservice could be done to the Society, or to me, than by allowing them to spread.

It is further alleged that a policy of “ostracism” is enforced against those who do not hold this view of me. I cannot insult any member of the Society by believing that he would initiate or endorse such a policy. It is obvious that this would be an intolerable tyranny, to which no self-respecting man would submit. I may say, in passing, that in all selection for office in the movement, the sole consideration should be the power of the candidate to serve the Society, and not his opinion of any person—Col. Olcott, Mr. Sinnett, Mr. Mead, or myself. We do not want faction fights for party leaders, but a free choice of the best man.

Pardon me for troubling you with a formal repudiation of a view that seems too absurd to merit denial. But as it is gravely put to me as a fact, I cannot ignore it. For the Society, to me, is the object of my deepest love and service; my life is given to it, it embodies my ideal of a physical plane movement. And I would rather make myself ridiculous by tilting at a windmill, such as I believe this idea to be, than run the smallest chance of leaving to grow within the Society a form of personal idolatry which would be fatal to its usefulness to the world. In the T. S. there is no orthodoxy, there are no Popes. It is a band of students eager to learn the truth, and growing ever in the knowledge thereof, and its well-being rests on the maintenance of this ideal.

Ever your sincere friend,

ANNIE BESANT.

It does seem to the writer that the present occasion has shown that there *are* in the Society not merely a few but a considerable number who do not consider that the President's words and opinions are "beyond and above criticism," and that it is disrespectful even to suggest that her view might be mistaken. It seems also to the writer, that in selections for office in the movement we are getting (witness last year's experience about the Indian Council) "faction fights for party leaders," and that more attention is being paid to whether a candidate's views coincide or not with those of the President than to "the power of the candidate to serve the Society"; and it also seems to him that "personal idolatry" is spreading and a narrow orthodoxy and poperity creeping in. The proper moment therefore has come to speak out plainly, and even at the risk of having merely "tilted at a windmill" to call upon the President, the officers, and the older members plainly and firmly to voice their opinions against such degenerating and disruptive tendencies.

In spite of such declarations, however, the fact will remain that among the varied and numerous members of the Theosophical Society there will always be a large number who will, by temperament, find themselves unable on occasions like the present, that call for independent thinking, to have the heart to think otherwise than with revered member and head like the President; and the only practical solution of the difficulty will be that on occasions like the present, the President or other such highly revered member should, while the members are deliberating and forming their opinions, refrain from expressing her or his own opinion and wishes, either publicly (as in the present case) or even privately to individual members. For, in the latter case, such opinion and wishes are likely to be whispered from ear to ear—as it has been whispered in the present case that Bro. Wadia's letter to the Branch Secretaries had the approval of the President. Nothing short of the most scrupulous silence on the part of the person who has that hold upon the members which our revered President now has, will save the situation and protect the Society from degenerating into a practically one-man organisation, with all its narrowness, shortcomings, and allied dangers. It is a strange irony that the most revered member, whose views would be most inquired after by others, should have to observe this vow of silence; but that is the only way out of the difficulty—and here, as elsewhere, the elder members of our Theosophical family must by his sacrifice ward off the harm threatened to the family by the weaknesses of the younger ones. Had the President refrained from expressing her views and wishes in the pre-

sent case, it seems to the writer, unless he is much mistaken, that we would have seen more of independent thinking and judicial attitude than what we have seen now, which would surely have been a great gain to the movement.

This attitude of strict silence would be the more necessary when the President combines, as at present, the functions of the head of the Society as well as of the E. S. T. It is extremely difficult for some members of the E. S. T., and almost impossible for others, to dissociate, in cases like the present, the President of the Society from the Outer Head of the E. S. T. And in order that the dangers of a combination of these two functions in one person might be averted, it is extremely desirable that such person should keep his mouth sealed, and his opinion and wishes strictly to himself, while the matter is being deliberated upon by the members; and that those that come to know or may be in a position to guess his opinion and wishes, should not only check themselves from being led away, by their regard and reverence for the person of their leader, into directly or indirectly using such knowledge or position for the purpose, as they might consider, or guiding the votes of the members in right channels, but should take scrupulous care that the opinions and wishes of the President do not get generally known to members by means of confidential communications from member to member. Such policy alone can practically solve the difficulty, and earnest attention of the President and the members is humbly solicited to these important considerations.

It may be argued that if instead of accepting the judgment of the President we take a different view, we are guilty of creating disharmony in an organisation, the very watchwords of which are brotherhood, love, and harmony. Such an argument would have as an ideal the harmony of stones, not of thinking creatures. Are not we in the Theosophical Society—men and women of different countries, of various faiths, of all nationalities, of different minds and different environments—endeavouring to create amongst us a living nucleus of Universal Brotherhood, where the utmost difference of thought and opinion is to be permitted side by side with brotherly love and affection? That and that alone is our ideal; and any measure that lowers it and tends to create in the Theosophical Society mental slavery of any kind is a departure from our ideal, and is therefore a retrogressive and not a progressive step for our movement. Therefore it is that our efforts should be directed to gather together in the various councils of the Society, and in the circle of the advisers and co-workers of the President, whoever might be the fortunate incumbent of

that high post, not merely men and women whose modes of thinking are in a line with his, or whose reverence for him personally is likely to make them yield their own thinking to his, but also men and women whose modes of thinking are divergent from the President's, and who would freely express their divergent views—so that, having around him people of as varying temperaments and modes of thinking as possible, the wide and cosmopolitan character of our movement might be maintained, and there might be no chances of its work suffering by reason of its being narrowed to the ideas of a single person. The truth of this proposition has been frankly admitted by our revered President in the letter above quoted; and those that revere her deeply should take special care to have a wide tolerance for, nay, to offer a hearty welcome to, honest views different from those of the President. All attempts at smothering and running down such divergence of view should be immediately suppressed by the President and other leaders of the movement, and freedom of opinion encouraged in every possible manner. Thus and thus alone shall we be true to our ideals, and shall our beloved Society successfully fulfil its great function in the world—that of a helper and forerunner of that true brotherhood, which recognises fully the scheme of evolution and the varying stages at which every ego stands, and is based not on mere communality of thought and opinion, but on tolerating, welcoming, and learning from divergent opinions, and preserving inner love and regard in spite of the uttermost difference of thought, opinion, or belief! In this wise alone shall the first great object of the Theosophical Society be realised in life, and the Society fulfil its proper function of harbingering the next Root Race. May we all work whole-heartedly towards this noble end!

Having dealt with the more important aspects of the question, we may dwell on some of the other points involved.

We are now asked to request the President to invite Mr. Leadbeater back to our ranks. Some time after his resignation Mr. Leadbeater, in a letter published over his signature in *The Theosophist*, plainly declared that he was not willing to join the Theosophical Society again. We would have expected that before the Society was asked to request the President to invite him back, it would at least have been ascertained that he had changed his intentions. The President has, however, stated that she does not know what his present intentions are. The probability therefore stands that all this trouble, vexation, and difference, might end in a polite negative from Mr. Leadbeater. Is it wise to place

the President and the Theosophical Society in this awkward position?

A communication was alleged to have been received by the Colonel from the Blessed Masters to the effect that the advice Mr. Leadbeater gave was wrong. The Colonel stated that Mrs. Besant had also received a similar communication, but the latter has recently stated she did not. If these phenomena were genuine and the Masters' messages properly understood, what is now attempted to be done is the very reverse of what They advised, and the mistake which They pointed out of making the matter public is being repeated on a much larger scale.

Some of the Branches have while voting declared the resolution to proceed from a Branch consisting of so many members. All members do not attend a meeting, and the resolution may be one passed by a small majority. Would it be right to consider it as the opinion of *all* the members composing the Branch?

The writer has more than once gone through the stenographic report of the trial, and he is able to state that there has been no bias or bitter feeling manifested during the inquiry. On the other hand, the utmost consideration was shown to Mr. Leadbeater, and every point was left at a proper stage without being further pressed. In all fairness to those that advised the Colonel, the writer feels it his duty to say that as a lawyer he has failed to see in the proceedings any evidence of prejudice or ill-will on the part of any of the members of the Board. Granting that four out of twelve members had expressed adverse views in strong language, it does not follow that the whole trial was a "travesty of justice"; and with the utmost deference it must be said that the President has done injustice to the Board in expressing the views about the trial which she has in her letter. Needless to add that Dr. Van Hook's harsh criticism and violent remarks on this point are not at all justified.

With regard to the advice of Mr. Leadbeater, it might be added that the principle underlying it, in cases of boys before puberty, seems to be that impure thoughts can be got rid of by permitting them to be condensed into the least harmful actions. This is against the trend of all religious and Theosophical teaching. What does "The Voice of the Silence" say on this subject? "Do not believe that lust can ever be killed out if gratified or satiated, for this is an abomination inspired by Mâra. It is by feeding vice that it expands and waxes strong, like to the worm that fattens on the blossom's heart." The advice given seems to be in direct contradiction to this teaching. Is it not human experience that gratification of vice, while it may produce

a temporary lull, is succeeded by a stronger uprising, and that with each gratification the strength of the vice grows and diminishes not until the man is a physical, a moral, and a mental wreck? Is it not the only wise course in such cases to advise inner struggle and mental control, pure thinking and elevated study, good company and healthy occupation? There can be little doubt that the advice given involves some very dangerous principles; and as these are not mere matters of intellectual belief but refer to practical morals, the greatest care should be exercised to see that the Society is not unnecessarily involved into any supposed complicity with moral wrong. It was "to relieve the Society from any supposed complicity" that Mr. Leadbeater wisely resigned; and if the Society now votes for his invitation, without his public repudiation of the teaching, will it not be considered by the public tantamount to the Society putting the seal of approval on Mr. Leadbeater's advice, considered by most people in the world as morally wrong?

It may further be argued that, even conceding for the sake of argument that there was something wrong in the advice of Mr. Leadbeater, we should have tolerance for such a distinguished brother, and show love to him by inviting him back. In the first place, this argument entirely gives up the position which the President and the Vice-President have adopted, namely—that the invitation is to be the means of doing justice to a wronged brother. Had the invitation vote been asked for on grounds of tolerance and love, the matter would have stood on much less debatable grounds indeed. It must further be remembered—first, that the greatest love and respect for Mr. Leadbeater may exist side by side with a wish that, for the sake of justice and as a matter of principle, this summary way of dealing with the question should not be adopted; and secondly, that the interests of the Theosophical Society are involved in the matter, and that these are far superior to all other considerations.

We must remember, having regard to the high moral standard we hold up before the world in our literature, to see that we give to the ordinary man of the world no room whatsoever for the accusation that in practice we not only fall woefully short of that standard, but that our code of morality is inferior in practice even to that of the ordinary good man of the world. It is apparent that a defence of Mr. Leadbeater's action is not possible without going into the theories of thought accumulation and astral vision, and that if the vast mass of people outside the Theosophical Society are not prepared to accept these theories, Mr. Leadbeater's action to them is morally wrong and entirely

unjustifiable. Even accepting these theories as true, there would be room for a serious difference of opinion as to Mr. Leadbeater's advice, and, be it remembered, on a matter not merely of doctrine but of morals. Now the Theosophical Society lives for the world, and not for its members; and any impression on the minds of the public, whether such impression be justified or not, which lowers the moral basis of our Society, is bound seriously to hinder our work in the world, and scrupulous care should be taken not unnecessarily to create any such impression. It is partly because there has been so far no valid basis for imputing any moral wrong to our leaders that our Society has been able to hold its own, in spite of outside attacks. We have now the admission that Mr. Leadbeater did give advice to boys which ordinarily is considered as most harmful to them and to the race in general; and if this goes out into the world, we give a foundation for an attack that will drag the Theosophical Society down in the eyes of the public so far as its morals are concerned, which would be disastrous indeed.

Mr. Leadbeater wisely contemplated this, and he tendered his resignation "in order to save the Society from any embarrassment" and simply to relieve it from any supposed complicity. Shall we now place the Theosophical Society in a similarly embarrassed position by inviting him back? By the wisdom and good sense of the Colonel and his advisers we were able successfully to tide over the difficulty. Shall we invite trouble to our homes again? Mr. Leadbeater's books are still being read and studied; but it may well be that when the whole matter is made public many people will avoid them. The writer has heard it to have been declared by a European who is reading Mr. Leadbeater's books that if the latter did give such advice he would not look at his writings again. Let us not forget that we are working for the good of the world, and we must take the world as it is and make concessions for human prejudices and shortcomings. May we not continue to love and respect Mr. Leadbeater in our hearts, to read and study his books and articles, to get and also to give to the world the benefit of his investigations and his wisdom, and yet for the good of the Theosophical Society let things go on as they do now? Mr. Herbert Burrows in moving the resolution of the British Section against the Van Hook letters is reported to have stated:—

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.

Shall we force their hands and rake up a matter that was so well settled by our late Colonel?

Let us weigh on the one hand the harm that would come to the Theosophical Society by Mr. Leadbeater's remaining outside as he is now, and on the other the harm that would ensue if he is readmitted and the whole matter brought before the public; and if the last outweighs the first, and it does in the mind of the writer, wisely say, "Pray let matters stand as they do now." What do we really lose if Mr. Leadbeater remains outside? He is indeed (as he stated in his preliminary explanation at the trial) "shut out from a certain kind of Theosophical work"; but he himself added, "Since it has come forward it would be undesirable that I should appear before the public." We are now having Mr. Leadbeater's articles, and we shall have also his books. We shall lose his public lectures, and his visits to branches. As against this we have to consider the terrible harm to the Theosophical Society by the matter being made public, which the Colonel, Mr. Sinnet, and others were so anxious to avoid, and which they wisely averted. We may also perhaps have the resignation of many good members. Shall we undergo the risk of all this, or shall we do wisely to let things run on as they have been since Mr. Leadbeater resigned? It is for each member to ponder well and answer, for on his answer depends the future of the Society.

The writer feels it necessary to add in closing that the only motive that has inspired him in writing these few lines has been the good of the Theosophical Society. He has attempted to keep the question clear, as far as possible, of personalities. All that he hopes in the end is that his words may be read in the same spirit in which they are written, and that an impersonal discussion of this question may lead to a clear understanding of principles and thus help the noble work of our dear Society.