

Meanwhile, Madame Blavatsky began to make friends amongst the Europeans, and in 1880 visited Simla, where she began late in the day to approach her work from the right direction. Again, however, some mistakes were made which have retarded the establishment of the Theosophical Society, as far as India is concerned, on the dignified footing that it ought to occupy. A great many wonderful phenomena were manifested in the presence at various times of a great many people; but proper safeguards were not taken to avert the great danger that must always attend such a method of recommending occult science to public notice. It is beyond dispute that phenomena, exhibited under thoroughly satisfactory conditions to persons intelligent enough to comprehend their significance, create an effect in awakening a thirst for the study of occult philosophy that no other appeal can produce. But it is equally true, though at the first glance this may not be so apparent, that to minds, quite unprepared by previous training to grasp the operation of occult forces, the most perfectly unimpeachable phenomenon will be received rather as an insult to the understanding than as a proof of the operation of occult power. This is especially the case with persons of merely average intelligence, of whose faculties cannot stand the shock of a sudden appeal to an entirely new set of ideas.

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About the end of September my wife went one afternoon with Madame Blavatsky to the top of a neighbouring hill. They were only accompanied by one other friend. I was not present myself on this occasion. While there Madame Blavatsky asked my wife, in a joking way, what was her heart's desire. She said at random and on the spur of the moment, "to get a note from one of the Brothers." Madame Blavatsky took from her pocket a piece of blank pink paper that had been torn off a note received that day. Folding this up into a small compass she took it to the edge of the hill, held it up for a moment or two between her hands and returned saying that it was gone. She presently, after communicating mentally by her own occult methods with the distant Brother, said he asked where my wife would have the letter. At first she said she should like it to come fluttering down into her lap, but some conversation ensued as to whether this would be the best way to get it, and ultimately it was decided that she should find it in a certain tree. Here, of course, a mistake was made which opens the door to the suspicions of resolutely disbelieving

persons. It will be supposed that Madame Blavatsky had some reasons of her own for wishing the tree chosen. For readers who favour that conjecture after all that has gone before, it is only necessary to repeat that the present story is being told not as a proof, but as an incident.

At first Madame Blavatsky seems to have made a mistake as to the description of the tree which the distant Brother was indicating as that in which he was going to put the note, and with some trouble my wife scrambled on to the lower branch of a bare and leafless trunk on which nothing could be found. Madame then again got into communication with the Brother and ascertained her mistake. Into another tree at a little distance, which neither Madame nor the one other person present had approached, my wife now climbed a few feet and looked all round among the branches. At first she saw nothing, but then, turning back her head without moving from the position she had taken up, she saw on a twig immediately before her face - where a moment previously there had been nothing but leaves - a little pink note. This was stuck on to the stalk of a leaf that had been quite freshly torn off, for the stalk was still green and moist - not withered as it would have been if the leaf had been torn off for any length of time. The note was found to contain these few words: **"I HAVE BEEN ASKED TO LEAVE A NOTE HERE FOR YOU. WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?"**. It was signed by some Tibetan characters. The pink paper on which it was written appeared to be the same which Madame Blavatsky had taken blank from her pocket shortly before.

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We set out at the appointed time next morning. We were originally to have been a party of six, but a seventh person joined us just before we started. After going down the hill for some hours a place was chosen in the wood near the upper waterfall for our breakfast: the baskets that had been brought with us were unpacked, and, as usual at an Indian picnic, the servants at a little distance lighted a fire and set to work to make tea and coffee. Concerning this some joking arose over the fact that we had one cup and saucer too few, on account of the seventh person who joined us at starting, and some one laughingly asked Madame Blavatsky to create another cup and saucer. There was no set purpose in the proposal at first, but when Madame Blavatsky said it would be very difficult, but that if we liked

she would try, attention was of course at once arrested. Madame Blavatsky, as usual, held mental conversation with one of the Brothers, and then wandered a little about in the immediate neighbourhood of where we were sitting - that is to say, within a radius of half-a-dozen to a dozen yards from our picnic cloth - I closely following, waiting to see what would happen. Then she marked a spot on the ground, and called to one of the gentlemen of the party to bring a knife to dig with. The place chosen was the edge of a little slope covered with thick weeds and grass and shrubby undergrowth. The gentleman with the knife - let us call him X----- -- as I shall have to refer to him afterwards - tore up these in the first place with some difficulty, as the roots were tough and closely interlaced. Cutting then into the matted roots and earth with the knife, and pulling away the *débris* with his hands, he came at last, on the edge of something white, which turned out, as it was completely excavated, to be the required cup. A corresponding saucer was also found after a little more digging. Both objects were in among the roots which spread everywhere through the ground, so that it seemed as if the roots were growing round them. The cup and saucer both corresponded exactly, as regards their pattern, with those that had been brought to the picnic, and constituted a seventh cup and saucer when brought back to where we were to have breakfast. I may as well add at once that afterwards, when we got home, my wife questioned our principal *khitmutgar* as to how many cups and saucers of that particular kind we possessed. In the progress of years, as the set was an old set, some had been broken, but the man at once said that nine teacups were left. When collected and counted that number was found to be right, without reckoning the excavated cup. That made ten, and as regards the pattern - it was one of a somewhat peculiar kind, bought a good many years previously in London, and which assuredly could never have been matched in Simla.

Now, the notion that human beings can create material objects by the exercise of mere psychological power, will of course be revolting to the understandings of people to whom this whole subject is altogether strange. It is not making the idea much more acceptable to say that the cup and saucer appear in this case to have been "doubled" rather than created. The doubling of objects seems merely another kind of creation - creation according to a pattern. However, the facts, the occurrences of the morning I have described, were at all events

exactly as I have related them. I have been careful as to the strict and minute truthfulness of every detail. If the phenomenon was not what it appeared to be - a most wonderful display of a power of which the modern scientific world has no comprehension whatever it was, of course, an elaborate fraud. That supposition, however, setting aside the moral impossibility from any point of view of assuming Madame Blavatsky capable of participation in such an imposture, will only bear to be talked of vaguely. As a way out of the dilemma it will not serve any person of ordinary intelligence who is aware of the facts, or who trusts my statement of them. The cup and saucer were assuredly dug up in the way I describe. If they were not deposited there by occult agency, they must have been buried there beforehand. Now, I have described the character of the ground from which they were dug up; assuredly that had been undisturbed for years by the character of the vegetation upon it. But it may be urged that from some other part of the sloping ground a sort of tunnel may have been excavated in the first instance through which the cup and saucer could have been thrust into the place where they were found. Now this theory is barely tenable as regards its physical possibility. If the tunnel had been big enough for the purpose it would have left traces which were not perceptible on the ground - which were not even discoverable when the ground was searched shortly afterwards with a view to that hypothesis. But the truth is that the theory of previous burial is morally untenable in view of the fact that the demand for the cup and saucer - of all the myriad things that might have been asked for - could never have been foreseen. It arose out of circumstances themselves the sport of the moment. If no extra person had joined us at the last moment the number of cups and saucers packed up by the servants would have been sufficient for our needs, and no attention would have been drawn to them. It was by the servants, without the knowledge of any guest, that the cups taken were chosen from others that might just as easily have been taken. Had the burial fraud been really perpetrated it would have been necessary to constrain us to choose the *exact* spot we did actually choose for the picnic with a view to the previous preparations, but the exact spot on which the ladies' jumpans were deposited was chosen by myself in concert with the gentleman referred to above as X-, and it was within a few yards of this spot that the cup was found. Thus, leaving the other absurdities of the fraud hypothesis out of sight, who could be the agents employed to deposit the cup and saucer in the ground, and

when did they perform the operation? Madame Blavatsky was under our roof the whole time from the previous evening when the picnic was determined on to the moment of starting. ... Colonel Olcott, the President of the Theosophical Society, also a guest of ours at the time of which I am speaking, was certainly with us all the evening from the period of our return from the abortive expedition of the afternoon, and was also present at the start. To imagine that he spent the night in going four or five miles down a difficult *khud* through forest paths difficult to find, to bury a cup and saucer of a kind that we were not likely to take in a place we were not likely to go to, in order that in the exceedingly remote contingency of its being required for the perpetration of a hoax it might be there, would certainly be a somewhat extravagant conjecture. Another consideration - the destination for which we were making can be approached by two roads from opposite ends of the upper horseshoe of hills on which Simla stands. It was open to us to select either path, and certainly neither Madame Blavatsky nor Colonel Olcott had any share in the selection of that actually taken. Had we taken the other, we should never have come to the spot where we actually picnicked.

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“On Sunday, the 3rd of October, at Mr. Hume’s house at Simla, there were present at dinner Mr. and Mrs. Hume, Mr. and Mrs. Sinnett, Mrs. Gordon, Mr. F. Hogg, Captain P.J. Maitland, Mr. Beatson, Mr. Davidson, Colonel Olcott, and Madame Blavatsky. Most of the persons present having recently seen many remarkable occurrences in Madame Blavatsky’s presence, conversation turned on occult phenomena, and in the course of this Madame Blavatsky asked Mrs. Hume if there was anything she particularly wished for. Mrs. Hume at first hesitated, but in a short time said there was something she would particularly like to have brought her, namely, a small article of jewellery that she formerly possessed, but had given away to a person who had allowed it to pass out of her possession. Madame Blavatsky then said if she would fix the image of the article in question very definitely on her mind, she, Madame Blavatsky, would endeavour to procure it. Mrs. Hume then said that she vividly remembered the article, and described it as an old-fashioned breast brooch set round with pearls, With glass at the front, and the back made to contain hair. She then, on being asked, drew a rough sketch

of the brooch.

“Madame Blavatsky then wrapped up a coin attached to her watch-chain in two cigarette papers, and put it in her dress, and said that she hoped the brooch might be obtained in the course of the evening. At the close of dinner she said to Mr. Hume that the paper in which the coin had been wrapped was gone. A little later, in the drawing room, she said that the brooch would not be brought into the house, but that it must be looked for in the garden, and then as the party went out accompanying her, she said she had clairvoyantly seen the brooch fall into a star-shaped bed of flowers. Mr. Hume led the way to such a bed in a distant part of the garden. A prolonged and careful search was made with lanterns, and eventually a small paper packet, consisting of two cigarette papers, was found amongst the leaves by Mrs. Sinnett. This being opened on the spot was found to contain a brooch exactly corresponding to the previous description, and which Mrs. Hume identified as that which she had originally lost. None of the party, except Mr. and Mrs. Hume, had ever seen or heard of the brooch. Mr. Hume had not thought of it for years. Mrs. Hume had never spoken of it to anyone since she parted with it, nor had she, for long, even thought of it. She herself stated, after it was found, that it was only when Madame asked her whether there was anything she would like to have, that the remembrance of this brooch, the gift of her mother, flashed across her mind.

“Mrs. Hume is not a spiritualist, and up to the time of the occurrence described was no believer either in occult phenomena or in Madame Blavatsky’s powers. The conviction of all present was, that the occurrence was of an absolutely unimpeachable character, as an evidence of the truth of the possibility of occult phenomena. The brooch is unquestionably the one which Mrs. Hume lost. Even supposing, which is practically impossible, that the article, lost months before Mrs. Hume ever heard of Madame Blavatsky, and bearing no letters or other indication of original ownership, could have passed in a natural way into Madame Blavatsky’s possession, even then she could not possibly have foreseen that it would be asked for, and Mrs. Hume herself had not given it a thought for months.

“This narrative, read over to the party, is signed by -

A. O. HUME,  
ALICE GORDON,

M. A. HUME,  
P. J. MAITLAND,  
FRED. R. HOGG,  
WM. DAVIDSON,  
A. P. SINNETT,  
STUART BEATSON,  
PATIENCE SINNETT.

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I realise this more fully now than at the time of which I am writing. Then I was chiefly anxious to get experiments arranged, which should be really complete in their details and leave no opening for the suggestion even of imposture. It was an uphill struggle first, because Madame Blavatsky was intractable and excitable as an experimentalist, and herself no more than the recipient of favours from the Brothers in reference to the greater phenomena. And it seemed to me conceivable that the Brothers might themselves not always realise precisely the frame of mind in which persons of European training approached the consideration of such miracles as these with which we were dealing, so that they did not always make sufficient allowance for the necessity of rendering their test phenomena quite perfect and unassailable in all minor details. I knew, of course, that they were not primarily anxious to convince the commonplace world of anything whatever; but still they frequently did assist Madame Blavatsky to produce phenomena that had no other motive except the production of an effect on the minds of people belonging to the outer world; and it seemed to me that under these circumstances they might just as well do something that would leave no room for the imputation even of any trickery.

One day, therefore, I asked Madame Blavatsky whether if I wrote a letter to one of the Brothers explaining my views, she could get it delivered for me. I hardly thought this was probable, as I knew how very unapproachable the Brothers generally are; but as she said that at any rate she would try, I wrote a letter, addressing it "to the Unknown Brother," and gave it to her to see if any result would ensue. It was a happy inspiration that induced me to do this, for out of that small beginning has arisen the most interesting correspondence in which I have ever been privileged to engage - a correspondence which, I am happy to say, still promises to continue, and the

existence of which, more than any experiences of phenomena which I have had, though the most wonderful of these are yet to be described, is the *raison d'être* of this little book.

The idea I had specially in my mind when I wrote the letter above referred to, was that of all test phenomena one could wish for, the best would be the production in our presence in India of a copy of the London *Times* of that day's date. With such a piece of evidence in my hand, I argued, I would undertake to convert everybody in Simla who was capable of linking two ideas together, to a belief in the possibility of obtaining by occult agency physical results which were beyond the control of ordinary science. I am sorry that I have not kept copies of the letter itself nor of my own subsequent letters, as they would have helped to elucidate the replies in a convenient way; but I did not at the time foresee the developments to which they would give rise and, after all, the interest of the correspondence turns almost entirely on the letters I received: only in a very small degree on those I sent.

A day or two elapsed before I heard anything of the fate of my letter, but Madame Blavatsky then informed me that I was to have an answer. I afterwards learned that she had not been able at first to find a Brother willing to receive the communication. Those whom she first applied to declined to be troubled with the matter. At last her psychological telegraph brought her a favourable answer from one of the Brothers with whom she had not for some time been in communication. He would take the letter and reply to it.

Hearing this, I at once regretted that I had not written at greater length, arguing my view of the required concession more fully. I wrote again, therefore, without waiting for the actual receipt of the expected letter. A day or two after I found one evening on my writing-table the first letter sent me by my new correspondent. I may here explain, what I learned afterwards, that he was a native of the Punjab who was attracted to occult studies from his earliest boyhood. He was sent to Europe while still a youth at the intervention of a relative-himself an occultist - to be educated in Western knowledge, and since then has been fully initiated in the greater knowledge of the East. From the self complacent point of view of the ordinary European this will seem a strange reversal of the proper order of things, but I need not stop to examine that consideration now.



My correspondent is known to me as the Mahatma Koot Hoomi. This is his "Tibetan Mystic name" - occultists, it would seem, taking new names on initiation - a practice which has no doubt given rise to similar customs which we find perpetuated here and there in ceremonies of the Roman Catholic church.

The letter I received began, *in medias res*, about the phenomenon I had professed...