

# Uncertain Winds Guide Public Opinion

## The Fierce Irony of a Warrior Shines in the Last and Unfinished Text Left by HPB in 1891

Helena P. Blavatsky



**“Public opinion in Russia, as anywhere else, is like a kaleidoscope in which the combination of figures change continually according to the movement of the hand holding it; or, in other words, the notion of what is possible or impossible, prudent or foolish, suitable or unsuitable, depends on some leaders of science and fashion who cause that public opinion to rotate like a weather-cock.”**

**(H.P.B.)**

### **Editorial Commentary:**

The following article was written in Russian by Helena Blavatsky to be used as the beginning of a “story”, which would be called “*The Theosophical Society: a Truthful Tale of the Nineteenth Century*”.

Its subtitle would be “*Source-material for the Future History of Psychism in the Darwinian Epoch. Dedicated to the Skeptics of the Motherland*”.

In spite of the humour and irony one finds in it, it is easy to see the pain with which HPB wrote the text, a short while before she died in London on 8 May 1891. The text shows Blavatsky had no illusions regarding what to expect from most theosophists, in terms of good sense and discernment.

The unfinished narration is reproduced from the “Collected Writings” of H.P.B., edited by Boris de Zirkoff, TPH, USA, volume XIII, pp. 209-214.<sup>1</sup>

(Carlos Cardoso Aveline)

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There is so much nonsense, written and spoken, especially in Russia, concerning the Theosophical Society, which I personally planned and founded in New York on the 17th November 1875, that I have finally decided to enlighten my dear compatriots on the subject. Whether they believe me or not is, of course, left to them.

The story goes that Prince Bismarck, when he wished to conceal from the public any of his planned political tricks, the smooth unfoldment of which might be hampered if prematurely revealed, openly informed the public of his plans. In other words, the Iron Chancellor told the plain truth, and - nobody believed him. In like manner, I am about to tell the truth by stating the facts, knowing beforehand that the rules of criticism in a civilized country stand in the way of belief. On the contrary, reading my truthful account, based on almost unbelievable yet true facts, and acquainting themselves with the history of the Society which emerged almost

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<sup>1</sup> This is the introductory note written by Boris de Zirkoff:

“The original Manuscript of this unfinished Tale in H.P.B.’s handwriting is in the Adyar Archives. Its Russian title is: *Teosoficheskoye Obshchestvo - Skazka-bil’ XIX veka*. H.P.B.’s sister, Madame Vera Petrovna de Zhelihovsky states (*Russkoye Obozreniye*, Vol. VI, November, 1891, pp. 275-278) that such a tale was being written by H.P.B. shortly before her final illness, but that only a portion of the Introductory part was written; she also gives several brief excerpts from it. An English translation of this incomplete tale, prepared by Zoltán de Álgya-Pap, a very scholarly Hungarian Theosophist, then resident at Adyar, was published in *The Theosophist*, Vol. 82, September, 1961. Somewhat later, namely in 1962, the Theosophical Journal *Alba* edited in Boston, Mass., by two devoted Russian Theosophists, Nicholas Pavlovich von Reincke and his sister, Dagmara Pavlovna von Reincke, published the original Russian text of this tale, with the *facsimiles* of two pages thereof reproduced herewith. H.P.B.’s text is a masterpiece of Russian prose, full of sparkling wit and vivid imagery. Our English translation of this tale follows on the whole Mr. de Álgya-Pap’s rendering, with a few alterations and improvements required by the Russian original wording.”

Boris’ note is on p. 209, vol. XIII of the Collected Writings. (CCA)

instantaneously, without any preparation, and which from seven members, individuals unknown to the world, rapidly developed in a few years into a numerous “Brotherhood” covering the globe, like mushrooms after rain, with its “Lodges” - these wise critics will feel compelled to express their doubts. And even from my sympathizers I do not expect more than was written to me by the wife of a major serving in the Caucasus. She honored me with the impression made upon her by my story about *The Mysterious Tribes of the Blue Mountains*<sup>2</sup>, and ended her letter exclaiming:

“Oh, what an inventive storyteller you are!”

Since 1881, I have written much about the Theosophical Society and its activities in India, first in “Letters to the Motherland” published in the *Moskovskiya Vedomosti*, and later in the *Russkiy Vestnik*, and what I have described has always been considered by the public as a “fabrication” of mine, particularly my account of the psychological constitution of the Hindus which, of course, is not to be found in statistical records and books on the British Colonies. My stories *From the Caves and Jungles of Hindostan*, left unfinished after the death of M. N. Katkov, were received by the public as a novel and plain *fiction*. Really, it would be sensible to remember the wise remark of the English poet: “Truth is often stranger than fiction.”

After all, to believe in nothing is, perhaps, more reasonable. The unbeliever has a more peaceful sleep and an easier life. To deny something is more comfortable than to accept on faith anything that has not yet obtained the right of citizenship in society, and by accepting which you are compelled to swim against the current of public opinion and common thinking. For this reason people will not believe me even now. Never mind! Just as Epictetus told his host - who, using his stick, had thrashed the sage for his advice - I shall tell my critics: “Strike, *but* listen.” And whatever happens then does not concern me, as grandmother used to say concerning the future: “That’s why.”

Public opinion in Russia, as anywhere else, is like a kaleidoscope in which the combination of figures change continually according to the movement of the hand holding it; or, in other words, the notion of what is possible or impossible, prudent or foolish, suitable or unsuitable, depends on some leaders of science and fashion who cause that public opinion to rotate like a weather-cock.

That which we believed yesterday, we no longer believe today; and in both instances merely because the wind was blowing from a different direction. Even contemporary science, or rather its high priests, taught in the Middle Ages all that today they deny, and believe today in that which they ridiculed in those earlier days.

Astrology, Alchemy and Magic are flung like rubbish into the attic of the Academies, while the circulation of the blood, steam-power and electricity, called by them not so long ago nonsensical, absurd fictions, are now seated in places of honor at their meetings. On the other hand, gentlemen-Academicians find themselves now compelled to believe in things at which only ten years ago they turned up their highly erudite noses in utter disdain; in things which fifty years ago were subjected to severe ostracism and banished from the holy precincts of the Academy - namely, *Mesmerism* and *Animal Magnetism*. At the present time both of these are flourishing under the mask of “suggestion” or “hypnotism”. And all this because our earth rotates, and human brains follow its movement. Before Galileo, scholars imagined the

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<sup>2</sup> Click to see HPB’s book “[The People of the Blue Mountains](#)”. (CCA)

terrestrial globe as a flat pancake in the centre of the universe, while Pythagoras, some 2,000 years before Copernicus, taught the heliocentric conception.

Our European scholars of the Middle Ages considered the Hindu allegory representing our Earth as resting upon four elephants standing on a turtle, wagging its short tail in empty universal space - as a sacred truth. Now they have become convinced that the earth is round, and that our planet is an insignificant little globe among billions of other and bigger planets.

People used to think of themselves as Gods of this Earth, for whom the Cosmos had been created; but now science has convinced us that we are nothing more than the progeny of tailless monkeys, and are, together with these our wretched *cousins*, descendants of one and the same (however, as yet undiscovered) forefather - Adam with a tail. Long ago? Well, it was only yesterday that according to the authoritative teaching of Haeckel and of his friend Huxley, there sat at the very root of the genealogical tree of humanity the *Moneron*, hermit of the Ocean, a *jelly-like* blob considered by Darwinists as the *Alpha* of all flesh living on earth, and the *Omega* of which is man himself. This bit of jelly fished out of the depths of the sea by Huxley, was named in honor of his German colleague *Bathybius Haeckalii*, and Darwinists praised themselves profusely for their great discovery. “*Eureka!* The authentic seed of the human race has been discovered”, I was recently told by Romanes. And then what? ..... Today this candidate for human progenitor, put through strict chemical tests, proves to be a pinch of inorganic matter, simply sediment. (...) <sup>3</sup>

The fact that the founder of this allegedly *wonder-working* Society is a child born of the same stock, cannot fail to interest the Russian reader. And the further fact, namely, that this “child of their own” has earned for herself and the Society a world-wide, although rather mixed reputation, attracting to its fold, the best, the soundest, and often even the most learned *heads* (as will be proved later on) from many overseas countries hitherto hostile to the Russian spirit - is remarkable in itself and bound to produce a smile on the faces of our native patriots.

Until, however, the complete history of our “Brotherhood” will have been told to posterity, the readers and critics, hearing nothing about the Theosophical Society save gossip, have, of course, the most legitimate and logical right to think and judge of it according to their own fancy. Such is the spirit of the age. Hence, I provide them all a laugh at the “Mahatmas” of Tibet and India. Let all prudent sceptics see in them, judging from the stories told by the enemies of the Society, merely scarecrows made of muslin and bladders on long poles, Magicians soaring in the blue sky of India, and even flitting, as stated by eye-witnesses, in the fogs of England. Let’s laugh together at those hundreds of clever people, whom, in the opinion of the Society for Psychical Research, I so skillfully *fooled* with these *muslin-Mahatmas!* And let us remember that Hindu and antediluvian Magic, adepts and their phenomena, all included, are simply mystification and jugglery. So be it! However, it is not at all a matter of Magic .....

I can assure you that the Theosophical Society is left entirely untouched by the negation of “supernatural phenomena”, as no Theosophist, myself included, ever believed in anything

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<sup>3</sup> At this point, a note by Boris de Zirkoff says that page 5 of the manuscript is missing. (CCA)

“*supernatural*”. Still less can the existence of the Society be explained by means of such nonsensical and always exaggerated manifestations. (...) <sup>4</sup>

## **The Theosophical Avalanche**

..... [That this person,] coming from the steppes and the banks of the Dnieper, without either house or home, social contacts or money, *suddenly had the idea and accomplished that* which none of you could. She just sent out a call in New York on the 7th of October 1875, and on the 17th of November of the same year, five weeks later, the Theosophical Society was founded with a few hundred members in America, and its first Branch established in London with 73 members. And from that day, simply by the touch of my hand, the avalanche began to roll onward. And since then it has rolled over the globe, and is still rolling even today, growing not only from day to day, but from hour to hour.

And this avalanche cannot be demolished either by the calumnies of the Society for Psychical Research or by mockeries or persecution. Why? Because, without any phenomena, this avalanche is - a power! And back of it is the power of *Truth*. This enigma cannot be cut down by the axe of the fiercest criticism; its footprints cannot be swept away by the broom of indifference and denial. Of what the essence of this power consists will be explained later. And then everybody will be able to see how little could phenomena influence the growth and success of the Theosophical Society, but on the contrary, how they could be harmful to it - if anything in the world could harm the coming of that predestined hour.

But all this is merely by way of introduction which, considering the many and varied tales afloat, I felt bound to make. Now, this being done ..... <sup>5</sup>.

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“**Uncertain Winds Guide Public Opinion**” is available as an independent item in the websites of the Independent Lodge of Theosophists since 26 December 2022. It is also part of the May 2019 edition of “[The Aquarian Theosophist](#)”.

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## **Small Practical Actions**

\* **T**he purpose of obtaining knowledge is to put it into practice.

\* **A**ccept the privilege of thinking with calm. Print the texts you study from the associated websites. Reading on paper helps us attain a deeper view of philosophical ideas. As the reader

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<sup>4</sup> Here Boris de Zirkoff reports that page 7 of the manuscript is missing. (CCA)

<sup>5</sup> At the end of the manuscript, Zirkoff reproduces one sentence which is in a different handwriting, and was “very probably written by Madame de Zhelihovsky”, HPB’s sister. Boris writes: “The date which she gives is according to the Eastern Orthodox Calendar; it corresponded at that time to May 8th in the Western Calendar.” The note by Vera says: “*Not finished because of the death of H. P. Blavatsky on 26th April, 1891.*” (CCA)

studies a printed text, he can underline sentences and make handwritten comments in the margins that link the ideas directly to his personal reality.

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**R**ead more:

\* [\*\*Russia, Wisdom and World Peace.\*\*](#)

\* [\*\*How We Fabricate Scapegoats.\*\*](#)

\* [\*\*Russia: The Putin Interviews.\*\*](#)

\* See other texts on [\*\*Russia, Theosophy and Helena Blavatsky.\*\*](#)

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