

OBSERVATIONS

ON

MR. LILLIE'S

“KOOT HOOMI UNVEILED.”

BY

The President of the London Lodge

OF THE

THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY.

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MR. LILLIE'S "KOOT HOOMI UNVEILED."



If notice is taken of this pamphlet on behalf of the Theosophical Society, it is not on account of any merits or any good feeling to be discovered in it, for these, we regret to say, are conspicuously absent. But Mr. Lillie is a Member of the Royal Asiatic Society, a body justly held in the greatest esteem, and the authority lent to the writer by this association may lead an unwary reader to give to the statements in the pamphlet an attention to which neither its aim, nor its learning, nor its accuracy, entitle it.

To tell the truth, we fear that Mr. Lillie's judgment about Theosophy has been warped by a rather severe notice of his work "Buddha and Early Buddhism," which appeared in the "Theosophist" in February, 1884. It was stated in that article, as the opinion of certain excellent Sanskrit and Pali scholars—Southern and Northern Buddhists—that to point out and explain conscientiously the numberless mistakes in the little 8vo. volume would necessitate three like volumes at the least. Mr. Lillie's Exposition of Buddhism was characterized as not only "exoteric," but decidedly fantastic. At the same time the reviewer recognized the gravity of the consequences of ignoring the work altogether, for he went on to say, that while the author's pretensions, coupled as they were with a very indifferent knowledge of Buddhism and Brahmanism,

and a complete ignorance of the value of Sanskrit terms, might be amusing to the average Shastri and Pundit, they might be a little mischievous, as tending to pervert and darken the general notions of the Western profane.

The ungracious task of the writer of that article—that of pointing out a few of the long series of blunders contained in the book—is now ours, though, happily, on a smaller scale. For in the pamphlet entitled “Koot Hoomi Unveiled,” we find the same unsupported pretensions, the same perverse misconceptions, and the same reckless assertions, that abound in “Buddha and Early Buddhism,” from the catchpenny title at the beginning to the tame and foolish denunciation at the close.

What the result of Mr. Lillie’s attempt at unveiling is does not clearly appear. Mr. Lillie himself seems to be in doubt whether it is Madame Blavatsky or “some not very logical person,” a description which certainly cannot apply to Madame Blavatsky. Of Madame Blavatsky Mr. Lillie speaks with bated breath.

“In a word,” he says, “she is a female ‘brother.’ She has been initiated after undergoing a terrible ordeal to test her fitness. Report speaks of her passing torrents on the narrowest bridge, and braving all the elements, and even being sent disguised as a man to fight for Garibaldi at Mentana.”

Madame Blavatsky is not a “brother,” nor was she sent to Mentana. It is true that she found herself unexpectedly a spectator in the midst of that battle, as many other women did who were sympathisers with the Italian cause. The character of Theodora in *Lothair* was not wholly a creation of Lord Beaconsfield’s genius. It had a basis of fact. But, unlike Theodora, whose career was brought to a close in that campaign, Madame Blavatsky’s devotion to the service of humanity may be said to have then commenced. For, from that time, her life has been consecrated to the promotion of spirituality among mankind;

and when her career shall be ended, she will leave in the Theosophical Society and in "Isis Unveiled" a nobler memorial of effort in a sublime cause than any which has been witnessed in this generation.

It is sincerely to be hoped that an autobiography of this remarkable woman may one day be given to the world. It is only in the story of her life that any correct appreciation can be formed of the isolated incidents in her career with which the world is acquainted. That alone will reveal the pervading spirit, and give the due light and colour to every event.

Mr. Lillie stumbles at the threshold of his inquiry. He begins with a difficulty as to the nature of "Esoteric Buddhism." It is no Buddhism with which he is acquainted. It—

"is not the Buddhism of Tibet at all. It is the Buddhism of the South altered, and, indeed, stultified to fit in with the teachings of a French book of magic written by a gentleman under the pseudonym of Eliphas Lévi. And all the statements about the Buddhism of Tibet are absolutely erroneous."

If Mr. Lillie's studies have been confined to Esoteric Buddhism, and with the indifferent success described in the article to which we have referred, no wonder he is puzzled when he attempts a review of the Esoteric teaching. We will tell him then that Esoteric Buddhism, the doctrine of the Buddhas, the Wise, is the Wisdom Religion. Neither Hindu nor Buddhist in its origin, it is the common ground in which Buddhism and Brahmanism meet; the underlying basis of every religion in the world which is worthy of the name. Mr. Lillie has studied the oriental writings to little purpose if he finds Esoteric Buddhism to be but a compound of Southern Buddhism and the teachings of Eliphas Lévi. For if we except the few errors, unavoidable in a book written by one confessedly

not an oriental scholar, there are no statements in Mr. Sinnett's book, "Esoteric Buddhism," which do not find their support in the Brahmanical writings. It is pure Advaitism. And with regard to Eliphas Lévi, the references in Mr. Lillie's pamphlet would seem to show that he understands even less of the "foggy" teachings of that western mystic than he does of the Sanskrit terms employed in oriental literature.

Mr. Lillie tells us that the teachings of the alleged Tibetan Buddhists are put forth in three works: "Isis Unveiled," "Esoteric Buddhism" and "The Occult World." Now it is a canon of just criticism that one part of a work should be interpreted by another; and it is one of the most elementary rules that the citations made should convey a fair representation of the meaning of the writer whose work is under review. We shall see how Mr. Lillie observes these rules.

No charge has been more frequently brought against the Theosophy than that it is atheistic.

"I will set down," says Mr. Lillie, "the main tenets of this Creed."

"There is no God."

"There is no God personal or impersonal" says the "Theosophist of May, 1882."

This is an inaccurate quotation of a sentence occurring in a note, and we will give the sentence entire:

"Buddha never claimed to have received 'Divine Inspiration,' since Buddha rejected the very idea of a god, whether personal or impersonal." Adopting the course above referred to, that of making one part of a system the interpreter of another, we will ask the reader to consider the following passage in "Isis Unveiled." It occurs at page 29 of the first volume, almost at the outset of the work:—

"Far from us be the thought of the slightest irreverence—let alone blasphemy—toward the Divine Power which called into

being all things, visible and invisible. Of *Its* majesty and boundless perfection we dare not even think. It is enough for us to know that *It* exists and that *It* is all wise. Enough that in common with our fellow creatures we possess a spark of *Its* essence. The supreme power whom we revere is the boundless and endless one—the grand ‘CENTRAL SPIRITUAL SUN,’ by whose attributes and the visible effects of whose inaudible WILL we are surrounded—the God of the ancient and the God of modern seers. His nature can be studied only in the worlds called forth by His mighty FIAT. His revelation is traced with His own finger in imperishable figures of universal harmony upon the face of the Cosmos. It is the only INFALLIBLE gospel we recognize.”

A noble and sublime declaration, endorsed and adopted by every Theosophist.

Om, Tat, Sat, the threefold designation of the intelligent, omnipotent, and individual WILL, pervading all nature, may be called the watch-words of the Theosophical Society, and they negative entirely Mr. Lillie’s assertion. “The first of these words signifies ‘*That Being* which preserves, destroys, and creates.’ The second implies ‘*That only Being*, which is neither male nor female!’ The third announces ‘*The True Being!*’ These collective terms affirm that ONE, UNKNOWN, TRUE BEING IS THE Creator, Preserver and Destroyer of the Universe.” (Translation of an abridgment of the Vedanta, by Rajah Rammohun Roy, p. 22.)*

In the Bhagavat-Gita, a priceless gem of spiritual truth to every Theosophist, a work revered in all ages by Brahmanists and Buddhists alike, the doctrine of the Supreme Spirit is set forth in a manner which should make

* It may be interesting to Theosophists to learn that Mr. Mohini M. Chatterjee, the Hindoo Chela, now visiting this country, is a descendant of the Rajah. The Rajah used the term “Being” for lack of a better one, for human language is insufficient to express correctly psychological images. He had spent some years in Tibet.

the charge of atheism against the Theosophists impossible. But a charge of this kind is generally made by those only who think they know the Supreme Being thoroughly, and to such we may commend the teaching of the Cēna Upanishad of the Sama Veda. "He who believes that he cannot comprehend God *does* know Him; and he who believes that he can comprehend God *does not* know Him, as men of perfect understanding acknowledge Him to be beyond comprehension, and men of imperfect understanding suppose Him to be within the reach of their simplest perception." Says Krishna, in the Bhagavat-Gita: "I know all beings—past, present and future—O, Arjuna! but no one knows me. All beings fall into error as to the nature of the creation, Bāhrata! by reason of that delusion of natural opposites, which springs from liking and disliking. But those men who act uprightly, in whom sin is dead, freed from this delusion of the natural opposites, worship me firm in devotion. They who turn to me and strive after liberation from regeneration and death, know that whole supreme spirit, and the Adhyātma, and entire action."

What, then, did the writer of the note in the Theosophist, which we have quoted, mean to affirm? Simply this, which is so well expressed by Mr. Edwin Arnold in his poetic rendering of the discourse of Buddha pronounced before the king:—

" Ah! Brothers, Sisters, seek
Nought from the helpless gods by gift and hymn,
Nor bribe with blood, nor feed with fruit and cakes;
Within yourselves deliverance must be sought;
Each man his prison makes."

But the writer of the note would have run counter to the profoundest truth of Theosophy, if meaning to convey anything contrary to the teaching in the same discourse

of Buddha, for which we again refer to "The Light of Asia":—

"Behold, I show you Truth! lower than hell,
Higher than heaven, outside the utmost stars,
Farther than Brahm doth dwell,

"Before beginning and without an end,
As space eternal and as surety sure
Is fixed a Power divine which moves to good,
Only its laws endure.

.

"Such is the law which moves to righteousness,
Which none at last can turn aside or stay;
The heart of it is Love, the end of it
Is peace and consummation sweet. Obey!"

So much regarding Mr. Lillie's charge of atheism.

His next assertion as to the Theosophical creed is—

"The great secret of magic is to perform miracles with his **INEFFABLE NAME**."

"Page after page," he says, "of 'Isis Unveiled' is devoted to this **INEFFABLE NAME**; and it is patiently discussed whether this was 'Macroprosopos,' 'Jehovah,' or 'Ferho,' or 'Fo.'"

We are unable to find any such discussion in "Isis Unveiled." Nor is there any statement in it what this name was. How is it likely there should be, if by the expression allusion is made to a thought, incapable of expression in language, ineffable?

As to Mr. Lillie's allegation that the writer comes at last to the conclusion that "Jesus Christ performed all his miracles with the word 'Ferho' or 'Faho,' or 'Fho' or 'Fo,'" which is the word used for Buddha in Tibet, it is nothing less than a garbled and perverted representation of part of a chapter in "Isis Unveiled," in which Mr. Lillie shows himself unable to distinguish between irony

and serious argument. But it is not even ironically suggested that Jesus Christ performed his miracles with the word "Ferho" or "Faho," or "Fho" or "Fo."

We will now proceed to the next assertion of this learned "Member of the Royal Asiatic Society," as to the alleged tenets of the Theosophical creed.

"The highest reward of the just man made perfect is annihilation."

That is to say, that, according to the Theosophical creed, Nirvana means annihilation. But in "Isis Unveiled," vol. ii. p. 319, we read :

"It is not true that Gautama never taught anything concerning a future life, or that he denied the immortality of the soul. Ask any intelligent Buddhist his ideas on Nirvana and he will unquestionably express himself as the well known Wong-Chin-Fu, the Chinese orator, now travelling in this country, did in a recent conversation with us about Niepang (Nirvana). 'This condition,' he remarked, 'we all understand to mean a final re-union with God, coincident with the perfection of the human spirit by its ultimate disembarrassment of matter. It is the very opposite of personal annihilation.'"

"Nirvana," says the author of "Isis," "means the certitude of personal immortality in spirit."

But there are Nirvanas and Nirvanas, and Mr. Lillie's introduction of the expression "eternal non-consciousness," as if it were to be found in Esoteric Buddhism, is unwarranted by anything in the book itself. The word "eternal" is not used, and non-consciousness is expressly used as the equivalent of absolute consciousness, that is to say, it is not consciousness in any way similar to that realized by us.

At page 174 of "Esoteric Buddhism," we read that "when the solar Pralaya comes, the whole purified humanity merges into Nirvana, and from that inter-solar Nirvana will be re-born in the higher systems." How

does this support Mr. Lillie's inference? If purified humanity is said by Mr. Sinnett to merge into Nirvana, to be re-born in a higher system, is it a truthful representation of his views to say that the highest reward of the just man made perfect is annihilation?

What Theosophists do say and believe is that individuality never ceases. If individuals do exist it is because they existed potentially in the Divine mind. They are immortal. With alternating periods of manifestation in the Maya of external life, and of repose in the subjective life of Nirvana, ever ascending in the scale of grandeur and perfection, they have that which the poet prays for, "The glory of going on and still to be."

But we must come back to Mr. Lillie and his exposure of Theosophy, and of the best known and best beloved and revered among its promoters, the Mahatma Koot Hoomi.

"The seventh article of this queer faith touches that a continent named Aatalantis (*sic*) was submerged at a fixed date. Koot Hoomi Lal Singh is evidently well acquainted with Donnelly's Atlantis."

That is to say, that Madame Blavatsky, or "the very illogical person," the common inspirer of "Esoteric Buddhism," and of "Isis Unveiled," borrowed her or his ideas about Atlantis from Mr. Donnelly's able and thoughtful work. For a little further on, Mr. Lillie asks if genuine Tibetan Buddhists would "draw all their dust to blind our eyes from the works of Eliphas Lévi and Mr. Donnelly?" Premising that the date of the submergence of Atlantis mentioned in Esoteric Buddhism is professedly taken from Plato, we would refer the reader to the following passage in "Isis Unveiled," vol. i. p. 557:—

"The perfect identity of the rites, ceremonies, traditions and even the names of the deities among the Mexicans and ancient

Babylonians and Egyptians, are a sufficient proof of South America being peopled by a colony which mysteriously found its way across the Atlantic. When? At what period? History is silent on that point; but those who consider that there is no tradition, sanctified by ages, without a certain sediment of truth at the bottom of it, believe in the *Atlantis* legend. There are scattered throughout the world a handful of thoughtful and solitary students, who pass their lives in obscurity, far from the rumors of the world, studying the great problems of the physical and spiritual universes. They have their secret records, in which are preserved the fruits of the scholastic labours of the long line of recluses, whose successors they are. The knowledge of their early ancestors, the sages of India, Babylonia, Nineveh, and the imperial Thebes; the legends and traditions commented upon by the masters of Solon, Pythagoras and Plato, in the marble halls of Heliopolis and Saïs, traditions which in their days already seemed to hardly glimmer from behind the foggy curtain of the past—all this, and much more, is recorded on indestructible parchment, and passed with jealous care from one adept to another. These men believe the story of the Atlantis to be no fable, but maintain that at different epochs of the past huge islands, and even continents, existed where now there is but a wild waste of waters. In those submerged temples and libraries the archæologist would find, could he but explore them, the materials for filling all the gaps that now exist in what we imagine is *history*. They say that at a remote epoch a traveller could traverse what is now the Atlantic Ocean, almost the entire distance by land, crossing in boats from one island to another, where narrow straits then existed."

There is a great deal more on the subject of Atlantis in "Isis Unveiled," most interesting information of a kind not dealt with in Mr. Donnelly's book.

"Isis Unveiled" was published in the year 1877, and Donnelly's Atlantis in 1882. And yet Mr. Lillie would have his readers believe that "Koot Hoomi Lal Singh," the inspirer of "Isis Unveiled," stole his materials from Donnelly's work!

Nor is Mr. Lillie more fortunate when, in the process of demolishing this "Tibetan Buddhist," he comes to deal with Koot Hoomi's name.

Although Mr. Lillie may be ignorant of the fact, Koot Hoomi is a family name in Kashmere, where the revered Mahatma who bears this name was born. It is the name of a Hindoo Rishi, who is mentioned in more than one Purana. His code is one of the eighteen codes, written by various Rishis, and which are preserved at Calcutta in the library of the Royal Asiatic Society. Mr. Monier Williams refers to this code under the name of Kutlumi (see "Indian Wisdom," p. 305). The name Koot Hoomi is also used in Tibetan, and it signifies the entrance to the adytum where the secret book is kept, and, also, the keeper of the gate of the sanctuary.

And yet with a recklessness which we do not care to characterize, Mr. Lillie writes in a note on page 6—

"The name 'Koot Hoomi' is gibberish, and all Eastern names have a meaning. This fact at once struck a native journalist. 'Lal Singh' is Hindoo. But then how can a Tibetan Buddhist have a Hindoo name? or how could a Hindoo be a Tibetan Buddhist? Mr. Sinnett tells us that Koot Hoomi Lal Singh is a 'Tibetan baptismal name.' An expert in the British Museum assures me that there are no words in the Tibetan dictionary in the least degree resembling them."

This, and several other philological criticisms of the same kind contained in the pamphlet, bring to mind an assertion once made to the writer by a college lecturer at Cambridge, that Euripides didn't know Greek!

The climax of recklessness and absurdity is reached when Mr. Lillie goes on to imply that every one of the statements in "Isis Unveiled," "The Occult World," and "Esoteric Buddhism" about Tibet and its religion are absolutely incorrect!

It would be an idle and profitless task to attempt to deal with all the errors and misstatements in this pamphlet. A few specimens have been given by way of warning. Nor will we follow Mr. Lillie in his statements about the

Kiddle incident, which has been dealt with by Mr. Sinnett in the fourth edition of the "Occult World," or with his theories and observations about the Mahatma, on whom he heaps so many insults.—

"No might nor greatness in mortality
Can censure 'scape; back-wounding calumny
The whitest virtue strikes. What king so strong
Can tie the gall up in a slanderous tongue?"

Measure for Measure.

Nor will we offer any comments on the letters of Dr. Wyld, which, as affording materials for giving expression to his ill-will, Mr. Lillie reprints in his pamphlet. But as Mr. Lillie resorts to Dr. Wyld's letters for information and assistance, and regards Dr. Wyld as an authority, we will refer him to a letter about Madame Blavatsky that appeared in the "Spiritualist" on the 24th January, 1879, the latter part of which is as follows:—

"This habit of mind arises from her vehement reverence for her Eastern lords and masters, who are for ever being reviled by Christian missionaries. You may criticise herself freely as you like; but if you whisper a word of treachery against her revered chiefs you convert her into an implacable enemy, and from this characteristic it will be seen that she is very far from having reached that dignified and calm repose and sublime toleration which all who attain to the wisdom of the soul possess.

"Beyond all doubt she is a magician controlling the movements of matter and counteracting the actions of *poisons*, as I experienced in my own person.

"She is wonderful and unique, and to have known her as I have is always to remember her with affection, admiration and respect.

"GEORGE WYLD, M.D."

But we do not write for Mr. Lillie. No argument could pierce his complacent all-sufficiency, worthy of the weaver in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. We write for our friends, to point out to them what a baseless fabric this pamphlet is;

and we write to protest against the insults which it heaps on the honoured name of the Master whom we regard with gratitude and love.

If there is no religion higher than truth, there is no iniquity lower than falsehood.

