

H. P. BLAVATSKY IN LONDON 1887— 1937

By Katherine A. Beechey

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On the 19th May 1937, the Blavatsky Lodge (London) of The Theosophical Society will have completed fifty years of continuous work, as shown by the records in its Minute Books. These give a fascinating account of the formation of the Lodge and its early activities, carried on under Madame Blavatsky's direct guidance, as well as the rapid growth in membership under the leadership of Dr. Annie Besant.

The Charter Members

THE inaugural meeting of the Lodge was held on Thursday, the 19th May 1887, at Maycot, Upper Norwood, London, S.E. Madame Blavatsky was never, as far as can be ascertained, President of the Lodge, though she was one of its founding members, her name appearing first in the list of the ten signatories to the application for a Charter, while it was in her own study at Maycot that the meeting was held. The other people present were : Mrs. Mabel Cook, Miss Louisa S. Cook, Mr. G. Thornton, Mr. T. B. Harbottle, Mr. W.B. Hamilton, M. Edouard Coulomb, Mr. Bertram Keightley, Mr. Archibald Keightley and Mr. G.B. Finch.

At this meeting it was agreed :

1. That a new Lodge be formed ;
2. That the undersigned shall be members of such Lodge ;
3. That it be called "the Blavatsky Lodge of The Theosophical Society" ;
4. **That the aim of the Lodge be active work ;**
5. That Mr. Finch be President for the first year;
6. That Mr. Thornton be Vice-President ;
7. That Mr. Arch. Keightley be Secretary and Treasurer ;
8. That the Council consist of the undersigned members ;
9. That a copy of these resolutions be forward to Adyar with a request for a charter ;
10. That the next meeting be held at Maycot on May 26th at six p.m.

Signed

H.P.B.(1)	H.P. Blavatsky
L.S. Cook	Louisa S. Cook
G.B.F.	G.B. Finch
Bertram Keightley	Bertram Keightley
G.H.T.	G.H. Thornton
T.P.H.	Thomas Harbottle
E. Q. Coulomb	Edouard Q. Coulomb
W.B.H.	W.B. Hamilton
M.C.	Mabel Collins-Cook
A. Keightley	Archibald Keightley

1. According to Mr. Bertram Keightley the only signatories to the application were the seven following : Mabel Collins, Dr. Ashton Ellis, Mr. Harbottle, Mr. Thornton, Dr. A. Keightley, Bertram Keightley and Madame Blavatsky (See THE THEOPHIST September 1931— "Reminiscences of H.P.B." by Bertram Keightley.)

The second meeting of the Lodge, held at Maycot on Thursday, the 26th May 1887, was important in that a resolution was then taken to publish a magazine. Various names were suggested, among them *Lucifer*, though the final decision was left over for a later time. And it was resolved also that for this purpose a limited liability company should be formed, to be called the “Theosophical Publishing Company.” This is the first time that Mr. Ellis is mentioned as taking part in the proceedings.

From that date the Minutes show that Blavatsky Lodge met regularly on Thursdays until the 16th June 1887, and fairly full summaries were kept of the subjects of discussion and Madame Blavatsky’s replies to questions. The Minutes of May 26 and June 2 were “approved” by G. B. Finch on June 23. We are told, however, in the history of the Lodge which appears in the reports of proceedings of the First Annual Convention (1) that “the arduous and self-sacrificing labours of the members met with little success until, on 20th October 1887, with the change of address of Madame Blavatsky, the Lodge was transferred to 17 Lansdowne Road, Holland Park, W .”

1. Report of Proceedings of the First Annual Convention of The Theosophical Society in Europe, held in London 9th and 10th July 1891.

At the first meeting of the Lodge which was held at 17 Lansdowne Road, the names of those present include all the signatories of the original application except Miss L. S. Cook and Mr. G.B. Finch, the latter having “resigned the Presidency and membership of the Lodge” Mr. Harbottle was elected President in his stead. Mr. Ellis was also present. It was at this meeting that the Countess Wachtmeister and Mr. E. D. Fawcett were elected.

The Lodge immediately proceeded to a consideration of the draft rules introduced by Mr. Harbottle, who said that the main points in these Rules as against those of the London Lodge of the Theosophical Society (2) “were active work as the main object of the Blavatsky Lodge, the power of the Council to request the resignation of those who did not work, and the preservation of Initiation.”

2. The question of the early relations with the London Lodge is important and will be dealt with later.

“Special” Object of the Lodge

The special object of the Lodge is stated to be “the spread of Theosophical teaching and Brotherhood by the individual and collective work of its members ” ; and at the next meeting a further rule was included which made it “the duty of the President and Council to supervise the work of members, collective and individual, and when requested, to advise new members as to the work to be done,” while the member on his part was “to sign an undertaking on election to carry out to the best of his ability the special object of the Lodge.” The meetings were to be held at least once a month, and no subscription was required, but all expenses to be defrayed by voluntary subscription.

A printed copy of the Rules is to be found in the Minute book. It consists of a double octavo sheet, the two inside pages being blank. At the top of the fourth page appears the double

triangle (interlaced) in a circle with a Sanskrit word (*prana*) in the centre, all in embossed silver, while underneath appears the title, “The Blavatsky Lodge of The Theosophical Society,” with the names of the officers below. The President was T. B. Harbottle, the Vice-President, Captain P. H. Dalbiac, and the Honorary Secretary A. Keightley, whose address is given as 17 Lansdowne Road, Holland Park, W., while the Council consisted of H.P. Blavatsky, Mabel Collins (Mrs. Mabel Cook), W.B. Hamilton, E.L. Coulomb and B. Keightley.

It was at this second meeting on the consideration of the rules, i.e. 3rd November 1887, that “the resignations of Messrs. Thornton and Ellis were communicated and accepted,” after which “a philosophical discussion on Reincarnation, Karma and Devachan followed.”

The last Minute for 1887 covers the first meeting also of 1888, the dates being December 27 and January 4, and announces the proposal and election of Mr. G. R. S. Mead and Mr. F. Jabez Johnson, the first of whom was to have so great an influence in the Lodge and the European Section of The Society for the next twenty years.

The Pledge of the Lodge

It may or may not be a significant fact that the first two entries in the Minute Book of Blavatsky Lodge for 1888 are written in violet ink. The following Minute concerns the meeting of the Lodge held on the 19th January 1888, “at which the President read a letter from Mr. Keightley; (1) this letter communicated his ideas on the Pledge of the Lodge.”

1. Probably Dr. A. Keightley, as will be seen later.

This is the first mention in the Minutes of “the Pledge of the Lodge,” though subsequently references occur frequently. If we turn now to the end of this first Minute Book we find a page headed “The Pledge of the Lodge ” in violet ink, and underneath are set out the six clauses thereof, as follows :

1. I pledge myself to endeavour to make Theosophy a living power in my life.
 2. I pledge myself to support, before the world, the Theosophical movement, its leaders and its members.
 3. I pledge myself never to listen without protest to any evil thing spoken of a brother Theosophist and to abstain from condemning others.
 4. I pledge myself to maintain a constant struggle against my lower nature, and to be charitable to the weaknesses of others.
 5. I pledge myself to do all in my power, by study and otherwise, to fit myself to help and teach others.
 6. I pledge myself to give what support I can to the movement in time, money and work.
- So help me my Higher Self:

Here follow the signatures of twenty members of the Lodge, the first eight being written in violet ink, as was the Pledge itself. (1)

1. As some of the signatories are still alive, it has been thought wiser to withhold their names from publication.
— Ed.

Anticipating somewhat, we are told in a statement made by Dr. Archibald Keightley at a meeting held on 5th January 1885 [1888??] that “all the founders of the Blavatsky Lodge were pledged, and for many months after the foundation each member who joined was pledged, among other things, to make Theosophy a living power in his life. . . . The original intention of the Lodge is shown by an article written by myself in *Lucifer*. This article is entitled ‘The Meaning of a Pledge.’ All members who entered the Lodge signed that Pledge in a book kept for that purpose.” [*Lucifer* Vol.3 Sep. 1888]

Other Grades

It would appear, from the fact of the colour of the ink corresponding with the Minutes of the early part of 1888, as well as the omission of the names Finch, Thornton and others, that the Pledge was not instituted until the beginning of 1888, while other facts make it probable that it was not in operation after the end of the same year, though “the Pledge of the First Degree of the Blavatsky Lodge,” which was instituted on 16th February 1888, may have been in operation for some months longer. For at the meeting on February 16 we are told that “provision was made for a new class of members of a third grade—Probationary or Associate Members— who need not necessarily belong to the T.S .” Their qualification was to be an interest in Theosophy and willingness to sign the following Pledge:

“ I pledge myself to study Theosophy and to defend it and spread it on all occasions to the best of my power.”

This Pledge also appears at the end of the Minute Book, written out five times altogether, with some seventy or eighty signatures appended, while the fact that on February 2 the meeting had had to be postponed “owing to the entrance of strangers” seems to indicate that the Lodge meetings were not open to the public. (It is interesting to note that among the signatures of the Associate Members is to be found that of W.B. Yeats.)

For the next month or two the Minutes simply record the proposal and election of new members and their signing of the Pledge, while it had been decided “that a discretionary power should be given to Mme. Blavatsky for the election of members without reference to the Council.”

On March 22nd Captain Dalbiac’s resignation was accepted, and on March 29 Mrs. Cook was elected Vice-President. At this meeting it was further decided “that Diplomas on vellum should be issued to members.” Two blank samples are pasted in the Minute Book, evidently trying out different symbols, the final form (not shown) being settled on May 10.

Relations with America

On April 5, “in view of the approaching convention of the American Branch at Chicago,” it was unanimously resolved : “That the Blavatsky Lodge is desirous of sending to its American Brothers its most cordial congratulations and good wishes. The members hear with great satisfaction of the growing strength of The Theosophical Society in the United States, and of the increasing support accorded to the Founders of The Society in their work for the advancement of Humanity. The Lodge is fully conscious of the importance of solidarity, and of the value of mutual assistance and co-operation. It is anxious, therefore, to take advantage

of the presence of its Secretary, Dr. A. Keightley, at Chicago, to give expression to its earnest hope that the Branches on both sides of the Atlantic may, as time goes on, become more and more united in their work". It was further resolved : "That the Lodge hereby appoints Dr. A. Keightley to attend the Convention on its behalf and to present the above resolution to the assembled delegates."

H.P.B. and H.S.O.

The Meeting of the Lodge held on 12th April 1888 is of particular interest. At this meeting "the following address was adopted :

To the President and Council of The Theosophical Society.

We are instructed by the Council of Blavatsky Lodge to address to you the following inquiries :

1. Do the officials of The Society at Headquarters recognize that The Society is still under the guidance of the Masters ?
2. Who is understood to be the representative of the Masters ?
3. What is the attitude of the said officials towards Madame Blavatsky, and her work in Europe ?

Our reasons for making the above queries are as follow :

1. We feel that it is of the greatest importance to have a definite understanding between Headquarters and the Officers of the various branches on the points above enumerated.
2. It appears that members of the Executive at Adyar have written unofficially to members of The Society in France, England and America, denying that Madame Blavatsky is any longer a representative of the Masters or entitled to speak in their name.
3. Marked hostility has been shown towards Mme. Blavatsky's work in Europe :
 - (a) by letters calculated to sow distrust of her motives and intentions in the minds of those engaged in the work ;
 - (b) by the studied omission of all mention of *Lucifer* in the pages of The Society's organ, THE THEOSOPHIST, when other Magazines, some not in any sense Theosophical, and even hostile to the movement, are noticed at length ;
 - (c) by the delay of over six months in sending its charter to the Blavatsky Lodge.

(Signed) Thomas B. Harbottle, President of the Blavatsky Lodge.
Mabel Cook, Vice-President.

Rival Journals

There are here one or two points that call for comment. With regard to the "hostility" complained of, it is quite evident from Colonel Olcott's *Old Diary Leaves* that he had no love for either Blavatsky Lodge or *Lucifer* in their early days. From *Old Diary Leaves*, III, 436 we learn that he "remonstrated strongly against her [Mme. Blavatsky] setting up a rival, competing magazine" while she was still part editor of *The Theosophist*. But "it was useless to protest . . . In due time *Lucifer* appeared as her personal organ."

The Colonel's description of the founding of Blavatsky Lodge appears in the same volume, as follows : "A number of seceders from his (Sinnott's) London Lodge organized as the Blavatsky Lodge and met at her house in Lansdowne Road, where her sparkling personality and vast knowledge of occult things always ensured full meetings." However, in Volume IV of *Old Diary Leaves* he refers more kindly to the Lodge. On page 25 he says : "Finally a party of 14 (1) of the younger persons joined to form the since world-famous Blavatsky Lodge. . . ."

1. Mme. Blavatsky had written to Col. Olcott describing the *second* meeting of the Lodge, a week after its foundation, at which fourteen members were present. (See *Old Diary Leaves*.)

But at the 1888 Convention at Adyar he states (in the same volume !) : “On Christmas Day I got a foolish cablegram from H.P.B. threatening the resignation of herself and the entire Blavatsky Lodge. She used the name of the Blavatsky Lodge and of certain of its members so often in her letters as condemning me utterly and taking her views unreservedly, that it became at last tiresome. Considering our personal relations, the identity of our ages, and our joint relationship to our Guru it seemed to me ridiculous that she should imagine that the dicta of a group of younger colleagues, however warm partisans of hers, should influence me to act against my own judgment in questions of management. I wrote her at last that if she sent me any more round-robins or protests from the same quarter I should neither read nor answer her letters. Our affairs must be settled between ourselves without the interference of third parties. Answering me she admitted the correctness of my judgment and the exasperating documents ceased to arrive.”

Apparently the last of the “ex-asperating documents” was the resolution set out in the Minutes for 5th July 1888, which was “to be signed and immediately sent out to India.” The resolution was to the effect “that in the event of the President of The Society declining to recognize formally the actual position of Mme. Blavatsky in Europe, we the members of the Blavatsky Lodge here present undertake to give her the fullest support in any course she may consider necessary.”

The charter of Blavatsky Lodge seems to have been a source of difficulty. It was applied for on 19th May 1887. On July 8, writing to Colonel Olcott, Mme. Blavatsky (See *Old Diary Leaves*) says: “Please send a charter as it is already announced in the papers.” But we learn that speaking at the Annual Convention at Adyar at the end of December 1888, Colonel Olcott gives the number of charters granted in England as two, so that the Blavatsky Lodge had probably received its charter by that time.

Esoteric Section Formed

It is most unfortunate that there is a gap in the Minutes of the Blavatsky Lodge from July 1888 to September 1889 — just six blank lines. We know from other sources that many things happened in the interval. We can read elsewhere that Colonel Olcott came to England in the autumn of 1888, when the matter of the European work of Madame Blavatsky was at last settled, and she was left to develop the occult side of her teachings. The Esoteric Section was formed in October 1888, quite obviously from the nucleus of students who had taken the Pledge of Blavatsky Lodge not so very many months before.

We are able also to refer to the published Transactions of the Blavatsky Lodge, which show that during the last weeks of 1888 there were two meetings when the subject under discussion was “Dreams,” while in the early part of 1889 the Lodge meetings were taken up with discussions on the “Stanzas of the First Volume of the Secret Doctrine,” the questions and Madame Blavatsky’s answers being taken down in shorthand and published after revision by Mme. Blavatsky.

It also appears from these same Transactions that at the beginning of February 1889 the presidency of the Lodge passed from Mr. **Harbottle** to Mr. **William Kingsland**. Most important of all, during this interval, in May 1889, Mrs. **Annie Besant** and Mr. **Herbert**

Burrows joined The Society and probably the Blavatsky Lodge. We know also that they were with Madame Blavatsky in Fontainebleau in the summer of that year, and that in August, while in Jersey, she wrote *The Voice of the Silence*.

When next the Minutes were written up we find, in a different handwriting, “After the return of H.P.B. [the previous Minute writer always wrote ‘Mme. Blavatsky’] from Fontainebleau and Jersey the following meetings of the Lodge were held on Thursday evenings at 8.30.”

H.P. BLAVATSKY IN LONDON

By Katherine A. Beechey

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H.P. Blavatsky was one of the founding members of Blavatsky Lodge, London, which on May 20 this year celebrated its fiftieth anniversary. In this second instalment of her narrative, compiled from the minute-books of the Lodge, Miss Beechey depicts Madame Blavatsky speaking to the members and surrounded by other giants of the period: Annie Besant, Colonel Olcott, A.P. Sinnett, G.R.S. Mead, Dr. Wynn Westcott. H.P.B. ceased to attend in 1890, and passed over on the 8th May 1891, inquiring as to its welfare up to the very last. In the two years with which this chapter deals, the attendance rose from 40 to 245.

Study in Christian Origins

THERE is a gap in the first Minute Book of Blavatsky Lodge from July 1888 until September 1889, when Madame Blavatsky returned “ from Fontainebleau and Jersey.” Dr. Besant has described, in a lecture on “ Study and Practice ” delivered under the auspices of the Lodge in 1919 (1), how the members tried to carry on without her:

“When H.P.B. went off to the Channel Islands, I think it was, leaving very few students behind her, she said we must not break our sequence of the meetings on any account. When one of us said: ‘ Well, perhaps none of us will be here,’ she would say: ‘ Well, one of you will be here, and that person must hold a meeting.’ . . . So, we met at the rooms of H.P. Blavatsky ; two or three of us together. . . . That was most faithfully carried out in the early days of the Blavatsky Lodge.”

1. Transaction III issued by the Blavatsky Lodge of The Theosophical Society. “Study and Practice” : a lecture delivered by Mrs. Besant at Mortimer Hall, under the auspices of Blavatsky Lodge, on 2nd October 1919.

However, on H.P.B.’s return a meeting was held at 8.30 on September 19, “ at which there was a preliminary discussion on the subject and arrangement of the proposed course of instruction by H.P.B. on the “ Origin, History, Authenticity and Esotericism of the New Testament.” Twenty members and associates and seven visitors were present. The following week the President (Mr. W. Kingsland) “read a paper introducing the discussion on the esoteric nature of the four Gospels,” and “a general discussion followed.”

After that, for the next four weeks, Mr. G.R.S. Mead would read a paper on some verses of the first chapter of the Gospel of St. John, the verses then being “explained by H.P.B.” though at the end “ the plan of taking verse by verse was discontinued ” and selections from the Old and the New Testaments were made, while on one occasion “ the significance of the names Jesus and John (was) explained by H.P.B.”

Unfortunately, the intellect of the members was apparently unequal to the combined brilliance of Madame Blavatsky and Mr. G.R.S. Mead, for on October 24 “it was decided that as the explanations which had formed the subject of the previous meetings were too abstruse for

many members of the Lodge, a new departure should be made and some subject of a more elementary nature be attempted at the next meeting.”

Visit of Colonel Olcott

The minute for 31st October 1889 records the visit of Colonel Olcott to the Lodge, for we are told that the President-Founder lectured on Karma, while a fortnight later there was a general discussion on Reincarnation, “the President-Founder being the chief speaker.” Again, on December 19, “the President-Founder was present and took part in the debate” on the *Key to Theosophy*, the writer of the minutes describing this discussion as “perhaps the most interesting of the year.” Afterwards “Mrs. Annie Besant in the name of the Lodge thanked Colonel H.S. Olcott for his visit and the work he had accomplished for the cause by his lecturing tour,” and in wishing him farewell and *bon voyage* hoped that he would convey the Lodge’s fraternal greetings to its Indian brethren.

The President-Founder, replying in a short speech, “traced the rapid growth of The Society and said how much he regretted again leaving his colleague, Madame H.P. Blavatsky, concluding with kindly words of farewell to all.”

The subject eventually chosen for study and discussion from November 1889 until June 1890 was the *Key to Theosophy*. The method adopted was for the President, or whoever was in the chair, usually Mrs. Besant, to read anything from eight to a dozen pages of the Key, after which there would be a general discussion, the Minutes recording faithfully week after week the numbers of the pages chosen for study. By June 1890 they were taking pages 288-294. The attendance gradually rose from 40 during October 1889 to over 60 from March onward, and there begin to occur such statements as these: “We had a very full meeting and were much cramped for space.” “The attendance was large . . . the room being filled to overflowing.” Finally comes the entry : “26th June 1890. No meeting. Changing address.”

Madame Blavatsky’s Health

During 1889 Madame Blavatsky was usually present at the Lodge meetings, and took an active part. From January 1890 onwards, however, we find frequent references to the state of her health. For instance, on January 3 we learn that “Madame Blavatsky was unfortunately away for a change at Brighton on account of her continued ill-health.” On January 30 she was “still away owing to her ill-health.” However, on February 13, though she was “still away recruiting her health,” she “is expected back by next Sunday.” And on February 20 we learn that “Madame Blavatsky returned last Sunday to Town and is better for the change, although she is not quite well.”

From then until the end of June, with the exception of April 10, when “Madame H.P. Blavatsky was too ill to appear in Lodge,” she regularly attended the Lodge meetings, the usual wording of the minute being “Mrs. Annie Besant in the Chair. Madame Blavatsky present, though still suffering in health.”

On July 3 there was the inaugural meeting in the new hall of the Blavatsky Lodge at Avenue Road, described (in *T.P.S. Series*, III, 9) as follows

“The chair was taken by the President of the Lodge, Mrs. Besant, at whose side on the platform sat Madame Blavatsky, to whose noble example and unceasing, self-denying labour these Headquarters of The Society in Europe owe their existence.”

“The proceedings terminated amid enthusiastic congratulations to Madame Blavatsky.” (Lucifer, July 1890).

On July 20 Madame Blavatsky was due to speak at the Lodge, on “Woman in Antiquity,” “but being too much disturbed and ill by the late change of residence,” her place was taken by Annie Besant on “Woman in Modern Society,” which had been scheduled for August 27. However, on August 7 “H.P.B.’s notes on ‘Woman in Antiquity’ were read by Annie Besant; and besides these, H.P.B. gave considerable information verbatim, concerning the Past of Women and its Karmic results.”

From then on, apart from a statement on October 30 to the effect that a member had been “expelled from the Lodge for slandering the Society and H.P.B.,” there is no further reference in the Minutes to Madame Blavatsky until on 12 May 1891 we find inserted in the book a printed notice as follows :

At the next Lodge meeting, Thursday, May 14th, the Vice-President, Dr. W. Wynn Westcott, before the usual lecture, will speak briefly of H.P.B. and the great blow the Society has suffered by the loss of her personal presence. All the members and Associates of the Lodge are earnestly requested to honour the occasion with their presence.

Claude F. Wright,
Hon. Secretary.

Dr. Besant Takes a Prominent Part

I have been anticipating somewhat, and must now return to the autumn of 1889, when Mrs. Besant began to take a prominent place in Blavatsky Lodge. The first mention of her name occurs in the minutes for 21 November, 1889, when we are told: “In the absence of W. Kingsland, Annie Besant took the chair.” She continued to preside, was elected President of the Lodge in January 1890, and held this office until 1904 when, in view of her frequent absences from England, she resigned. Mr. Mead was elected President, and Mrs. Besant “President of Honour,” with power to preside at meetings when able to attend the Lodge.

This post of honour she held until she became President of The Theosophical Society in 1907, later becoming an Honorary Member of the Lodge and remaining so until her death in 1933.

Going back to 1889, we find that the minutes are concerned with the ordinary Lodge meetings held on Thursdays at 8.30 p.m., but occasionally there was business to be done. At a meeting held at 7 o’clock on 12 December 1889, delegates were elected to represent the Lodge at the British Section Council meeting. The following week nominations were made for the election of officers, who were duly elected in January 1890. At this date Mrs. Annie Besant was President, Mr. W.R. Old Vice-President, Mr. F.L. Gardner Secretary and Countess Wachtmeister Treasurer, the remaining members of the Council being W. Kingsland, A.W. Cobbold and Herbert Burrows.

By this time the rules of the Lodge had undergone some alterations to bring them in line, apparently, with the rules of the British Section. The revised rules were adopted on 2nd

January 1890, the chief changes being in the aim of the Lodge and the rules regarding visitors. The object is now stated to be: "To train its members in Theosophical knowledge by study and discussion, and to serve as an active centre for Theosophical work." Members and associates could introduce visitors at three ordinary meetings, "but if after the third visit such visitor does not become an associate or member he can no longer be admitted." As an associate, "interested in Theosophy but not yet prepared to take up full membership," he was allowed to attend the Lodge for three months, and at the end of this period "he must either become a member or cease to attend the Lodge meeting and resign his associateship." Applications for associateship or membership had to be posted up on the notice-board a fortnight before election. There was no subscription to the Lodge, expenses still being met by voluntary contributions from members and associates, but a subscription was required "as a member of the British Section." The meetings were held weekly and were open to members, associates and visitors, but power was taken to have meetings for members only. In May cards for visitors were introduced, and these had to be signed by the members responsible.

Relations with London Lodge

It has already been stated that on several occasions Mr. A.P. Sinnett was present at meetings of the Blavatsky Lodge and took part in the debates. It is interesting, therefore, to note the relationship which existed between the London Lodge and the Blavatsky Lodge. On 5th July 1888 it was recorded in the minutes that "letters between Messrs. Harbottle and Sinnett were read and discussed, the point in question being the separation of the Blavatsky Lodge from the London Lodge." It was resolved that "in the opinion of the Blavatsky Lodge it is highly inadvisable for those members of the Blavatsky Lodge who are also members of the London Lodge to resign their membership of the London Lodge."

Further we are told that "this was unanimously carried as an instruction." At this same meeting Mr. Harbottle proposed, and Madame Blavatsky seconded:

That notice be sent to all members of the London Lodge acquainting them with the times at which meetings will be held at 7 Duke Street, and that the Secretary be instructed to write to the Secretary of the London Lodge suggesting that notice of the meetings held by the London Lodge be added to this notice.

Mr. Sinnett, however, seemed to view the matter in a different light, and it is worthwhile to quote from the report of the London Lodge which was published in the report of proceedings of the first Annual Convention of The Theosophical Society in Europe held in July 1891:

"In 1887 Madame Blavatsky returned to England, and the Blavatsky Lodge was formed. That organization very shortly afterwards began an energetic propaganda, and the London Lodge decided to withdraw to a corresponding degree from public activity, considering that it would be undesirable that it should enter into any sort of competition with a Lodge that Madame Blavatsky was personally associated with. Those of its members who wished to share in the proceedings of the Blavatsky Lodge were recommended to transfer their membership, which course was adopted by a large majority. A certain number preferred on the other hand to remain in association on the lines of the older branch, and the London Lodge continued to meet and discuss Theosophical subjects, though without holding any more open meetings."

Increasing Membership

On 3rd July 1890 there was held an “inaugural meeting in the Lodge’s Lecture Hall at the New Headquarters, 19 Avenue Road, Regent’s Park, N.W.” Cuttings from *Lucifer*, July 1890, and T.P.S. Series, III, 9, being inserted in the minute-book. Mrs. Besant was in the chair, with Madame Blavatsky by her side. We are told that “the new hall will seat some 300 people with comfort, and is appropriately hung with curtains of Oriental silk, while the panels of the walls and ceiling have been decorated with symbolical paintings by one of the Fellows of the Lodge, Mr. Machell”; also that “every seat, every inch of standing room was occupied, and a number of late arrivals found themselves compelled to stand outside and follow the proceedings as best they could through the door and windows.”

The first session in the new hall began on July 10, when a series of discussions was inaugurated by Herbert Burrows on “Theosophy in Relation to the Problems of Modern Life.” The lectures were entitled :

July

- 17. “Education.” Mr. Bertram Keightley.
- 24. “Woman in Antiquity.” From notes by H.P.B.
- 31. Woman in Modern Society—civil and economic.” Mrs. Cooper-Oakley.

Aug.

- 7. “Woman in Modern Society— the family.” Mrs. Besant.
- 14. “Capital and Labour.” Mrs. Besant.
- 21. “Theosophy and Materialism.” Mr. Kingsland.
- 28. Theosophy and Modern Culture.” Mr. W. B. Yeats.

Sept.

- 4. “Philanthropy.” Mr. G. R. S. Mead.
- 11. “Treatment of Criminals and Lunatics.” Mr. W.R. Old.
- 18. “Treatment of Animals, Vivisection, etc.” Dr. Archibald Keightley.
- 26. “Theosophy and Ecclesiasticism.” Mr. Kingsland.

The attendance during this session is not recorded, except for the meeting on July 17, when there was a “small meeting of about 20 people, the rain being heavy.” Yet the serial number allotted to an associate whose name was posted on July 25 was 175. The annual general meeting was held on Tuesday, 30th September 1890, Annie Besant being re-elected as President, William Kingsland elected as Vice-President, Claude F. Wright elected as Secretary and Countess Wachtmeister re-elected as Treasurer. Sydney V. Edge was elected Assistant Secretary, the additional members of the Council being W.R. Old, G.R.S. Mead, and Mrs. Cooper-Oakley. W. Kingsland resigned in January 1891, “he desiring to accept the position of President of the new Lodge at Chiswick,” and Dr. W. Wynn Westcott was appointed to fill the vacancy.”

On October 9th a new series began on “Theosophy from the Root Up.” This continued until 15th January 1891, the syllabus giving detailed references to *The Secret Doctrine* and the *Key to Theosophy* for the different lectures. A second course on the same subject, conducted by Mrs. Besant, occupied the meetings from 22nd January to 26th March 1891. All this time the membership of the Lodge was increasing, the serial number on March 5 being 245. It was

found necessary to hold additional meetings, and the following circular was sent out to members :

Blavatsky Lodge, Theosophical Headquarters,
19 Avenue Road, Regent's Park, N.W.
London, November 25th, 1890

Dear.....

Taking into consideration the rapid increase in the number of those attending the weekly meetings of the Blavatsky Lodge, the Council has proposed that a conversazione be held on the first Tuesday in each month at 8 p.m. This reunion is to give members the opportunity of becoming better acquainted with each other, there being no possibility of private conversation at the regular Lodge meetings.

The Council feels that each member ought to be encouraged to take an active interest in the supporting and carrying out of the work at Headquarters, and to make the Headquarters as far as possible a living centre of Theosophic thought and life.

You are likewise asked to invite any of your friends that may evince interest in Theosophy, and, owing to the number of strangers that will naturally be expected, are requested as far as possible, with other members and associates, to assist in entertaining the guests.

The first reunion will, then, be held on Tuesday, Dec. 2nd, at 8 p.m.

Tea and coffee will be served. Evening dress optional. Yours fraternally,
Claude F. Wright, Secretary.

Death of H.P.B.

From April 2 to May 14 Mrs. Besant's name does not appear in the minutes, because she was absent in America. Dr. Wynn Westcott took the chair at the meetings. There is no break in the Lodge meetings on account of Madame Blavatsky's death on Friday, 8th May 1891.

The May 7 meeting was occupied with a paper read by Mrs. Marshall on "Theosophy and Theosophical Christianity," and we are told that (1) Madame Blavatsky wished very much to know from Miss Louisa Cooke "whether there had been a good Lodge meeting" that evening.

On May 12 a notice was sent to all members that at the Lodge meeting on May 14 Dr. W. Wynn Westcott would speak briefly, before the usual lecture, of "H.P. Blavatsky and the great blow The Society had suffered by the loss of her personal presence."

1. Reminiscences of H.P. Blavatsky.
