

COLONEL OLCOTT IN JAPAN AND AUSTRALIA

A STRIKING figure in the Convention of 1888 was a Japanese who came with an invitation to Colonel Olcott to visit Japan. This visit was duly made, and Colonel Olcott, accompanied by H. Dharmapala of Ceylon, left with the blessings of the leading priests of Ceylon on a unique Buddhist mission to Japan. As this trip was strictly for Buddhist propaganda, Colonel Olcott did the work in his private capacity as an individual and not as the President. - He had remarkable success, and received welcome from all the sects of Buddhism in Japan. After his return, he set on foot the idea of bringing together into closer relation the two main divisions of Buddhism, commonly called the Southern and Northern Churches. After much consultation, he finally drew up a statement of the principles of Buddhism, which were acceptable to such divergent forms as exist in Ceylon and Japan. This statement was then formally signed by the heads of the leading sects which represent Buddhism in the various countries. It is now incorporated in his *Buddhist Catechism*.

In 1891, Colonel Olcott made a tour of Australia, and just as he was preparing to leave for New Zealand, he received news of the passing of H. P. B. He cancelled his New Zealand tour and returned to India, and thence proceeded to Europe. What the President-Founder said then about the future of Australia is here worth recording. In his Presidential Address to the Convention of 1891 he said :

“I am not called upon to give my general views about Australia, but may simply remark that our race

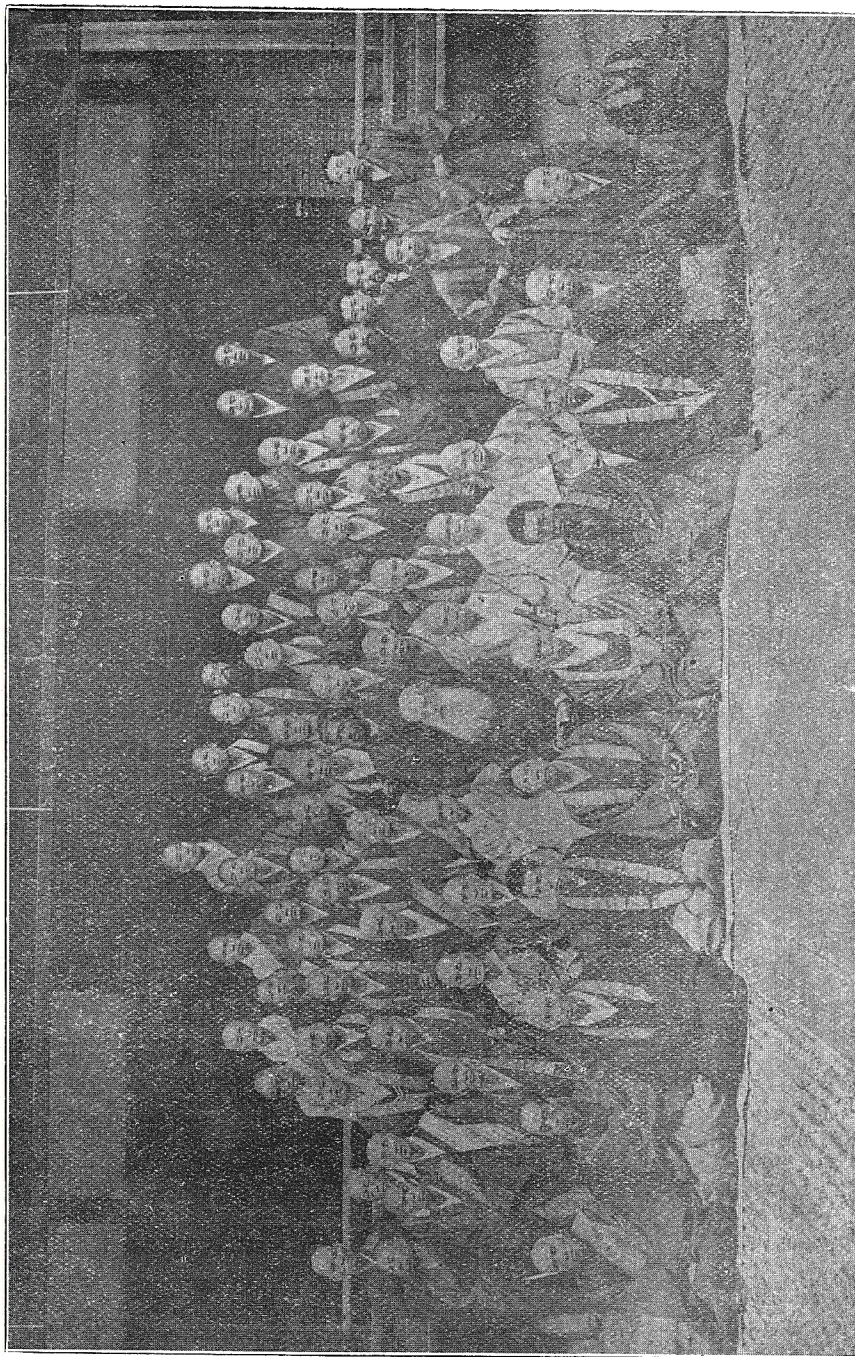


FIG. 132
COLONEL OLCOTT WITH JAPANESE PRIESTS

is building at the Antipodes an empire or a republic that will become in time one of the greatest on earth. When a great statesman asked me what I thought of them, I said that Australia was like a game-cock in the egg: all their future is before them. One finds in Melbourne and elsewhere buildings that rival in splendour those of Paris, London and New York, immense wealth accumulating, and the people working with a consuming energy and fiery zeal like those of Americans. But the colonial Empire of to-day is only the faint foreshadowing of the future federated state, whose foundations they are laying now. And I find another—to us, a much more important—thing out there: the Australian temperament is evolving, like the North American, mystical tendencies and capabilities. Mark the prophecy and see if it is not fulfilled. I know it to be the fact by intercourse with many people in all the Australian colonies, I felt it in the atmosphere. A coarse vagabond brutality is being also evolved, it is true, but this mystical quality is already showing itself. It would not surprise me to be shown that fifty years hence Theosophy will have one of its strongest footholds in the hearts of those dear, good people who were so kind to me throughout my recent tour.”

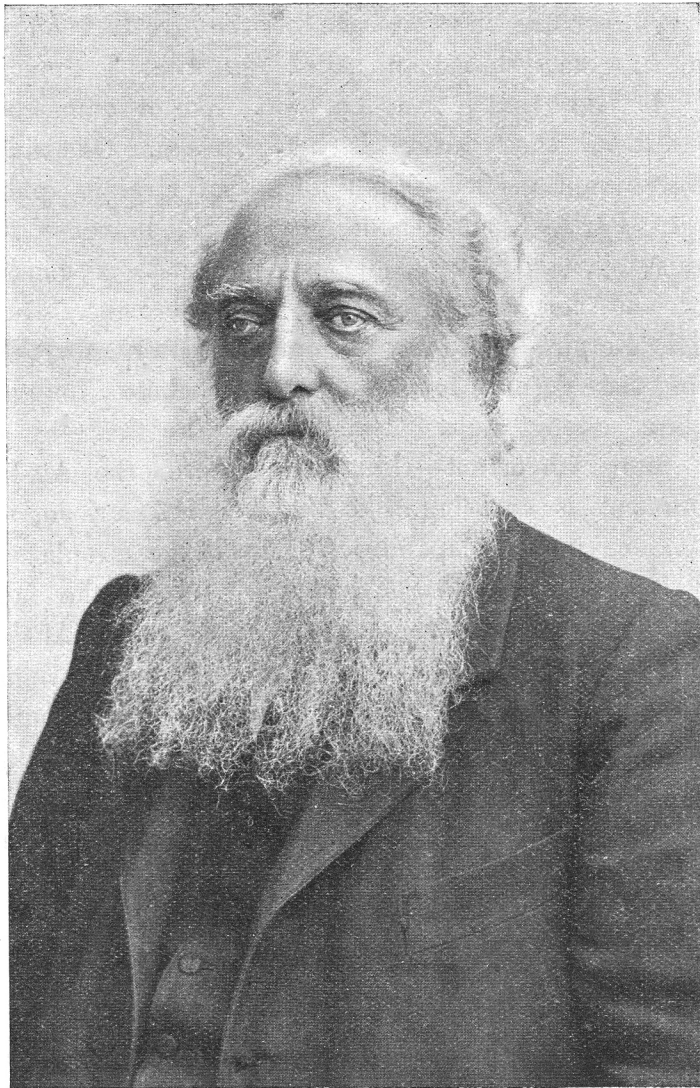


FIG. 133
H. S. OLCOTT