

THE PASSING OF H. P. B.

ON May 8, 1891, H. P. B. laid aside her physical body. When she passed away, she left the Movement vigorous, and all the old clouds of 1884 and 1885 had disappeared. The Society at her death had in each Section groups large and small of members who could stand on their own feet, and develop the Movement according to the needs of each country.

Mrs. Besant was on a lecturing tour in America at the time of H. P. B.'s death, and she heard of her teacher's passing away only on her arrival. The death of H. P. B. made no difference to the outer organisation of the T.S., for Colonel Olcott was in charge of the Society as President. But it made a very great difference to the occult part of the work, the E.S.T. founded by H. P. B. Before her death, she had appointed by writing Mrs. Besant "Chief Secretary of the Inner Group of the Esoteric Section and Recorder of the Teachings," and also made her verbally the Outer Head of the E. S. T. Mr. W. Q. Judge had previously been appointed by H. P. B. her agent for America to distribute documents. After her death, and at Mr. Judge's suggestion, supported by what purported to be a message from Adept who was the Inner Head of the E. S. T., Mrs. Besant consented to divide the E.S.T. into two Divisions, Eastern and Western, the former to comprise India and Europe, the latter to consist of America. There were to be two joint Heads, Mrs. Besant for the Eastern Division and Mr. Judge for the Western. As will be narrated later, this arrangement broke down after three years.

Before her passing away, H. P. B. left a request that on the day of her death those who felt attached to her would

remember her by a brief ceremony. This was to read extracts from two books which she loved, the *Light of Asia* and the *Bhagavad-Gita*. Colonel Olcott later suggested that the 8th of



FIG. 135

H. P. B.

May should be called "White Lotus Day," and that not only H. P. B. should be commemorated, but also all Theosophical workers who, in the country and in the Lodge, had passed away in the course of the year. This is now being done on every 8th



FIG. 136

H. P. B.

of May. In addition to reading from the *Light of Asia* and the *Bhagavad-Gita*, members now read extracts from other Scriptures also, but beginning with the two books which H. P. B. loved.

In the great Hall at the Headquarters in Adyar, there exists an alcove behind the platform. In this alcove Colonel Olcott constructed a figure in plaster of H. P. B., modelled from Schmiechen's portrait of her which appears as Fig. 97. An Indian artist from

the Madras School of Art was called upon to copy from the picture, and what he achieved is shown as Fig. 136. The statue bears an inscription in Latin by Colonel Olcott: "H. P. B. Amicitiae nostrae testimonium. H. S. O. 8. 5. 1899." Soon after Colonel Olcott himself passed away in 1907, H. P. B.'s statue was shifted to the left of the pedestal, and a statue of him in plaster was placed by her side, resting the

right hand on her left shoulder, with the inscription on the pedestal: "In loving memory of the Founders of the T. S., 1891 and 1907."

Though only half a century has passed after the organisation of the Society, it is already possible to estimate in some

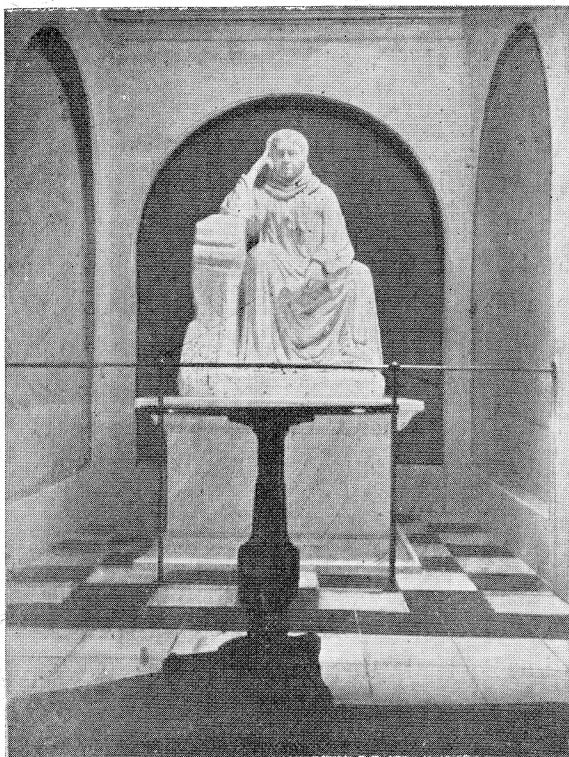


FIG. 137

STATUE OF H. P. B. AT ADYAR

measure the character and the services of H. P. B. Many are still alive who knew her intimately, though this band is slowly diminishing. They all bear testimony to a very powerful personality, whose influence was felt by all who eagerly sought truth. H. P. B. was utterly unconventional, and she had no truce with sham or hypocrisy, whether in religion or in social observances. The one thing which mattered to her was that a man should be eager and willing to brave public opinion in trying to live loyally by his ideals. Throughout the years of her Theosophical service, she worked all the time under the direct orders of her occult Chiefs. In Their service, she was flawless in her devotion and heroism. She knew that she would be misunderstood and vilified, and she voluntarily became a martyr to the Cause of Truth. A fine sensitiveness to all points of honour was one of the most powerful elements of her character, and yet her lot was to be completely misunderstood and

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misjudged by the world, simply because she was not allowed, under her occult orders, to give always the full explanation of everything which she had to do in the carrying out of orders. Yet those few who did understand her gained from her what changed life for them utterly. For she brought to them that Light "which lighteth every man that cometh into the world".

The services of H.P.B. to the world in general are manifold, but one especially stands out. This is the unification which she has given through her writings to the various departments of truth in which men have laboured throughout the ages. Before the beginning of the Theosophical Movement, for over two thousand years since the decadence of Greek civilisation, there has been in Europe no religious and intellectual synthesis which a man of culture could profess. Life was broken up into departments severally of religion, science, art and philosophy. Each in its own way had a great message, but few were able, outside of the Mysteries, to see the nexus between them all, and find a synthesis of truth. H. P. B. in her writings stated to the modern world this great synthesis which underlies everything. For the first time in the modern world, both in the East and in the West, a man of culture and understanding who in addition to his intellectual development has a deeply religious nature, can find in the Theosophical philosophy a full satisfaction of all his aspirations. H. P. B. ushered in that great standpoint "of the Centre" which is the high water mark of every civilisation. Many after her have added to the body of knowledge, with which the Theosophical Movement was started by her. But in our days, she was the first to build a bridge between religion, science, philosophy and art, and to construct that intellectual edifice in which thousands to-day live, finding through Theosophy the realisation of all their hopes and dreams. H. P. B. will stand out in all the ages to come as one who brought the Light and ushered in a new age of Wisdom.

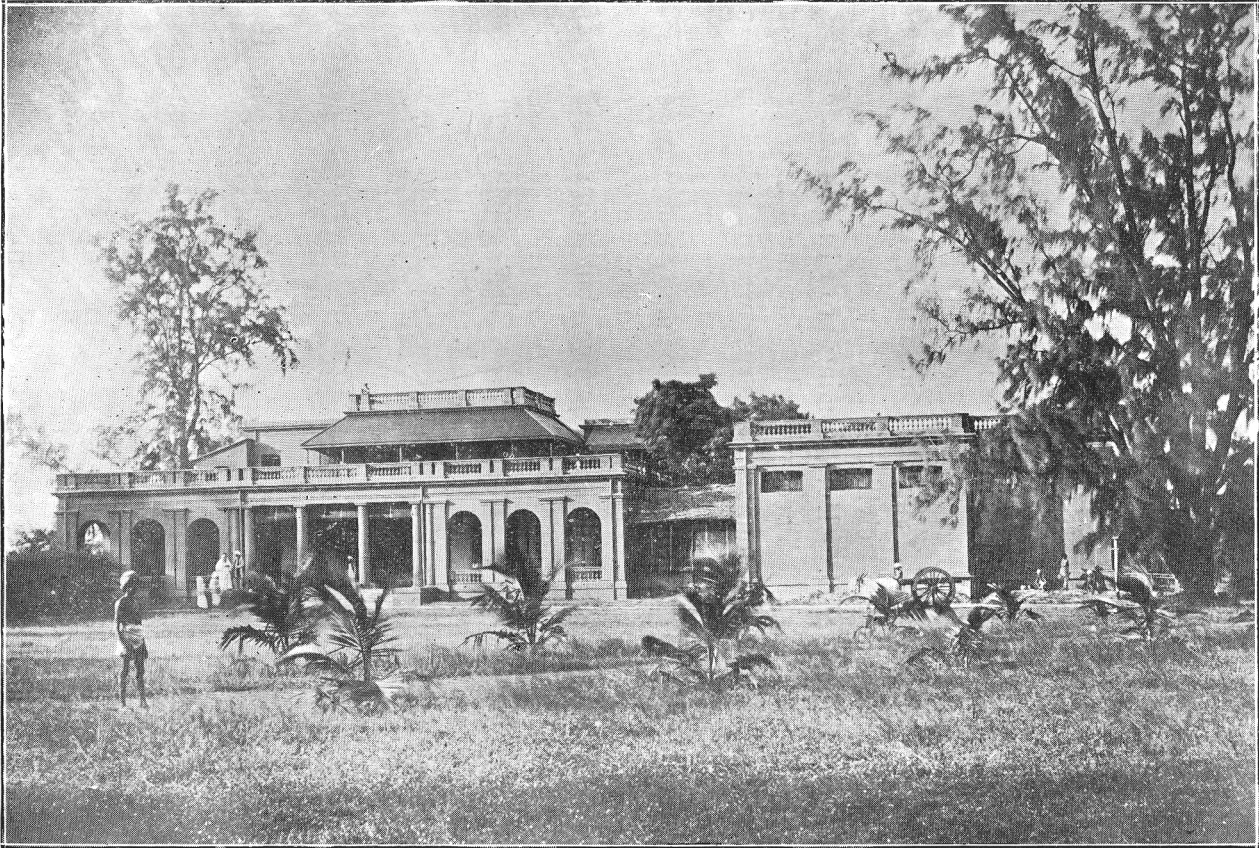


FIG. 138

Adyar Headquarters, after first rebuilding of frontage, with Library, in 1887