

DIFFICULTIES IN U.S.A., 1906

IN 1906 the Society was plunged into a most unexpected issue. It was asserted that C. W. Leadbeater, who was very prominent as a writer and lecturer, had been giving to youths advice on the subject of their sex difficulties which many members thought utterly incompatible with his teachings as a Theosophist. On complaint being made to Colonel Olcott by the officers of the American Section, a Judicial Committee was called to enquire into the matter. Mr. Leadbeater admitted that he had given the advice to certain youths as a prophylactic, and that in his judgment it was a lesser evil than the advice given by many doctors. Every youth whom he had advised was kept under his observation, and his advice was strictly individual, to meet the particular needs of those placed in his care for training. He refused to admit, with regard to his remedy for the sex difficulties under which boys coming to maturity labour, that any moral standards were involved, as the advice dealt with a purely temporary physiological problem. Recognising however the resentment regarding the matter on the part of a large number of members, most of whom were in America, he offered his resignation and it was accepted. But this did not close the matter, as another large group of members held that, however reprehensible they might consider his advice to be, it in no way unfitted him to be a member of the Society.

This was the stand taken by C. Jinarajadasa, who at this time was a lecturer for the American Section. Many held with him that the principle of liberty in the Society was

being infringed, if members who held unconventional ideas as to the solution of sex problems were to be asked to resign because of those ideas. As Mr. Leadbeater had given the advice to youths gladly sent to him by parents for training, and as those youths were constantly with him, additional charges were made of immoral conduct.

A strong compact minority in America refused to endorse the action of the American Executive under Mr. Alexander Fullerton, which had asked for the resignation of Mr. Leadbeater, and it began working to elect a new Executive. Colonel Olcott arrived in America to preside over the Annual Convention in Chicago, hoping to smooth matters. He found the divisions too strong for his mediation. It was during this time that he cancelled the diploma of membership of C. Jinarajadasa, on charges preferred by the American Executive. These charges said that Mr. Jinarajadasa had endorsed the views of Mr. Leadbeater, which however was not the case, and that he had defied the American Executive and was fomenting trouble in the Section. This expulsion by Colonel Olcott was promptly taken up as unjustifiable, and Mrs. Besant lodged an appeal against the President's decision to the General Council. Colonel Olcott then placed the matter before the General Council, with the arguments of Mrs. Besant, who pointed out that the President-Founder was "misled as to facts and mistaken as to procedure", and that the stand taken by Mr. Jinarajadasa was not in favour of the advice of Mr. Leadbeater, but simply that the Society had stultified itself in the furtherance of its stated objects by holding that any particular set of opinions could not be held by a member within the Society. The General Council voted that Mr. Jinarajadasa should be reinstated. Colonel Olcott, however, died before the actual reinstatement could be made by him, and this was done later by Mrs. Besant as President.

The minority in the American Section who desired to rescind the action of the American Executive slowly increased

in number, and at its Convention in 1907 they became the

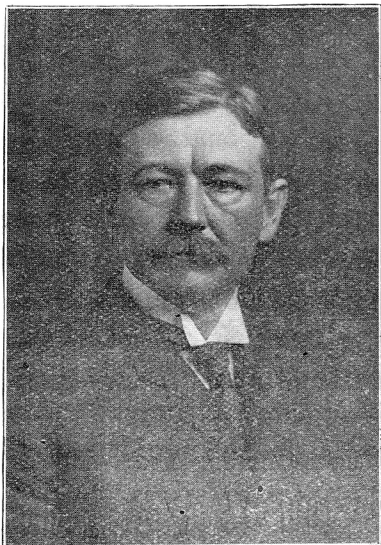


FIG. 153

DR. WELLER VAN HOOK

majority and elected a new Executive, with Dr. Weller Van Hook (Fig. 153) as General Secretary, in the place of Mr. Alexander Fullerton. The disturbance in America affected several countries in Europe, but only a few members resigned, and only one or two Lodges disbanded. In *Theosophist*, February, 1908 (Supplement) and in the Convention address of 1908, two statements will be found by Mrs. Besant on Mr. Leadbeater's position on this matter.

The turmoil of 1906 in the T. S. over the sex question was not without beneficial result. For the first time, Theosophists had their attention focussed on this most vital of human problems. If there is anywhere a solution to be found, it certainly must be in Theosophy, if it is sought for in the right direction. Since the problem was so forcibly and so publicly brought to the attention of Theosophists in 1906, a great deal of light has been thrown on the ramifications of the subject by the investigations of medical men, especially neurologists. Psychoanalysis has thrown a flood of light on this recondite problem, and all earnest inquirers can to-day approach the problem not only with more knowledge but also with less emotionalism. The day is perhaps not far distant, when the new knowledge gained from both medical and occult science will show the way to a solution, which will restore to man his pristine purity, and put an end to the degradation which man has imposed on woman throughout the ages.