

OCCULT PHENOMENA

Soon after the arrival of the Founders in India, there began an era of occult phenomena which made the Society famous throughout the world. There has been much ignorance and misconception as to what these phenomena were and how they took place. As is well known, in 1885 H. P. B. was accused of trickery in connection with them. Of late, a mass of new evidence, in the shape of the original letters from the Masters, has been published, and it is now possible for anyone who is really interested to have all the facts before him. Briefly summed up, the situation was as follows.

H. P. B. through her occult training had command over certain invisible powers of nature, and she could herself perform many occult phenomena. But apart from these, a certain number of phenomena was produced for a specific purpose by other pupils of the Adepts, under Their instructions. It was carefully explained by Them in 1880 that, though They had seemingly unlimited control over the powers of nature, yet since They were obliged to use every atom of Their force only for the service of man, it was not possible for Them to use those occult powers indiscriminately, but only when the result was likely to deserve the expenditure of force. In general, the occult rule was to perform no phenomena of any kind in order to support a philosophical theory. The Adepts knew from long experience that no man is convinced because a phenomenon takes place which staggers his intellect. But if, before a phenomenon takes place, he has sufficiently understood the principles

underlying the phenomena, then each phenomenon is a proof of the existence of a natural law, in just the same way that an experiment in a laboratory is a proof of the theory expounded in the class room.

In 1880, however, under the exceptional circumstances of starting a new and world-wide movement to combat the utter scepticism and materialism prevalent at the time, permission was given by the Chiefs of the Adept Brotherhood for the use of a certain amount of Their force in the performance of phenomena. These phenomena consisted mainly in precipitating letters, in materialising various objects, and in the production of sounds from the ether. There were many other minor kinds which need not here be mentioned.

Now, the important thing to note is that the Adepts and Their pupils were, in their physical bodies, in Tibet, while the phenomena had to be performed either in India or Europe. This made it necessary for Them, in order to save as much force as possible, to have a centre on the physical plane, through which Their forces for the phenomena could be discharged. In these days of wireless, we know that while one station sends out a message of a certain wave length, there must be another station equipped with instruments for similar wave length to receive the message. In the same kind of way, when the Adepts were ready to use Their forces, it was found necessary to have a centre on the physical plane. Such a centre was H. P. B.; sometimes as a substitute Colonel Olcott and Damodar K. Mavalankar could also be so utilised.

In writing to Miss Arundale, when H. P. B. was about to leave England in 1884, the Master K. H. wrote: "You know of course that once H. P. B.'s aura in the house is exhausted you can have no more letters from me." The presence on the spot of H. P. B. enabled the phenomena to take place with less expenditure of force than if they had to be performed without her as the physical fulcrum. It is because of this need of a

physical fulcrum that, whenever a phenomenon took place, one or other of the three mentioned above, or some other pupil equally attuned in vibration to the nature of the Masters, was necessary on the physical plane. But this fact was made the basis of an accusation against H. P. B. It was said that she was in collusion with Them, and that the phenomena were the result of trickery. As a matter of fact, many phenomena took place in India when H. P. B. was in Europe. Letters were precipitated in moving trains when H. P. B. was not in the train. Anyone who desires to acquaint himself more fully on this matter can to-day get far more information than the inquirer could in 1885. Even a little understanding of the nature of the control of occult forces makes the inquirer to-day realise that events, which seem to suggest fraud, are in reality proofs of scientific conditions indispensable in the control of natural law.

When the two Founders arrived in India, they quickly came under the suspicion of the British Government. H. P. B. was a Russian, though she had naturalised as an American citizen. But there had been political difficulties between Britain and Russia, and therefore suspicions arose that she might possibly be a Russian spy. As the British officials could not understand two American citizens coming to India to work for the revival of the culture of the "natives," for several months police spies followed them in their journeys. It was only after formal protest, and after presentation of credentials, and an explanation to the Viceroy's Government of the origin and objects of the Society, that police supervision was finally removed. The Founders gave an assurance to the Government that the Theosophical Society, as such, had no connection with any political movement in India or elsewhere. From that day, the Society has made no pronouncement whatsoever, as an organised body, on any matter dealing with national aims and objects in the purely political field of any country.

A very great impulse to the dissemination of Theosophical ideas was given by the phenomena which were associated with H. P. B., after the Founders went to Simla to stay with the Sinnetts. All that happened then has been narrated in *The Occult World*. An interesting relic of this period is the famous cup and saucer which are still at Adyar, and which are reproduced in Fig. 64.



FIG. 64

CUP AND SAUCER PRECIPITATED BY H.P.B.

At this time, there was attracted to Theosophy an Englishman of high official position in India, Allan Octavian Hume, C. B. (Fig. 65). He became President of the Simla Eclectic Society in 1881, and though of a very sceptical intellect wrote many articles explaining Theosophy in the light of the teachings which he received from the Adept Teachers. Later he lost interest in the Society and in its philosophy. But it is noteworthy that this contact with the Adept Teachers roused him to a new vision of the possibilities of Indian national life. Mr. Hume, after retiring from Government service, propounded the idea of a political organisation for the furtherance of Indian aspirations. The founding of the Indian National Congress is due to him, and he has been truly called the "Father of the Indian National Congress".

The first division in Theosophical ranks took place in July, 1880. It has been mentioned that the party that came to India consisted of the two Founders and Miss Rosa Bates and Mr. E. Wimbridge. In 1880 Monsieur and Madame Coulomb, who were penniless in Ceylon, came and joined the Founders in Bombay and were given employment, the former as odd job man and the latter as housekeeper. Very quickly a clash arose between Miss Bates and Madame Coulomb, and this developed into a fierce quarrel, in which Mr. Wimbridge took the side of Miss Bates.

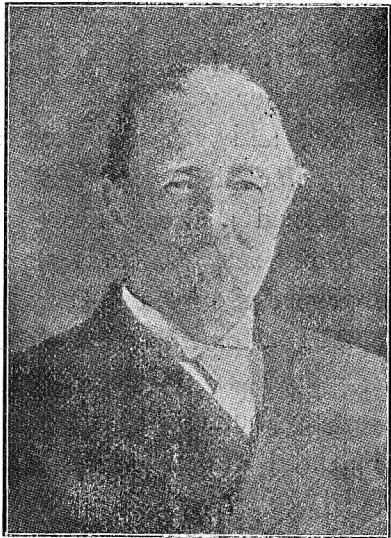


FIG. 65

A. O. HUME

After a period of bitter discomfort to the Founders, finally Miss Bates and Mr. Wimbridge left the establishment and later the Society. Thus the original four who left New York were reduced to a nucleus of two.

However, by this time many workers had gathered round the Founders, among whom was one who became famous in

Theosophical annals for his devotion to both the Founders and to the Masters. This was Damodar K. Mavalankar, a Brahmin



FIG. 66

DAMODAR K. MAVALANKAR

of Gujerat (Fig. 66). He was married, but his wife consented to his adopting what was practically the life of a Sannyasin, and to leaving her provided for with his parents who were well-to-do people. Damodar, as he was affectionately called by all, joined the Founders in Bombay. He was appointed Joint Recording Secretary, and threw himself heart and soul into the work. In February, 1885, he was called by his Master to Tibet, and left for the north. He arrived at the Ashrama of his Master, after very great hardships. When one notes how frail he was, and yet did such a mass of work, snatching only a few hours for sleep, one realises that he has earned a great name for himself in the Society's annals. A part of the property of the Society at Adyar is named after him "Damodar Gardens".



FIG. 67

A. SANKARIAH

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Soon after the Founders began their work, a cultured Theosophist, who was the head of a Hindu religious and philosophical association joined hands with the T. S. This was A. Sankariah, President of the Hindu Sabha. He was then the Prime Minister or Naib Dewan of Cochin (Fig. 67). The Hindu Sabha affiliated with the T.S., without however losing



FIG. 68

H. H. DAJI RAJA, THAKORE
SAHIB OF WADHWAN



FIG. 69

PRINCE HARISINGHJEE
RUPSINGHJEE



FIG. 70

GOPALRAO HARI DESHMUKH



FIG. 71

ADITYARAM BHATTACHARYA



FIG. 72
N. D. KHANDALAWALA



FIG. 73
NORENDRO NATH SEN



FIG. 74
K. N. SEERVAI
Recording Secretary, T.S.



FIG. 75
DR. ANNA M. KUNTE

its identity or autonomy. There stand out among those who helped the work in India in these early days, His Highness Daji Raja Chandra Singhjee, the Thakore Sahib of Wadhwan, Prince Harisinghjee Rupsinghjee of Bhavnagar, Gopalrao Hari Deshmukh, Adityaram Bhattacharya, N. D. Khandalawala, Norendro Nath Sen, K. N. Seervai, Dr. Anna M. Kunte, Mahadev M. Kunte, Dorabjee Dosabhoj, Tukaram Tattya and Nobin K. Bannerjee.



FIG. 76

MAHADEV M. KUNTE



FIG. 77

DORABJEE DOSABHOJ

From one point of view the history of the T. S. is a steady growth and expansion. Country after country has been affected by Theosophical ideas, and when to-day one looks at the splendid position it holds, with its 1,600 Branches in 41 countries organised into National Societies, one does not realise how many obstacles from without and from within the Society has surmounted. The first division in the Society arose in 1880, as already narrated, with the secession of two of the four who left New York. The next great difficulty was due to divergency in policy and aims which arose between the T. S. and the Arya Samaj.

The T. S. had united with the Arya Samaj, so as to make practically one organisation. On the arrival of the Founders in India, the greatest cordiality was shown by the Chief of the Arya Samaj, Swāmi Dayānand Saraswati, towards the Founders. He began in the *Theosophist* the writing of his autobiography, and wherever the Arya Samaj had a Branch, the Founders were cordially welcomed, and Arya Samajists did everything to arrange for meetings for the T. S. The difficulty that arose between the two organisations was due to the fact that the T. S. was unsectarian and cosmopolitan, while the Arya Samaj had as its chief aim the purification of Hinduism, and naturally took as its axiom that, among all the religions, Hinduism was the best expression of Divine Truth. While the Founders were heartily in sympathy with the whole trend of Indian religion and culture, they could not, as officials of the Theosophical Society, subscribe to any teachings which tended to exalt Hinduism as the one and only revelation, at the expense of other religions. A further but minor point of dissension was that the Founders refused to commit the Society to the somewhat narrow ideas of a personal God, which some of the Arya Samajists considered at the time essential to their profession of faith. Bitter accusations were hurled by the Arya Samajists against the T. S., and finally the bond that cemented the two was broken.

It is worth while noting here that, from the earliest days of the T. S., there has been a good deal of misunderstanding of the attitude of the Masters on this matter of "a personal God". People who are not of a philosophical turn of mind, and do not care to analyse too deeply the fundamentals of the universe, readily accept all that religious dogmas tell them as to a Creator. With this acceptance, there swiftly follows the personification of God in some human image. Then soon, hierarchies of priests arise, and they begin going outside due bounds, and dominate the minds of the faithful. A belief in a personal

God has brought to mankind the most wonderful of inspirations towards noble conduct and, when that belief is rightly understood and lived, nothing but good comes to humanity. But unfortunately, with the idea of a personal God, there comes inevitably the idea of mediators, who often are priests who must perform Samskāras or Sacraments, without which no man is considered capable of coming near to Divinity. Slowly then man begins to rely on someone or something outside of himself, and his whole outlook undergoes a change. Many an evil, for which he is himself directly responsible, and which he and none other should put right, is regarded by him as due to external causes over which he has no control. Apathy then develops, and a thousand evils come in the footsteps of those religions which have emphasised a personal God, without emphasising at the same time that the nature of that personal God dwells in man also. The doctrine of grace and salvation in such religions, when separated from the deeper truths of mysticism, have undoubtedly tended to make men drift and rely more upon subservience to preceptors and upon observance of ceremonial, rather than upon the development of that innate divine goodness which contains both the power and the wisdom which men require for their guidance. It is also obvious, to anyone who knows of the vastness of the universe, and realises how small a part in the universal scheme is this Earth of ours, that the usual conception of the personality of God must swiftly change so as to lose those characteristics of personality which we commonly associate with the term "person". The attitude of the Masters on this point has been stated most clearly thus, by H. P. B. in the Introduction to *The Secret Doctrine*:

“Esoteric Philosophy reconciles all religions, strips every one of its outward human garments, and shows the root of each to be identical with that of every other great religion. It proves the necessity of a Divine Absolute Principle in Nature. It denies Deity no more than it does the sun. Esoteric Philosophy has never

rejected God in Nature, nor Deity as the absolute and abstract *Ens*. It only refuses to accept any of the gods of the so-called monotheistic religions, gods created by man in his own image and likeness, a blasphemous and sorry caricature of the Ever Unknowable.”

During this early period in India, two of the Adepts constantly appeared, both at Crow's Nest in Bombay and at Adyar, and were seen by those who were even half-clairvoyant, as these two Masters sometimes partially materialised. But They

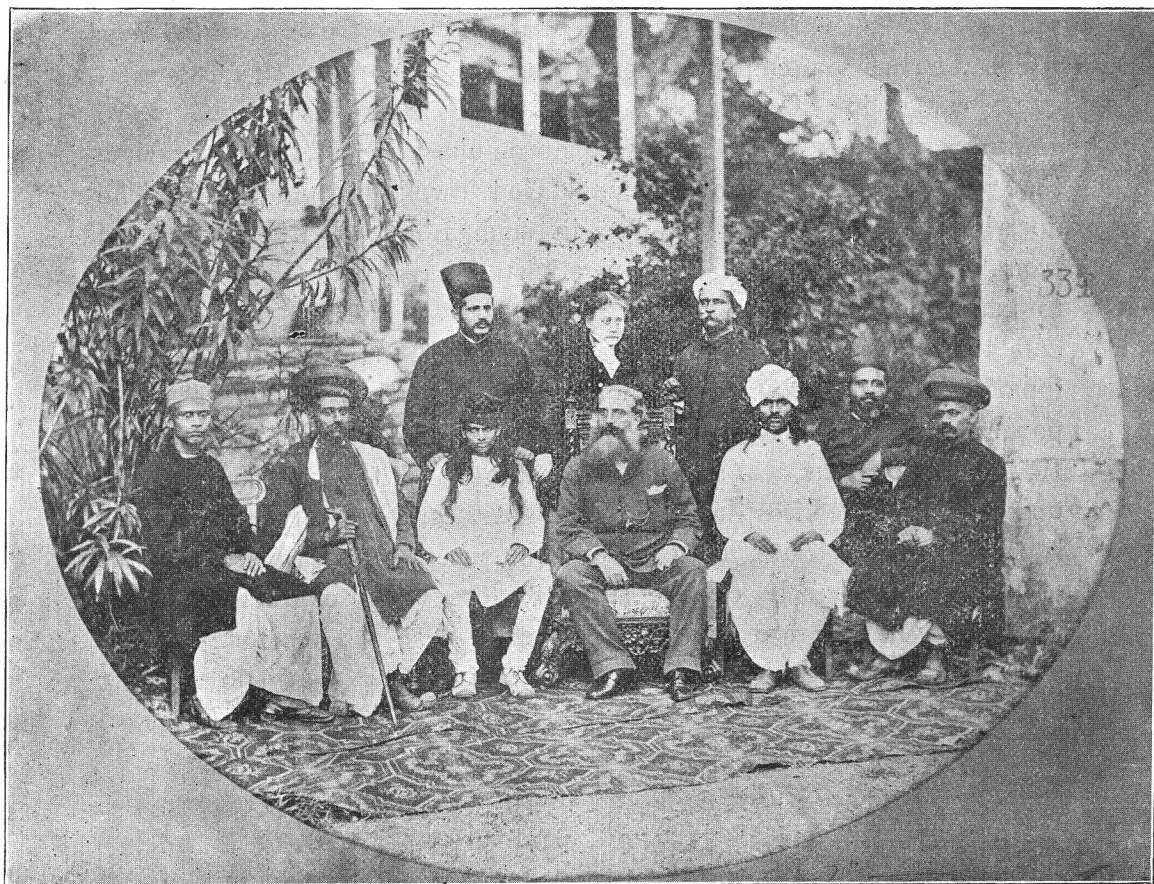


FIG. 78

GROUP AT CROW'S NEST, 1881

were seen in Their own physical forms on three occasions. In 1882 H.P.B. was called to meet her Master in Sikkim. The second was when soon after S. Ramaswamier went into Sikkim and there met his Master M. The third occasion was when Colonel Olcott and Damodar Mavalankar were at Lahore in November, 1883. At this time, the Master K. H. had come to India from Tibet, and at Lahore He came to the tent of Colonel Olcott, and left with him the letter which appears as Letter XVI in *Letters from the Masters of the Wisdom* (First Series). When Colonel Olcott and Damodar went to Jammu in Kashmir, a message came to the latter calling him to an Ashrama not far from Jammu. Here the Master K. H. and the Master Hilarion and other Masters were temporarily residing, and Damodar stayed with his Master three days. He has narrated this visit in the issue of the *Theosophist*, Dec.—Jan., 1883-84.

One of the very striking attempts of the Masters to help India was to found a newspaper which would build up Indian opinion on matters political and social. A. P. Sinnett was the editor of the *Pioneer*, when he joined the Society in 1879. Soon after his meeting with the Founders, he came into closer contact through correspondence with the Masters. His especial link was with the Master K.H., and under the impetus of his devotion to the Master his nature as an Anglo-Indian slowly changed, till he saw more rightly into the nature of Indians. This broadening made complications for him as the editor of a semi-official journal, and the proprietors of the *Pioneer* disliked the new attitude taken towards Indian problems by its editor. So Mr. Sinnett was given notice that, at the end of his engagement, the *Pioneer* would no longer need his services. It was at this juncture that the Master K. H. desired to organise the newspaper *Phoenix*, with Indian capital but with Mr. Sinnett as editor. Several of the letters of the Master K. H. deal with this project. Mr. Sinnett left for England in 1883, hoping to return, but the *Phoenix* project fell through for want of support from Indians.

When Mr. Sinnett arrived in London, a vivification took place in the activities of the British Theosophical Society. But its new vitality brought complications, because among the members in London there were two groups. The first group was led by Mr. Sinnett, and he and his friends were specially drawn to the oriental teachings as represented by *The Occult World* and

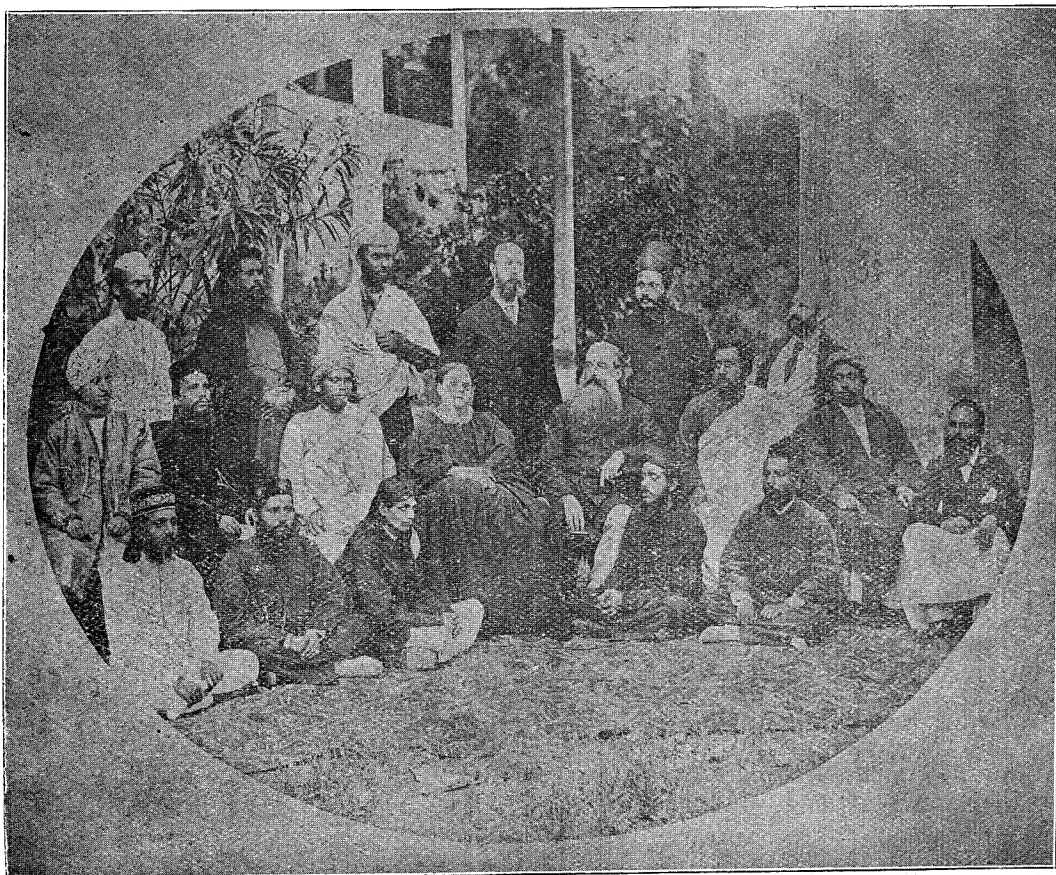


FIG. 79

CONVENTION GROUP, BOMBAY, 1882

Standing : Chandrashekar, N. K. Bannerjee, P. Nityananda Misra, A. P. S., J. N. Usmorla, A. D. Ezekiel.
 Seated on chairs : Gopi Nath, Bishan Lal, S. Ramaswamier, H. P. B., H. S. O., Tripada Bannerjee,
 Norendro Nath Sen, Thomas Perira.
 Seated on ground : L. V. Varadarajulu Naidu, Abinash Chandra Banerji, Damodar K. Mavlankar,
 M. M. Chatterjee, Mahendranath Gangooli

Esoteric Buddhism. The second and smaller group was led by Mrs. Anna Kingsford, M.D. (Fig. 80) and Mr. Edward Maitland; they



FIG. 80

ANNA BONUS KINGSFORD

and a promise was given that teachings would be sent to them. Mrs. Anna Kingsford's group, however, was of too different a



FIG. 81

WILLIAM CROOKES, F.R.S.

were drawn far more to a revival of esoteric Christian teachings as represented by the Kabala than to Hindu and Buddhist mysticism. The clash between these two tendencies in one Branch became bitter for a while. A certain number of members led by Mr. Sinnett bound themselves by a pledge to constitute "The Inner Group of the London Lodge," and offered implicit obedience to whatever orders might come from the Masters. The Group was accepted by the Masters M. and K.H., and a promise was given that teachings would be sent to them. Mrs. Anna Kingsford's group, however, was of too different a quality to mingle with those who were drawn so profoundly to the eastern conceptions of occultism. Finally, after much strife, a special Branch called the Hermetic Lodge was chartered, to study the Kabalistic Christian teachings under her inspiration. It was however soon found that the Hermetic Lodge felt itself hampered in its aims, so long as it remained within the T.S. Therefore, with the goodwill of Colonel Olcott, a new society was organised called "The Hermetic Society". The Society quietly

carried on its activities for several years, but never became a really effective movement.

In 1883, William Crookes, F.R.S., joined the Society. After Mr. Sinnett's arrival in London, a close friendship sprang up between them. In spite of his many scientific activities, Sir William Crookes kept to the last his interest in occultism, knowing well what knowledge the Adepts had to illuminate science.

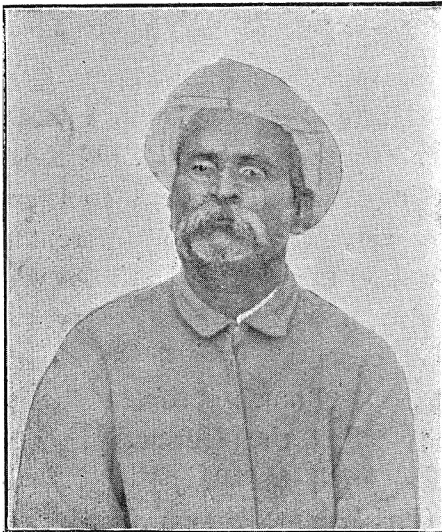


FIG. 82

TUKARAM TATYA

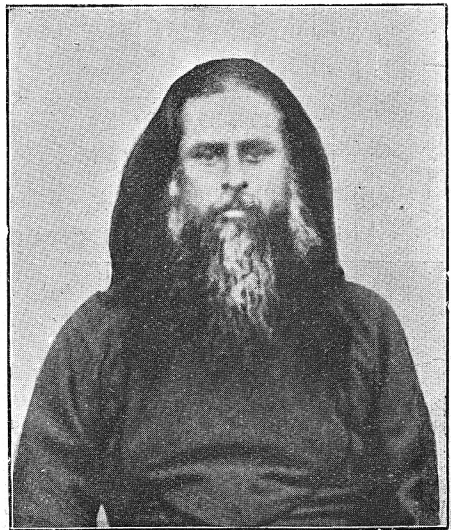


FIG. 83

NOBIN K. BANNERJEE