

## THE NEUTRALITY OF THE T.S.

THE Constitution of the Society has been carefully constructed so as to leave the greatest latitude for all types of activities by Theosophists, without the broad platform of the Society being in any way narrowed thereby. Except the statement as to the fact of Universal Brotherhood, no other Theosophical teaching has so far been officially endorsed by the Society. It is a strange fact that even this doctrine of Universal Brotherhood was not stated at first as one of the beliefs to which the Society is committed. It was only in 1878, after union with the Arya Samaj, that the idea of Brotherhood became the basis of the Society's activities.



FIG. 151

MRS. BESANT IN 1904

19

Though the T.S. has not officially stood for any particular set of philosophical concepts, nor endorsed any one religion, yet as a matter of fact Theosophists have, from the commencement, taken part in many kinds of religious activities. In 1880, both the Founders formally declared themselves Buddhists. To the end of his days, Colonel Olcott expended a great deal of his energy on behalf of Buddhism. Very few ever objected to the President of the Society devoting so much of his time to the development of one religion, because it was recognised that membership in the Society did not

limit an individual's activities, so long as he did not commit the Society as a whole to them.

When Mrs. Besant came to India in 1893 and, with her deep understanding of the spirit of Indian culture, threw a great deal of her energy into the revival of the glory of the ancient days of India, there were indeed a few in England who criticised whether a Theosophical lecturer, endorsed by the Society, had any right to go outside the mere bald proclamation of Theosophical principles. These few were alarmed that Mrs. Besant was committing the Society to Hinduism. Later on, when a certain number of Theosophists threw themselves with enthusiasm into Co-Masonry, a few protests were again made that the Society's neutrality was being infringed. In the Convention address of Colonel Olcott in 1905, he states his judgment on this general problem, whether Lodges and individuals of a non-sectarian Society like the T. S. do commit the Society as a whole, when they take up some particular line of activity which is congenial to them. His statement is as follows:

During the past year some strong protests have been sent me against the mixing up of the Society with a system of Co-Masonry in which Mrs. Besant and some of our best members have taken a great interest. One chief objection has been the giving of our Branch Rooms for meetings of the new Order. For my part, I see no more objection for members to join this Society than any other, always provided that every necessary precaution should be taken to prevent the appearance of the Society as a body being in any way responsible for the basis or government of the Association. In this respect I should say that it would come within the same category as the E. S. T. or any other body composed of individual members. In view of my official position it would not be proper for me to have any personal relation with any of these bodies.

At the same time my wish to meet the legitimate desires and aspirations of my colleagues is proved by what I have done in the making of the present room for the E. S. T. in the new Library Building.

In 1902 E. S. T. members subscribed the cost of building the present rooms over the Eastern section of Adyar Library, and since then these rooms have been reserved for the use of E.S. members.



FIG. 152

OFFICERS OF UNIVERSAL CO-MASONRY, 1902, BRITISH JURISDICTION.

Mrs. M. S. Sharpe, Mrs. F. Faulding, Mrs. U. M. Bright, Miss E. Bright, Colonel W. B. Lauder,  
A. J. Faulding, Mrs. Annie Besant, Max Gysi, Mrs. I. Hooper, Herbert Whyte, Mrs. E. Lauder,  
Miss E. Ward.