

THE PASSING OF COLONEL OLCOTT

AFTER trying to bring peace in the American Section in 1906, Colonel Olcott sailed on September 25 for Italy. A week later, he had an accident on board and fell down a stairway. This accident seriously impaired his health. Though in Italy he



FIG. 154

Colonel Olcott, Mrs. Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater, Adyar Convention, 1905

recovered sufficiently to sail for Colombo, on his arrival in Ceylon on November 24, he became seriously ill of heart trouble. He was conveyed to Adyar, but his health did not

improve. During the first day's Convention meeting on December



FIG. 155

COLONEL OLCOTT IN 1906

27, 1906, he was carried down from his room to the Convention Hall, but his address was read for him by Mrs. Besant.

In January, 1907, several events occurred of an occult nature which added to the disturbance of 1906 regarding C. W. Leadbeater. According to the statement issued by Colonel Olcott, the two Masters, who had since the Society's commencement been closely identified with it, appeared to him, and named Mrs. Besant as Colonel Olcott's successor as President. The Constitution of

the T.S. gave him the right to *nominate* a successor, though the nomination had to be ratified by the vote of the Society.

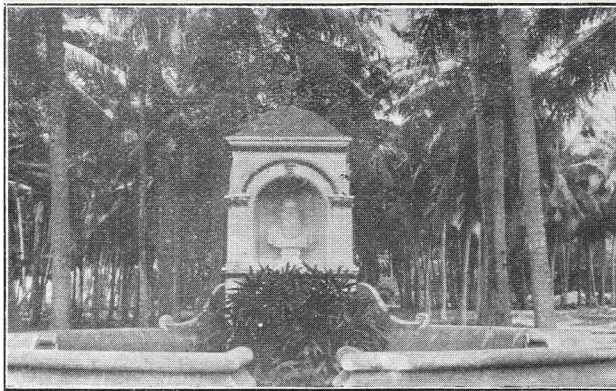


FIG. 156

OLCOTT MEMORIAL

Colonel Olcott duly sent to all Sections an unofficial notification of the visit to him of the two Masters who had for so long inspired the work of the Society, and he *appointed* Mrs. Besant as his successor. The word "appointed" was obviously a slip, as his right was only to *nominate* and not to *appoint*. Colonel Olcott passed away at 7.17 a.m. on February 17.

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Colonel Olcott's body was cremated at Adyar, near the bank of the river. The Olcott Memorial (Fig. 156) was built to mark the site, and a



FIG. 157

STATUES OF THE FOUNDERS, HEADQUARTERS HALL,
ADYAR

Freemason, and belonged to Huguenot Lodge No. 448, and was its Senior Warden in 1861. He was also in 1860 a member of Corinthian Chapter, Royal Arch, No. 159. His diplomas are now in the Masonic Temple, Adyar.

Henry Steele Olcott will, with his comrade H. P. B., stand apart from all successors to his office. Even while living, the Society loved to distinguish him by the title of President-Founder. But for his utter dedication to the cause of the Society, it would not have grown as it did. H. P. B. had an immense knowledge to give, and also a wonderful temperament which attracted workers to the cause of the Masters. But in the swift development of the organisation, a different temperament than hers was required, to weld into one constitutional body men and women of all races and creeds. It was Colonel Olcott's gift to the Movement that he was able to render that signal service. Though born in the youngest of the countries and into the white race, the moment he landed in India every prejudice of race and colour disappeared. So far as his creature comforts were concerned, he retained his western ways. But

in his heart and mentality, he opened out to his oriental brethren with wonderful adaptability. There is not a single person in India who knew him who ever saw the slightest trace of race or colour prejudice in him. His brethren of another race and colour were as himself, and so long as a man was devoted to the cause of Theosophy, Colonel Olcott was his comrade to the last.

Colonel Olcott was not able to give to the Movement

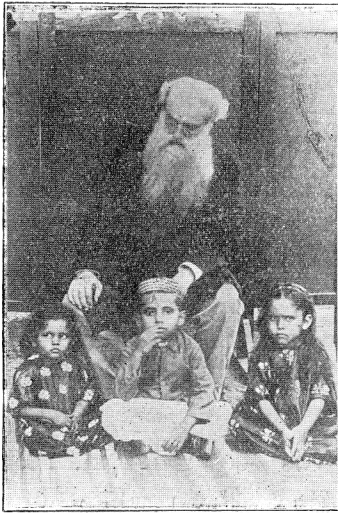


FIG. 158

R. S. OLCOTT

any intellectual depth, nor did he ever profess to do so. He often misunderstood the drift of H. P. B.'s plans, because working under the restrictions of her orders, she was not able to reveal everything even to him. He felt he was often kept in the dark by her, and sometimes there arose in him an attitude of obstruction. This, however, he was willing to put aside the moment he understood. On many an occasion, he was left without advice or guidance, and had to rely only upon his own insight and judgment. It is on such

occasions that his sterling worth came out, for he never failed the Society in giving to it the best he had, however much sometimes, as he would later admit, he might have acted more wisely.

There are few now living, in this year 1925, who remember him. Year after year, the number will be fewer still. But all those who retain memories of him give with united voice their testimony to a wonderfully pure devotion in him, and to a lofty dedication to the welfare of humanity. He thought of Theosophy not in terms of one religion or one country, but in terms of one World linked together in bonds of Tolerance and Brotherhood. No greater testimony can be

given to his character than to show what the Theosophical Society was, when he passed away and left it to his successor.

It is impossible, in such a brief history as this, to put on record the noble services of all the workers in all the countries where the Theosophical Movement has spread. It would be utterly invidious to single out some more than other workers, because the value of their services does not depend upon the length of their membership, nor upon any office they have held in a National Society. In Figs. 159—168 are shown a few of this noble band throughout the world, who were associated with Colonel Olcott as he travelled from country to country organising Lodges of the Society. The record is quite incomplete, because only a few photographs are at Adyar of the old workers, and only those photographs are reproduced in the present work.

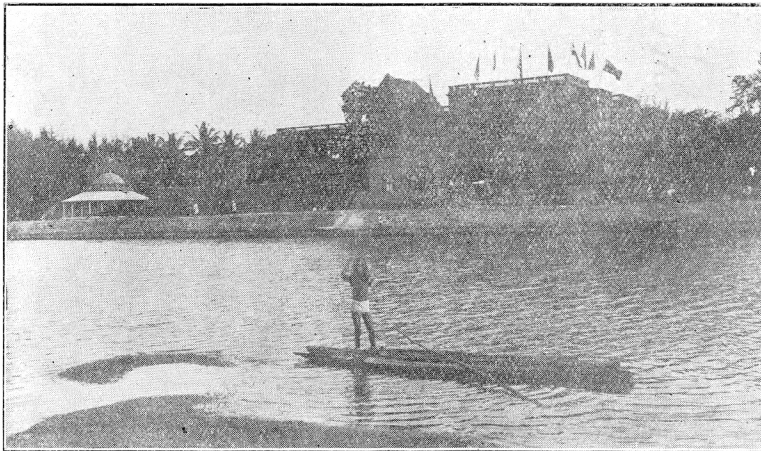


FIG. 159

ADYAR HEADQUARTERS, RIVER FRONTAGE IN 1895

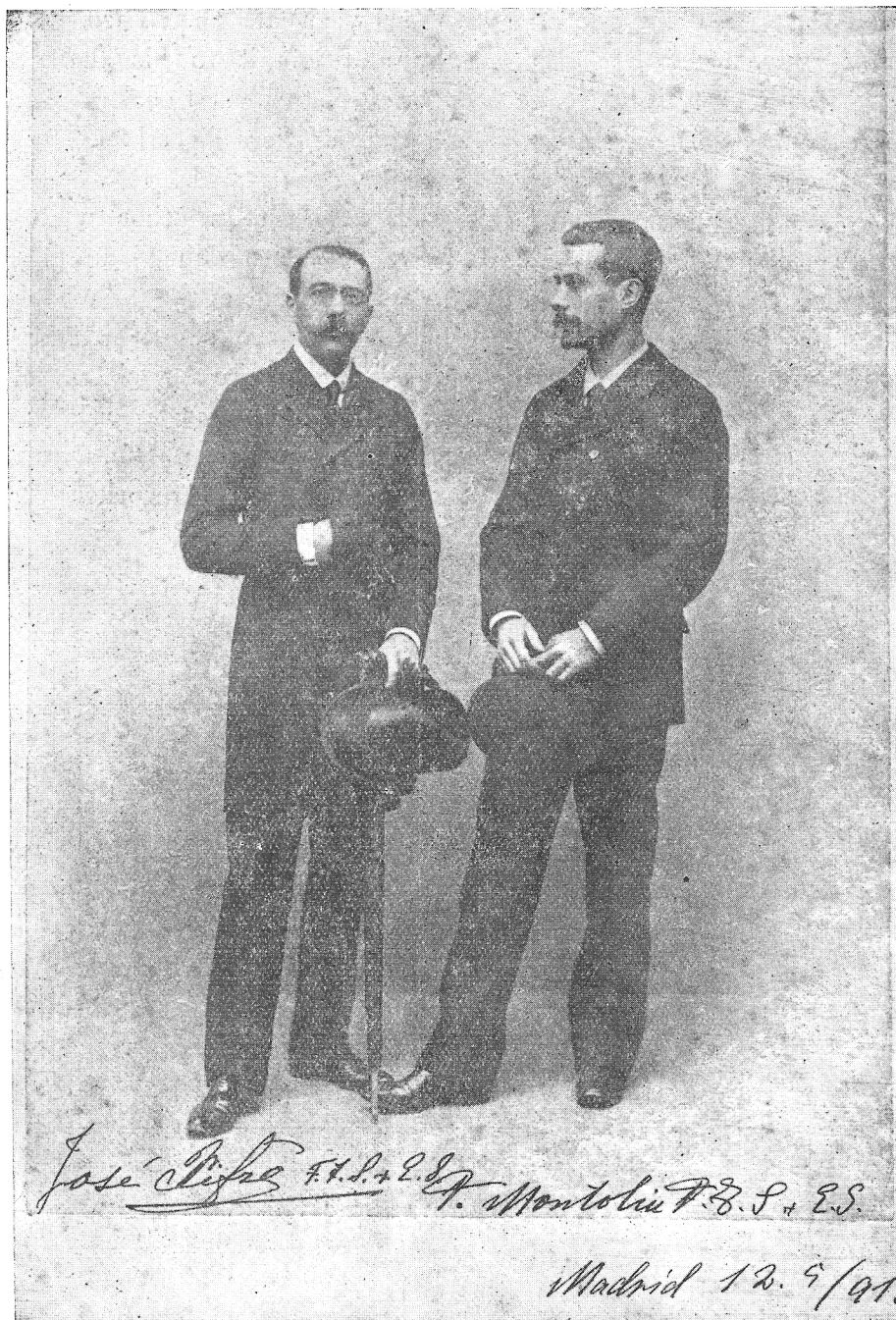


FIG. 160

TWO WORKERS FOR THEOSOPHY IN SPAIN, 1891: JOSÉ XIFRE AND G. MONTOLIÚ



FIG. 161
MAUNG TECKHA PHROO
1885—Burma



FIG. 162
J. W. BRODIE-INNES
Scotland



FIG. 163
LILLIAN EDGER
New Zealand and India



FIG. 164
W. B. FRICKE (Holland)
and H. S. OLCOTT



FIG. 165
COLONEL OLCOTT IN SWEDEN, 1900



FIG. 166

K NARAYANASWAMI AIYAR



FIG. 167

DR. W. E. ENGLISH
Asst. Editor, *Theosophist*



FIG. 168

MEVR. PIET MEULEMAN
Holland



FIG. 169

MEVR. E. WINDUST
Holland