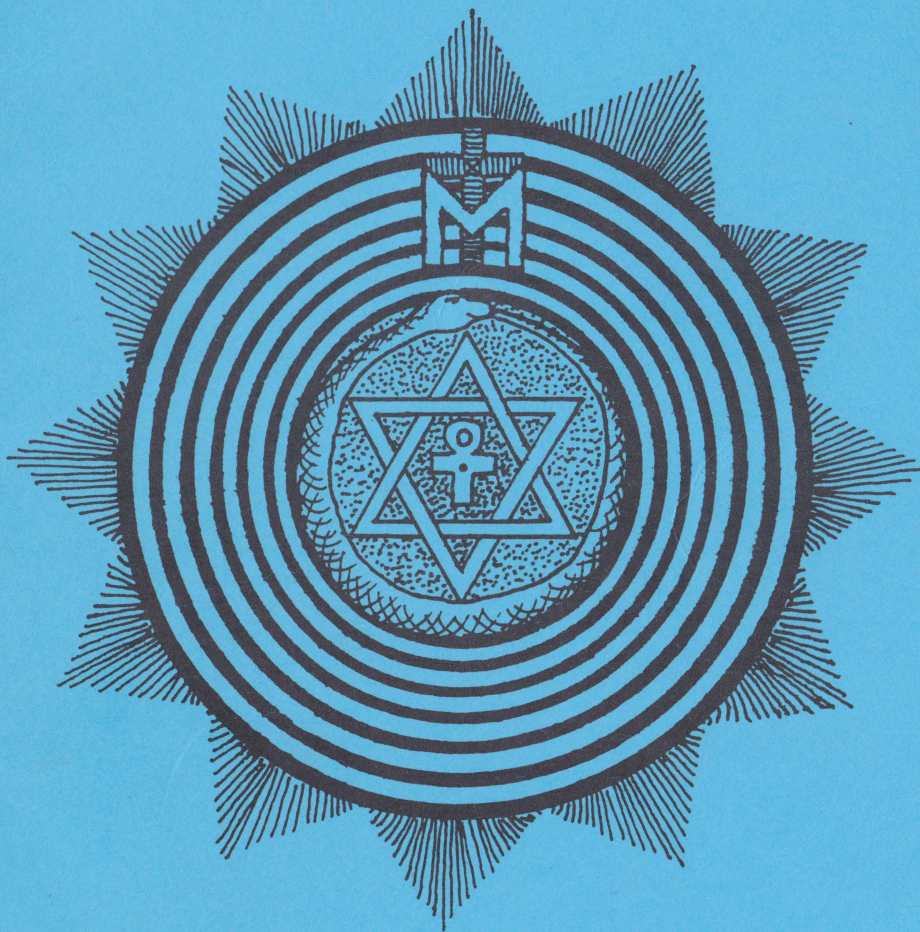


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# THE BEGINNINGS OF THEOSOPHY IN FRANCE

Joscelyn Godwin



Theosophical History Centre



## THE AUTHOR

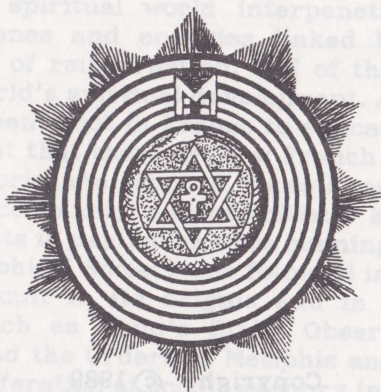
Joscelyn Godwin was born in 1945 and educated at Radley and Magdalene College, Cambridge, before emigrating to the USA in 1966. He holds a Ph.D. in musicology from Cornell University, and teaches at Colgate University in Hamilton, New York. Aside from his many musical publications, his research into Western esotericism has produced three books: *Robert Fludd*, *Athanasius Kircher*, and *Mystery Religions in the Ancient World* (Thames & Hudson), and is now focusing on the reception--and rejection--of Eastern wisdom in modern times.

**Cover illustration:** Seal of Marie, Countess of Caithness and Duchess of Pomar. Drawn after the design stamped on the cover of her *Serious Letters to Serious Friends*, second edition, London, 1888, where it bears the motto *IN MY END IS MY BEGINNING*.



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## THE BEGINNINGS OF THEOSOPHY IN FRANCE

### Introductory

When the Theosophical Society was first introduced to France, it found a climate quite different from that of Britain or America. The French in the nineteenth century (and in the twentieth, for that matter) were far more aware of esoteric matters than the English-speaking public. One evidence of this is the number of publications on the occult sciences that appeared well before the dramatic flowering of interest in the *fin de siècle* period. Another, and a more important one, is the insistence with which the main ideas of occultism and Western esotericism had been presented in every sort of literature. Well-read people with no particular esoteric leanings thus became familiar with the concepts of initiation, of a spiritual world interpenetrating our own, of intermediary planes and energies linked by the principle of correspondence, of reincarnation, and of the presence of sages directing the world's spiritual development. A virtual conspiracy seems to have been afoot in France to educate the public in this way, to the extent that there are few French authors of the first rank in whose work (and often in whose lives) one cannot detect some degree of complicity and of initiatic knowledge.<sup>1</sup>

Four currents in particular were running strongly in France when the Theosophical Society was founded in 1875. The first was Freemasonry, occult in its origins and in many of its fringe developments such as Hund's Strict Observance, Cagliostro's Egyptian Rite, and the Orders of Memphis and of Misraim. It was perhaps the proliferation of occult masonry in France that caused the reaction of 1877, when the Grand Orient de France deleted from its statutes the requirement of belief in the "Great Architect of the Universe", admitted atheists to its ranks and thereby cut itself off from fellowship with the Grand Lodges of Britain and America.

The second current was Magnetism, a term that embraces Mesmerism, Hypnotism, and all manner of experiments with trance states, clairvoyance, and hysteria. This had begun in France with Mesmer himself, and although officially discouraged by a Royal



Commission in 1784, continued to interest some of the most eminent scientists and physicians until World War I. One may recall that Sigmund Freud was formed in this milieu, as a pupil of Charcot.

A third element was Spiritualism, a movement launched in America in 1848 and soon adopted with enthusiasm in France, where the theories and experiences of the Magnetists provided a ready framework for it. Understood as a means of communication with the dead, Spiritualism flourished especially after the able publicist Allan Kardec arrived on the scene in 1860 (date of his *Le Livre des Esprits*).

The fourth principal element, which came to the fore with the publications of Eliphas Lévi (from 1856 onwards) was a new interest in the Hermetic Tradition: in the synthesis of astrology, alchemy, Kabbala and ceremonial magic that had gone underground during the "Age of Reason". This was distinct from the widespread fascination with the occult sciences mentioned above, which was based on anecdote and wonder, when it was not merely part of a pro- or anti-Catholic polemic. Lévi's Hermetism took such interest to a deeper level through intellectual synthesis and personal involvement in the traditional wisdom of Egypt, Israel, and Greece.

Theosophy in France would intertwine with all of these tendencies before rejecting them all, and the process and reasons for this will partly emerge from this study. Briefly put, the Theosophical Society was not originally a secret group, designed to cater to the principle of exclusion and the fostering of self-importance through costumes, rituals, and grades; it had to reject a Magnetism that tended towards the materialistic and thirsted for phenomena; it did not encourage the supposed communication with the dead; and its revelations of Eastern wisdom were unwelcome to a Hermetism so firmly rooted in the Judaeo-Christian tradition.

This monograph treats the early history of French Theosophy as it appears from the contemporary sources. Much of this material has not appeared in English, nor has the whole story been told in French, so far as I know. If some of it should later prove false, that is only to be expected in a field which has seen so much obfuscation of the truth even on the part of its main protagonists. This is merely an offering to those who may one day make better sense of the story.

### **Mme Blavatsky's early visits to France**

Thanks to her Russian aristocratic background, Mme Blavatsky had grown up fully at ease with French culture and the French language, once the universal tongue of diplomacy and of Saint Petersburg society. She first visited France in 1850 or 1851 while traveling from Egypt to London, and perhaps made subsequent



cross-Channel trips. According to one version of the story, she was in Paris, en route to England, when she had to flee from a mesmerist who wanted to detain her. [Fuller, 6]<sup>2</sup> This might well be a euphemistic reference to her reputed activity with a Spiritualistic magnetizer called Victor Michal (1824-89), who is said to have developed her mediumistic powers.<sup>3</sup>

Michal wrote an interesting little book that tells us something of the milieu that Mme Blavatsky would have entered if indeed she put herself into his hands. The book deals with the subtle link between the body and the soul, which Michal calls the "aromal body", a term derived (along with much else in French Spiritualism) from the philosopher Charles Fourier. The aromal body, says Michal, is a vehicle for the soul to act on bodies, analogous to the ether through which God, a pure spirit, works on matter. He imagines the aromal body as made of a kind of magnetic fluid, and finds that this occult agent explains all the strange phenomena such as love and hatred on first sight; men with a commanding influence on others; somnambulism, either natural or magnetic; turning tables, second sight, catalepsy, hysteria, contagious passions, the power of example; presentiments of the future, vision at a distance, and more. [Michal, 7]

Michal is not a literary man, and writes helter-skelter. He also seems to have been a bit of a rogue, as we see from the next extract:

I'm sure that there is even a lot of money to be made from making visible in a glass of water all sorts of interesting things, present, past, and even sometimes future. As far as the future is concerned, I wouldn't dare answer for it--it's too delicate. The fact is, one does see; the experiment succeeds eight times out of ten, and in any case one need not pay if one is not completely satisfied. [9]

He knows all about hashish, and about the kind of experiments in which strange phenomena are caused to occur at a distance from the medium. These are easily explained, says Michal, since "the aromal body can, without the person knowing it, be transported *physically* from one place to another; it can penetrate opaque objects..." [14] When it comes to Spiritualism, Michal is a little sceptical: he says that the status of the entities that speak through turning tables depends on their degree of development from one life to another, and that one must judge them by what they have to say. [19] He alludes in this context to the "metempsychosis of Fourier", which would be elaborated by his friend Allan Kardec into a complete doctrine of reincarnation. Finally Michal offers, for 10,000 francs payable in advance, to teach the rediscovered "theory of Séidism", as used by fakirs. This is the system of the Old Man of the Mountain (i.e. the chief of the Lebanese Druses), with

which, he says, you can make whole populations follow you! [20] But if Michal knew that, why did he have to charge anyone anything? And what did the Academy of Philosophic Sciences think of this proposition?

After this small sampling of Michal's box of tricks, it is no wonder that Mme Blavatsky was not anxious to recall her relationship with him. He was the kind of occult adventurer with whom her career repeatedly brought her in contact--no doubt through the attraction of her own powerful "aromal body". Yet even though he must join the host of unreliable witnesses without whom there could be no Theosophical history at all, it is worth hearing what he later said about Mme Blavatsky to Mme de Morsier. According to Michal, she was a marvelous subject; in the "second state" her character differed absolutely from that of her normal personality. In fact, the two aspects of her personality were diametrically contrasted to one another. Michal only stopped his experiments on account of her frightful attacks of anger when she returned to her normal state. This does sound very much like the dual personality of "Mme Blavatsky" and "HPB", on which so many of her friends remarked and which she herself acknowledged. The author of the article in *Light* which tells of the Michal incident adds that, beside the magnetizer's own telepathic link with Mme Blavatsky, he might have been able to project the double of another subject in order to communicate with her and to make her produce phenomena. [Mani, 532-3]

Mme Blavatsky's experiences with Michal, and Michal's own theories, fit very well into the context of occult research as it was going on in more or less secret circles, before Spiritualism kindled the popular imagination with its messages from the "Other Side". I conclude this episode of Mme Blavatsky's history with Narad Mani's odd anecdote:

Mme Blavatsky was psychologized in a rather peculiar fashion. We have it from a reliable source that when she went to sleep, Michal would sigh "*Tu es la Perle*" ["You are the Pearl"]. When she reawakened, he would say to her "*Tu es le Mauvais*" ["You are the Evil One"]. When she was ready and about to leave, he stretched his hands over her and said to her in a cavernous voice: "*Je te sacre Reine des Sabbats*" ["I consecrate you Queen of the Sabbath"]. [533]

After the Battle of Mentana (1867) it is said that Mme Blavatsky came to Paris for convalescence. It is beyond doubt that she was there again in mid-1873, staying with her cousin at 11 Rue de l'Université. Her chief friends in the city were the Leymaries, a couple prominent in Allan Kardec's branch of Spiritualism. (There is still a spiritualist bookstore of that name on the Rue Saint-Jacques.) This branch called itself the *spirites*, as distinct from the



*spiritualistes*; the crucial difference was that the *spirites* believed in reincarnation as taught through Kardec's mediums, whereas the *spiritualistes*, like most English and American Spiritualists, did not. In view of the anti-reincarnationist stance which Mme Blavatsky would reflect in her writings up to *Isis Unveiled*, it is intriguing that all her known Parisian connections were with the opposite side.

Although she had given every sign of intending to make a lengthy stay in Paris, Mme Blavatsky suddenly received an order to go to New York, and embarked the next day, arriving on 7 July 1873. The events that followed, notably the foundation of the Theosophical Society in 1875, are amply documented elsewhere.

### French Membership in the early Theosophical Society

By the following year (1876), the New York Society included some French members. One would like to know whether it is correctly stated in her obituary that Lady Caithness, Duchess of Pomar,<sup>4</sup> was one of them. However, there is no corroborative evidence in the archives of the French Society for the early membership of this pivotal figure, whom Mme Blavatsky had surely come across in Paris. In 1879 a Branch Society was formed in Paris called the "Société Théosophique des Spirites de France". All the members belonged to the Kardec school. For five years, this society went its way in virtual ignorance of what Mme Blavatsky and others were teaching in *The Theosophist* and elsewhere. Being quite sufficiently occupied with events in Bombay and Adyar, New York and London, she thought it best to leave them in peace.

At last, in response to the demand by members, some more recent material was translated for them by one of their number, D.A. Courmes. It was an unfortunately chosen "Fragment", written not by Mme Blavatsky but by A.O. Hume, supposedly expounding the teaching of the Mahatmas. The French group were appalled when they read this, because they understood from it that the doctrines now coming out of India denied reincarnation, and, worse, asserted that the spiritual ego or Higher Self of the human being is annihilated after death--whereas in Theosophical doctrine it is merely the personal ego that is. This led one member, Tremeschini, to write an ill-informed tirade against Mme Blavatsky's teachings, in which he displayed some bizarre misunderstandings (and spellings) of Oriental names and terms. He also said, revealingly, "If truth is to be found anywhere on earth, it is not in the theories of Hindu occultism." [BCW, VI, 85] The ensuing controversy lasted from March to October 1883.<sup>5</sup> Along with some lively teasing of Tremeschini, Mme Blavatsky's replies set out unambiguously the Seven Principles of Man as she had learned them from her Oriental

sources, and the different roles of these Principles in reincarnation. She adds, lest the French group continue under any illusions, that the entities contacted by Spiritualists do not deserve the name of "spirit" or "soul"—in other words, that they are not the departed relatives, etc., that they were believed to be; that the only Personal God of the Theosophists is the individual's own Seventh Principle; and that Theosophists do not need discarnate spooks to teach them, since they are in contact with living Oriental Masters. These were all points upon which French esotericists would take issue in the years following.

The translator of Hume's fragment, Commandant Courmes, was among Mme Blavatsky's earliest and most constant friends in France. He had joined the society on 8 November 1876, and from her letters one can see that she trusted and liked him. On 17 April 1883 she explained to him privately how the Seven Principles of Man can be grouped into three. On the practical front, she advised him to contact Baron Spedalieri, who had been a disciple of Eliphas Lévi. [Blech, 13-16] Writing again on 1 June 1883, she tells Courmes not to trust Sumangala, the High Priest of Buddhism in Ceylon. "He's a Siamese sectarian [surely she meant Sinhalese?] and a desperate materialist. Only the Amadapura sect and the Buddhism of Tibet can instruct you." [27] This was in stark contrast to the respect always paid to Sumangala and to the Theravada School by Olcott—but unlike Mme Blavatsky, the Colonel never claimed a Tibetan origin for his own Buddhism.

The Adyar records show that several other people who would play a prominent part in this tale had already joined the Theosophical Society, either independently or as members of the Spiritist group. Charles Blech, the chief authority on this subject, adds the following names of early adherents: [Blech, 8]

René Caillé	joined 22 June 1880
Félicien-Charles Barlet [=Albert Faucheux]	"
Henry Gillard	"
Baron Spedalieri	31 Jan 1881
Dr Thurmann	5 June 1881
Félix Krisna Gaboriau	25 Aug 1882

The most eminent members of the "Société Théosophique des Spirites de France" were the astronomer Camille Flammarion and his wife. He was one of the many top-ranking scientists who involved themselves in Spiritualism and psychical research during this period, and also authored a three-volume study of apparitions connected with death. But this branch was anything but in tune with the ideals of the Parent Society of Adyar, where the guidance and teachings of the Mahatmas were the focus of every activity. Mme Blavatsky was soon to offend the greater number of the Spiritualists in France, as she had done elsewhere and as she fully

intended to do.

Theosophy in France began officially with the foundation of the "Société Théosophique d'Orient et d'Occident" on 28 June 1883.<sup>6</sup> The President of this Society was Marie, Countess of Caithness, widow (since 1881) of the 14th Earl of Caithness. She also bore the Spanish papal title of Duchess of Pomar from her first marriage.<sup>7</sup> Lady Caithness was a marvel of accommodation, able to maintain several different mystical departments at once, to write long books and hold splendid soirées, and on top of it all, to keep on the right side of Rome. She had formed a highly exclusive "Cercle de l'Etoile Céleste",<sup>8</sup> under the spiritual guidance of Mary, Queen of Scots. At the end of 1881, Lady Caithness had announced the End of the World and the beginning of a New Cycle in 1882, which would see the "advent of the Feminine or Wisdom Principle to animal humanity". [Caithness 1881] Whatever her activities behind the scenes, her influence was paramount in kindling an interest in Theosophy among the aristocracy of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, and the roster of her "Société Théosophique d'Orient et d'Occident" included more than one princess and the widowed Comtesse de Mnizech, Balzac's stepdaughter, whose husband had been Eliphas Lévi's heir.<sup>9</sup> Among the commoners who also belonged to this secret group<sup>10</sup> were Louis Dramard, a militant socialist, the Alsatian littérateur Edouard Schuré, soon to be famous for his *Les Grands Initiés* (1888), future Nobel laureate Charles Richet, and the Christian socialist Albert Journef.<sup>11</sup> The Vice-President was Dr M. Thurmann and the Secretary Mme de Morsier, both spiritualists. The existence of such a group would be of great assistance to Mme Blavatsky on her own visit to France in 1884, but in her candid correspondence with Courmes, she shows her doubts about it. She counsels him: "Don't give the feminine group its head—Pomar, Kingsford, Morsier, etc. Join the Fortin group." (Dr Fortin headed a third group, also chartered by Adyar, called the "Société Scientifique des Occultistes de France".) Surveying this Spiritualist group, and wondering who might head a real Theosophical Society in Paris, Mme Blavatsky says simply: "All I know are idiots." [Blech, 31]

### The Visit of the Founders

When Mme Blavatsky and Col. Olcott arrived at Marseilles on 12 March 1884, they were greeted by Baron Spedalieri, with Commandant Courmes in his full naval uniform.<sup>12</sup> Courmes should have known from the tone of her letters to him that Mme Blavatsky had little respect for form, but to drive home the point, she immediately took his arm and, to his excruciating embarrassment, made the poor officer accompany her on a shopping



expedition. [Blech, 6]

It was a long time since she had moved in the aristocratic circles to which her birth had accustomed her. Olcott writes touchingly of her delight in speaking Russian with other émigrés while staying with Lady Caithness at the Palais Tiranti in Nice. On March 28 the Founders arrived in Paris, several newspapers noticing the event which they interpreted as a "Buddhist Mission to Europe". Victor Meunier, writing in *Le Rappel*, actually called it a "Buddhist invasion",<sup>13</sup> and one has to admit, with hindsight, that the effects on the French esoteric world were nothing less than that.

Colonel Olcott was soon obliged to cross the Channel to deal with the troubles in London between the Sinnett and Kingsford factions, and Mme Blavatsky made her own spectacular intervention there on April 7. On her return to Paris, she stayed for three months at 46 rue Notre-Dame des Champs, a long, narrow street in the Sixth Arrondissement. Vsevolod Solovyoff gives a list of thirty-one people whom he met during his visits there. Since this was omitted from Walter Leaf's abbreviated translation of Solovyoff's book, I reproduce the list here, summarizing in endnotes the informal comments which Solovyoff makes about a few of them.<sup>14</sup>

1: Colonel Olcott. 2: William Q. Judge. 3: Mohini. 4: Bertram Keightley. 5: Babula. 6: The Duchess of Pomar. 7: Emilie de Morsier. 8: Caroline de Barrault.<sup>15</sup> 9: The Countess d'Adhémar. 10: Dr Charcot. 11: Monsieur Combré.<sup>16</sup> 12: Charles Richet. 13: Dr Thurmann.<sup>17</sup> 14: Jules Baissac. 15: Camille Flammarion. 16: Vicomte Melchior de Vogué. 17: Monsieur Leymarie. 18: Monsieur Evette.<sup>18</sup> 19, 20: Two Americans, Ditson and Holloway. 21, 22: Professor and Mrs Wagner. 23, 24: Robert, a magnetizer, and his subject Edouard. 25: Mme A. 26: Prince U.<sup>19</sup> 27: Major-General K. 28, 29: Mme G. and her son.<sup>20</sup> 30, 31: Two more relatives of Mme Blavatsky.

Despite this interesting list of visitors, Solovyoff had the impression that not much was happening on the Theosophical front. It is true that by May 1884 there were still only 53 French members enrolled, [Blech, 7] but Solovyoff cannot have had any idea of what was going on between the principals of this little drama.

One result was a definitive break with the Spiritualists. On 3 June 1884, Olcott cancelled the charters of their group and of Dr Fortin's, and adopted Lady Caithness' "Société Théosophique d'Orient et d'Occident" as an official Branch of the Madras Theosophical Society. The Founders accepted members who wanted to take a formal oath--and some resigned. After Mme Blavatsky's departure from Paris, Colonel Olcott somehow offended Lady Caithness, who resigned from the Society in September 1884, while continuing to run the "Société Théosophique d'Orient et

d'Occident" on her own. But there was no real hostility on her part, and she would continue to speak well of Mme Blavatsky long after most of her friends had deserted the Theosophical cause. A pair of books on "Universal Theosophy" which she published in 1886 give an idea of the way her doctrines were developing under Mme Blavatsky's influence. The first, on "Christian Theosophy", explains how the Church needs regeneration, though even in its present state it is still indispensable to society to combat egotism and worldliness. Lady Caithness distinguishes the attitude of "Christian Theosophy" from her own "Universal Theosophy" by saying that for the first, Jesus is *the* Christ, whereas for the second, he is *a* Christ. [Caithness 1886, 30] Her Christ is a cosmic and universal principle, her Messiah a mystic and divine Being represented by the Initiates of all nations. [29] Most of the companion volume on Buddhism comes from Sinnett's *Esoteric Buddhism*, with a special emphasis on the common goal of Brahmanism and Buddhism, *moksha* or *nirvana*. Lady Caithness defines these as "total annihilation of the lower ego", [Caithness 1886a, 14] showing that she was not under the widespread impression that *nirvana* means total extinction, with its corollary that Buddhism is a nihilistic philosophy. In fact, Lady Caithness was quite a sound Theosophist when she was not taken up with Mary Stuart<sup>21</sup> or with her theory that the British are the Lost Tribes of Israel.<sup>22</sup> Her son, the Duc de Pomar, contributed a very positive article on Buddhism to the first number of her journal, *L'Aurore*, which sought to make Buddhism seem as close as possible to Christianity.<sup>23</sup> These points bear directly on the controversies that would soon tear the infant society apart.

Lady Caithness' temporary resignation from the French Theosophical Society took away much of the energy from the enterprise,<sup>24</sup> and the scandals of the next two years came close to extinguishing it; I refer to the publicity surrounding the affair of the Coulomb couple in Adyar, Richard Hodgson's report to the Society for Psychical Research, and the statements made to the Paris Theosophists in 1886 by the disillusioned Solovyoff and his ally Mme de Morsier. Some of the early members had found other work to do. Louis Dramard had founded the *Revue Socialiste* (1885) and, being compelled by his poor health to spend much of his time in Algeria, was helping the Arab workers against their oppressors<sup>25</sup>. René Caillié had spent some of his youth in Egypt as a canal engineer. Now he was crippled with rheumatism, living on next to nothing in a boarding-house, but running one idealistic journal after another.<sup>26</sup> Arthur Arnould, otherwise the novelist A. Matthey, had turned his back on political activism (he had been exiled for nine years after the Commune) to the extent of accepting the Order of Isabelle la Catholique in 1886.<sup>27</sup>

## *Le Lotus and the Isis Branch*

It was on 2 July 1886 that Louis Dramard proposed to Mme Blavatsky the foundation of a new organization for the French Theosophists. His plan was that they should rescue René Caillé's struggling journal *L'Anti-Matérialiste* (already veering towards Theosophy in its subtitle, *Etudes sur l'occulte et la philosophie bouddhique*) and make it a properly Theosophical organ. Consequently, on 15 September, Caillé's journal appeared with the new and resounding title of *Revue des Hautes Etudes* ("Review of Advanced Studies"). For a while, Caillé edited it alone, but he was unable to refuse a deluge of materials by a Lyon cabalist, Boulon, and articles against India and Theosophy by the Abbé Roca and Stanislas de Guaita.<sup>28</sup> The trouble, it seems, was that Caillé had not been required to work with an editorial committee, which would have made diplomatic refusals easier. No doubt this formed part of the agenda in November, when Gaboriau visited Mme Blavatsky in Ostend, in company with his childhood friend Edouard J. Coulomb or "Amaravella" (no connection whatever with the Coulombs of Adyar).<sup>29</sup>

Like many of the early Theosophists, Gaboriau came from the intellectual milieu where freethought met with spiritualism and socialism. The only evidence of his pre-Theosophical activity is a commemorative discourse he gave at his native Nantes on Allan Kardec as "free-thinker". Gaboriau was young, he had inherited a little money, and he wanted to use it for the good of Theosophy. He proposed taking over the journal for two years--that was as much as he could afford--after which he hoped the movement might have grown to attract other support. This seemed acceptable to all parties (and there cannot have been more than a handful of them), and so in March 1887 there appeared the first issue of a new and purely Theosophical journal, *Le Lotus*, under Gaboriau's sole editorship.<sup>30</sup> It was subtitled: "*Revue des Hautes Etudes Théosophiques, tendant à favoriser le rapprochement entre l'Orient et l'Occident. Sous l'inspiration de Mme Blavatsky.*" Among the regular contributors were Barlet, who wrote an important article on initiation in the first number, and one who calls himself "Papus, myste"--actually the medical student Gérard Encausse, who will appear as the hero, or the villain, of the latter part of this story.

Lady Caithness' journal greeted *Le Lotus* kindly. Her friend the Abbé Roca said "We will scarcely mention its differences from *L'Aurore*...Catholics have nothing to fear from these researches," and went on to explain that:

the Mahatmas are visibly called to complete our initiation, in giving us the secret tradition of the marvelous sciences that were cultivated in the Golden Age under the names of



Theurgy, Alchemy, Astrology, etc. The extreme limit that our exact sciences have reached, thanks to the latest work of Messieurs Berthelot, Flammarion, Charcot, etc., verges on the hyperphysical regions explored by the priesthoods of Antiquity and still familiar to the Brothers of Tibet and Ceylon. It will be to the glory of the Mahatmas to have given the keys of these transcendental sciences to the indefatigable seekers of the West; but they know well with what sign the Epopt must seal the supreme initiation as soon as his work is achieved.

A great publicist of our day, well known to the *Lotus* and profoundly versed in knowledge of the two traditions, had recently composed a magisterial work where he brought together, as necessary agents for the future, those two great forces of humanity, combining their action according to the rule given, with another intention, by Horace: "Alter alterius posuit rem et conjurat amicè." The book was printed; the edition of 3000 copies was about to come out, when suddenly the author had the whole lot burned. I would never have been consoled if I had not received from the great writer this confidence: "The scales were tipping, and I was not pressing on the right side. I had made the West bow before the East, and our Messiah before the Avatars who were his predecessors in India. There is only one *Master* in the world, and that Master is Jesus Christ."

There we have the language of the perfect initiate.

[*L'Aurore*, May 1887, 328]

This "publicist" and "perfect initiate" whom Roca so reveres was Saint-Yves d'Alveydre, and the book in question was his *Mission de l'Inde*, written and printed in 1884 but withdrawn before publication.<sup>31</sup> Saint-Yves himself had welcomed the Mahatmas' letters as published by Sinnett in 1884, but now, as a result of his own astral expedition to subterranean India, he realized that he was straying too far from the West and, worse, from Christianity. Saint-Yves would definitely be one of those Christian Theosophists mentioned by Lady Caithness for whom Jesus was *the* Christ, and his influence would count for much behind the scenes in the years following.

*Le Lotus* had no such reservations about the teachings of the Theosophical Mahatmas: none other than Papus wrote there that "At last, in our time, from the source of all initiations, from India, has come a movement which progresses further each day." [*Le Lotus*, July/August 1887, 281] Papus' attitude at this point was not far different from that of Lady Caithness, who in the same year wrote that now, at the end of the cycle, Theosophy has reëmerged in the West as in India, thanks to its guardians in the

Himalayas; that this gleam from the long-lost Secret Doctrines has been answered by solitary watchers, "some at Hermetic Sources, and others at the still more spiritual light of the STAR CIRCLE". [Caithness 1887, 339-40] Here is one of the few clues as to the nature and orientation of her "Cercle de l'Etoile".

In June 1887 the "Isis" Branch of the Theosophical Society was founded and held its first monthly meeting in the rooms of the *Revue Socialiste*.<sup>32</sup> Colonel Olcott approved its statutes on 25 October: Louis Dramard was President, Arthur Froment Vice-President, Gaboriau Secretary, and Thurmann and Papus "Delegates of Adyar". Other members included Barlet, Cailié and the playwright Eugène Nus. Now Blavatskian Theosophy had a journal and a branch of its own in Paris, and its future was looking brighter.

But however good Gaboriau's intentions were, he was not a tactful man. In fact, he seems to have been unable to resist the temptation to insult everyone within reach of his editorial pen. He could have found something nicer to say of Lady Caithness than merely "It's good to see the Faubourg Saint-Germain showing democracy and tolerance!" and adding, in clear juxtaposition to her work and the Abbé Roca's, that "The *Lotus* is above all cults and dogmas." [*Le Lotus*, June 1887, 254] He must have greatly offended Saint-Yves d'Alveydre in the same issue by giving a favorable review to Claire Vautier's *Monsieur le Marquis*, a scandalous novel in which Saint-Yves, barely disguised, is cruelly exposed as a fraud, a seducer, and a megalomaniac. In December 1887, the journal printed a translation of Subba Row's article "God, Personal or Impersonal", and the Abbé Roca on "The Esotericism of Christian Dogma". One could scarcely juxtapose two more disparate views; for Roca, "It is Christ who sends us these messages from the Brothers of the Orient", [*Le Lotus*, Dec 1887, 149] while for Subba Row "The Arhats are indeed atheists, if theism means a god governing the universe by his will". [136] Mme Blavatsky was so disgusted by Roca's article, which made the Mahatmas heralds of a reformed Roman Catholicism, that she wrote a scathing and detailed reply, and the ensuing controversy took up many pages of the *Lotus* in early 1888<sup>33</sup>. In March 1888 Gaboriau wrote a lukewarm review of *Le Serpent de Genèse* by Stanislas de Guaita, the aristocratic magician and bibliophile who might have been a useful ally; his objection is that Guaita "cannot resist anthropomorphizing God".<sup>34</sup>

In the same month a crisis arose in the Isis Branch: on 15 March 1888 the President, Louis Dramard, died in Algeria of lung cancer at the early age of 39. Mme Blavatsky wrote of him: "Would that many other Theosophists should resemble Louis Dramard! Then, indeed, Theosophy would become a mighty power for good in the world!"<sup>35</sup> The problem of succession arose. Froment declined the presidency of "Isis", saying that he was too young and

inexperienced. At the end of May 1888 the meetings ground to a halt and a major schism took place.

It was more than mere tactlessness that caused this. Gaboriau had printed in the May *Lotus* an article by Papus in praise of Saint-Yves d'Alveydre, which he had decorated with sarcastic footnotes that showed how little he thought of Papus and of Saint-Yves.<sup>36</sup> Papus knew nothing of this until he saw it in print. Did Gaboriau, as the journal's editor, have the right to do such a thing? One other member of the Committee agreed that he did; the other three disagreed, as well they might.<sup>37</sup> The only thing to be done was to call on Mme Blavatsky.

Her reponse would have been surprising, if one did not know the depth of her antipathy to the Christian supremacy for which Saint-Yves, the Abbé Roca, and now Papus stood. She decided to dissolve "Isis", abrogate its statutes, and give Gaboriau a charter naming him as President with full powers to reorganize the Branch. Naturally, the three dissenting members did not accept this decision. In July 1888 they distributed to members two numbers of a *Bulletin d'Isis* in which they outlined their grievances against Gaboriau, who promptly dismissed them from the Isis Branch. Since he was still running the *Lotus* with his own money, he had the luxury of a more public forum for his point of view, and he exploited it to the full in the months that followed.

### **The Hermès Branch and the *Revue Théosophique***

The expelled members had no recourse but to go over Mme Blavatsky's head to the President of the Society, Colonel Olcott, and ask him to intervene. Olcott made the trip especially from India and arrived in Europe on 26 August 1888. [See ODL IV, 52-66] He had a poor opinion of this "hypersensitive young man named Gaboriau", and gave a formal decision on 17 September in favour of the rebels. "The impossibility of reorganizing the Isis T.S. being evident, a new charter was granted [23 September] to a new Branch, the 'Hermès', and the now lamented M. Arthur Arnould, the well-known author, was elected President; M. Eugène Nus, the historian, and George Caminade d'Angers, Vice-Presidents; Gérard Encausse, Corresponding Secretary; and C. Dubourg and Julien Lejay, Secretaries. A large roll of members was inscribed and the young Branch began its career." [57]<sup>38</sup>

But Gaboriau did not stand alone, yet. He and his friend Amaravella went to London and met the Founders on 2 and 8 October. Mme Blavatsky had accused the Colonel of putting himself entirely in the hands of Papus, and of sacrificing Theosophy "out of fear of that wretched little -----!" [ODL IV, 54] This brought to a head the latent tension between the



Founders. On 9 October 1888 they agreed, with great misgivings on Colonel Olcott's part, to found the Esoteric Section under Mme Blavatsky's exclusive direction. Back in Paris, Olcott now gave in to Mme Blavatsky to the extent of offering two charters: one to Arnould's group and another to Gaboriau, neither of them to be called "Isis". But Gaboriau would not or could not form a Branch without the others (perhaps he lacked the minimum requirement of seven members), and so the Hermès Branch alone was set up with a membership of about thirty.

Mme Blavatsky was not contented with this arrangement: her sights were still set on her young protégé. Since Gaboriau had refused an exoteric charter, she would offer him an esoteric one! The general reorganization of the Theosophical Society that she had in mind during this autumn of 1888 was that Olcott would be in charge of India, William Q. Judge of America, and she herself in charge of Europe. Then, she writes to her friend Camille Lemaître, at the first anti-Theosophical farce on the part of Papus and his "Hermès" colleagues, she could and would annul their charter. But perhaps she was being a little over-dramatic in concluding her letter: "Without you and Gaboriau--Goodbye, Theosophy!"<sup>29</sup>

The lack of a mouthpiece for the Hermès Branch--which was in effect the Isis Branch under a new name and minus Gaboriau--prompted Papus to start his own journal, *L'Initiation*, in October 1888. Gaboriau praised it faintly in his own columns, adding that "Papus' notion seems to be the vulgarizing of occultism, two terms that go ill together." [*Le Lotus*, Oct/Nov 1888, 509] He seems to have kept some phantom of "Isis" in existence until November 10, when, he informs his readers, the Branch ceased to exist. [512] The next month Gaboriau announced that Mme Blavatsky had agreed to take her name off the cover of the *Lotus*, so that no one should be offended, and on December 12 he wrote to Olcott to resign from a Theosophical Society that was, he said, run so autocratically. How sad, he added, that it could not retain such people as Subba Row, Mohini, Carl du Prel, Colonel Pfoundes, Hübbe-Schleiden, Jules Baissac and Edouard Schuré. [*Le Lotus*, Dec 1888, 576]

Gaboriau's attitude was incomprehensible to Mme Blavatsky. On 12 December 1888 she wrote again to her confidante Camille Lemaître: "It's Gaboriau who has changed, not I. I am convinced that for some time he has been taking hashish. If not, then he is moved by some evil influence that he must have picked up in the spiritualist séances that he frequents." She says that even Papus has done less harm to Theosophy than Gaboriau; "What have I done against him? It's true that Colonel Olcott was unjust towards him. But he would sacrifice himself, me, and anyone for what he believes rightly or wrongly to be in the interests of the Society.

The fact that Gaboriau has spent himself, his time, his last franc in the service of the Society doesn't touch Olcott as it would another--because *Olcott is a fanatic. He has sacrificed all.*" [Blech, 175] And she adds: "Poor Coulomb, his childhood friend who loves him and is in despair--*he's* a true Theosophist, ready to sacrifice all for others. And he says that if Gaboriau doesn't change, soon he'll have to break with him, too. Gaboriau bombards him with letters against me and Olcott, and asks him to show them to me! These are hashish dreams..." [178]

Apparently one of Gaboriau's grievances was that Mme Blavatsky was giving Papus and Arthur Arnould replies to mystical questions that she had refused to the Isis members. She explains that Arnould is a member of the Esoteric Section, and as such receives the same instructions as the other members.

But Gaboriau assures Coulomb that Arnould is a Spiritualist, and having lost his wife, only aspires to *communicate with her* by my intermediacy. First of all, I am not a medium, I hate Spiritualism, and finally M. Arnould is not a Spiritualist, for all those who become members of the Esoteric Section have to renounce Spiritualism, and that in real *materialized* ink. [179]

In point of fact, Arthur Arnould, as well as Papus, was at this very moment also receiving the secret manuscript instructions of the "Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor" from Peter Davidson, its leader in America, translated by Barlet and Dramard.<sup>40</sup>

Yet despite her near-despair, Mme Blavatsky was even now ready to welcome the prodigal Gaboriau back to the fold. She goes on: "He must change the title [another periodical called *Le Lotus* had existed for seven years] and give his word not to insult the Colonel in his Bulletins, and wash our dirty linen within the family, and I'll do anything for him: monthly articles, sole rights to publish translations of *The Secret Doctrine.*"

Three days later, Mme Blavatsky wrote to Arnould to say how desperate she was about the French situation. As she tells Mme Lemaitre,<sup>41</sup> "the *Lotus* is lost for us, *Initiation* is just a calendar of tall stories! Papus does not have the sacred fire; he is an inquisitive type, and hasn't got much heart, I fear. I told Arnould that we need an *ultra-Theosophic* organ, with *no* egotistic element. He accepted with joy."

The question of funding the new journal did not seem too daunting, given the presence of three or four eager Americans in the Paris Esoteric Section, and Mme Blavatsky undertook to find half of the cost. The most prominent member was the Comtesse Marguerite d'Adhémar, an American heiress who had married into the French aristocracy--whom also Gaboriau had rebuffed. She had entertained Mme Blavatsky in April 1884 at her villa in Enghien,

just outside Paris, and it was she who had provided the neutral ground, in her drawing-room, for Colonel Olcott's arbitration. But Mme Blavatsky had not quite reckoned with the consequences of accepting such people's help. Comte Gaston d'Adhémar gave not half, but the total cost (4000 francs) of running the journal for one year...and naturally it would be directed by the Comtesse. Mme Blavatsky had to be content that Papus, at least, would be kept out of it. Now she would "work like a printer's devil for the good of Theosophy", and Camille Lemaître would provide the journal with what French Theosophists most needed: translations of basic works such as *The Secret Doctrine* and articles from *Lucifer* and *The Path*.<sup>42</sup>

Gaboriau had one parting shot. In the last number of the *Lotus*, having faithfully run the journal for two years and spent all his money, he wrote his "Farewell to the Readers." [*Le Lotus*, 7 March 1889, 705-713] After he and Amaravella had visited Mme Blavatsky in Ostend, he says, he took up her defence. But they gradually saw their error.<sup>43</sup> There was not one Mme Blavatsky, but three or four personalities; indeed, she was not always conscious of her acts. He drags up the episode from her past with which this story opened, saying that a Bohemian littérateur called Michal pretends to have known her in Paris in her youth, to have magnetized her and launched her on her career. As for *The Secret Doctrine*, Gaboriau confesses himself disappointed; since everyone has collaborated on it, as an intimate member of the household has told him, it's turned out a mixed salad--though not without colour. Of Colonel Olcott he has less to say: Gaboriau lost all his illusions when this "commercial traveler of Buddhism" came and meddled in Paris. Gaboriau apologizes for the insults he has published in the *Lotus* against Yves Guyot, the Minister of Public Works, Charles Richet, Richard Hodgson and the Society for Psychological Research. Finally, he gives his analysis of the three personalities that make up "HPB". Her subconscious (on which he refers us to Elliot Stock<sup>44</sup>) is like the base of a right-angled triangle. The upright is "Blavatsky", her ordinary consciousness, now almost disintegrated in favour of her subconscious. The hypotenuse is her super-conscious, "Hilarion". [*Le Lotus*, March 1889, 768] One has to add that while Gaboriau's analysis was tactless, to say the least, there was nothing original about it; Mme Blavatsky had herself noted in 1878 that Alexander Wilder could see three distinct individualities in her.<sup>45</sup>

We can now forget about Gaboriau, except for one pathetic postscript. In the *Lotus Bleu*, July 1894, his old friend Amaravella asks for help for him, "who after sacrificing all he possessed for Theosophy is now in a state of complete destitution". The *Lotus Bleu* opened the subscription with a donation of 25 francs.<sup>46</sup>

## The Machinations of Papus

We have seen the French Theosophical Society almost ruined by the combination of hostility on the part of Spiritualists, disconcerting news from Adyar, and the tactless nature of a young man who, nevertheless, gave all that he had for Theosophy. Now we return to survey the fortunes of "Hermès", the reconstituted Branch of the Society in France. The first act of the Branch after its charter was delivered on 17 November 1888 was to write to Mme Blavatsky, acknowledging her spiritual direction. This letter, signed by all the committee members, was taken to London by Papus himself.

Since this part of the story largely circles around Papus, it is worth mentioning a couple of salient facts about him. Even his son and biographer, Dr Philippe Encausse, admits that he did his most original work when he was young.<sup>47</sup> He had come to public notice in November 1887, at the age of 22, with the publication by "Isis" of his *Traité Élémentaire des Sciences Occultes*, the most influential book on the subject since Eliphas Lévi's *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie* (1856). Under the aegis of "Isis" he also published a translation of the *Sepher Jetsirah*, a booklet on *L'Occultisme contemporain*, and another on *Les Disciples de la Science Occulte (Fabre d'Olivet et Saint-Yves d'Alveydre)*.<sup>48</sup>

Papus had met Saint-Yves d'Alveydre for the first time in October 1887. At first keeping his distance, he would become more and more devoted to him, eventually heading the "Friends of Saint-Yves" after the master's death in 1910. Papus' devotion to Saint-Yves and, later, to the healer Maître Philippe of Lyon, confirmed his commitment to the Christian and the Western way, so that before Papus' untimely death (he became fatally ill while tending the wounded on the battlefields of 1916), the former magician and Theosophist had become virtually a Christian mystic. The other episodes in his career do not concern us here.<sup>49</sup>

*L'Initiation* began in a spirit of universal welcome. It opened its columns to René Caillé, now become a convert to Saint-Yves' mystical politics of "synarchy"; to the Abbé Roca's Esoteric Christianity; even to the Decadents, with a poem by Edmond Bailly called "La Gloire du Péché", dedicated to the pornographic artist Félicien Rops. Papus pays charming compliments to Lady Caithness and to the Comtesse d'Adhémar on their respective journals. In July 1889, Eugène Nus explains the Theosophical System as taught by A.P. Sinnett, with not a breath of hostility. Barlet contributes a translation from *The Light of Egypt* by T.H. Burgoyne, a work based on the teachings of the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor. At the great Exposition of 1889, Papus goes to see the Buddhist temple and describes it admiringly. In October he recalls fondly the beginnings of the *Lotus*, calling it the first serious French review



of esoteric doctrines, where he met Barlet and Stanislas de Guaita. He regrets Gaboriau's insults to him, but is generous, reminding the readers that *L'Initiation* never printed any personal rejoinders. [*L'Initiation*, Oct 1889, 89] It truly seems that the hatchets are buried--no doubt because now Papus has what he wanted, a journal all of his own.

Two other former members of the Theosophical Society had by now thrown themselves into the cause of Christian esotericism. In March 1889, Albert Jounet (now styling himself "Alber Jhouney") and René Caillé (now "Caillié") started their new journal, *L'Etoile*, whose title rightly or wrongly suggests a connection with Lady Caithness' "Cercle de l'Etoile"--though the star on the cover is five-pointed, not six-pointed like hers, and on it is superimposed the crucified Christ. Their opening manifesto is unequivocal: "It is in tradition, and, for us Westerners, in the Judeo-Christian tradition, that lie hidden all the necessary elements for this evolution, all the Truths that must guard the steps of the new Humanity...These Truths belong to the great Catholic Religion which reigns over all the Earths and all the Suns and in the whole Universe." [*L'Etoile*, March 1889, 3-4] In May 1889, Jhouney warns that the European and American disciples of a society of Hindu Adepts have resuscitated a false pagan magic in place of the true Kabbala. Kabbala believes in a conscious God who willed to create the world and did so through love. Neo-Buddhists or Theosophists, on the contrary, affirm that the principle of things is an unconscious force (and he quotes Mme Blavatsky to support this). In short, "the doctrine of the Mahatmas is an atheistic doctrine". [29-32] This is the theme that fills the pages of *L'Etoile*, interspersed with the tale of the Abbé Roca's valiant struggle against ecclesiastical tyranny. In July 1889, Caillé and Jhouney founded the "Ordre des Frères de l'Etoile" whose members were under no statutes, but simply defenders of the Messianic Doctrine. Again, a resonance with Lady Caithness' secret "Cercle de l'Etoile" is unmistakable. Perhaps the two men found her Messianism too feminine, her leanings too Buddhistic, and intended to restore to Christianity the spiritual energies that she had set in motion.

The same month, March 1889, also saw the first number of the Comtesse d'Adhémar's new *Revue Théosophique*, which the Director was not afraid to characterize precisely as a work of vulgarization. Mme Blavatsky wrote the opening article, "Le Cycle Nouveau", and Papus contributed an explanation of the Theosophical Society's seal. The editorial stance is similar to that of Lady Caithness: the message of the review is that the revelations of Theosophy, identified with Buddhism and with Eastern wisdom in general, should be received with open arms by a Christendom long starved of its aspirations by a repressive

Catholic Church. In June, the Comtesse wonders (obviously with an eye to *L'Etoile*) why Christian esotericists show such repugnance for Eastern truth. [Adhémar, 7-14] It is, she says, because of the continued influence of the Semites, always opposed to Christ and to Gnosis. "Jesus was not a Semite, but an Aryan by inspiration and perhaps by race" [8]; Buddhism is doing a real service to Christianity, and also to Jews, by uprooting the morbid Old Testament fanaticism from Christianity. And she quotes Saint-Yves himself, in his *Mission des Juifs*, on how Buddhism saved us from being overwhelmed by the Asiatic hordes. Now, she concludes, Christianity is torn between the Buddhist and Judaic tendencies; "the one will give you back Gnosticism, the essence of Christianity and the best synthesis of ancient Oriental religions (also adopted by the Neoplatonists); the other, Protestantism, the Roundheads, and Prussian pietism." [14]

Such a declaration could not go unanswered in *L'Etoile*, and so we find René Caillié defending the Jews for having given us the prototype of the "social law" (meaning Saint-Yves' political idea of Synarchy). "Christians who throw the first stones," he says, "are Cains killing Abel."<sup>50</sup> Jhouney, for his part, reproaches the "Neo-Buddhists" for abandoning the Old Testament, "that purified summation of occult wisdom".<sup>51</sup>

Lady Caithness sailed serenely above this unseemly controversy. After all, she was certain that we are all Jews, Britons and French alike being descendants of the Lost Tribes of Israel. Nevertheless, in September 1889 her own journal *L'Aurore* adopted the subtitle "*Organe du Christianisme ésotérique*", maybe as a courtesy to the Abbé Roca.<sup>52</sup> This worthy ecclesiastic, already in trouble with his superior the Bishop of Perpignan, had insisted to the Archbishop of Paris that there was an imperative need for the Church to publish a "Review of Esoteric Christianity", and had of course received no reply. On 2 September Roca wrote to the Pope, whose silence convinced him that the Vatican was finished as a spiritual entity: "Check and mate to Caesar", as he put it.<sup>53</sup>

Roca was by now becoming more and more anti-authoritarian and socialistic, and he was finding Lady Caithness' brand of Christianity too high and mystical, too far removed from the earth. Besides, she felt no need to obtrude her opinions on Rome; she was even in favour of keeping the Catholic Church going, for the good of its own flock! The controversy between them resulted in a years-long exchange of opinions, couched in terms of exquisite courtesy. Here is a summary of one of Lady Caithness' replies to the Abbé:

We do not think that salvation depends on material facts; we do not say that men or souls are saved because Jesus of Nazareth died on the cross; we affirm that all souls, of all

religions, can be saved if they follow the way indicated by the archetypal Christ. We do indeed touch the earth—but our planet must be transformed into heaven, the body into the glorious body, like the Transfiguration and Resurrection of Jesus. [*L'Aurore*, Dec 1891, 485]

From 9–15 September 1889 there took place in Paris the "Congrès Spirite et Spiritualiste International", embracing both wings of the Spiritualist movement under the presidency of Lady Caithness. Papus was one of the organizing secretaries of the Congress, providing simultaneous translation of the Spanish speeches [*L'Aurore*, Oct 1889, 484], and the Abbé Roca was there as representative of *L'Etoile*. The English Spiritualists were upset because they had stipulated that there should be no discussion of reincarnation at the Congress; however, they could not suppress it. "Marie", i.e. the Countess of Caithness in her inspired mode, comments that reincarnation, besides being found in both the Old and New Testaments, is essential for the progress and purification of humanity on this earth, which is "a vast school, ruled by Karma". [554] There is no evidence that any of the main French Theosophists shared Mme Blavatsky's contempt for Spiritualism; rather, since distinguished scientists were showing more and more interest in it, it was a more open forum for the exchange of ideas than any of the groups we have been following. But now we return to the machinations of Papus.

Here is a report from the Comtesse d'Adhémar's *Revue Théosophique* which shows what were seen as the main esoteric groups at the end of 1889, and which records the germ of a new crisis for Theosophy in France:

Beside "Hermès", the French Branch of the Adyar Theosophical Society, and the "Société Théosophique d'Orient et d'Occident" presided over by Mme the Duchess of Pomar, and outside the societies of a more occult character such as the H[ermetic] B[rotherhood] of L[uxor], the Rose-Croix, the Martinists or "Supérieurs Inconnus", the "Loge F..M.. Initiatique", etc., a new group has just been founded. The *Revue Théosophique*, invited for December 18 to 44 Rue Turbigo, was represented on the board by one of our collaborators; we also notice on the board our brother M. Papus, M. Lermina, the magus St. de Guaita, etc.—a vast room full. M. Papus explained the goal of the new group: Science, Art, Society. We wish them much success. A little more generosity on questions of personalities, and the goal will rapidly come closer. [*La Revue Théosophique*, Jan 1890, 239]

We learn from this report that Papus, evidently restricted by

the activities of the Hermès Branch, was feeling the need for wider contacts, and naming the areas in which he was seeking to make his influence felt. By "Science" he means the world of the Polytechnicians and astronomers who are wondering how the materialist world-view can be expanded to accommodate the phenomena they have witnessed in the séance-room. "Art" refers to the Wagnerians and the nascent Aesthetic movement in which Joséphin Péladan would soon be the busiest entrepreneur. "Society" covers both Saint-Yves d'Alveydre's synarchic scheme for political reform and the more general Christian Socialism of the *Etoile* group.

Jules Bois' report on the meeting for *L'Etoile* tells us more. Bois was under the mistaken impression that the new group was actually called the "*Mouvement Théosophique*", which shows that there was some effort to appropriate, or at least let drop, the name of Theosophy. Apparently Papus spoke against modern theories of science, hoping that on their ruins would be erected the doctrines of Louis Lucas and Hoëné Wronski. And the Twentieth Century, he added with an eye to the "feminine group", belongs to Women. [*L'Etoile*, Feb 1890, 202]

By the time of its second meeting on 29 January 1890, Papus' new group had settled on the name of "Groupe Indépendant des Etudes Esotériques". Victor-Émile Michelet (the author, years later, of a valuable study of this period) spoke on "Esotericism in Art", and Papus on the influence of occult societies on the Socialist movement. [*L'Initiation*, Feb 1890, 185] A passage from Eliphas Lévi was read at each session, which created a "reverent atmosphere". [*La Revue Théosophique*, Feb 1890, 287] Papus had only good words for his colleagues at the Hermès Branch; in March, he regretted that the Comtesse d'Adhémar had to step down from directing the *Revue Théosophique*<sup>64</sup>: thanks to her, he says, Theosophy had taken on a truly elevated character. He welcomes the "more modest organ" of Hermès, *Le Lotus Bleu*, which will do good service in publishing mainly translations from the English. [*L'Initiation*, March 1890, 281] Yet at the time of writing, Papus had already discontinued his functions at "Hermès", and had even written to Colonel Olcott on 14 February 1890 to give notice of his resignation. Well might the Comtesse d'Adhémar say, in her farewell editorial, that the Theosophical movement in France "lacked unity". [*La Revue Théosophique*, Feb 1890, 241] What was Papus up to?

### Papus Unveiled

Papus explained his motives later: he had in the interim discovered three "proofs" that Mme Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott were working a massive fraud on the West for their own amusement: 1. In



Colebrooke's *Philosophies of India* he had found all the philosophical part of this "esoteric" teaching; 2. Personal research had revealed that Mme Blavatsky knew no Sanskrit or Hebrew, and had made gross errors in naming the seven principles of man; 3. Augustin Chaboseau's recent *Essai sur la Philosophie Bouddhique*, based on materials in the Musée Guimet, had explained the whole system of Buddhism without any need for Mahatmas, including everything the Theosophists knew, and much that they did not. Having ascertained this, Papus says that he advised interested parties to form an independent group with no fees or dogmas, and this was the origin of the "Groupe Indépendant des Etudes Esotériques". [*Le Voile d'Isis*, 7 Oct 1891]

From now on, Papus was ready to believe every calumny cast at the Founders and at Theosophy. But his was not so much a path of rejection as of self-assertion: if the Theosophists knew nothing of Buddhism, then why should Papus not become an expert on it himself? Consequently, in March 1890 he started giving lectures and interviews to newspapers about Buddhism.<sup>55</sup> He explains that Max Müller, Richard Wagner and all the current German philosophic school are Buddhists; they just do not practise it [!]. Here in France, he continues, we only take its doctrine, that of "*Bouddhisme*" (with one D) which is the ancient esoteric wisdom. We *Bouddhistes* are united in a group, running *L'Initiation* and growing daily. Papus implies that the Theosophical Society propagates the false *Bouddhisme* (with two D's).<sup>56</sup> That Papus was serious—at least for a few months—in setting himself up as the spokesman for Western Buddhism appears from his invitation in *L'Initiation* of May 1890, soliciting membership for the "Bud[d]hist Propagation Society" of Kyoto (the title is given exactly thus, in English). Papus' connection with this society came through Captain C. Pfundes, a former Theosophist and a recognized scholar of Japanese folklore, who felt that Buddhism should be kept separate from a Theosophy that was falling into disrepute.<sup>57</sup>

Papus' flirtation with Buddhism and his awe of the "Brahmanic" revelations of Saint-Yves were surely what provoked his friend Josephin Péladan to say: "I disdain *bouddhisme* as an archaeological theologian; I deny the so-called brahmanic chronology, the Cycle of Ram."<sup>58</sup>

Mme Blavatsky was not in a position to affect these absurd developments. On 24 March 1890 she writes to Camille Lemaitre: "I'm so sick, I can't write anything but transcendent philosophy, which takes no thought, I just open a drawer in my memory and—copy." [Blech 199] In an undated letter, she says "Why join Hermès? Leave them with their little initiatic calendars and their independence." [207] Her best hopes lie with Amaravella/Coulomb, whom she is sorry now that she "scalped" in *Lucifer*, and Arthur

Arnould. [203] She was right: these two, with Commandant Courmes, would prove her best allies in the ensuing years. As to their subsequent history, Coulomb would disappear from the Theosophical literature after 1894, possibly due to some troubles at the new headquarters at 30 Boulevard Saint-Michel; Arnould died in November 1895; while Courmes remained in the Adyar Society and acted as director of *Le Lotus Bleu* until his death on 15 January 1914.<sup>59</sup>

On 21 April 1890, George Caminade replaced Papus as Secretary General of the Hermès Branch. I do not think it worth documenting all the recriminations about Papus' resignation and expulsion from the Branch, which festered on into late 1891.<sup>60</sup> On May 5, Papus left the Branch, taking with him Barlet, Julien Lejay, George Polti and Lucien Mauchel. He forthwith set up another Branch which he called "Sphynx", and asked Col. Olcott for a charter. The Colonel tells us that he refused the request. [ODL IV, 245] However, Papus did not hesitate to announce his presidency of the new Branch in *L'Initiation*,<sup>61</sup> nor to claim after the dissolution of "Hermès" that his Sphynx Branch alone represented the Theosophical Society in France. [*L'Initiation*, Aug 1890, 470] *Le Lotus Bleu* reported in due course that "Sphynx's" charter had been withdrawn, which it would hardly have done if Papus had never held one. [*Le Lotus Bleu*, Oct 1890, 283]

In May 1890, Papus started a newsletter in order to address more transient matters than was possible in the monthly *L'Initiation*, meaning his polemics against a Theosophical Society of which he was quietly planning to head the sole Branch. After a few autographed numbers, the newsletter began on 12 September as the weekly *Le Voile d'Isis*. (Oh, the energy of these nineteenth-century pamphleteers, with their weekly and monthly reviews, mostly written by themselves!) Papus seldom sank as low as this scurrilous series of satires on what he called the "S[ociété] T[rompérie]" and its "Mahatma Hodgson". He gloatingly compared the fall in the Society's membership with the expansion of his own "Groupe Indépendant des Etudes Esotériques". Everything was fuel to his fire: the early death of Subba Row was an occasion to berate Mme Blavatsky for having taught seven human principles, not three or four [*L'Initiation*, Aug 1890, 469]; the new Theosophical journal, *Le Lotus Bleu*, in its humble format, was described as the "Blue Railway Guide". [*Le Voile d'Isis*, 12 Nov 1890, 4] With a lack of critical distance that is truly astounding, Papus finally swallowed whole the story of the *New York Sun* (20 July 1890), to the effect that all of Mme Blavatsky's material was nothing but a plagiarism from the manuscripts of the Baron de Palm, these in turn being mostly based on Eliphas Lévi.<sup>62</sup> Thus the whole Theosophic episode could be dismissed, leaving Papus free to

cultivate an "occultism" which invoked the resounding names of Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin, Fabre d'Olivet, J.M. Ragon, Hoëné Wronski, P.F.G. Lacuria, Eliphas Lévi, Louis Lucas and Saint-Yves d'Alveydre<sup>63</sup>--as if modern France held the monopoly of the world's wisdom.

Papus' true motives reveal themselves in the multiplicity of groups, orders and journals which he directed or was active in during 1889 and 1890:

Hermès Branch of the T.S. (Secretary General)

Sphynx Branch of the T.S. (President)

Martinist Order ("Supérieur Inconnu")

Groupe Indépendant des Etudes Esotériques (President)

Ordre Kabbalistique de la Rose+Croix (Council Member)

Ordre de la Rose+Croix Catholique (Council Member)

Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor

Buddhist Propagation Society of Kyoto (Representative in France)

*L'Initiation* (Editor and Proprietor)

*Le Voile d'Isis* (Editor and Proprietor)

Spiritualist Congress (Organizing Secretary)

Gnostic Church

Kumris Branch of the T.S., Brussels (Lecturer)<sup>64</sup>

The ambition of this gifted 24-year-old, who had to have a finger in every esoteric pie, was something to be reckoned with. As Colonel Olcott put it, Papus "seemed disposed to play the part of an Ahriman in any organization in which he was not supreme director." [ODL IV, 245]

To deal with the increasing difficulties in the Society, Colonel Olcott had sent an order from Adyar on 9 July 1890, delegating Mme Blavatsky to deal with the European Branches. His hope was that they could be united in a "European Section", autonomous as the American Section was under William Q. Judge. In Paris, this resulted in a General Meeting of the Hermès Branch on 8 September 1890, where "Hermès" was dissolved and a new Branch founded with a charter from Mme Blavatsky. This, the sole Branch of the Theosophical Society in Paris, was called "Le Lotus"; Arthur Arnould was its President, as he had been of "Hermès". It now fell to G.R.S. Mead, as Secretary General of the European Section, to deal with Papus, who was clamouring to be formally expelled and making libellous statements about other members that brought him to the brink of litigation.<sup>65</sup>

After these sordid matters, it is refreshing to turn to Lady Caithness' warm and generous-spirited contribution to the debate over Buddhism. Writing as "Marie", she says that the world is moving towards the recognition of the wisdom of the East, thanks to the Theosophical Society and the "indefatigable zeal of the great

Adept H.P.B. and her immensely valuable books". The baptism of which Christ speaks is spiritual and can be received by any religion--or none. The Eastern religions will not supplant Christianity, but if they help to remove some veils, so much the better! We can now have *all* the Bibles, starting with Egypt's. Only modern Christendom has so far refused the esoteric side: it has long lost the key, though no doubt it is sealed up somewhere in the Vatican. We cannot call Christian civilization "enlightened". But truth survives, seen through Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity--we all adore the same God.<sup>66</sup>

Lady Caithness had a remarkable knack of avoiding unpleasantness, but she inhabited too rarefied a sphere, both socially and spiritually, to provide a rallying-point for the French Theosophical Society. Besides, one never knew when her inspiration might strike. She tells us that after Mme Blavatsky's death on 8 May 1891, the poor spirit of HPB came rushing to Lady Caithness to try to prevent her body from being cremated--having discovered, too late, the error she had fallen into in recommending cremation to Theosophists. Once on the other side, Mme Blavatsky told her that she had completely retracted some of her former teachings with regard to the spiritual plane, knowing now that communication is possible with the real spirits of our departed friends. [*L'Aurore*, June 1891, 210-11] This episode would be embroidered later into a request by Mme Blavatsky's spectre that Lady Caithness take over her affairs, necessitating a vigorous *mise-au-point* by Arthur Arnould. [*Le Lotus Bleu*, April 1894, 96] It is here, perhaps, that we come closest to divining Lady Caithness' secret motives.

When Colonel Olcott and G.R.S. Mead came to Paris after the General Convention of the Society, at the end of July 1891, the Colonel enjoyed being entertained by Lady Caithness and the Comtesse d'Adh mar, but records no meetings with untitled members. Fascinated, as ever, by phenomena, his chief interest was now in the experiments in hypnosis being conducted by professors in Paris and Nancy. [ODL IV, 266ff.] Papus had moved on to fresh battles, on other turf, but the Theosophical Society in France had been so deeply wounded by the events of the past four years that it was not in a position to take much advantage of the ensuing calm.

### "La Haine contre l'Orient"

It remained for the few members still faithful to Mme Blavatsky's principles to define what Theosophy was, and what it was not. In September 1891, when *Le Lotus Bleu* changed to a more handsome format than that of the "railway guide" that Papus had mocked,

Amaravella wrote a leading article on this topic, also contributing under his real name of E.J. Coulomb a survey of the Theosophical Movement's history in France. He recalls the brilliant future it seemed to promise when the Isis Branch was flourishing under Dramard and *Le Lotus* under Gaboriau. But it has had to fight all the way, he says, against an apparently hostile movement, "a gallimaufry of neo-cabalism, neo-Christianity, neo-magism, neo-spiritualism...where all that is of any value is taken without acknowledgement from the Theosophical works." [*Le Lotus Bleu*, Sept 1891, 12]

The question of influence is more complicated than that, though it is probably closer to the truth than the contention of the other side, that everything of value in Theosophy had been lifted from Eliphas Lévi, via Baron de Palm. In the final analysis, the quarrel between Mme Blavatsky and the occultists was not about intellectual property or priority: it was about the relative value of Eastern wisdom, and about the personality or impersonality of God. For if Mme Blavatsky was right, then not only Western civilization but Christianity itself had been on a mistaken path ever since Saint Paul: Jesus Christ was not the only-begotten Son, and God was not Our Father. Amaravella, a faithful reflection of his teacher, puts it quite plainly: "We do not communicate with God, for the simple reason that we do not believe in God. We deny the existence of a pure spirit, all-powerful and infinitely good, and the contradiction of a personal infinite. However, we are not atheists." [2] There were few minds in nineteenth-century France able to assent to that paradox.

Theosophy might have kept its allies in the anti-clerical and sceptical circles that were interested in Spiritualism and psychical research, whose attitude is summed up by Louis Dramard's statements: "I've always been a materialist, and still am..." "It isn't physical materialism that is to be fought, but practical positivism that restricts the entire universe to so-called 'real life'."<sup>67</sup> Likewise, the first of the Society's three stated purposes, "the formation of a nucleus of universal brotherhood," was bound to appeal to socialists of esoteric bent, of which France had been full since the days of Fourier, Saint-Simon, Père Enfantin--and the young Eliphas Lévi himself. However, while there were many eminent scientists willing to break out of the philosophical straitjacket of nineteenth-century materialism, there were few who would go so far as to embrace the faith of, and in, the Mahatmas. Theosophy was bound to offend those who thought that Western civilization, with or without God, represented the zenith of evolution, by proclaiming these mysterious Orientals who look on all the West's achievements with benign disdain--and this in the heyday of colonialism, when the awakening of the East was seen as



the "yellow peril." In a way, it was not unfair to describe Theosophy as a "Buddhist Mission to Europe", as the French press did in 1884; nor was Amaravella entirely wrong in diagnosing the reaction as stemming from "*la haine contre l'Orient*", a veritable hatred of the East. [*loc. cit.*]

## Conclusion

Our story has shown how the Theosophical Society in France ran into the same obstacles as arose wherever it went. The first was the universal human trait of egotism, which tends to take luxuriant forms in groups devoted to spiritual development. In the person of Gaboriau we have the model of the well-meaning egotist who believes with iron sincerity that his own way is the right way, and cannot make the accommodations necessary to the functioning of any group, esoteric or exoteric. Once this type of enthusiast is installed in a position of power, quarrels and schisms are bound to follow. Papus' egotism is of a more subtle variety, disguising itself by pretending to speak from a superior wisdom to that of his rivals. One scarcely needs to mention the many parallel instances in the history of the Society.

The second problem that faced the Theosophical Society was the more specific one of the Judaeo-Christian tradition, and its claim to uniqueness and universality. Ever since the events of which I have written, French esotericism has remained divided on this matter. On the one side is the Christian Hermetism of Saint-Yves d'Alveydre, Papus, and Paul Sédir, who, after welcoming what Mme Blavatsky's masters had to offer, saw the dangers it posed to their native faith and retrenched. The Martinists and Rosicrucians, along with a number of traditional Catholics, naturally belong to this stream, though they may not agree with each other any more than Christians of different denominations do. The latest and by far the finest product of this school is the anonymous *Meditations sur les 22 Arcanes Majeures du Tarot*, in which the bases of the schism are set out with unsurpassed clarity and historical insight--though not without the bias endemic to this group.

Among the non-Christian esotericists, some started out in the Theosophical Society and later went their own way; R.A. Schwaller de Lubicz is the best-known example. Others, such as the Traditionalists René Guénon and Frithjof Schuon, never had any respect for the Society and its founders, but equally refused to give Christianity a superior status among the world's traditions--an attitude for which they were perhaps more indebted to the Theosophical example than they wished to believe. After all, how many non-Christian esotericists, or proponents of the *Sophia Perennis*, can one count before this period?<sup>68</sup> In France, as

elsewhere, the influence of the present-day Theosophical Society (or Societies) may be relatively slight, but the currents stirred up by Mme Blavatsky's passage are swirling with undiminished vigour.

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### Notes to the Text

1. Out of the huge literature on this subject, see for example Brian Juden, *Traditions Orphiques et Tendances Mystiques dans le Romantisme Français (1800-1855)* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1971); Michel Lamy, *Jules Verne, Initié et Initiateur* (Paris: Payot, 1984), both with large bibliographies; and recent critical work on Gérard de Nerval, Charles Nodier, Alfred de Vigny, George Sand, Honoré de Balzac, Charles Baudelaire, Victor Hugo, and the host of *fin de siècle* authors and poets. The theme of conspiracy is traced back to Voltaire and brought forward to Proust, Gide and Sartre (!) in Denis Bonhomme's eccentric but stimulating book *The Esoteric Substance of Voltairian Thought* (NY: Philosophical Library, 1974). A cognate theme runs through the works of Fulcanelli and Eugène Canseliet.

2. All such references are to page-numbers of works listed in the Bibliography. A bracketed number alone refers to the work last cited.

3. Victor Michal is not to be confused with Louis Michel (1816-83), the mediumistic prophet of Figanières with whom Papus was so much impressed [*L'Initiation*, July 1897], nor with the Abbé Victor Marchal, writer on spiritualism. Our sources on Michal are an article in *Light*, 28 Aug 1897; its summary with additional material in Mani, 532; and Guénon 1921, 16. I do not know who wrote as "Narad Mani", but it must have been a person, or persons, with the most intimate knowledge of the period. The scurrility of some passages, together with the praise of Saint-Yves d'Alveydre as the true authority on the East, make me suspect Papus himself. René Guénon would draw heavily on Narad Mani (without naming the source) in writing his book on Theosophy.

4. Obituary of Lady Caithness by D.A. Courmes in *Le Lotus Bleu*, 27 Dec 1895, 477.

5. See BCW IV, 546ff., V, 1ff., VI, 75-93ff. for the French and English texts of Mme Blavatsky's contributions.

6. Blech, 35, giving the year erroneously as 1884. He gives the date correctly on p.143.
7. Her first husband had been the Count of Pomar-Medina. After his death, Pope Leo XIII raised their son to the rank of Duke, with the consent of the Spanish court, and in 1879 the Pope bestowed on the Dowager Countess, as a courtesy, the title of Duchess.
8. See René Caillé in *L'Etoile*, March 1890, 25; Lady Caithness in *L'Aurore*, Jan 1891, 2-4.
9. Note here a hint of the formidable web of connections that link the Swedenborgian Balzac with Eliphas Lévi and with the Russian aristocracy, the latter involving links with Saint-Yves d'Alveydre (through his wife) and with Mme Blavatsky's own family. Papus would later take advantage of this network to go and advise the Tsar on spiritual and political matters.
10. See Guénon 1921, 182-91: chapter on "La Duchesse de Pomar".
11. To the superficial view, the presence of these red-hot Socialists might seem to jar with the group mentioned in the previous note; just as the Catholicism of Lady Caithness might seem incompatible with her continued respect for the rabidly anti-Catholic Mme Blavatsky. Narad Mani remarks pertinently on the need to pierce the veil of political duality in order to understand all this. [Mani, 85]
12. ODL, III, 78. One can see exactly how Courmes looked in ODL, IV, photograph opposite p.449.
13. See Gaboriau's summary of the French press's treatment of Theosophy in *Le Lotus*, Oct/Nov 1888, 506.
14. I am grateful to the Library of Congress for lending me this rare Russian text, and to Nathalie Roklina for reading it to me in English.
15. Solovyoff notes that Mme de Barrault was elderly, modest, quiet, sickly in appearance; optimistic and powerful of soul; a well-developed reason in a weak body. She had married a wealthy Gascon nobleman, but was not a Duchess as Mme Zhelikovsky said! Rare for a Frenchwoman, she had some genuine scholarly diplomas, wrote periodical articles on "The Mission of Women", etc., but never took pride in this--blushed like a girl if it was mentioned. She gave all her soul, time and money to good deeds, in association

with Mme de Morsier. She lived strangely above a cul-de-sac in the Rue de Varenne and opened her own door; after she had been pulled into the Theosophical Society, she offered her comfortable house for meetings. But distant and reserved. When the phenomena were demystified, she immediately signed an application to India, rejecting her membership. She died two years ago. Her husband was never in Paris, nor had anything to do with the T.S. Mme Zhelikovsky managed to fasten him as a "duke" to HPB's circle.

16. According to Solvyoff, a gifted "inventor" whose patents all failed; his life a disaster; son of a Gascon druggist, brought to the T.S. through the Barraults. A hypnotizer, he was attracted to the occult but always postponed his full commitment. Solovyoff was fond of him.

17. Swiss, a fanatical mystic, ready to believe anything. First a Martinist, later a Spiritualist. He spoke a lot at meetings, making nonsensical and boring arguments. Later he disappeared and probably died.

18. Old, short, energetic, innocent, shy, seldom visited, sat in the corner on the edge of a chair. If encouraged by the hostess, he'd readily magnetize to heal HPB, doing passes with trembling hands. "Oh, you have such power!" she would say, and he would retire to his corner in bliss. He was "well known", an old friend of Du Potet. Solovyoff asked him about Du Potet, but Evette regretted that he couldn't explain, lacking scholarship and education--"I'm very simple, I can't hide it. *Je suis bon*--so the Lord gives me power to cure by magnetism." During Du Potet's fatal disease, Evette was the only one allowed to magnetize him. He wanted to heal Solovyoff's nerves, explaining that all the pain went to the magnetizer until after the treatment. Consenting sceptically, S. visited E.'s dusty apartment, full of worthless "rarities". At the first session, S. thought E. was taking nonsense about his sensations, but whatever S. did, E. never failed to spot the location of his pain. After a session when S.'s eye was hurting, E.'s eyes teared and turned red. He could detect without being told, by feeling the pain himself.

19. Brought to Solovyoff's house two years before by the poet Mayakoff. Visited HPB once. Solovyoff gives only the initials of the Russian visitors, but this one is surely the mystical Buddhist Prince Ukhtomsky.

20. An acquaintance of HPB's relatives, who came from Odessa with her hunchback son.

21. She says that her own editorials in *L'Aurore*, signed "Marie", are received from those who inhabit the Spirit World surrounding our earth: "We used to doubt them, but now they are our sacred books." (*L'Aurore*, March 1887, 169)

22. This would form the theme of a third volume, on "Semitic Theosophy". [Caithness 1889]

23. Duc de Pomar, "La Philosophie Bouddhiste, réduite à sa plus simple expression" in *L'Aurore*, Jan 1887, 59ff. The author says that he leaves the esoteric side to Lady Caithness.

24. Lady Caithness must have rejoined the Society since 1884, because she resigned again in 1886. See Guénon 1921, 185 (following Mani, 84); Solovyoff, 190.

25. *Nouvelle Biographie Française*, s.v. "Dramard, Louis"; see also BCW IX, 412-13.

26. Caillé edited *L'Anti-Matérialiste* (subtitled "*Etudes psychologiques*" then "*Etudes sur l'occulte et la philosophie bouddhique*"), *Revue des Hautes Etudes*, *L'Etoile* (with Jounet), *L'Ame* (immediately interrupted by his death), and at some point also *L'Eclaireur*. See Barlet's obituary of him in *L'Initiation*, July 1896, 3-5, which encapsulates Barlet's impression of the beginnings of Theosophy in France.

27. See *Nouvelle Biographie Française*, s.v. "Arnould, Arthur"; also his obituary by "Dac" [=D.A. Courmes] in *Le Lotus Bleu*, Dec 1895, 433-4.

28. I have not been able to see *L'Anti-Matérialiste*, so cannot say whether "Boulon" is the notorious Satanist, Abbé Boullan. These details are from Blech, 145.

29. E.J. Coulomb came from Nantes, whence he had to return for military service in 1890, and where he founded on February 9, with Camille Lemaitre, the "*Branche altruiste*" of the Theosophical Society. Later he would translate *The Voice of the Silence*. See the important materials published recently by Daniel Caracostea: "Sejour d'Alexandra David-Neel, Paris 1892" in *Le Lotus Bleu*, Dec 1986, 402-10, with supplementary letter, *Ibid.*, Dec 1988, 252; and "Lettres de H.P.B. à Arthur Arnould", *Ibid.*, March 1988, 60-66.



30. *Le Lotus*, which is sometimes called "*Le Lotus Rouge*" after its red cover, is different from *Le Lotus Bleu*, as will be seen.
31. On the circumstances surrounding Saint-Yves' *Mission de l'Inde*, and for further references, see my "Saint-Yves d'Alveydre and the Agarthian Connection" in *The Hermetic Journal*, 32 and 33 (1986), and "La Genèse de l'Archéomètre" in *L'Initiation*, 1988/2 and 4.
32. See *Le Lotus*, June 1887, 256.
33. See BCW, VIII, 341-91; IX, 179-237, 343-98.
34. A letter from Stanislas de Guaita to an unidentified recipient, now in the Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica, Amsterdam, shows that he was involved in a kind of Christian magic circle, along with Caillé, Jounet and the Abbé Roca, and that he regarded Saint-Yves as the person to turn to in occult emergency.
35. BCW, IX, 342, quoted from *Lucifer*, June 1888.
36. The article by Papus is "Fabre d'Olivet et Saint-Yves D'Alveydre". One example of Gaboriau's footnotes shows the tone: "M. Saint-Yves neglects to prove the existence of this Jesus, though this would be important to prove the false filiation which transmits a 'social law' [Saint-Yves' 'synarchy'] so lacking in universality. What becomes of the Orientals in all of this?" *Le Lotus*, May 1888, 89-90.
37. This is the version of Charles Blech [Blech, 149], but it is not clear, either from his account or from the French journals, exactly who they were. In a denunciatory letter to *Lucifer*, July 1888 [BCW, X, 33], Gaboriau and Froment name Goyard, Encausse and Lejay as signatories of the *Bulletin d'Isis* (see below), but say that two of them are not even members of the Theosophical Society.
38. See also Blech, 150, who got his information from a speech by Arthur Froment on the early history of the Theosophical Society in France, 5 Sept 1910.
39. Letter to Mme Lemaitre, given in Blech, 193-8. Blech dates this 16 Oct 1889, but from the contents it obviously dates from a year earlier.
40. The manuscripts relating to this episode are in the Fonds Papus of the Bibliothèque Municipale de Lyon.

41. Letter of 31 Dec 1888, given in Blech, 183-186.
42. Ibid., and undated letter to Mme Lemaitre, in Blech, 189-191. See Caracostea's article in *Le Lotus Bleu*, March 1988, for some of the unfortunate consequences of Mme Lemaitre's style of "translation".
43. Later in the year Amaravella reproached Gaboriau for including him in this statement, protesting that he, Amaravella, had quite contrary opinions on their "spiritual mother". Gaboriau made a gentlemanly apology. See their letters of 25 and 28 September, in *La Revue Théosophique*, Oct 1889, 95.
44. The London publisher of the defamatory pamphlet by Mme Coulomb (of Adyar), *Some Account of my Intercourse with Madame Blavatsky from 1872 to 1884*, published 1884.
45. See Mme Blavatsky's diary, 12 October 1878, in *BCW I*, 411.
46. *Le Lotus Bleu*, July 1895, 256. Gaboriau must have survived somehow, for we find him in 1910 re-editing a French translation of Cornelius Agrippa's work on magic. He died on 8 August 1911 (communication from Daniel Caracostea).
47. Philippe Encausse, *Papus* (Paris: Belfond, 1979), p.187.
48. The latter has been reprinted in *L'Initiation*, 1986/1 and 1988/4.
49. In English, see especially the many passages on Papus in Webb 1971 and 1981.
50. "Etudes Sociales--Les Judéo-Chrétiens" in *L'Etoile*, July 1889.
51. *L'Etoile*, Aug 1889, 84.
52. Lady Caithness would explain later that Esoteric Christianity meant (to her) "the mission accomplished by feminine personalities belonging to the spiritual sphere". (*L'Aurore*, Oct 1891, 31)
53. Abbé Roca, "Le Vatican Royal: Echec et Mat à César" in *La Revue Théosophique* and *L'Etoile*, Dec 1889.
54. Commandant Courmes, cited in Blech, 209, said that she had to leave France for family reasons.

55. *L'Initiation*, April 1890, 87, mentions an interview with *Le Matin*, 9 March 1890, on "Bouddha chez nous".
56. *Loc. cit.* Mme Blavatsky had often made the point that the secret doctrines of *Buddhism* are only partly to be found in Gautama's philosophy of *Buddhism*. She makes the distinction clear in "Théosophie et Bouddhisme", in *Le Lotus*, Sept 1888, 321-33. (See BCW, X, 110-123)
57. This and further information is contained in a revealing private letter of about 1889 from Pfoundes to Papus, in the Fonds Papus of the Bibliothèque Municipale de Lyon.
58. Péladan's *Démission* of 14 May 1890, printed in *L'Initiation*, June 1890, 282-3.
59. See the articles of Daniel Caracostea cited in note 29.
60. See *Le Voile d'Isis*, *L'Initiation* and *Le Lotus Bleu* of that period.
61. *L'Initiation*, July 1890, 376. The charter was supposed to have been conferred on May 6, and the statutes adopted by the President at Adyar.
62. See especially "L'Affaire de la Société Théosophique. Histoire anecdotique par Papus" in *Le Voile d'Isis*, 11 and 18 Feb 1891.
63. See the list in *Le Voile d'Isis*, 7 Oct 1891.
64. No doubt there were others. Curiously enough, Papus never succeeded in becoming a Freemason.
65. Papus wrote to Olcott on 23 Aug 1890 that he could no longer stay in a society where high offices were held by criminals guilty of moral outrages. He was unable, when challenged, to explain who or what he was talking about. (*Le Lotus Bleu*, Nov 1890, 70-71) There is a clue in the "dreadful calumny" of which G.R.S. Mead writes to the readers of *Le Lotus Bleu*, June 1890, 284: the allegation that Mme Blavatsky's associate Bertram Keightley had to leave America because he was accused of an attempted murder.
66. "Le Bouddhisme à Paris" in *L'Aurore*, July 1890, 198-200. Mme Blavatsky might have concurred, so long as this "God" were admitted to be none other than our own *Atman*, Seventh Principle, or Higher Self. But then this would disqualify Jews and Christians, as believers in a Personal God, and Buddhists, as holders of the

anatta doctrine of no abiding Self.

67. See Blech, 151-165, for a series of letters from Dramard to Dr Autun, 1884-85.

68. I can count only one in France: Fabre d'Olivet.

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