

*De Zirkoff on Blavatsky's
background and early life.*



Outline of her life prior to her public work.

From *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (HELENA PETROVNA BLAVATSKY) I pp. xxv-lii.

a DEFINITIVE EDITION OF THE COLLECTED WRITINGS OF H.P. BLAVATSKY calls for a brief survey of her early life and her family background, in order to acquaint the reader with the many vicissitudes during that early period when, as far as we know at present, Helena Petrovna Blavatsky [H.P.B.] had not yet embarked upon her literary career.

The source material with regard to that period is very fragmentary and uncertain. Her own statements are often contradictory and therefore unreliable, and those of her friends and relatives are often equally confused, with the exception of her sister Vera Petrovna de Zhelihovsky who kept a Diary and was a particularly careful writer.

For some curious reason, many of the uncertainties which could have been at least partially eliminated during the lifetime of various contemporaries, were allowed to remain unchallenged, until too late to do so, owing to the passing of these individuals, or the destruction of documents known to have existed at one time.

All in all, the best that any modern writer can do is to present a fragmentary account with a number of obvious *lacunæ* or a choice of possible alternatives, supported by references to early sources of information, leaving the reader to draw his own conclusions as to the most probable course of events.

This, perhaps, is not a unique situation, especially when the *occult* nature of H.P. Blavatsky's career is taken into account. The lives of genuine Occultists throughout the ages are for the most part but little known, and their various moves are, as a rule, uncertain. No complete biographical sketch of any degree of authenticity can be produced in the case of Count de Saint-Germain or Count de Cagliostro, except for certain brief periods in their careers; nor would a biographer fare any better in the case of Apollonius of Tyana, Śamkarāchārya, Simon Magus, Zoroaster or Pythagoras.

As time passes, and the constant shifting of scenery on the karmic stage takes its usual course, details are forgotten, individuals vanish into the distant background of historical perspective, and witnesses depart from their former scenes of action, until much is left to mere conjecture and speculation, against the backdrop of a rapidly receding era. It is even more so in the case of those strange and mysterious charac-

ters whose lives are woven on a unique pattern, whose mission is devoted to the liberation of men from the thralldom of the senses, and who appear in our midst from time to time as symbols of spiritual freedom, and as living witnesses to the hidden powers of man. For the

. . . initiates are as hard to catch as the sun-sparkle which flecks the dancing wave on a summer-day. One generation of man may know them under one name in a certain country, and the next, or a succeeding one, see them as someone else in a remote land.

They live in each place as long as they are needed and then — pass away “like a breath” leaving no trace behind.



Helena Petrovna Blavatsky was born at Ekaterinoslav, a town on the river Dnieper, in Southern Russia, on the 31st of July, 1831, according to the Julian or so-called “Old Style” [o.s.] Calendar, then current in Russia. According to the Gregorian Calendar the date would have been August 12th. Although no official record has ever been produced of the exact time of her birth, it has been determined with sufficient accuracy by astrological rectification, based on various important events in H.P.B.’s life, to have been 1:42 a.m., local time, which, equated for Greenwich, would be 11:22 p.m., on August 11th, 1831.¹

The year 1831 was a very bad one in Russia; a widespread epidemic of cholera raged and several members of her parents’ household had been victims of the disease. As Helena was born prematurely, and there was fear for the infant’s life, an immediate baptism took place. A child who held a candle in the first row behind the officiating priest, set fire to his robes during the ceremony.²

Helena’s mother was Helena Andreyevna (1814–42), eldest daughter of Andrey Mihailovich de Fadeyev (December 31st, 1789 – August 28th, 1867 o.s.) and Helena Pavlovna, *née* Princess Dolgorukova (October 11th, 1789 – August 12th, 1860 o.s.).

A.M. de Fadeyev, Helena’s maternal grandfather, a Privy Councillor, was at one time Civil Governor of the Province of Saratov and later, for many years (1846–67), Director of the Department of State Lands in the Caucasus, and member of the Council of the Viceroy of the Caucasus, Count Mihail Semyonovich Vorontzov. His *Reminiscences, 1790–1867*³ is an extremely valuable work giving the entire family background of the de Fadeyevs and much information concerning the various sojourns of H.P.B.’s mother and father, and Helena as a child. The work is also of great importance as a description of Russian life and of many historical personalities of the 19th century.

¹ *The Theosophist*, Vol. XV, October 1893, pp. 12-17

² *ibid.*, Vol. XXX, April 1909, p. 85

³ *Vospominaniya, 1790–1867* (Russian text), in two parts bound in one volume. Odessa: South-Russian Society for Printing, 1897. Enlarged and supplemented from essays originally published in the *Russkiy Arhiv* (Russian Archive).

Helena Pavlovna, Helena's maternal grandmother, whom A.M. de Fadeyev had married in 1813, was the daughter of Prince Paul Vassilyevich Dolgorukov (1755–1837) and Henrietta Adolfovna de Bandré-du-Plessis (d. 1812) who was of French descent.¹ She had married against the wishes of her parents, who objected to her marriage with a commoner, even though he was known to be of great probity. Helena Pavlovna was a very unusual individual, a noted botanist, a woman of scholarly attainments and of great culture, rare endowments for a woman of that period in Russia. She was proficient in history, natural science, archæology and numismatics, and had some valuable books and collections on these subjects. For many years she corresponded with a number of foreign and Russian scientists, among them Baron F.H. Alexander von Humboldt (1769–1859); Sir Roderick Impey Murchison (1792–1871), British geologist and one of the Founders of the Royal Geographical Society, who went on an extensive expedition to Russia, Christian Steven (1781–1864), the Swedish botanist who engaged in a comprehensive study of Crimean flora and worked in the silk industry of the Caucasus; Otto Wilhelm Hermann von Abich (1806–86), the well-known geologist and explorer; and G.S. Karelin (1801–72), traveller, geographer, ethnologist and explorer of natural science. Helena Pavlovna spoke five languages fluently and was an excellent artist.

Hommaire-de-Hell, traveller and geologist, who spent some seven years in Russia, speaks of Mme. de Fadeyev's hospitality and scholarly attainments in one of his works.²

Lady Hester Lucy Stanhope (1776–1839), the famous English traveller who had circled the entire world dressed as a man, says in her book on Russia:

In that barbarian land I met an outstanding woman-scientist, who would have been famous in Europe, but who is completely underestimated due to her misfortune of being born on the shores of the Volga river, where there was none to recognize her scientific value.

¹ The family du Plessis belonged to the old French nobility with the title of Marquis, and was divided into two branches: *Mormay-du-Plessis* and *Bandré-du-Plessis*. One of the members of the latter, being a Huguenot, had to leave France and settle in Saxony. Adolph Franzovich de Bandré-du-Plessis, grandfather of H.P.B.'s grandmother, served first in Saxony but later accepted an invitation to go to Russia, and as a Captain, entered military service there in the beginning of Catherine the Great's reign. He commanded an Army Corps in the Crimean War, became Lieutenant-General, and was a favourite of Field Marshal Suvorov. He also saw diplomatic service in Poland and the Crimea, and was a protégé of the Chancellor, Count Nikita Ivanovich Panin. A highly intelligent and cultured man, he retired in 1790 because of ill health, and resided on his estate of Nizki, in the Province of Mogilev, where he died in 1793.

From his marriage to Helena Ivanovna Briseman-von-Nettig, of the Province of Lifland, he had one daughter, Henrietta Adolfovna. Henrietta was a very beautiful woman but somewhat peculiar and flighty. She married Prince Paul V. Dolgorukov in 1787, she was separated from him after a few years, but rejoined him again some three years before his death. Besides their daughter, Helena Pavlovna, they had a second daughter, Anastasiya Pavlovna (d. 1828) who married Alexander Vassilyevich Sushkov.

These details are from A.M. de Fadeyev's *Reminiscences*, 1, 20-22

² Cf. Ignace-Xavier Morand Hommaire-de-Hell (1812–48), *Les steppes de la Mer Caspienne, la Crimée et la Russie méridionale*, etc., Paris, Strassburg, 1843–45, 3 vols. The descriptive part is by his wife Adèle who was a poet and writer in her own right. Chapters XXI and XXII of the French original, and pp. 165–77 of the English translation (*Travels in the Steppes*, etc.; London: Chapman and Hall, 1847), deal with their visit to the Kalmuk prince Tumen; therein they speak of Madame de Fadeyev and describe the Kalmuk setting and festivities in which H.P.B. herself, as a small girl, took part, as she later recounts in *Isis Unveiled*, II p. 600, *fn*.

Helena Pavlovna's extensive herbarium was presented after her death to the University of St. Petersburg.¹

The other children of the de Fadeyevs were: Rostislav Andreyevich (1824–84), Major-General in Artillery, Joint Secretary of State at the Ministry of the Interior, and a noted writer on subjects of military strategy; Nadyezhda Andreyevna (1828–1919), the much beloved aunt of H.P.B., who was only three years her senior, never married and was for some years a member of the Council of The Theosophical Society; Katharine Andreyevna (b. 1819) who married Yuliy F. de Witte and was the mother of the famous statesman, Count Serguey Yulyevich de Witte; and Eudoxia Andreyevna who died in infancy.

Considering the general cultural background, it is not unnatural that Helena Andreyevna, daughter of the Fadeyevs, and mother of H.P.B., should herself have been a very remarkable woman. She was born January 11/23rd, 1814, near the village of Rzhishchevo, in the Province of Kiev, where the estate of the Dolgorukovs was located. Nurtured in an atmosphere of culture and scholarship, she became a noted novelist, her first work, called *The Ideal*, being published when she was 23. Her marriage, in 1830, at the early age of 16, to a man almost twice her age, Col. Peter Alexeyevich von Hahn,² was an unhappy one, owing to incompatibility and the inability on her part to fit into the narrow groove of her husband's military life. Her delicate sensitivity and high ideals made it impossible for her to enjoy the society of people whose ideas and sentiments remained on a very commonplace level. In her novels, she pictured the wretched position of women, their lack of opportunity and education, and voiced the question of their ultimate emancipation. She was the first woman in Russia to do so in literature. Her unhappiness must have contributed to the undermining of her health, and she died from tuberculosis when only 28 years of age.³

Helena's father, Captain of Artillery Peter Alexeyevich von Hahn (Gan) — 1798–1873 — was the son of Lieutenant-General Alexis Gustavovich von Hahn (d. before 1830) and Countess Elizabeth Maksimovna von Pröbsen.⁴ The family was descended from an old Mecklenburg family, the Counts Hahn von Rottenstern-Hahn, one branch of which had emigrated to Russia a century or so before. Alexis G. von Hahn was a famous General in the Army of Field Marshal Suvorov and won a decisive battle in the St. Gothard Alps, at a spot named Devil's Bridge, on the River Reuss. He was named

¹ See "Helena Pavlovna Fadeyeva," by her daughter, Nadezhda A. de Fadeyev, in *Russkaya Starina* (Russian Old Days), Vol. 52, December 1886, pp. 749-51

² Written and pronounced in Russian as *Gan*.

³ Her literary output was large. Her published works include the following: *The Ideal*; *Utballa*, *Jelalu'd-din*; *Theophania Abbiadjio*; *Medallion*; *Lubonka*; *Lozha v Odesskoy opere* (A Box at the Odessa Opera); *Sud svyeta* (The World's Judgement); and *Naprasniy Dar* (A Fruitless Gift). She wrote under the pseudonym of *Zeneida R — va*, and was hailed by the greatest Russian literary critic Byelinsky as a "Russian George Sand." Her *Complete Works* were published in four volumes at St. Petersburg in 1843, a second edition being issued by N.F. Mertz in the same city in 1905.

See the comprehensive biographical sketch by Catherine S. Nekrassova entitled "Yelena Andreyevna Gan," in *Russkaya Starina* (Russian Old Days), Vol. LI, August and September 1886, pp. 335-54, 553-74. A brief account by Lydia P. Bobritsky entitled "Helena Andreevna Hahn," in *The Theosophical Forum*, Vol. XXVI, August 1948, based primarily upon the Preface to the 2nd edition of her *Complete Works*, St. Petersburg, 1905.

⁴ H.P.B.'s father, Peter Alexeyevich, had at least seven brothers and sisters. Among them, Ivan Alexeyevich who was Postmaster-General at St. Petersburg.

Commander of the city of Zürich in Switzerland, during the period of occupation. Not much is known about his wife, H.P.B.'s paternal grandmother, but Vera P. de Zhelihovsky, H.P.B.'s sister, says that it was from her that H.P.B. inherited her "curly hair" and her vivaciousness.¹

When Helena was born — she was the couple's first child — her father was absent in Poland, at the Russo-Polish war which lasted until September 1831.

The first ten years of Helena's life were spent in frequent changes from one place of residence to another, partly due to the fact that her father's battery of Horse-Artillery was being transferred from place to place, and partly because of the precarious health of her mother.²

In the summer of 1832, her father returned from Poland and they went to live in a small community called Romankovo, in the Province of Ekaterinoslav.³ Towards the end of 1833, or the beginning of 1834, they moved to Oposhnya, a small place in the Province of Kiev.⁴ After other frequent changes of location, they returned to Romankovo for a time.⁵

During this period, Helena's brother Alexander (Sasha) was born; however, he soon became ill and died at Romankovo, where he was buried.⁶

In the same year of 1834, Helena's grandfather, Andrey Mihailovich de Fadeyev became a member of the Board of Trustees for the Colonizers, and moved with his wife to Odessa. Helena went with her mother to stay with them.⁷ While there, Helena's sister, Vera, was born on April 17/29th, 1835.⁸

Sometime during 1835, Helena and her parents travelled in the Ukraine and in the Provinces of Tula and Kursk.⁹ In the Spring of 1836, the family went to St. Petersburg, where the father's battery had been recently transferred.¹⁰ At about this time, A.M. de Fadeyev (Helena's grandfather) was appointed Trustee for the nomadic Kal-muk tribes in the Province of Astrakhan.¹¹ After a business trip to St. Petersburg, on which his daughter Nadyezhda accompanied him, he left for Astrakhan in May 1836,

¹ Vera P. de Zhelihovsky, *Kak ya bila malen'koy* (When I was Small), 2nd rev. and enl. edition, St. Petersburg, A.F. Devrient, 1894, p. 243

² A.P. Sinnett, *The Letters of H.P. Blavatsky to A.P. Sinnett*, New York, Frederick A. Stokes, 1924, p. 150

³ C.S. Nekrassova, "Helena Andreyevna Gan," in *Russkaya Starina*, Vol. LI, August and September 1886, p. 344

⁴ V.P. de Zhelihovsky, *Moyo otrochestvo* (My Adolescence), St. Petersburg, A.F. Devrient, 3rd ed., p. 76

⁵ Nekrassova, *op. cit.*, pp. 346-47

⁶ V.P. de Zhelihovsky, "Helena Andreyevna Gan," in *Russkaya Starina*, Vol. LIII, March 1887, p. 734; Nekrassova, *op. cit.*, p. 348

⁷ A.M. de Fadeyev, *Vospominaniya*

⁸ Nekrassova, *op. cit.*, pp. 347-48

⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 349, 353

¹⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 349-50

¹¹ Sinnett, *op. cit.*, p. 150; Nekrassova, *op. cit.*, p. 353

or early Summer. Helena, with her mother and sister Vera, went with them, while her father returned to the Ukraine. They remained in Astrakhan for about a year.¹

In May 1837, the grandparents, accompanied by Helena, her mother and her sister Vera, went to Zheleznovodsk in the Caucasus, for treatment in the hot water springs.²

Later in the same year, Helena, with her mother and sister, resumed their nomadic life, going first to Poltava. It is here that her mother met Miss Antonya Christianovna Kühlwein, who became governess and friend of the family.³

In the Spring of 1838, Helena's mother's condition became more serious, and they moved to Odessa, for mineral water treatments.⁴ In June of 1839, the family secured the additional services of an English governess, Miss Augusta Sophia Jeffers, who came from Yorkshire.⁵

In early December of the same year, Helena's grandparents moved to Saratov on the Volga, where A.M. de Fadeyev had become Governor of the Province. Helena, her mother and her sister, Vera, joined them in that city.⁶

In June 1840, Helena's brother Leonid was born in Saratov (he died October 27/November 9th, 1885, at Stavropol).⁷ In the Spring of 1841, Helena went with her family to join her father in the Ukraine.⁸ In the early Spring of 1842, they moved to Odessa again, together with the two governesses and Dr. Vassiliy Nikolayevich Benzengr, who attended Helena's mother. In May of the same year, the grandparents de Fadeyev came to Odessa to visit them.⁹

On June 24/July 6th, 1842, Helena's mother, Helena Andreyevna von Hahn, died at Odessa, as a result of her protracted illness, and in the Fall of the same year the children went to live with their grandparents in Saratov.¹⁰ They stayed there until the end of 1845, living in the city during the Winter months, and in the neighbouring countryside in Summer.¹¹ It must have been towards the end of this period that H.P.B., then 13, rode a horse which became frightened and bolted — with her foot

¹ Zhelihovsky, *Ruskaya Starina*, March 1887, pp. 751-52; de Fadeyev, *Vospominaniya*; Nekrassova, *op. cit.*, p. 354; H.P.B.'s Letter to P.C. Mitra, April 10th, 1878; *H.P.B. Speaks*, Vol. I, p. 109

² Nekrassova, *op. cit.*, p. 556; Zhelihovsky, *op. cit.*, p. 752

³ *ibid.*, pp. 752-54

⁴ Zhelihovsky, *Russkaya Starina*, March 1887, p. 754

⁵ Sinnett, *op. cit.*, pp. 149-50; *Incidents in the Life of H.P. Blavatsky*, London, George Redway, 1886, p. 24; Zhelihovsky, *op. cit.*, p. 756; Nekrassova, *op. cit.*, pp. 562-63

⁶ de Fadeyev, *op. cit.*; Zhelihovsky, *op. cit.*, pp. 762-63; Nekrassova, *op. cit.*, p. 565

⁷ Nekrassova, *op. cit.*, p. 565; Zhelihovsky, *op. cit.*, p. 766

⁸ *ibid.*, p. 567

⁹ Zhelihovsky, *op. cit.*, p. 766; Nekrassova, *op. cit.*, p. 573. The period of 1837-42 is described in a very entertaining manner by Vera Petrovna de Zhelihovsky, H.P.B.'s sister, in her book for children entitled *Kak ya bila malen'koy* (When I was Small), 2nd rev. and enl. ed., St. Petersburg, A.F. Devrient, 1894; 269pp., fig., plates.

¹⁰ Zhelihovsky, *Moyo otrochestvo*, pp. 4-15, 76; Nekrassova, *op. cit.*, p. 573; Sinnett, *Letters*, etc., pp. 159-60; *Incidents*, etc., pp. 24-25; Zhelihovsky, *Russkaya Starina*, March 1887, p. 766; Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled*, II p. 600

¹¹ *ibid.*, pp. 15-61, 69-160; Zhelihovsky, *Kak ya bila malen'koy*, chapters x and xi

caught in the stirrup. She felt someone's arms around her body supporting her until the horse was stopped.¹

On the authority of Helena's sister Vera,² it would appear that their father, then living far away and quite alone, and knowing that his children would soon be going to live in the Caucasus with their grandparents, came to see them at Saratov during the Summer of 1845, spending a month there. The family had not seen him for three years and had some difficulty recognizing him, as he had aged and changed greatly. The time of this visit is rather well determined by the fact that Vera says she was then in her "eleventh year."³

Sometime before the end of 1845, Helena apparently visited the Ural Mountains and Semipalatinsk with an uncle who had property in Siberia, on the boundary of Mongolia, and made numerous excursions beyond the frontiers.⁴

In January 1846, Helena's grandfather, A.M. de Fadeyev, was appointed by the Viceroy of the Caucasus, Prince Mihail Semyonovich Vorontzov, to the post of Director of the Department of State Lands in Trans-Caucasia.⁵ The last part of the 1845–1846 Winter season, and the Summer of 1846, were spent in and around Saratov.⁶

In the middle of August 1846, the grandparents and one of the aunts, Miss Nadyezhda A. de Fadeyev, moved to Tiflis in Georgia (Caucasus), while Helena, Vera, Leonid, their married aunt, Catherine A. de Witte, with her husband and two children, and the two teachers, Mme. Pecqœur and Monsieur Tutardo, moved to a country place on the other side of the Volga, near the village of Pokrovskoye.⁷

They returned to Saratov in the middle of December for the rest of the Winter of 1846–47.⁸

In the beginning of May 1847, the children, accompanied by Catherine A. de Witte and Antonya Kühlwein started on their journey to Tiflis, to rejoin their grandparents. With no railways or paved roads, such a journey was a very serious venture. They first went down the Volga on the SS. *St. Nicholas*, stopping for two days at Astrakhan. From there they sailed on the SS. *Teheran* along the coast of the Caspian Sea as far as Baku, where they arrived on May 21st o.s., and the very next day started for Tiflis in horse-drawn carriages.⁹ On the 23rd they reached Shemaha and remained

¹ Madame Pissareva's account in *The Theosophist*, Vol. XXXIV, January 1913, p. 503

² Zhelihovsky, *Moyo otrochestvo*, pp. 165-68

³ Writing to Sinnett (*Letters*, etc., 150) who was importuning her for data regarding her early life, H.P.B. said that she was on a visit to London and France with her father in 1844. It is then that she is supposed to have taken music lessons from Moscheles, and to have lived with her father at Bath. There is no confirmation whatever of any such trip at that time. It should be borne in mind that such a trip would have started from Saratov on the Volga where the family then lived. We have just seen that in the Summer of 1845, in Vera's "eleventh year," they had a visit from their father, who spent only one month with them, and had not seen them for three years. Any trip abroad, which in those days took considerable time, does not seem to fit into the picture at all.

⁴ Blavatsky, *Collected Writings*, VI pp. 293-94

⁵ Zhelihovsky, *Moyo otrochestvo*, p. 171

⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 160-73

⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 173 *et seq.*, 198; de Fadeyev, *op. cit.*

⁸ *ibid.*, p. 213

⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 228-46

there for about a month with their grandparents and aunt Nadyezhda, who had come to meet them.¹ In the middle of June the journey to Tiflis was resumed, via Ah-su, the Shemaha pass, and across the river Kura which they forded at Minguichaur, staying a day at Elizabethpol. They reached Tiflis towards the end of June.²

Late in the Summer of the same year the family went to Borzhom, a resort on the estate of Grand Duke Mihail Nikolayevich, and then to the hot baths of Abbas-Tuman, staying at Ahaltzih on their way.³ They returned to Tiflis at the end of August, and occupied the old Sumbatov mansion through the Winter season of 1847–48.⁴

In the beginning of May 1848, Helena went with both of her aunts and her uncle Yuliy F. de Witte, to Pyatigorsk and Kislovodsk for “water cures,” narrowly escaping disaster from an avalanche between Koysaur and Kobi.⁵ At the end of August they left Pyatigorsk for the German Colony of Elizabeththal to join the rest of the family there, going later to Ekatarinenfeld, a water resort.⁶

The Winter season of 1848–49 was spent at Tiflis in the mansion of the old Princes Chavchavadze. During that Winter Helena became betrothed to Nikifor Vassilyevich Blavatsky.⁷

In the Spring or early Summer of 1849, Helena appears to have run away from home, possibly following a certain Prince Golitzin, a student of the occult, regarding whom very little information is available. According to Madame M.G. Yermolova, this escapade had some connection with the prospective marriage plans, but the truth about it is not known.⁸

At the end of June, the whole family, including uncle Rostislav, went to Gerger, in the vicinity of Yerivan, and thence to the settlement of Dzhelal-ogli (Kamenka) for the marriage ceremony.⁹

¹ Zhelihovsky, *Moyo otrochestvo*, , pp. 249-51

² *ibid.*, pp. 251-58

³ *ibid.*, pp. 263-66

⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 269-77

⁵ *ibid.*, p. 277

⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 290-92

⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 293-96

⁸ E.F. Pissareva, *H.P. Blavatsky. A Biographical Sketch* (Russian text), 2nd rev. ed., Geneva, Editorial Offices of *Vestnik*, 1937, pp. 36-38; Madame Pogosky, *The Theosophist*, Vol. XXXIV, July 1913

⁹ Zhelihovsky, *op. cit.*, pp. 296-98; de Fadeyev, *op. cit.*, II, 113

It was there that Helena married N.V. Blavatsky,¹ July 7th, 1849, leaving with her husband the same day for Darachichag (meaning “valley of flowers”), a mountain resort near Yerivan.² The actual date is given by Sinnett,³ and may be “old style.” She tried to escape during this trip.⁴ The months of July and August must have been spent in that resort, where the newly-weds were visited at the end of August by Helena’s aunts and grandparents. After a brief visit, they all went to Yerivan, visiting on their way the ancient monastery of Echmiadzin.⁵

The stories of Helena’s horseback rides around Mount Ararat and the neighbouring countryside probably belong to this period, when she was accompanied by a Kurd tribal chief named Safar Ali Bek Ibrahim Bek Ogli, who was detailed as her personal escort, and who once saved her life.

It is improbable that the real reason or purpose underlying Helena’s early and rather strange marriage will ever definitely be known, and it is certainly unwise to accept too readily certain alleged reasons that have been advanced to explain it. According to Madame Pissareva,⁶ this marriage to a middle-aged and unloved man, with whom she could have nothing in common, can be explained by a keen desire to gain more freedom. According to the account of her aunt, Nadyezhda A. de Fadeyev,⁷ Helena had been defied one day by her governess to find any man who would be her husband, in view of her temper and disposition. The governess, to emphasize her taunt, said that even the old man she had found so ugly and had laughed at so much, calling him a “plumeless raven,” would refuse her as a wife. That was too much for Hel-

¹ Nikifor Vassilyevich Blavatsky was born in 1809, and belonged to the landed gentry of the Province of Poltava in the Ukraine. He attended the Poltava Gymnasium for the Gentry, and became at the end of 1823 a clerk in the Office of the Civil Governor of Poltava. In 1829 he was transferred to Georgia, Caucasus, in the same capacity. In 1830 he served for some months on the Staff of the Commander in Chief, Field Marshal Count Paskevich-Yerivansky, and until 1835 was Assistant Journalist in that Office. He was then temporarily attached to the Office of the Commissary of the Active Army, and in 1839 was transferred to the Office of the Civil Government of Trans-Caucasia. In 1840 he became Inspector of the Police at Shemaha. In 1842–43 he was Head of various *uyezds* in the Caucasus. After a short residence in Persia, he was appointed November 27th, 1849, Vice-Governor of the newly formed Province of Yerivan, and governed it during the absence of the Military Governor. In 1857 he was temporarily appointed to an International Committee to investigate controversial issues concerning the frontiers.

In the Summer of 1860 he was given a two months leave of absence and went to Berlin for treatments. This he repeated the following Summer. He resigned as Vice-Governor November 19th, 1860, and was assigned to the Central Administration Office of the Viceroy. His resignation from all positions was accepted in December 1864. At that time he had a small estate in the Province of Poltava, and stated in a contemporary document that he was still married. (Cf. *Service Record* drawn up in 1864, and which is on file in the Central State Historical Archives of the U.S.S.R.) Throughout his career, N. V. Blavatsky served in civilian capacities, and his civilian rank was no higher than that of Civil Councillor (*statsky sovyetnik*), which was granted to him December 9th, 1856.

All efforts to ascertain the year of N.V. Blavatsky’s death have proved fruitless. It is known, however, from a letter written by Nadyezhda A. de Fadeyev to H.P.B. and dated October 1/13th, 1877, that he was alive then and living in Poltava.

² Zhelihovsky, *op. cit.*, pp. 298-99

³ Although the year of Helena’s marriage has been stated by various writers to have been 1848, and even she herself wrote to Prince Dondukov-Korsakov that it took place “during the Spring of 1848” (*H.P.B. Speaks*, II, 64), nevertheless, a careful month-by-month account of events written by her own sister, Vera Petrovna de Zhelihovsky (*My Adolescence*), establishes, the date as 1849. Vera specifically states that when the family went to Gerger for the Summer — and this was prior to Helena’s marriage — her cousin, Serguey Yulyevich de Witte (the future Prime Minister), had just been born, and this event occurred June 17/29th, 1849.

⁴ *Incidents*, etc., pp. 56-57

⁵ Zhelihovsky, *op. cit.*, p. 303; Col. Henry S. Olcott, *People from the Other World*, Hartford, Conn., American Publ. Co., 1875, p. 320

⁶ *The Theosophist*, Vol. XXXIV, January 1913

⁷ Sinnett, *Incidents*, etc., p. 54

ena, and three days later she made him propose. This version seems to be somewhat corroborated by H.P.B. herself,¹ although it would appear that she was under the impression she could “disengage” herself just as easily as she had become “engaged.”

However, a completely false judgment could result on this subject, unless special attention is given to a letter written by H.P.B. to her friend, Prince Dondukov-Korsakov, in which somewhat obscure but nevertheless half transparent *occult* hints are given in connection with this marriage. The student must be left to his own intuition to unravel the nature of these hints, which H.P.B. very likely did not wish to explain with any degree of detail.² Whatever may have been the real reason and purpose, superficial judgment based primarily upon printed or written statements, or the speculations of others, is bound to lead one astray in this matter.

In October 1849, Helena left her husband and started on horseback for Tiflis to re-join her relatives. The family decided to send her to her father who at the time was apparently in the vicinity of St. Petersburg, having recently remarried.³ He was to meet her at Odessa. Accompanied by two servants, she was sent by land to catch the steamer at Poti on the Black Sea coast of the Caucasus. Helena contrived in some way or other to miss the boat. Instead, she boarded the English vessel *SS. Commodore*, then in the harbour, and through a liberal outlay of money persuaded the skipper to fall in with her plans. Accompanied by her servants, she took passage for Kerch in the Crimea. The steamer was due to proceed from there to Taganrog, on the Sea of Azov, and thence to Constantinople. Arriving at Kerch, Helena sent her servants ashore to procure apartments and prepare for her landing the following morning. In the night, however, she sailed on the *SS. Commodore* for Taganrog and Constantinople.⁴ At this point began a long period of wandering all over the world extremely difficult to trace in any coherent manner.

On arrival at Constantinople, Helena seems to have run into some trouble with the skipper and had to go ashore in a *caïque*⁵ with the connivance of the steward. In the city she met an old family friend, a Countess K — (most likely Kisselev).⁶

It would seem that the rest of the year 1849 and part of 1850 were spent by Helena travelling in Greece, various parts of Eastern Europe, Egypt and Asia Minor, probably in the company of Countess Kisselev, at least part of the time.⁷ It is possible that during this period she met at Cairo the Copt occultist, Paulos Metamon. Helena’s own statement that her life was saved in Greece by an Irishman named Johnny O’Brien may refer to this period also, even though she places this event in 1851.⁸

¹ Sinnett, *Letters, etc.*, p. 157

² *H.P.B. Speaks*, II, 61-65

³ Zhelihovsky, *Moyo otrochestvo*, p. 299. He had married Baroness von Lange (d. 1851).

⁴ Sinnett, *Incidents, etc.*, pp. 57-58

⁵ [Traditional Turkish fishing boat]

⁶ Sinnett, *op. cit.*, pp. 58-59

⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 58-60; Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves*, I, p. 432; *Scrapbook*, Vol. I, p. 48; *The Theosophist*, Vol. V, April 1884, pp. 167-68; Olcott, *People from the Other World*, pp. 328-32; *Isis Unveiled*, Vol. I, pp. 382, 474

⁸ H.P.B. to Georgina Johnston, undated but written from London in 1887.

The period of 1850–51 presents many uncertainties. Helena must have been in Paris sometime during this period; also in London where she met a friend of the family, Princess Bagration-Muhransky;¹ she may have made some short tours on the Continent;² she speaks³ of being alone in London in the early part of 1851, and living in Cecil St. in furnished rooms, then at the Mivart's (now Claridge's) Hotel with the Princess. After the latter had left, she continued to stay there with her *demoiselle de compagnie*; she also speaks of having lived in a large hotel somewhere between the City and the Strand.⁴

H.P.B. told Countess Constance Wachtmeister that she met her Teacher, Master M., in the physical body for the first time in London, and that this took place in Hyde Park,⁵ “in the year of the first Nepal Embassy,” as she told Sinnett.⁶ The embassy of the Nepal Prime Minister, Prince Jung Bahādur Koonwar Rānaje, took place in 1850; his party left Calcutta April 7th, 1850, and sailed from Marseilles to Calcutta December 19th of the same year. The approximate time when H.P.B. met her Master would therefore be in the Summer of 1850. However, in her *Sketchbook*, now in the Adyar Archives, H.P.B. says that she met her Teacher at Ramsgate, on her twentieth birthday, August 12th, 1851. She informed Countess Wachtmeister, however, that “Ramsgate” was a blind.⁷ In connection with both of these dates we run into several difficulties. According to the Countess, H.P.B.'s father was in London at the time, and H.P.B. consulted him about the Master's offer to co-operate “in a work which he was about to undertake.” From H.P.B.'s sister's account of their youthful years, however, one gathers the impression that their father, who became a widower for a second time in 1851, was then in Russia. Writing to Sinnett,⁸ H.P.B. herself says that she was alone in London in 1851, and not with her father. Moreover, the Countess states that, after meeting the Master, H.P.B. soon left London for India.⁹ This, however, could refer to the year 1854 when she met her Teacher in London once again.

It is fairly certain or at least probable that H.P.B. went to Canada sometime in the Fall of 1851, to study the Indians, and stayed at Quebec.¹⁰ From there she went to New Orleans, to study the practice of Voodoo; she was warned in a vision of the dangers connected with Voodooism. She then proceeded through Texas to Mexico; she speaks of a Père Jacques, an old Canadian she met in Texas, who saw her through some perils to which she was then exposed. During this period she seems to have

¹ Sinnett, *Incidents*, etc., p. 61

² *ibid.*, p. 62

³ Sinnett, *Letters*, etc., p. 150

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 150; *H.P.B. Speaks*, Vol. II, Adyar, The Theosophical Publishing House, 1951, pp. 66-67

⁵ Countess Constance Wachtmeister, *Reminiscences of H.P. Blavatsky and “The Secret Doctrine,”* London, Theosoph. Publ. Society, 1893, pp. 56-58

⁶ Sinnett, *op. cit.*, p. 150

⁷ Wachtmeister, *op. cit.*, p. 58, *fn.*

⁸ Sinnett, *Letters*, etc., p. 150

⁹ Wachtmeister, *op. cit.*, p. 57

¹⁰ Sinnett, *Incidents*, etc., p. 62

received a legacy of some 80,000 rubles from “one of her godmothers.”¹ She bought some land in America, but did not remember where and lost all papers connected therewith.²

Her travels continued during the year 1852. On her way to South America, H.P.B. met a Hindu chela at Copán, Honduras. She must have travelled extensively through both Central and South America, visiting ancient ruins. She speaks of having “business relations” with an old native priest of Peru, and to have travelled with him or another Peruvian in the interior of the land.³

Sometime during 1852 she went to the West Indies; she had written to “a certain Englishman” whom she had met in Germany two years before, and whom she knew to be on the same quest as hers, to join her in the West Indies, in order to go to the Orient together. Both the Englishman and the Hindu chela apparently joined her there, and all three went via the Cape to Ceylon, and thence in a sailing boat to Bombay.⁴

After their arrival at Bombay, the party dispersed. H.P.B. was bent on an attempt to get into Tibet through Nepal alone. This first attempt failed through what she believed to be the opposition of the British Resident.⁵ When she tried to cross the Rangit river, she was reported by a guard to Captain C. Murray, who went after her and brought her back. She stayed with Captain and Mrs. Murray for about a month, then left and was heard from as far as Dinājpur.⁶ She says that she stayed in India “nearly two years, receiving money each month from an unknown source.”⁷

H.P.B. appears to have gone to Southern India, and thence to Java and Singapore, apparently on her way back to England.⁸ From a certain statement of hers, it would appear that she took passage on the SS. *Gwalior* “which was wrecked near the Cape,” and was saved with about twenty others.⁹

Her sister Vera speaks of her musical talents and of the fact that she was a member of the Philharmonic Society in London. This could have occurred at this period, sometime in 1853.¹⁰

On September 14/26th, 1853, Turkey declared war on Russia, and the English and French Fleets entered the Black Sea in late December. According to the testimony of

¹ According to the tradition of the Greek Orthodox Church, it was permitted to have more than one “godmother” or “godfather,” but ordinarily there was only one of each.

² Sinnett, *Incidents*, etc., pp. 62-65; Letter from H.P.B. to Sydney and Herbert Coryn, November 2nd, 1889

³ *ibid.*, p. 66; Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled*, I pp. 546-48, 595-99

⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 65-66; *Letters*, etc., p. 157

⁵ [i.e., Resident Minister, title of a British Government Official who is required to take up permanent residence in another country.]

⁶ Sinnett, *Incidents*, etc., p. 66; Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves*, I, 265; *The Theosophist*, Vol. XIV, April 1893, pp. 429-31: “Traces of H.P.B.,” by Col. H.S. Olcott.

⁷ *H.P.B. Speaks*, Vol. II, p. 20

⁸ Sinnett, *Incidents*, etc., p. 66

⁹ *H.P.B. Speaks*, Vol. II, p. 20. This steamship, however, could not be identified in the records of Lloyds of London.

¹⁰ *Rebus*, St. Petersburg, No. 40, 1883, p. 357

her sister, H.P.B. was detained in England by a contract, and this was during the Crimean War.¹ Nevertheless, it was not until April 11/23rd, 1854, that Emperor Nicholas I issued a public Manifesto regarding a declaration of war against England and France. The Allies decided upon an expedition to the Crimea on August 14th, 1854.

It is almost certain that H.P.B. was in London in the Summer of 1854, because she says that she met her Master “in the house of a stranger in England, where he had come in the company of a dethroned native prince.” This was undoubtedly Prince Dhuleep Singh, Mahārāja of Lahore.² The latter, a son of the famed Ranjīt Singh, sailed from India April 19th, 1854, accompanied by his guardian, Sir John Login. They arrived at Southampton on the SS. *Colombo*, Sunday, June 18th, 1854, and the Prince was presented to the Queen July 1st. If H.P.B.’s statement is not a blind, we have here a fairly accurate date in an otherwise very uncertain period in her travels.

Somewhat later in the Summer or Fall of 1854, H.P.B. set out for America again, landing in New York. She went to Chicago and across the Rockies to San Francisco, with a caravan of emigrants, probably in a covered wagon.³ It is not clear whether she went to South America on this trip, but it is likely that she remained on the American Continent until the Fall of 1855. She then left for India via Japan and the Straits, landing at Calcutta.⁴

H.P.B. engaged in widespread travel throughout India. At Lahore she met a German ex-Lutheran minister by the name of Kühlwein, known to her father (possibly a relative of their governess), and his two companions, the Brothers N * * *, all of whom had formed the plan to penetrate Tibet under various disguises. They went together through Kashmīr to Leh, the chief city of Ladak, at least part of the time accompanied by a Tartar Shaman who was on his way home to Siberia. According to Sinnett, H.P.B. crossed into Tibetan territory, with the help of this Shaman, while the others were prevented from carrying out their plan.⁵ Finding herself in a critical situation, she was rescued by some Lamaist horsemen apprized of the situation by the Shaman’s thought.⁶

¹ *Rebus*, St. Petersburg, No. 40, 1883, p. 357.

² “From the Caves and Jungles of Hindostan,” Chapter XXI, first published in *Moskovskiya Vedomosty* (Moscow Chronicle), April 29th, 1880; *Sir John Login and Dhuleep Singh*, by Lady Login; *Illustrated London News*, Saturday, June 24th, 1854: “A Distinguished Foreigner”; also issue of July 8th, 1854; *The Morning Chronicle*, Monday, June 19th, 1854.

³ Sinnett, *Incidents*, etc., pp. 66-67. It was probably during this trip West that H.P.B. stayed overnight with Mrs. Emmeline Blanche (Woodward) Wells, Editor and Publisher of *The Woman’s Exponent*, in Salt Lake City, Utah. Mrs. E.B. Wells (1828–1921) belonged to a Mormon family. We have from her pen a volume of poems, *Musings and Memories* (Salt Lake City: C.Q. Cannon & Sons Co., 1896; 2nd ed., publ. by “The Desert News,” 1915). Mrs. Daisy Woods Allen, who was Mrs. Wells’ granddaughter, was told about H.P.B.’s visit by her grandmother who also mentioned the fact that H.P.B. was at the time wearing heavy men’s shoes as she intended to travel over rugged country. On the testimony of “old-timers,” H.P.B. resided also for a while in Santa Fe, New Mexico, though this may have been during a previous trip.

⁴ Sinnett, *Incidents*, etc., p. 67

⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 67-69

⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 67-72

These adventures have been connected by A.P. Sinnett and other writers with those described in *Isis Unveiled*.¹ The latter narrative concerns the exhibition of psychological powers by a Shaman. This description mentions the neighbourhood of Islamābād (Anantnag) which is considerably West of Leh, in the Kashmīr Valley, or *away* from Tibetan territory, and curiously enough, the sandy deserts of Mongolia, which geographically are thousands of miles away. Moreover Ladak is spoken of as Central Tibet. All this gives rise to much confusion so that no definite picture can be outlined.

Moreover, we are confronted by various additional difficulties, some of them geographical. Ladak (or Ladakh) and Baltistan are provinces of Kashmīr, and the name of Ladak belongs primarily to the broad valley of the upper Indus, but includes also several surrounding districts in political connection with it. It is bounded North by the Kuenlun range and the slopes of the Karakorum, North-West and West by Baltistan which has been known as Little Tibet, South-West by Kashmīr proper, South by what used to be British Himālayan territory, and East by the Tibetan provinces of Ngari and Rudog. The entire region is very high, the valleys of Rupshu and the South-East being 15,000 feet, and the Indus near Leh some 11,000 feet, while the average height of the surrounding ranges is some 20,000 feet.

Leh (11,550 feet) is the capital of Ladak, and the road to Leh from Srinagar lies up the lovely Sind valley to the sources of the river at the Pass of Zoji La (11,580 ft.) in the Zaskar range. From Leh there are several routes into Tibet, the best known being that from the Indus valley to the Tibetan plateau, by the Chang La, to Lake and Pangong and Rudog (14,900 ft.).

The extremes of altitudes with their corresponding harsh climatic conditions as well as the barrenness of the land must be taken into account.

H.P.B. seems to have travelled also in Burma, Siam and Assam,² and must have contracted a “fearful fever” near Rangoon, “after a flood of the Irrawaddy River,” but was cured by a native who used an herb.³

On May 10th, 1857, the Sepoy Mutiny erupted in a revolt at Meerut, but H.P.B. seems to have left India by then; she went in a Dutch vessel from Madras to Java, going there on orders from her Teacher, “for a certain business,” as she said.⁴

H.P.B. must have returned to Europe sometime in 1858, possibly in the early part of the year, and travelled through France and Germany, before returning to Russia.⁵ In February 1858, her sister’s first husband, Nikolay Nikolayevich de Yahontov, died, and the widow went with her two infant sons to live temporarily with her father-in-law, General N.A. de Yahontov, prior to moving to her own estate. While her sister gives an account of H.P.B.’s unexpected arrival at Pskov on Christmas Night, 1858, it

¹ Vol. II, pp. 598-602, 626-28

² *The Theosophist*, Vol. XXXI, July 1910

³ Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled*, II p. 621

⁴ Sinnett, *Letters*, etc., p. 151; Sinnett, *Incidents*, etc., p. 72

⁵ Sinnett, *Incidents*, etc., pp. 72, 74

is known from another source¹ that she must have returned to Russian soil somewhat earlier, perhaps in the late Fall of 1858.

This concludes a major cycle in H.P.B.'s career.



¹ A letter written by Nikifor V. Blavatsky to Nadyezhda A. de Fadeyev, and dated November 13th (o.s.), 1858. The original is in the Adyar Archives; text was published in *The Theosophist*, Vol. 80, August 1959.

AFTER A FAIRLY SHORT STAY AT PSKOV, during which H.P.B.'s psychological powers became widely known throughout the neighbourhood, and produced quite a stir among the people, she went with her father, and her half-sister Liza,¹ to St. Petersburg, staying at the Hôtel de Paris. This must have been in the Spring of 1859. From there they all went to Rugodevo, in the Novorzhevsky Uyezd, in the Province of Pskov, where the estate which her sister had recently inherited from her late husband was located.²

While at Rugodevo, H.P.B. became very ill, due to the re-opening of a wound near her heart, received some years before. This illness seems to have been periodic, lasting from three to four days, during which she was often in a deathlike trance. After these attacks she experienced strange and sudden cures.³

In the Spring or Summer of 1860, H.P.B. left with her sister Vera for Tiflis, to visit their grandparents; they travelled for about three weeks in a coach drawn by post horses.⁴ On their way, they stopped at Zadonsk, Province of Voronezh, in the territory of the Don Cossacks, a place of pilgrimage where the relics of St. Tihon are preserved. They had an interview with Isidore, then Metropolitan of Kiev, whom H.P.B. had known some years earlier when he was Exarch⁵ of Georgia. Becoming aware of her psychological powers the nature of which he seemed to understand, Isidore told her prophetically that she would do a great deal of good to her fellowmen if she used these powers with discrimination.⁶

It is known that, while at Tiflis, in the Caucasus, H.P.B. lived for about a year in the house of her grandparents, the old Chavchavadze mansion. On August 12/24th, 1860, her grandmother, Helena Pavlovna de Fadeyev, passed away.⁷

From some sources it would be easy to get the impression that H.P.B.'s marriage to N.V. Blavatsky had been annulled, or at least that steps had been taken to do so. However, in a letter to Prince Dondukov-Korsakov, she states that after returning to Tiflis, she was reconciled with Blavatsky and, after staying with her grandfather, lived with Blavatsky for about a year, on Golovinsky Avenue, in the house of Dobrzhansky.⁸

¹ H.P.B.'s father, Col. Peter A. von Hahn, had married a second time, a Baroness von Lange, by whom he had a daughter, Elizabeth Petrovna (1850–1908); she married Kiril Ivanovich Beliy (d. 1908).

² Sinnett, *Incidents*, etc., pp. 91, 115–116; *Rebus*, No. 4, 1885, p. 41; No. 41, 1883, p. 367; No. 44, 1883, p. 397; Letter of H.P.B. to Sydney and Herbert Coryn, November 2nd, 1889.

³ *ibid.*, p. 134; *Rebus*, No. 44, 1883, pp. 399–400

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 135; Sinnett, *Letters* etc., p. 151; V.P. Zhelihovsky, Biographical Sketch of H.P.B. in *Lucifer*, London, Vol. XV, November 1894, p. 206; *Rebus*, No. 46, 1883, p. 418

⁵ [In Eastern Christian Churches, Exarch is either the deputy of a Patriarch (a position between that of Patriarch and Metropolitan), or a Bishop appointed over a group of the faithful not yet large enough or organized enough to be constituted an Eparchy or Diocese.]

⁶ Sinnett, *Incidents*, etc., pp. 137–38; *Lucifer*, Vol. XV, November 1894, p. 207; *Rebus*, No. 46, 1883, p. 418

⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 140–143; Gen. P.S. Nikolayev in *Istorichesky Vestnik*, St. Petersburg, Vol. IV, December 1885, pp. 623–24; *Rebus*, No. 6, 1885, p. 61

⁸ *H.P.B. Speaks*, Vol. II, pp. 152, 156

It would appear from her own statements,¹ that she left Tiflis in 1863, and went for a while to Zugdidi and Kutais, returning thence to Tiflis again, to live for another year with her grandfather.

During these years in the Caucasus, H.P.B. travelled and lived at one time or another in Imeretia, Guriya and Mingreliya, in the virgin forests of Abhasia, and along the Black Sea Coast. She seems to have studied with native *kudyani*, or magicians, and to have become widely known for her healing powers. At one time she was at Zugdidi and Kutais.² For a while she was in the military settlement of Ozurgety, in Mingrelia, and even bought a house there.³ She engaged in commercial enterprises, such as the floating of lumber and the export of nut-tree-spunk.⁴ Sometime during this stay in the Caucasus she was thrown from a horse, sustaining a fracture of the spine. It is during this period in her life that her psychological powers became much stronger and she brought them under the complete control of her will.⁵ While at Ozurgety, she had a severe illness; on orders of the local physician, she was taken in a native boat down the river Rion to Kutais. She was then transported in a carriage to Tiflis, apparently near death; soon after, however, she had another of her sudden cures, but remained convalescent for some time.⁶ For a while her uncle, Gen. Rostislav A. de Fadeyev, was gravely concerned about her condition.⁷ The seriousness and probable *occult* nature of her illness is clearly hinted at when she states that “between the Blavatsky of 1845–65 and the Blavatsky of the years 1865–82 there is an *unbridgeable gulf*.”⁸

Just exactly how and under what circumstances H.P.B. acquired a ward by the name of Yury remains wrapped in mystery, except for the fact that she states this was done to protect the honour of another. That this coincided at least approximately with the period in her life now under consideration, is evidenced by a Passport issued to her on August 23rd (o.s.), 1862, in the city of Tiflis, signed by Orlovsky, Civil Governor. It states that this document was given “in pursuance of a petition presented by her husband, to the effect that she, Mme. Blavatsky, accompanied by their infant ward Yury, proceeds to the provinces of Tauris, Cherson and Pskoff for the term of one year.”⁹ It is not known whether such a trip was ever undertaken. On the other hand, H.P.B. wrote¹⁰ that during the Summer of 1865 she was at Petrovsk, in the Daghestan region of the Caucasus, where she witnessed one of the ghastly rituals of a native sect. From this we may infer that she was in the Caucasus at least until the

¹ *H.P.B. Speaks*, Vol. II, p. 156

² *ibid.*

³ Sinnett, *Incidents*, etc., pp. 143-148; Sinnett, *Letters*, etc., p. 156; *Lucifer*, Vol. XV, December 1894, p. 273

⁴ *Rebus*, No. 46, 1883, p. 418

⁵ Sinnett, *Incidents*, etc., p. 146; *Rebus*, *loc. cit.*

⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 148-50; *The Path*, New York, Vol. X, May 1895, pp. 34-35

⁷ *The Path*, Vol. X, May 1895, p. 33

⁸ *H.P.B. Speaks*, Vol. II, p. 58

⁹ The original of this Passport was in the Archives of the Point Loma Theosophical Society; a copy of it exists in the Archives at Adyar.

¹⁰ *Isis Unveiled*, II p. 568, *fn.*

Summer of 1865, especially as she definitely states that she “left for Italy in 1865 and never returned again to the Caucasus.”¹

After leaving Russia she began to travel again; no comprehensive account of this period is possible, however, because of contradictory data and often complete lack of definite information.

She may have spent some time travelling in various parts of the Balkans, Servia and the Karpat Mountains, going later to Greece and Egypt.² It is probable that she also went to Syria, the Lebanon, and possibly Persia. It may be that it was during this period that she became a member of the Druzes and possibly of other mystic orders of Asia Minor. She indicated that she had also been in Italy around that time, “studying with a witch,” whatever that may mean.³

To this period belong her travel-notes written in French and contained in a small Notebook now in the Adyar Archives. Although these notes are undated, H.P.B. mentions one or two historical facts which provide a key to the dating of the trip she describes. It appears that she was at Belgrade when the Turkish garrison yielded the Fort and the commander, Al Rezi Pasha, withdrew from the territory. This was April 13th, 1867. H.P.B. travelled by boat on the Danube, and by coach between various towns of Hungary and Transylvania; she visited, among others, Brassó, Szeben, Fehérvár, Kolozsvár, Nagyvárad, Temesvár, Belgrade, Neusatz, Eszék, etc. These travel-notes are the only definite information concerning her whereabouts during a period which presents a great deal of uncertainty.

Later in 1867, H.P.B. apparently went to Bologna, Italy, still having her care Yury to whom she was greatly attached; he was in poor health and she was trying to save his life.⁴ He died, however, and H.P.B. returned to Southern Russia for a very short visit for the purpose of burying her ward, but did not notify her relatives about being in her homeland. She then returned to Italy on the same passport.⁵

After her travels in the Balkan states, she went to Venice,⁶ and was definitely present at the battle of Mentana, November 3rd, 1867,⁷ where she was wounded five times; her left arm was broken in two places by a saber stroke, and she had a musket bullet imbedded in her right shoulder and another in her leg.⁸

¹ *H.P.B. Speaks*, Vol. II, p. 156. H.P.B.'s sister, however, gives the date of 1864, as appears from H.P.B.'s manuscript translation of her sister's account, “The Truth about H.P. Blavatsky.”

² Sinnett, *Letters*, etc., p. 151; *Lucifer*, Vol. XV. December 1894, p. 273

³ *ibid.*, p. 154

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 144; Sinnett, *Incidents*, etc., p. 150

⁵ *ibid.*, p. 144

⁶ *ibid.*, p. 144; *The Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett*, p. 478

⁷ [Fought between French-Papal troops and the Italian volunteers led by Giuseppe Garibaldi, who were attempting to capture Rome, then the main centre of the peninsula still outside of the newly unified Kingdom of Italy. The battle ended in a victory by the French-Papal troops.]

⁸ Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves*, Vol. I, pp. 9, 263, 264; *Scrapbook*, Vol. I, p. 17; Sinnett, *Letters*, etc., pp. 144, 151, 152, 153. *The Theosophist*, Vol. XV, October 1893, p. 16

In the beginning of the year 1868, H.P.B. was in Florence, on her way to India through Constantinople.¹ She went from Florence to Antivari and towards Belgrade, where she waited, on order of her Teacher, in the mountains, before proceeding to Constantinople; she may have been in the Karpat Mountains and Servia once again.² She says she was at Belgrade some three months before the murder of the Hospodar, Prince Mihailo Obrenovi of Serbia, which took place June 10th, 1868.³

It is presumed that H.P.B. went via India to some parts of Tibet, and that this was sometime in 1868; mention has been made of her crossing the Kuenlun Mountains and going via Lake Palti (Yamdok-Tso),⁴ although geographically this is inconsistent. It is on this journey to Tibet that she met Master K.H. for the first time, and lived in the house of his sister at Shigadze.⁵ This may have been the period when she spent some seven weeks in the forests not far from the Karakorum Mountains.⁶



The Battle near Mentana (c 1907) Lionel-Noël Royer

¹ Sinnett, *Letters, etc.*, pp. 151-52

² *ibid.*, p. 152

³ *ibid.*, pp. 151-53; *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, Vol. I, "A Story of the Mystical," pp. 163-73

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 215

⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 153, 215

⁶ *The Path*, Vol. IX, January 1895, p. 299

The subject of H.P.B.'s stay in Tibet is wrapped — conceivably for good and sufficient reasons of her own — in considerable mystery. It is probable that we will never know just exactly when and how many times she penetrated this territory. However, to counter any unfriendly critic who may attempt to deny the fact that she was ever in Tibet, we have from her own pen a very specific statement when she wrote:

. . . I have lived at different periods in Little Tibet as in Great Tibet, and . . . these combined periods form more than seven years . . . What I have said, and repeat now, is, that I have stopped in Lamaistic convents; that I have visited Tzi-gadze, the Tashi-Lhünpo territory and its neighbourhood, and that I have been further in, and in such places of Tibet as have never been visited by any other European, and that he can ever hope to visit.¹

It is important to bear in mind, that while H.P.B. penetrated far into Tibet proper, it does not mean that *every time* she mentions being in Tibet, she necessarily means Tibet proper, as Ladakh used to be known as Little Tibet, and the term Tibet was used in a very general manner.

Towards the end of 1870, namely, on November 11th, her aunt, Miss Nadyezhda Andreyevna de Fadeyev, received the first known letter from Master K.H. stating that H.P.B. was well and would be back in the family before “18 moons” shall have risen.

H.P.B. returned to Europe via the Suez Canal which was opened for travel on November 17th, 1869, and passed through it sometime towards the end of 1870, possibly in December.² She went to Cyprus and Greece and saw Master Hillarion there.³ She embarked for Egypt at the port of Piraeus, on the *SS Eunomia*, plying between the Piraeus and Nauplia. Ships were provided in those days with guns and gunpowder as a protection against pirates. Between the islands of Dokos and Hydra, in the sight of the island of Spetsai, in the Gulf of Nauplia, the ship's powder magazine blew up, July 4th, 1871, with a considerable loss of life; H.P.B., however, was uninjured. The Greek Government provided the survivors passage to their destination, and so H.P.B. finally reached Alexandria, with hardly any means at all. She seems to have won some money, however, on what she calls “No. 27” and went to Cairo sometime in October or November 1871. She stayed at the Hôtel d'Orient where she met Miss Emma Cutting (later Mme. Alexis Coulomb) who was able to loan her some money for the time being.⁴

H.P.B. remained in Cairo until about April 1872. During her stay there, she organized what she calls a *Société Spirite*, for the investigation of phenomena; it would appear that this was done against the advice of Paulos Metamon, a well-known Coptic mystic and occultist with whom she was in touch at the time.⁵ The society proved

¹ *Light*, London, Vol. IV, No. 188, August 9th, 1884, pp. 323-24. Cf. *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, Vol. VI p. 272

² *The Theosophist*, Vol. XXXIV, July 1913, p. 476

³ Sinnett, *Letters*, etc., p. 153

⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 153, 215; *Incidents*, etc., p. 157. Also Greek newspapers of the time.

⁵ Dr. A.L. Rawson, “Madame Blavatsky: A Theosophical Occult Apology,” Frank Leslie's *Popular Monthly*, XXXIII, February 1892

a dismal failure within a fortnight, and H.P.B. was nearly shot by an insane Greek who was obsessed.¹ At one time or another, she lived in Bulak, near the Museum.

She then went to Syria, Palestine and Constantinople; she seems to have been at Palmyra; between Baalbek and the river Orontes, she met Countess Lydia Alexandrovna de Pashkov, and went with her to Dair Mar Maroon between the Lebanon and the Anti Lebanon Mountains.²

She reached Odessa and her family sometime in July 1872, which would be some “18 moons” after the receipt of K.H.’s letter. It is difficult to say whether we can credit Witte’s statement to the effect that she opened an ink factory and an artificial flower shop at Odessa during her stay there.³

There is some inconclusive information to the effect that H.P.B. made a musical tour in Russia and Europe, as “Madame Laura” during 1872–73, but this cannot be considered reliable.⁴

Her stay in Odessa was short, and she left sometime in April of 1873, going first to Bucharest to visit her friend, Mme. Popesco.⁵ From there she proceeded to Paris, presumably on orders from her Teacher.⁶ She stayed there with her cousin, Nikolay Gustavovich von Hahn, son of her paternal uncle Gustav Alexeyevich, at rue de l’Université 11, and seems to have intended to settle there for some time.⁷ According to Dr. L.M. Marquette,⁸ she spent her time in painting and writing, and established close ties of friendship with Monsieur and Mme. Leymarie.

One day, very soon after her arrival in Paris, H.P.B. received “orders” from the “Brothers” to go to New York, and sailed the very next day; this must have been towards the end of June 1873, as she arrived in New York July 7th.⁹

H.P.B. was very short of money, and the Russian Consul refused to loan her any money. She took quarters in a new tenement house, at 222 Madison St., New York, which was a small experiment in cooperative living launched by some forty women workers. The owner of the house, a Mr. Rinaldo, introduced her to two young Jewish friends of his, and these gave her work designing illustrated advertising-cards; she also seems to have tried some ornamental leather work, but soon abandoned that and is said to have made artificial flowers and cravats.¹⁰

¹ Sinnett, *Incidents*, etc., pp. 158-69; *The Theosophist*, Vol. XV, Supplement, November 1883, p. ix; Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves*, I, 23; J.M. Peebles, *Around the World*, 1874, p. 272

² *ibid.*, pp. 167-68; Olcott, *op. cit.*, I, 334-35

³ *ibid.*, p. 168; *Letters*, etc., pp. 153, 215; *H.P.B. Speaks*, Vol. I, p. 193

⁴ Olcott, *op. cit.*, I, 458 fn.

⁵ Sinnett, *Letters*, etc., pp. 152-54; *Incidents*, etc., p. 169; *H.P.B. Speaks*, Vol. II, p. 23

⁶ *H.P.B. Speaks*, *loc. cit.*

⁷ Sinnett, *Letters*, etc., p. 154; Olcott, *op. cit.*, I, p. 20

⁸ Olcott, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 27-28

⁹ Sinnett, *Letters*, etc., p. 154; Olcott, *op. cit.*, I, p. 20; Sinnett, *Incidents*, etc., p. 175; *The Path*, Vol. IX, February 1895, p. 385

¹⁰ Olcott, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 20, 472; *The Word*, Vol. XXII, p. 139; Holt, “A Reminiscence of H.P. Blavatsky in 1873,” *The Theosophist*, Vol. LIII, December 1931

Sometime later, a widow (possibly Mme. Magnon), offered to share her home in Henry Street with H.P.B. until her financial difficulties ended. She accepted, and together they inaugurated Sunday meetings at this address.¹

It was on July 15/27th, 1873, that H.P.B.'s father, Col. Peter A. von Hahn, passed away after only three days of illness. From a letter written to H.P.B. by her half-sister Liza (dated October 18th, o.s., 1873) her whereabouts were not definitely known to her family at the time, and so the news about the passing of her father reached her after a three months' delay. She also received at the same time some money, as part of her portion of the estate. She then moved to the North-East corner of 14th Street and Fourth Avenue, in a furnished top floor room, where she seems to have had a small fire.² She also lived on Union Square and on East 16th Street.³

It would seem that H.P.B. went for a time to Saugus and lived somewhere near the woods; she also visited Buffalo.⁴

On June 22nd, 1874, H.P.B. entered a partnership agreement, purchasing land near the villages of Newport and Huntington, in Suffolk County, Long Island, in the State of New York. This was to be a partnership with a French lady by the name of Clementine Gerebko, and in July 1874, H.P.B. moved to the farm.⁵ Inevitably, this affair ended in a row and a lawsuit, which, by the way, H.P.B. won when the case was tried by jury, April 26th, 1875. Judgment was filed on June 15th, 1875, in the Office of the Clerk of Suffolk County.

It was in July of 1874 that Col. Henry Steel Olcott, while working in his New York law office, had an urge to find out what was then going on in contemporary Spiritualism; he bought a copy of the *Banner of Light* edited in Boston, Mass., and read in it the account of the phenomena that were taking place at the Eddy farmhouse in the township of Chittenden, Vermont. He decided to go and see for himself. After staying there three or four days, he returned to New York and wrote sometime in August an account for the *New York Sun*.⁶ Then he received a proposal from the N.Y. *Daily Graphic* to return to Chittenden to investigate the whole affair thoroughly. He accepted this proposal,⁷ and returned to the Eddy farmhouse September 17th, 1874.

It was on October 14th that H.P.B., acting on instructions received by her,⁸ and having read Col. Olcott's accounts in the papers, went to Chittenden, and thus took place the significant meeting of two of the future Co-Founders of The Theosophical Society.⁹



¹ Holt, *loc. cit.*

² *ibid.*

³ Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves*, I, p. 30

⁴ *ibid.*, I, p. 440; *H.P.B. Speaks*, Vol. I, p. 193

⁵ *ibid.*, I, pp. 30-31

⁶ *ibid.*, I, p. 113

⁷ *ibid.*, I, pp. 1-5

⁸ Letter from H.P.B. to Dr. F. Hartmann, dated April 13th, 1886

⁹ Excerpted from *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (HELENA PETROVNA BLAVATSKY) I pp. xxv-lii

Suggested reading for students.



Tributes to Madame Blavatsky.

- “Blavatsky interviewed by Charles Johnston”
- “Blavatsky makes it in Bagpipe Music”
- “Blavatsky on Blavatsky”
- “Blavatsky remembered by Henry Travers Edge”
- “Blavatsky will instruct me in the seven sacred trances”
- “Blavatsky's Obituary by NY Daily Tribune”
- “Blavatsky's Obituary by WQ Judge”
- “Cleather on Blavatsky (1922)”
- “Cleather on the Great Betrayal (1922)”
- “De Zirkoff pays homage to Blavatsky”
- “The Esoteric She by WQ Judge”
- “The great noetic radiance of our epoch”
- “The New York Times on Blavatsky”
- “The Seal of HP Blavatsky”
- “Wachtmeister et al. reminisce on Blavatsky (1893)”

