

# The LAMP



## T H E L A M P

The Lamp was the first Theosophical journal published in Canada. Its first number appeared in August, 1894, three and a half years after the first Canadian branch of the Theosophical Society had been chartered in Toronto. By then, two other branches were in existence: the Kshanti Theosophical Society in Victoria, British Columbia; and the Mount Royal Theosophical Society in Montreal. Within another year, the members in Toronto had formed a second branch in that city--the Beaver Theosophical Society.

This early journal was the brainchild and effort of the Toronto members. The Editor was Albert E.S. Smythe. Much of the content came from the pens of Canadian writers, and in its columns appear the names of many who did yeoman service for the young Society in Canada, Sam Beckett and F.E. Titus, among others. And of course, almost every issue included an editorial by Smythe, plus frequent articles under the by-line "Ben Madighan", a pseudonym he employed in those years.

From the beginning, The Lamp had what today seems an incredibly large press run of 5,000 copies. As an official notice reads, "we...intend to distribute them...in one of several districts into which we have divided Toronto. If you get a Lamp this month it may be some months before you see one again, as we will go over all the other sections before we return to yours." Then followed an invitation to subscribe. At only 25 cents per year, it must have been a bargain even in those times, for each monthly issue ran to sixteen pages.

Many members must have put their shoulders behind this effort. The writer recalls an old Toronto member--young and eager in the 1890s--telling him how she and several others would get together when The Lamp came off the press each month, divide up the copies and go around delivering them, by hand, from door to door. This attempt to publicize Theosophy must have borne fruit, because soon there was sufficient interest in Toronto to support a number of weekly lectures and study classes.

In those years were published a dozen or more Theosophical magazines in various countries, and some of them were excellent. In spite of the competition, however, The Lamp must have had a special appeal, because it seems before long it boasted paid subscribers far beyond Canada, and especially in the U.S.A. Perhaps this was due not so much to the quality of the articles, but rather because discerning students of Theosophy everywhere could perceive its unique value. That is to say, its columns were open to all views--a Smythe hallmark.

Publication continued until 1897. It was resumed in September, 1899 (with no editorial explanation of the break!). D.N. Dunlop, a well-known Irish Theosophist was now named as Associate Editor, but his participation seems to have been limited to providing occasional articles. Publication ceased in September, 1900, with the forty-third issue.

For nearly twenty years thereafter, as far as is known, the only Canadian Theosophical publications were bulletins put out by the branches. Then in March, 1920, appeared the first issue of The Canadian Theosophist, which has been published without a break ever since. The first Editor was again Albert E.S. Smythe, a position he held until just before his death in 1947.

T.G.D.

Spring, 1987

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# The LAMP

A THEOSOPHICAL MONTHLY

EDITED BY  
ALBERT E. S. SMYTHE.

O mystic Nile! Thy secret yields  
Before us; thy most ancient dreams  
Are mixed with far Canadian fields  
And murmur of Canadian streams.  
*—Charles G. D. Roberts.*

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