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A REFLECTION ON *THE SECRET DOCTRINE*, No. 24

Like the formidable presence of Mt. Everest, at once majestic and mysterious, *The Secret Doctrine* towers above the terrain of esoteric literature. Silently, but irresistibly, it beckons the adventuresome, the dauntless—"those who called it forth," in the words of HPB—to leave the arid steppes of mediocrity and materialism, and scale its mighty heights from where one may behold vast vistas of metaphysical splendor.

Those of lesser stamina (and driven largely by curiosity) often make the attempt but soon give up, confused and dazed by the vertical labyrinth of esoteric lore; other gentle souls, unprepared for the rigors of abstract metaphysical thought, find *The Secret Doctrine* to be a most effective soporific. But the sturdy mountaineer, armed with the will to prevail, may profit from the advice of those who have ascended the peaks. "Remember that when one idea is well understood, it will help in comprehending another, because the teachings are all interrelated," says Geoffrey Barborka, author of *The Divine Plan*. In his *Secret Doctrine Digest*, Ernest Wood offers this perspective: "It is not as psychic revelation that this mountain of philosophy plus science plus religion is presented. On the contrary, its author requests the reader to study the ideas and information given in it from the standpoint of common experience and reason. . . . She would advise one to accept nothing that is offensive to reason, or to our instincts and impulses of goodness and love, or to the fundamental freedom and dignity of every man's own judgment."

While a single ascent of Kilimanjaro, the Matterhorn, or Everest will at once reward the climber with a breathtaking and pristine view, the same cannot be said of Blavatsky's magnum opus. One must return again and again before the eyes become accustomed to the view at this altitude. "If anyone thinks that he knows *The Secret Doctrine* by reading it once or even a dozen times, or a score of times," advises G. de Purucker, "he mistakes greatly the situation. It must be read not only between the lines but within the words."

But with repeated attempts comes familiarity with the terrain, increasing confidence, and the ability to find new footholds leading to still higher elevations. To his delight, the persevering climber finds that what was once considered to be *terra incognita* has become *terra firma*, while the lowlands from which the ascent began takes on a crepuscular glow of unreality and illusion.

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