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PROLOGUE to *THE VOICE OF THE SILENCE*, No. 2

*The Voice of the Silence* was written during the summer of 1889 while Mme. Blavatsky was staying with friends in Fontainebleau, France. By all accounts, it was written very quickly and followed on the heels of *The Key to Theosophy*, which was written earlier that same year. The first book review for *The Voice* appeared in the February 1890 issue of *The Theosophist*; the reviewer whimsically compared *Light on the Path*, a mystical treatise written by Mabel Collins four years earlier, to the newly published *Voice of the Silence*: “The difference between these two works will strike some people as like that between a magnificent melody by Verdi and a fragment of Wagner.”

One of the friends who were with Mme. Blavatsky in Fontainebleau was Annie Besant. In an 1895 lecture, Besant recalled the fascinating spectacle of watching Mme. Blavatsky as she labored over the manuscript of *The Voice*:

She wrote it at Fontainebleau, and the greater part was done when I was with her, and I sat in the room while she was writing it. I know that she did not write it referring to any books, but she wrote it down steadily, hour after hour, exactly as though she were writing either from memory or from reading it where no book was. She produced, in the evening, that manuscript that I saw her write as I sat with her, and asked myself and others to correct it for English, for she said that she had written it so quickly that it was sure to be bad. We did not alter in that more than a few words, and it remains as a specimen of marvelously beautiful literary work.

Besant’s account is very similar to the one given by Col. Henry Olcott in *Old Diary Leaves* where he describes Mme. Blavatsky during the writing of *Isis Unveiled*:

To watch her at work was a rare and never-to-be-forgotten experience. We usually sat at opposite sides of one big table, and I could see her every movement. Her pen would be flying over the page, when she would suddenly stop, look out into space with the vacant eye of the clairvoyant seer, shorten her vision as though to look at something held invisibly in the air before her, and begin copying on her paper what she saw. The quotation finished, her eyes would resume their natural expression and she would go on writing until again stopped by a similar interruption.

As fascinating as all that may be, none of it would matter one whit if *The Voice* had not been of the caliber to cause the Gnostic scholar G. R. S. Mead to characterize it as “the grandest thing in all our Theosophical literature.”

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