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PROLOGUE to *THE VOICE OF THE SILENCE*, No. 10

It has been said that the poetry in *The Voice of the Silence* is as exquisite as its paradoxes are startling. By poetry is meant the artful use of language to create poetic imagery. Such images are formed when two unlike objects sharing like attributes are compared, as in “the twilight of his career.” What connects twilight and career is that both inevitably come to an end. One example of imagery found in *The Voice*—“thy dark garments of illusion” (vs. 33)—compares ignorance to a piece of clothing; one serves to cover the body, the other to veil the mind.

In her Preface to *The Voice of the Silence*, HPB says: “I have done my best to preserve the poetical beauty of language and imagery which characterize the original.” We should not overlook or discount the power of poetry in this work. To underscore this point, let us state a simple fact: *The mind is subject to illusion*—a statement that is as unremarkable and forgettable as it is undeniably true. But under HPB’s skillful pen, this trite maxim becomes:

For the mind is like a mirror; it gathers dust while it reflects. It needs the gentle breezes of Soul-Wisdom to brush away the dust of our illusions. (vs. 115)

Here the prejudices and biases of the human mind are compared to dust settling on a mirror, a mirror that becomes less and less able to reflect the light, just as a conditioned mind is less able to perceive the truth. The simple beauty of the language serves to elevate a pedestrian truth to a memorable statement of enduring inspiration. However, the same truth—*the mind is subject to illusion*—is articulated in a very different fashion in the following passage:

The moth attracted to the dazzling flame of thy night-lamp is doomed to perish in the viscid oil. The unwary soul that fails to grapple with the mocking demon of illusion, will return to earth the slave of Mara. (vs. 35)

The change of tone is as unmistakable as a melody that is played first in a major, then a minor, key. HPB changes the mood from one of quiet reflection to one of stern admonishment; and she does this solely through her choice of imagery. From the contemplation of dust gathering quietly on a mirror, we now envision the stark image of dying moths entrapped in hot viscid oil. The underlying truth is the same in both verses, but the dramatic effect created by poetic imagery could not be more dissimilar. Careful readers will take time to savor the powerful word-play of HPB, thus enhancing their delight and enjoyment of her little masterpiece.

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