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# NICHOLAS ROERICH

## A STUDY IN HUMAN GENIUS

BY

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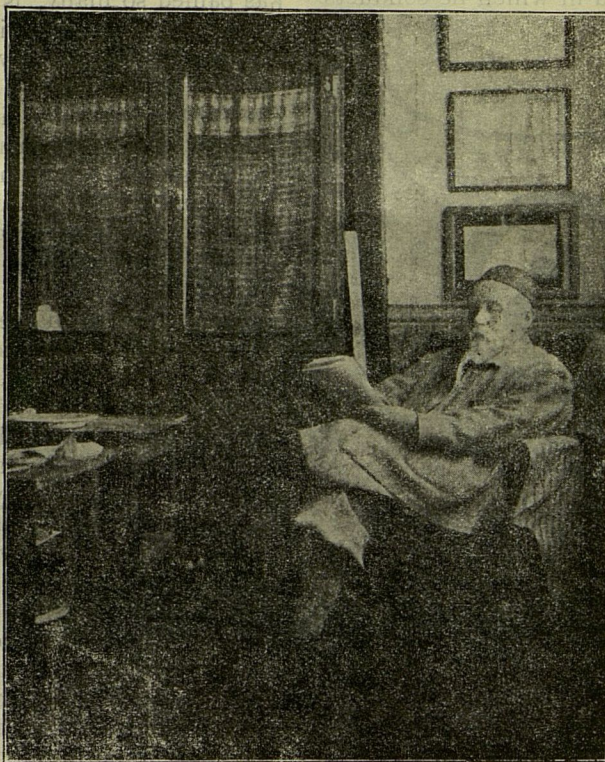
## Nicholas Roerich

### A Study in Human Genius

By MISS FRANCIS R. GRANT, NEW YORK CITY

**H**UMAN genius is the one phase of human conduct which remains elusive, even in an age which has made a fetish of psychological recipes. It is still a fugitive from the multiple of psycho-analysts, psychologists, psychiatrists, who would have us apparently

some, the elusive genius may range anywhere, from the involuntary phenomenon such as the mathematical wizard; but here we speak of the genius as the conscious creator, who masters the processes of creation and whose fruits are not some sporadic accident, but who wilfully imit-



Prof. Nicholas Roerich

believe they have bottled up securely all prescriptions of life and may infallibly apply them to human conduct. But this Unknown Element between the normal and the super-normal; between the average and the evolved baffles and intrigues—and inevitably escapes capture. To

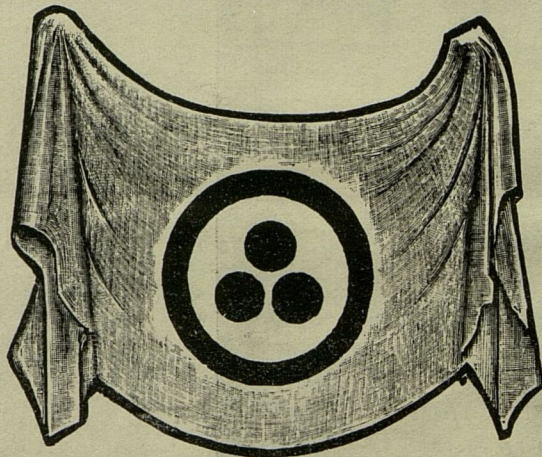
ates the divine in the expression of new consonances, whether these be in art, in science, in philosophy or in any other field of his articulation.

The genius is best seen through the study of his endeavors, in the observation of his methods. Thus we may deduce



the processes of his works, although not capture the intriguing psyche which dissolves under a scrutiny too severe. I am minded now of one of the most amazing of our contemporary geniuses, one who by versatility, by universality of his works, joins the processional of such men as Leonardo, Pythagoras, Blake, Goethe and numerous others:—I refer to Nicholas Roerich.

One of the most remarkable aspects of Roerich—one which inevitably makes itself felt, is the complete absence of that quality known to the average person as mood—or friction between the man and the external world in which he conducts



**Roerich Banner**

his works. In Roerich one is struck at once, not only by no evidence of non-adjustment to daily life, but by his complete containment of all that surrounds him. By this, I mean that condemnation and irritation are entirely apart from him; none of the intermittent outbursts, whims and caprices of conduct—regarded as the *sine qua non* of genius by some—ever disturb him—in other words, his is that equanimity and sweetness which bespeak the harmonious and disciplined spirit. One feels that Plato possessed this “completion” of the vessel. I speak of complete fulness because when a vessel is in the process of being filled at the

well, there is a murmur and gurgling of the water—that is, until the moment when the brim is reached. From then on the liquid pours in and overflows in silence. It is a modulation that talks of fulness and completion. I think of Roerich in this regard—as of a complete vessel, full to overflowing, from which the pure liquid flows around, quenching, refreshing and stirring to a new life. Thus, the discipline of containment is one of the first qualities that stirs one in the contemplation of the creative aspects of this evolved human.

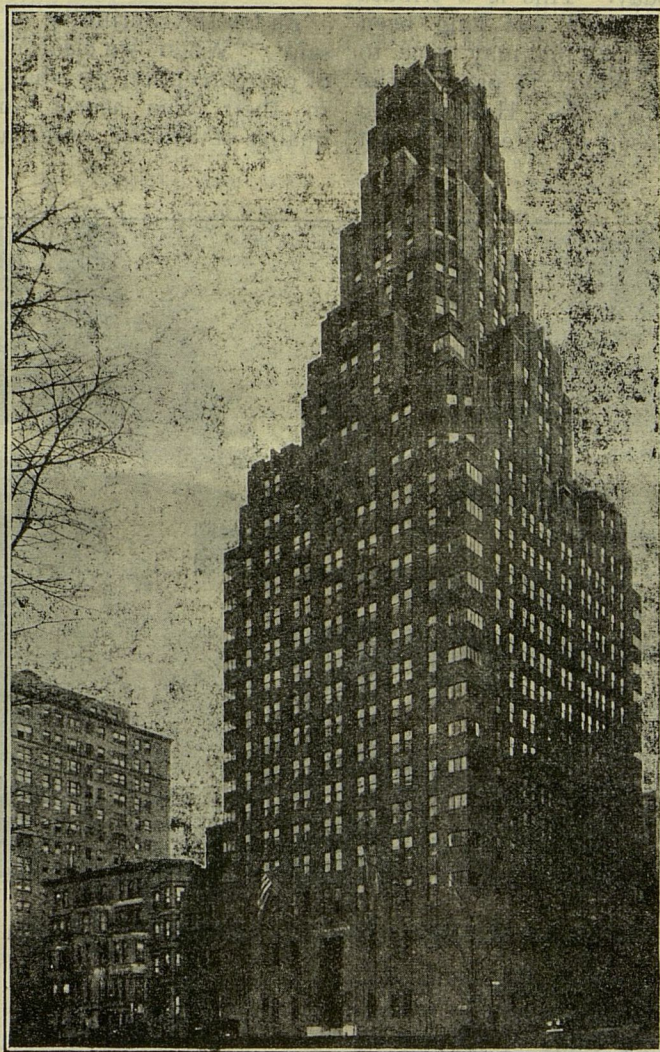
Another extraordinary quality which has baffled so many, is Roerich’s versatility, his ability—as with Leonardo—to turn as intimately to writing, as to painting, to architecture, to science. This versatility must be linked to the other quality which is so marked in these conscious geniuses—the quality of synthesis. The quality of synthesis so all-encompassing in its scope—eludes analysis, in a manner, because only those possessed of it, may define it in its full meaning. But it is manifested in the spirit as a crystal in which the true values of life have been focussed and co-ordinated—with the result that this mani-faceted gem irradiates in many hues, all equally pure and equally illuminated. Having acquired this crystal of spirit—this synthesis of universal values—a spirit creator may turn as readily and as perfectly from one field of creation to another. Because, having mastered the Essence or the Principle, he may manifest it equally in one or another variation of its meaning. This fatigueless, inexhaustible variety of creation permitted Leonardo or Michael Angelo or Blake to follow the inspiration of multiple genius. And it is this quality which in Roerich reflects in his writings, his art or the other endless phases of his creation, where he invariably expresses a genius which is mellow, mature, illumined.

Roerich’s fertility of creation is to



others also a constant source of awe—the fact that his creative works in painting alone now approach 4000 is almost incredible to those who do not know Roerich or the capacities of an evolved creative force, such as he represents. Multiplicity

*Assyrian*,” Kuindjy, and later with Corman, Roerich has indicated a surety of style and mastery of technique that astonished these first mentors of his creative life. Never is there the groping for an expression or execution. Convic-



**The Roerich Museum N. York**

of creation is dependent on a combination of things—surety of technique, fertility of imagination, continuity of labor. Surety of technique is Roerich's as among few of the major forces of the day. Ever since his first studies with that “*Assisian-*

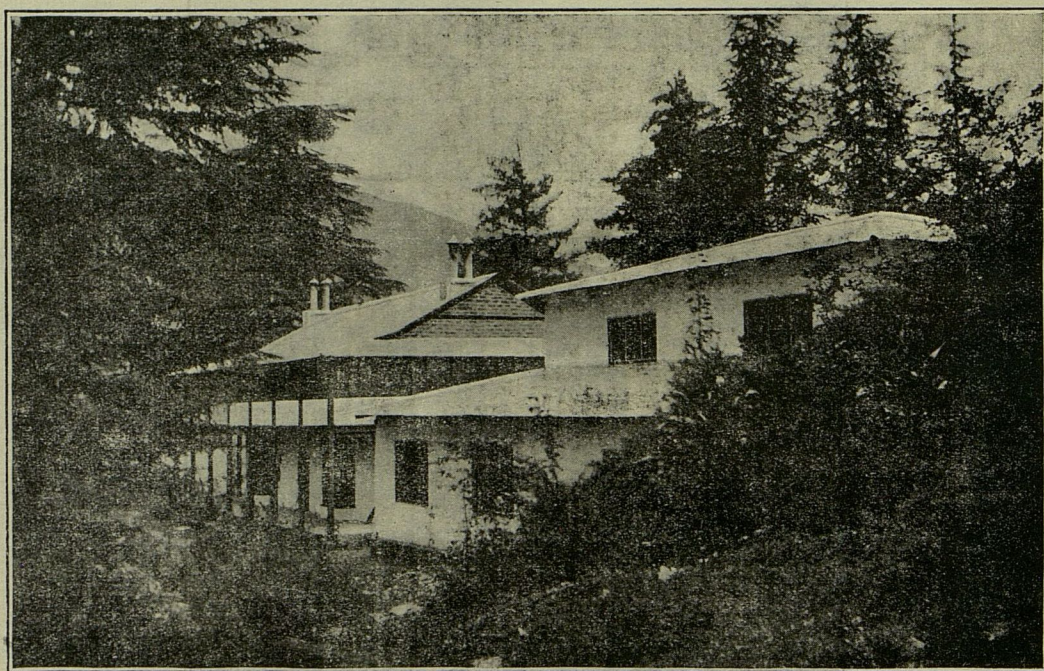
tion, assiduous experimentation and research, sure knowledge of material and its uses, have imparted to Roerich's art this technical authenticity which now is second to none. As to fertility in subject matter, no one who has even glanced



through the titles of Roerich's painting may be ignorant of the infinite horizons from which he takes his themes. Roerich has drawn his inspiration from the entire gamut of human experience—folk lore, philosophy, nature, religion, epics of yesterday and today. This is a tribute to his erudition which has long been recognized, and which one may trace to the unity of arts which is part of the gospel of Roerich's life. Having long laid down for himself the credo that Art

in tireless quests. Hence, myriads of themes are within the compass of Roerich because the concentric circles of his interest and passion for knowledge have defined larger and larger spaces into the starry world.

As for the continuity of effort—Blake said: "When we cleanse the windows of our perception we shall see all things in their true aspect—infinite." The quality of infinite persistence of effort



### Himalayan Research Institute of Roerich Museum

is One, Roerich never permitted barriers to rise between his explorations into the infinite entrancing trails of all cultural provinces. Thus, unconstrained as to his interests, he found that the aeons of existence of gods and men were his field. The searching light of his interest and illumination penetrated into all corners—that passionate spirit for knowledge led him into invisible realms, as it has led him through the expanses of the world,

pertains to the genius. Tirelessness, fatiguelessness is Roerich—and one learns to realize that it is because of a wise distribution of forces. Having the quality of versatility he may turn from one to the other of his manifold fields of efforts, renewing himself and refreshing himself by each diverse contact, and hence being never fatigued and, by that miraculous process of creation—being the more re-enforced by the greater outpouring.



It is consistent of genius that, unlike the lives of others, nothing in the life of the genius is wasted or useless. Hence, as all things serve to nourish the creative output of the genius, as each step of his life adds to the composite of creative completion, so his own creative genius illumines everything with which it comes in contact, transmuting and refining it. In this way there is a wise husbanding of forces—because nature, having produced a genius watches zealously lest his forces be dissipated or lost. In the study of a genius such as Roerich, one may watch with constant amazement the assiduity with which the pattern of the life is laid; true, one may not be aware of this inevitability in the process, but when the true perspective is gained, the pattern and each accompanying detail are brought into relief. In the case of Leonardo—and to me there is a unique kinship between these two major souls—he remains, finally, not the painter, nor the scientist, but the resplendant human, the unexampled spirit attesting to the glorious possibility of human attainment. With Roerich—although to some he is the artist, the writer, or the scientist, he must remain finally the spirit-synthesis, the combination of all these inalienable qualities; the cultural and spiritual leader of his age, concerned with the apotheosis of beauty and culture.

It is quite natural that Roerich, in the expression of this new role of world cultural leader, to which the entire processional of his life was tending, should have passed himself through the efforts of such vast creation; right, that having

worked out the processes of creation in many forms he may, with the authority of the *knower*, pronounce his devotion and consecration to the cause of creation among all men. Having lived the intensity, the tirelessness of creation, he alone may accept the mantle of a paternity for the cause of culture. Thus it is by very reason of the successive out-pourings of his own creative forces that he finally reaches his present summit—the exponent of the new pathway to human brotherhood, the creator of an oriflamme which shall pronounce the need of a united world-vigil for culture and spirit. Thus, the Banner of Peace—that latest superb expression of his genius, may be said to synthesize the credo of his genius—the clear perception and pronouncement of a spirit which has already crossed the bridge to the universal. And that finally, is what any study in the highest form of conscious genius must inevitably bring us to: that the true genius—the vessel which contains the divine amritha that eternally quenches the thirst of men—is the spirit which is no longer earthbound, but cosmic. A *rapport* with all the expanses of the infinite is his—he is an eternal stave among men. And to such collaborators with the Infinite as Roerich, men owe an eternal gratitude—generations are nurtured by the beauty of their outpourings, and their example adds nobility to the human race, impelling a new leap along that upward path which carries the spirit of mankind towards the Throne of the Supreme.

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