

NICHOLAS ROERICH.

A MASTER OF THE MOUNTAINS.

By Barnett D. Conlan.

What then is the nature of Tai Tsung  
Honourable Ancestor of all mountains?  
Invested at hour of formation and  
evolution, with supernatural  
qualities, dividing northern shade  
from southern light, it cuts the  
darkness from the dawn.

TU-FU.

At all the important turning points in the worlds' history, there have appeared great artists whose destiny it was to illumine Life, by giving form and colour to the spiritual tendencies of their time.

Pheidias, a perfect master of all the plastic arts of Greece, revealed the gods, latent in the world of myth and imagination, and his images not only reigned over the whole of the Ancient World, but lasted on long into the Middle Ages.

After a thousand years or so had elapsed, Giotto arose to usher in a New Age and a New Art. Like Chartres Cathedral or Dantes immense poem, Giotto's work, more than that of other painters reflects the essential beauty of Christianity and the aspirations of the Middle Ages.

And now when the Wheel of Time is bringing us once more to another ending and a fresh beginning, a great painter, Nicholas Roerich, sounds the note of dawn and resolutely leads the way towards a renaissance of the Spirit.

If Pheidias was the creator of divine form, and Giotto the painter of the Soul, then Roerich may be said to reveal the spirit of the Cosmos.

For this reason he is the chief interpreter of our epoch, and his art is the counterpart of Science itself, since it supplies that religious vision of Life and the Universe which Science had seemingly taken away.

The Art of Roerich, therefore, like the Art of Pheidias and Giotto is a sacred Art and if it is not centred exclusively round the human form, that is because it is modern and moves with the spirit of our time.

If Pheidias had a close affinity with Aeschylus, and Giotto with Dante, then Roerich, by his immense faith in the power of Culture may be said to continue the work of Goethe.

Among the worlds great artists he is unique in having formed societies all over the world with a view to promoting the love of Art and Science. In New York alone, he has built a cathedral of Art which contains a variety of Art institutions together with a thousand of his own masterpieces.

Such an activity would be hard to match at any period of the worlds' history, and we have to go back to the Middle Ages, to great builders and educators such as St Thomas Aquinas, if we are to find a parallel to such untiring energy.

It is perhaps in the order of things that Nicholas Roerich should be Russian. So deep and religious an attitude to Art as his could hardly derive from any other race to-day, and his universal culture, his vast outlook which stretches throughout Europe, Asia and America, comes of a race which is half asiatic, and which contains in itself a sort of synthesis of East and West.

A well known poet has told us that East and West can never meet - 'Never the twain shall meet'. Roerich, however, who is also a poet, but whose inspiration is not drawn exclusively from the past and the appearances of this world, not only points to an understanding between East and West, but assures us that a New Era, a New World more spiritual than that of the old order, will arise from such a meeting.

He is for union rather than for separation for he sees with the eye of the spirit as



well as with that of the body. Behind these forms and appearances, which are the crystallizations of centuries and refer to the past rather than to the future, there is a world of Spirit, infinitely simple and common to both hemispheres, and on this the Future will be built.

By a stroke of rare genius Roerich has been able to divine this spiritual realm not so much in the works of the historic past as in the vestiges of prehistoric times, in the Art of the Stone Age. Through the vast, the simple, the universal, he discerns the outlines of a New Beauty, which shall unite both East and West in forms far more essential than those which now go to separate them.

And here he touches on the great problem of our Epoch - that of Renewal, of Rebirth.

All the upheavals and insurrections that have occurred during the last twenty five years in every phase of life, and in the thoughts of the whole world, are signs of such a reawakening; and during this eventful period Roerich has been going from one continent to another, staying in one country and then another, until he has found himself at home in every part of the world.

It is for this reason that he is never pessimistic, for he knows that if the tide recedes in one part, it is rising in another, and that, on the whole, there is a powerful movement towards a Renaissance of the Spirit.

At fourteen years of Age being attracted by the Past, he began to excavate the tumuli on his fathers' estate near St Petersburg. The discovery of gold and silver coins of the tenth century, encouraged him to continue his researches, and eventually introduced him to the famous archaeologist A.A. Spitzine who made him a member of the Archaeological Society.

His excavations at Pskov and in the province of Novgorod led him to make a close study of the Stone Age, and get together an immense collection of stone reliques which included 75,000 objects, so that his vision of this period may be said to be based on scientific experience of a high order.

What he has to say of the Neolithic Period is of extraordinary interest. The knowledge of the man of science, the perception of the artist, and the vision of the poet have all combined to give us a living picture altogether unrivalled in the annals of archaeology.

The world of primitive savages and cave dwellers, which figures so miserably on the first pages of our history books, is here restored to its real stature, and shown as a period of splendid art.

Roerich asks us to forget the Age of Iron and the conventions of civilization and to try and visualize the beauty of the Stone Age - "The marvellous beauty of its tinted stones and precious furs, its coloured woods and woven tassels."

He assures us that this Age far surpassed our own in its aspiration to Art and Beauty and that the Future would do well to follow its example - "by working to embellish and harmonize our surroundings."

He shows us that these cave dwellers were anything but uncouth savages, that everything they touched was stamped with the beauty of form and colour, their walls covered with living frescoes, by no means inferior to the finest works of Japan, and that their vases, utensils and arms wrought of jade of jasper or of stone had a style and distinction worthy of the Greeks and Egyptians.

It is the aspiration of these cave dwellers to beautify everything around them with the same simplicity with which Nature beautifies the earth, that leads Roerich to the startling conclusion that they were nearer to the broad highway of perfection than we are to day.

"From continually living in fear and fighting against the world that surrounds him, Man has come to imprison himself in a labyrinth, from which there will be no escape until he again strikes the broad highway from whence he started"

This immense beauty of a far off Past stirs him to visions of a spacious Future, of a New Era, when the aspiration towards Art and the effort to beautify life will again be universal.

His life long researches into the Stone Age have given him the conviction that humanity has existed here on earth for many a million years, and that the immense cycle of time is again bringing us round to a New Era of beauty whose universal character will correspond with that of this Neolithic Culture.



This is a far more ample vision of things than that of the historians, but it is one which is in keeping with the nature of the Cosmos, and we have only to glance at the starry spaces at night to realize that such a large harmony and duration is far nearer to Nature than the world of our narrow traditions.

It is interesting to see how Roerich's researches into the Stone Age, and his early enthusiasm for this period has influenced all his work. It would seem to form the basis of his style, for many of his early paintings have a neolithic grandeur all their own.

It also explains why he finds himself at home in every part of the world where Nature is still intact and preserves some vestiges of this primeval beauty.

Not only among the ancient cities and monuments of his own country - in those early pictures of Kovno, Mitava, Riga, Kazan and old Pskov - but in all his wanderings through Asia and America, we shall always find him at work, painting the rocks and shrines rather than the more superficial aspects of the land through which he is passing.

All his life he has been erecting an immense edifice of Art, the foundations of which are firmly laid amid the rocks and stones of all the countries of the earth, while the summits, like the highest peaks of the Himalaya, catch the light of coming dawn.

In Art as in everything else some sort of heredity is necessary as a foundation on which to build, and the stronger the racial character the better. Roerich is as Russian as Titian is Venetian or Turner is English. His style eminently personal derives from the main tradition of Russian Art, and to a greater extent perhaps than the works of its ecclesiastical and Byzantine masters.

In such early works as - The Daughters of the Earth - The Heat of the Earth - Idols of Ancient Russia - The call of the Sun - there is a primitive spirit, the spirit of the pre-historic Slavs and of the Stone Age, due perhaps to the fascination of this epoch on the young artist, but partly, I believe, to an innate sense of those Cosmic Powers of life which underlie all appearances.

Simplicity is a characteristic of all high spirituality, and we shall find this primordial element in almost all his work.

Such a style may be pre-Russian, it may be even more universal than Russia, but only a Russian, I believe, could be equally great as artist and as mystic to have produced it.

Throughout almost all his work, which runs to over three thousand canvases, we are constantly reminded of the fresco paintings of the Byzantine Church and the sacred images of the ikon painter.

From 1902 to 1912 there are a whole series of Russian paintings depicting the ancient cities of Moscow, Smolensk, Vilna, Kovno, Mitava, Riga, Kazan, Pskov, Nijni-Novgorod - paintings which show the inner and poetic nature of these places as no other artist has done. In all these early works the style and the subject have the simplicity of the things that are everlasting. Their very titles, 'the Lake', 'the Forest', 'the White Church', 'the Cloud', 'A small town', have that timeless beauty which is of all ages because it is eminently simple, spiritual.

Some of these canvases have an unearthly beauty of coloring which would suggest that the painter has had visions of that world of archtypes, of which Plato spoke, a world where the souls of all things lives on for ever.

In his mural paintings - such as those of the Pochayev Cathedral, in the decoration of many a chapel, and in frescoes like the Queen of Heaven, Roerich shows his deep knowledge of the Byzantine tradition and the art of the Russian ikon painter.

Art, to him, is the sacred thing it always was to the pious Russian artists of the 17th century, and I imagine that he brings to his painting much of their fervour and devotion. "An ikon painter" he tells us, "while his work lasted only partook of food on Saturdays and Sundays, for, in those days, the painting of a holy image was a matter of prolonged ecstasy."

Roerich is not only one of the most remarkable of Russian painters, he is also one of the foremost critics and historians of Russian Art, and has done more perhaps than anyone before him to evoke its hidden treasures.

His lectures on Russian Art are themselves treasures, for they sparkle with the rich



imagery of the painter and the poet, give life there where others only perceived dead relics, and rouse our enthusiasm and curiosity for those wonderful fresco painters whose works have for centuries been neglected or forgotten in the shadow of many an ancient Russian church.

He was one of the first to discover that the naïve art of the ikon painter was, in reality, a very advanced art and the result of a consummate technique.

Like the supreme simplicity of Homer, which Hellenists now assure us was the result of highly wrought Art rather than of a primitive spontaneity, this early art of the Russian ikon painter displays, as Roerich shows us, a marvellous insight into the technique of decorative art.

So deep was their knowledge of Art that the effect produced by these miraculous ikons he tells us " borders on magic ".

It is here among these sacred painters of the Russian church that we can trace the technical source of Roerich's own art. He has the same remarkable sense of colour, the same profound attitude to his subject, and, like these pious workmen, he can produce " magical effects ".

To describe the unique character of his own work we could hardly do better than quote from one of his lectures on the mural paintings in the Russian churches.

" And even when you have grasped the magic colouring of those mural paintings in the churches of Yaroslavl and Rostov, this is not all. Examine carefully the interior of the church of St John the Baptist at Yaroslavl. What a marvellous harmony between the pure transparent tones of azure and that brilliant ochre !

"What a calm atmosphere emanates from those green tints with their emerald shadings fading away into grey and harmonizing so wonderfully with the reddish brown of the figures! "

" Archangels of a serene beauty of countenance crowned with a dark yellow halo float across the heavens, their immaculate white garments looking all the fresher by contrast with the deep blue background. And the gold is so well inserted, so perfectly adapted, that it never distracts the eye. These paintings have the quality of the most exquisite silk tapestries. "

" In the labyrinth of passages in the church of Rostov, we halt before many a miniature doorway astonished at the harmonious beauty of their setting. Through the pearl grey tints which cover these walls with their strange transparencies, human figures hardly discernible gaze upon you as you pass. In certain places you seem to feel the heat of the brilliant red and brownish red colours; in others a bluish green tint evokes a feeling of immense calm, or you suddenly pause, as if arrested by some solemn warning of the scriptures - to find yourself face to face with a sacred figure painted in ochre."

This beautiful description of the work of the great Russian fresco painters - perhaps the highest type of sacred art - might apply to many a Roerich masterpiece.

We have the same mysterious figures looming up against a background of magic colour the same sacred atmosphere and mystery, by no means lessened as one might imagine, by this age of unbelief, but grown vaster, more universal, and able to hold its glamour in the light of day.

His art then, is of noble descent and derives much of its technique from one of the greatest traditions of Art.

These writings and lectures of Roerich on Russian Art and civilization show a penetrating insight into Russian history, and do more, perhaps, than the work of any other historian to evoke the splendours of the past and the rich inheritance of Russian art.

Gazing back into the centuries he shows us the splendour of ancient Yaroslavl, Novgorod Moscow and Kiev. Above all ancient Kiev - the Mother of Russian Cities - is depicted in terms which only a poet, painter, archaeologist and historian could employ.

He tells us that the origins of the city are legendary, and that a recent discovery of a cult of Astarte, shows that they go back to the 17th cent B.C.

" Such was the splendour of ancient Kiev, where the Scandinavian skill in metal work joined to the Oriental wealth of Byzance produced such marvellous beauty that the Princes slew one another to get possession of the city.

The sparkle of its translucent enamels, its refined art of miniature, the nobility of its architecture, its wonderful bronze work, its wealth of tapestry together with the finest elements of Roman Art, all tended to give the city an unrivalled magnificence



He shows us the horsemen going and coming through the courtyards of those private palaces, where, in the words of an ancient epic poem:-

The entrance is paved with ivory,  
And over the door stand seventy ikons .  
In the midst of the courtyard are the terems,  
The terems with their golden domes.  
The first door is of cast iron,  
The second door is of glass.  
The third door is of trellis work.

and then follow the riders in their costumes :-

Their garments are of rich scarlet cloth  
Their leather belts fastened with clasps of bronze.  
They wear sharp pointed caps of black fur ,  
Embossed with golden crowns  
/ FEET Their/are shod in precious green leather  
Curved into metal clasps,  
With pointed heels.

There is room enough for an egg to roll about the toes .  
There is space enough for a bird to fly about their heels.

Roerich assures us that this epic, which corresponds with the Byzantine frescoes is true to life, and has the value of an archaeological document.

The poem continues with the portrait of a hero which might well figure in the Arabian Nights, or at the court of the fabulous Kubla-Khan.

Above his bonnet the helmet glows like fire ,  
His silver shoes are woven with seven silks  
Sewn with a golden thread.  
Over his shoulder hangs a cloak of black ermine,  
Of that black ermine which comes from beyond the seas,  
And covered with green velvet.  
Around every button hole - a bird is woven,  
On each golden button - a rampant beast is engraved.

He gives us a picture of the Russia of the Middle Ages which is probably unique in the archaeology of that country, and all the more authentic, since it is based upon his own researches among the fresco paintings of that period and upon a knowledge of the ancient Russian language and literature and its monuments.

He shows how the lower classes had no ill feeling against the cultured and how the society of those times dwelt in harmony, the people themselves sharing in the general atmosphere of Art and Poetry. But then, they had wise rulers such as Yaroslav who read and wrote books of the deepest wisdom and cultivated all the Arts.

He quotes a poem of the eleventh century which tells us that: " Prince Yaroslav the Wise founded Kiev the Great with its Golden Gates and built the beautiful church of Saint Sophia " and goes on to show us how Novgorod, Pskov, and Moscow were, at that time, cities of Art, splendid like Venice, with temples, palaces and private dwellings of the most perfect proportions.

But Roerich does not halt at these historic splendours of the Middle Ages, he goes even further back to the Ancestors, to the mythic past, to the Age of Bronze where his intuition tells him there are even greater marvels.

" Every day brings us some fresh revelation and we begin to discern a multitude of peoples. Behind the Byzantines clad in cloth of gold come the various throngs of Finno-Turks. Still further back the Aryans emerge in their sumptuous attire, and who knows what their predecessors were like ? "

" The treasures which these people have bequeathed us will help to build up a new Nationalism, and, in studying them, the younger generation must necessarily gain in health and strength. If our modern national art, so uncertain at the moment, is to be transformed into a new nationalism of a highly attractive character, it will have to be based upon the corner stone of this Ancient Art replete with the beauty of Truth and works of genius. In the great Future ahead of us this ancient sense of truth and beauty will be reborn. "



In his evocation of the Stone Age and his description of Mediaeval Russia and the vast art treasury buried under Russian soil, or visible in its ancient churches and palaces, Roerich has given us a wonderful succession of word frescoes which by their rich qualities recall the style of Pindar when he paints the splendours of Agrigentum and Syracuse.

After which we are not surprised to hear that an ancestor of the artist - the legendary Prince Rurik laid the foundations of Russian civilization in the year 862.

What is certain is that Roerich has founded an Empire of Art - the first of its kind, and that he has his ambassadors of Art and Culture in all the civilized countries of the world.

I have dwelt somewhat on the Russian side of Roerich's genius because so much has been said of the cosmopolitan and international character of his work. He is certainly 'universal', but after the manner of some giant tree, rooted in one particular spot and sending its branches out over the whole world.

Of all modern races the Russians have, perhaps, the greatest genius for Art, and if there is to be some great Renaissance of the Arts, in the deep sense of the Parthenon and the Cathedrals, it will be to Russia that the task of promoting it will probably fall.

The Russian element then in Roerich's genius is no mere hasard, but something connected with the onward march of the world.

It is interesting to see how Roerich has always moved with the general current, leading the way, as it were, in the forefront of all Art movements.

Previous to the war we find him as one of the most important elements in the Russian Ballet, creating with Igor Stravinsky the 'Rite of Spring', a masterpiece, which like Spring itself or the music of Bach is something which must remain everlastingly fresh.

At the end of the war he leaves Europe and its atmosphere of depression for America where he builds up a beacon fire against the encroaching darkness.

The Roerich Museum, towering like a lighthouse of Art, above the worlds' vulgarity and commercial indifference is too well known to be touched on here in detail.

It is sufficient to say that Roerich conquered America and that it would be hardly possible to overrate the influence of his work on the future of that great country.

If he has decided to remain in India among the Himalayas, there is reason to think that his work there must have an especial meaning for America.

Like Michel Angelo who displayed an untiring and titanic energy until an advanced age, Roerich also shows a multiple activity and, on a wider scale, perhaps, than the Italian for his work draws its inspiration from Europe, Asia and America.

It is one of the great consolations of existence, this great procession of torch bearers who carry the flame of beauty across the most stormy and despondent periods and, at the same time reveal Life's deepest values and, in fact its *raison d'être*.

If Michel Angelo helped to design and erect churches and decorate them, Roerich is additional to his art has been building up societies for Art and Culture in almost every country.

In proclaiming Art as a way of the Future he has struck a bell whose note must inevitably be heard by all the advancing spirits of the world.

A well known contemporary writer very aptly defines the old world and its beliefs as 'a mass of tradition which has turned sour', and it is these dead beliefs these outworn husks that have let pass the hordes of Darkness and an ocean of vulgarity which threatens to invade a great part of the world. Against these evil and degrading tendencies Roerich is fighting with all the fire of his remarkable genius - and fighting victoriously.

If he has conquered a good part of the best minds in America, he has also attracted the heart of youth, who, there is every reason to believe, will come, more and more, to look upon him as a guiding light.

In his "Call to Youth" where he lays stress on heroism and the striving towards the Beautiful, there are passages which recall the language of ancient Greece.

"You who are about to begin life will probably wish to know how you can best make your life a happy one. After forty years of labour and experience in twenty five different countries of the world, I do not hesitate to reply :- 'Only through the Beautiful' "



" The important thing is to encourage and develop the innate sense of Beauty which will prove to be a veritable shield against evil and ignorance "

" It is a mistake to imagine that the beautiful is beyond the reach of the workers and only a possession of the rich . Such false conceptions will only lead us to identify the Beautiful with Luxury , whereas one should understand that the vivifying spirit of the Beautiful is the very opposite to that of Luxury "

This might be the voice of Plato speaking to us in other conditions and recalling the ' kalos-kagathos ' that bright conception which lay at the foundation of the Greek spirit.

There is much in the philosophy of Roerich - in his preoccupation with the general good , in his belief that Art and the Beautiful constitute the highest aspects of Life and Morality - that brings him near to the conceptions formulated by Plato.

The universal tendency is towards a better state of things, and it must be evident to a discerning eye that much of what is going on to day under the label of conflicting systems is really a general movement towards those aspirations which Plato outlined in his community. Such aspirations , short of some general cataclysm , must be gradually realized , even though they work themselves out under systems which, in appearance, seem directly opposed to one another.

Roerich tells us that every Art creation is a dynamo charged with uplifting energy and a real generator of enthusiasm , and he looks to Art as the most effective instrument for leading us towards a life of " Beauty, " Simplicity and Fearlessness " to a " Fearlessness " which possesses the sword of courage and which smites down vulgarity in all its forms, even though it be adorned in riches "

To encourage this sense of Art he has founded centres of Culture in almost every country throughout the world , and in so doing has been impelled to act , I believe, from a deeper source than that which inspires most of the social and religious renovators of to day.

He looks upon life with the eye of Plato , with the understanding of Goethe , judging things with the rich possibilities of a cultured creative mind, rather than from the standpoint of some narrow conventionalized doctrine .

Like Goethe he is on the side of the living and organic , the realm of Art , and is not satisfied with the purely mechanical, intellectual, and systematic.

And herein lies the deep meaning of his crusade for Culture.

The material and mechanical efforts of the last century have left civilization in the position of a man who has come to create a highly organised body without a soul, and as a soul and spirit are not to be manufactured he is in danger of being caught in a gigantic web of soulless organisms whose joyless existence must eventually drive him to self destruction.

To ward off such an impending catastrophe Roerich, in 1930, devised a Banner of Peace on which figured three spheres symbolizing that synthesis of Religion, Art and Science - which is Culture.

The object of this Banner is to protect the worlds' Art treasures and monuments , in the same way that the Red Cross Flag protects the wounded.

Most of the leading countries immediately recognized the utility of such an arrangement and twenty five nations came forward to support this convention , while the well known leaders of Culture such as H.M. King Albert of Belgium, Rabindranath Tagore, Maurice Maeterlinck, Sir J.C. Bose, and President Roosevelt gave their enthusiastic adhesion.

Dr George Chklaver, Doctor of Law and Professor of Paris University who drew up the Pact in its legal form, pointed out in his inaugural address why such an arrangement could become effective.

" Seldom are all the nations of the World stirred by the same thought , seldom are they united by the same endeavour. It was given to Nicholas Roerich to create a Movement which has won the enthusiastic support of Governments and peoples alike ; thus it was proved once more that Beauty, Knowledge and Culture are the best means to bring together the ' Membra disjecta ' of humanity "

In discovering a point on which all nations are spontaneously agreed Roerich has stirred up a world wide attention to Peace and a wave of enthusiasm on behalf of Culture.



To Roerich the word Culture signifies much more than its current meaning of 'learning' or 'refinement'.

He uses it in a deeply religious sense, in its original druidic and oriental meaning of the 'Cult of Light' - Cult-Ur.

All the aspects of Roerich's activity, in this direction have been ably set out in 'Culture' a booklet published by Flamma Inc, New York, and written by the Latvian writer and poet Richard Rudzitis.

He tells us: "In the development of culture Nicholas Roerich distinguishes the following steps: ignorance, civilization, organization, then intellection, spiritual refinement, and only after this does man secure means for synthesis and a higher state of culture."

In founding centres of Culture throughout the world and designing a Banner of Peace and a Pact based upon those mutual interests which link together the different cultures Roerich has done something which is not only highly desirable but urgent and necessary.

The founding of this universal movement inspired by Culture is an act of Destiny, it is a decision which corresponds with the world's destiny and one which has been taken at the most critical moments of the world's history.

The ideal of 'making money' which has helped to hold together our materialistic world since the early nineteenth century is, for many reasons, gradually passing away and as a well known saying has it - 'Where there is no ideal the people perish.'

They perish because every ideal, even the lowest, is a rallying point a focus of ~~construction~~ construction, and when this goes then the Destructive Powers get their innings.

That the Destinies who watch over this world's evolution should have selected an Artist to undertake the immense work of canalizing the world's highest thought currents, is very significant.

It points to the Power of Art, the profound nature of Art, the all importance of Art.

Shelley made a great statement when he said "Poets are the trumpets that sing to battle Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world"

Had he been born to day to realize the wonderful influence that Music and Painting have had during the last hundred years, he might have said Art instead of Poetry, since Poetry is one of the Arts.

Shelley's statement has a double interest for us to day, for it is far more appropriate to our age than to his. It proclaims the power of Art and shows that all high effort and genuine spirituality is a condition of lofty warfare.

There are many reasons then, to believe that Roerich - a profound artist, possesses a wider and deeper insight into life than the majority of our politicians, social reformers and philosophers.

I was inspired many years ago to write a poem entitled 'High War' which opened with the lines:

" May God again let loose great wars  
Wherein is search and strife for ever  
To meet some spirit from the stars "

A few weeks after the Great War broke out, and I came to dislike the sound of these lines when, re-reading the piece, I found that it referred to a Sacred War a spiritual war, of which the Great War was a perversion.

More than twenty years had elapsed when, one day, I came across a sentence from Roerich

" There exists no such terror which cannot be transformed into a luminous solution by evoking into life a still greater tension of energy "

The heroic conviction of these lines recalled to my mind the phrase High War and, for the moment I seemed to be upon the brink of some revelation.

What if the one way out of War was through High War! just as the only way up from the basest instincts of human nature is through the higher mind?

In the last resort it is all a matter of potentiality, voltage, electricity, or, rather of those higher phases of electricity which constitute psychic energy.

To day it means that it is not enough to be peacefully minded, it is not enough to vote for the ideal of Peace, when the adverse party is in a state of greater tension and activity. War which is a state of intense and destructive activity can only be overcome by High War which will be a condition of even greater intensity and activity - but of constructive activity.



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That, it seems to me, is the heroic meaning of Roerich's message. He summons the world to a higher, nobler and more constructive type of warfare, a war of Culture whose object is to secure spiritual wealth, the only wealth, in the long run, worth attention, since it is that from which all the lower types of wealth take their reflection.

The big majority of people would probably conclude that such lofty ideals can never really have any lasting effect on a world governed by the power of Money and given over to warring materialisms.

It is futile however to judge the spiritual in terms of the temporal, for a visible failure may prove to be an invisible success.

This was the case of Confucius. Possessing the liveliest sense of order and justice, that has ever been known, he found himself, during a great part of his lifetime surrounded by a society of gangsters and ruthless politicians, so that at eighty years of age we find him declaring that, despite his long life of tireless effort, he had failed.

But what was the nature of this failure? Nothing less than the almost absolute moral control over four hundred millions of men for well nigh two thousand years.

It is the most stupendous warning that could be imagined. It is a warning to all cynical shallow, worldly scoffers of the Ideal, to remember that their little world of the here and the now is anything but powerful and that all their attempts to deny and extinguish the Light of the Spirit must inevitably be defeated.

In laying the foundations of Culture, in founding spiritual centres throughout the world Roerich is making an unprecedented effort to raise the level of thought in every nation. For profound reasons he has come to realize that no political and social system based on the old qualities of thought can save things now.

Such an undertaking is so much more arduous than anything hitherto attempted, that, at first sight, it must appear to many as well nigh impossible.

That Roerich has already started on the task however, suggests that it is possible, since everything hitherto undertaken by him has succeeded.

Moreover, he is not working merely through intellectual channels, but by spiritual power, and for one who possesses spiritual power there are a thousand gifted with intellectual power.

Now Roerich possesses spiritual power of a very high quality. Why this should be is not easy to say. Like genius, lofty spiritual power defies all definition or explanation, in short, it cannot be labelled or limited, being from the Infinite.

One of the reasons I am inclined to suggest is that all his life- and perhaps in previous lives- he has always been in a state of high war, of untiring effort.

He has been fighting all his life. Fighting against ignorance and misunderstanding; striving every moment to create great Art; forging his way past all sort of opposition to build up spiritual strongholds for the general welfare; proclaiming vital things in prose and verse; travelling everywhere to enlighten the best minds in twenty five countries, fighting his way, for profound spiritual reasons, through the impassible precipices and dangerous deserts of unknown Asia, and now, straining all his energies, he is striving to found spiritual centres throughout the world.

In all this he has shown himself to be the Ideal Warrior, for parallel with this unprecedented activity there are evidences of remarkable spiritual efforts.

His Banner of Peace then, should have an unusual and particular signification.

If there are any who are inclined to think that Roerich's idea of Peace is synonymous with slackness, ease, and repose, they have only to turn to his writings.

There they will be told that: 'The hope of ease, in all times, forced the people to forget the higher'

'Repose is nothing but an invention of the hordes of darkness'

They will hear of 'higher energies'; 'predestined victories'; 'untiring vigilance'; of 'fortresses of thought', and they will be told that if they are exhausted they should begin again and again.

In short, the most warlike language imaginable.

From all this one might infer that Roerich has the capacity of a great general, that he is far more warlike, in the best sense, the constructive sense, than the average military captain, and that he is not likely, when unnecessary, to destroy a fly.

His Banner of Peace is therefore a symbol of intense activity of the highest order and in this differs from those hoisted by our more urban and sedentary politicians.



It is a pity, perhaps, that the distinction cannot be made. It might help to clear the air. Were it not for the general misunderstanding which might ensue, it could far more appropriately be named 'The Banner of High War'.

All Roerich's efforts and activities have come to show that only a powerful crusade waged from a higher spiritual plane can hope to bring about permanent peace and unity.

Hitherto the Peace movements of the world have been directed largely by politicians and financiers who, for the most part, are connected with the material aspects of life.

Financial and political ambitions are generally to be found at the root of most wars and upheavals, so that they can hardly be expected to eliminate them.

Despite all that is said and believed to the contrary, all the world problems, of to day, derive from deeper causes than questions of finance, politics, or economics.

The Churches have failed to renew themselves and have fallen to the level of charitable organisations whose business it is to distribute the material things of life.

Moreover they have been taken in tow by the Financiers who rule the world, so that much of their spiritual independence has gone.

Otherwise, one might say that all the problems of to day reduce themselves in the last resort to a religious problem.

As things are we shall have to call it a spiritual problem.

It is very doubtful now if any political or economical organising of the nations can save the world from disruption.

Only some world wide change from a material to a spiritual goal can show the way out.

Disintegration, separation, and disruption are characteristic of Matter, just as Unity is in the nature of Spirit.

No fresh grouping or organising of the material side of life upon the circumference is likely to improve matters. We have to rise above, towards the Centre, where we shall find that heightened sense of unity or spiritual power which can overcome the destructive tendencies around us.

All the great religions and spiritual teachings of the past have concerned themselves with the conversion of the lower to the higher man. They have shown that it is only the higher spirit in a man that can accomplish this and no power outside of him.

Science will someday, perhaps, prove to us that all spirituality, all higher power is derived from great tension, great inner activity at the service of pure motive.

Just as the brutal and ignorant elements in a man can be gradually educated into something higher - something more potential, so the dark and destructive forces that break out into war can be guided to that higher plane which might logically be called High War, a state of intense spirituality alone capable of finally transmuting the Powers of Discord.

However sincere many of our statesmen and politicians may be in their desire for Peace, they have not that fiery spirituality, that high victorious concentration, which is able to raise the world to a higher level.

Were they to attempt to do so they would find themselves in the position of a man who wished to raise himself by the hair!

Such a change can only be brought about by those living on a higher plane.

This naturally brings us to the threshold of ~~human~~ Hierarchy, to the question of Higher Beings.

It is impossible to deny the existence of Higher Beings because it is not possible to do away with the idea of Infinity, anything less than Infinity seems impossible, and so with the question of Higher Beings.

All the great religions were founded by Higher Beings. In Asia alone, the gods, rishis, buddhas or enlightened Ones, can be counted by thousands.

In the West we have had a multitude of Saints, Heroes, Leaders, great Artists, who must certainly have drawn their inspiration from a higher level than that of our average humanity.

It has been generally taught or supposed that the 'pagan' Greeks cultivated, above all their bodily and intellectual powers and cared little about the existence of a spiritual realm.



We have only to study Aeschylus carefully to see that he lived far more in such regions than Shakespeare, for example, and so tremendous was his spiritual influence that, thousands of years later, when Wagner arose to build up his great Music Dramas, it was Aeschylus who inspired him with half his grandeur.

At Marathon, the Greek army beheld an apparition of Theseus, in full armour, fighting in forefront of the battle, and there are many historians who hold that this vision played a large part in deciding the victory.

Just before the great naval fight at Salamis all the Greeks prayed to their gods and heroes to assist them and despatched a ship to Aegina to bring back the spirit of Ajax and the heroes of former ages.

So soon as the ship touched harbour the Greeks knew that the great warrior was in their midst, and, without further hesitation they attacked and defeated one of the greatest armies known to History.

The modern mind so sceptical of what is spiritual, so sure in all things of its scientific superiority will have a tendency to dismiss this in a few words: 'superstition', 'autosuggestion'.

It is well worth remarking however, that with this sort of language the Greeks would have been practically wiped out of existence!

The modern attitude to the Invisible then, is anything but powerful, and it is one which is doomed to disappear.

Built upon the limitations of 19th Cent science, to day it finds its very foundations going, in fact almost gone.

The modern scientist knows that Matter, in the accepted sense of the term, does not exist, and that it is perhaps a sort of spiritual blindness.

He knows, for scientific reasons, that the very earth beneath him is by no means real, that the table upon which he is writing is only an illusion, and that the whole material scheme of things, including his own body, is no ultimate reality, but only an appearance.

In short he has arrived at the belief held many thousand years before by those Higher Beings of Ancient India - the Arhats, the Rishis and Buddhas, that the whole material Universe is but an appearance and that the only thing ultimately real and lasting is Spirit.

Should he employ such terms as Dynamism, Subtle Energies, or Radio-Activity, rather than spirit, it is all the more interesting.

If this transcendent vision of the man of science has not yet penetrated the general consciousness it is because such a change will only be brought about gradually. It will be done in great part, because, as Roerich has so well put it, - "Art is for all, art is for the people".

Through his own Art and inspiration Roerich has arrived at very much the same point of vantage as that of Ancient India, and present day Science, for he has also come to recognize the world of Spirit which is the substratum of this world of appearances.

It is this close contact with the Spiritual World which, despite these times of discord and darkness, has given him the energy to step forward as a leader and issue his call to arms on behalf of Culture.

He realises that we are at the advent of another Salamis - and Salamis is a symbol, this Greek victory being really a victory of Spirit over Matter.

A small body of men armed with an intense spiritual activity routed an overwhelming army of brute force by sheer fire of enthusiasm, and the fire once kindled produced - Athens, the Parthenon, Pheidias, Aeschylus, Sophocles, and, in short, a great part of that wonderful Hellenic Culture.

To day the situation is, if anything, more difficult. The enemy is not advancing from any one point on the horizon, but is in our midst.

The enemy is a State of Mind, and the wars, revolutions, upheavals and crimes which surround us are only the effects of this state.

It might be difficult to discover any one cause for modern Materialism, since its origins are multiple, but all those of the 19th century whose religion was written in their ledgers and whose motto was - Time is Money - did, of course, their very best to create it.



Modern Materialism is the antithesis of all that is meant by the word 'Culture', so that in calling all the advanced spirits of the world to rally round the 'Banner of Culture', Roerich has found the solution.

It is a solution which is the result of deep inspiration and due to a flash of inspiration rather than to any process of reasoning.

Only Culture can deal with the causes which cause all the evil of our time, without wasting energy on the effects.

There has been a general depreciation in the value of words so that a 'saint' has come to signify almost the opposite of its original meaning.

Saints like St Bernard and St Thomas Aquinas however, possessed a spiritual energy which it would be difficult to parallel to day. They travelled all over Europe at a time when travelling was a danger and hardship. They built schools and convents, educated the nations, and by their supreme energy, directed and guided the men of war and state, and with all this found time to compose immense metaphysical treatises on the scale of Aristotle.

They were in a state of High War fighting against darkness and barbarianism and fighting with an energy which for quality and continuity surpassed even that of men of war. They were spiritual warriors.

Roerich has much of this untiring energy, for his power is not merely intellectual but spiritual, dynamic, irradiating. He also is a crusader.

He belongs naturally to that family of higher beings who, irrespective of all distinctions of race, class, or academic honours are guiding and inspiring the world at large towards a more luminous way of life.

In India - which is still the world's great spiritual reservoir - there are signs that man is again beginning to rise towards a higher plane of consciousness.

Such marvellous spiritual energies as Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, Gandhi, Ramana Maharishi and Aurobindo Ghose, such great poets and scientists as Tagore and Jagadis Bose show that a spiritual renaissance has already started, and that India is once again beginning on new and scientific lines to recreate the spiritual splendours of the past.

That Roerich, from his high station in the Himalayas, should aspire to change the thought current of the world, may seem natural then, to many out there, but very doubtful of course to most of us over here.

And yet, there are many signs that he is likely to succeed and that Culture will conquer.

In the first place there is the warning of what happened to Confucius; and then, it is not so much the case of one man wishing to change the tendency of all against their will, as of the Voice of Humanity itself calling from the crest of the wave, as to the direction of the waters!

The Irish poet W.B. Yeats, whose strange and half mathematical insight into the nature of things almost borders on that of Ancient Tibet, says: 'As if I read the world, the sudden revelation of future changes is not from visible history but from its anti-self. Every objective energy intensifies a counter energy the other gyre turning inward, in exact measure with the outward whirl.'

If this be so, then centuries of Materialism must have generated a corresponding power of spirituality, so that there is reason to suppose that we are approaching some immense springtime of the spirit which no power on earth will be able to resist.

In this case, the movements of the future will be on the side of Roerich, a fact which he already seems to anticipate when he writes: "There is no one nation or class with us but the entire multitude of human beings, because in the last analysis it is the human heart which is open to the beauty of creativeness."

And what may seem impossible to many at the moment, might in the end prove to be the inevitable.

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It is interesting to see to what extent Roerich, as an artist, belongs to Russian music, to that great movement which, beginning with Glinka, and, developing through Opera and the Theatre finally produced the Russian Ballet, the most important event after Wagner and, in some ways, the finest synthesis of all the arts since the Greeks.

He is certainly a part of the movement, and to a greater extent perhaps than the other Russian painters of his time.

The poetic legends of Russian life which inspired the work of Glinka, Balakirev, Moussorgsky, Borodin, Rimsky Korsakov and Stravinsky had always been the chief element in Roerich's work and he had probably a deeper sense and more profound knowledge of Russian history than any of these men.

That he should have been called upon to paint the settings for Russian Opera -- for Prince Igor, Sadko, Snow Maiden, the Maid of Pskov, Khovanschina, Tzar Saltan and the Rite of Spring shows that he was an integral part of the movement.

I have reason to think that he may have been the most essential the most authentic element in it.

Not that he played a more important part than Moussorgsky, Borodin or Rimsky Korsakov, but that he was nearer, in many ways, than they, to the legends and poetic traditions on which it was all built.

Having followed the evolution of Russian Opera and Ballet in Paris from its beginning and known many of the artists connected with it I have always been impressed by the role played by Roerich.

The setting which the artist produced for Prince Igor is probably nearer to the music than any other which could have been painted.

And there is a deep reason for all this. In the scenery for the Polovtsy camp Roerich is not only painting Russian legend, he is painting his own life.

Twelve years after this we are astonished to see that he has settled down in these same tents, there is the same smoke rising from the camp fires and there stand the banners silhouetted against the green afterglow and the crescent moon.

He is on his expedition through Turkestan.

Borodin, it seems had recourse to travellers from Central Asia for the melodies of Prince Igor, but here is Roerich listening to them at their very source.

The Snow Maiden of Rimsky-Korsakov, the most fairy-like of Russian Operas had always appealed to Roerich and the scenery he produced was the most appropriate that could be imagined.

And here again after many years strange coincidences and parallels arise.

The artist is working in one of the rooms of the old palace of the King of Ladak, built on a precipice near the frontier of Tibet.

His family who have come to meet him exclaim -- "Why, this is the very room of the King of Berendei!" and they stand astonished to see the artist working in almost the identical scenery which he had painted for this ballet many years before.

With a ballet like the Rite of Spring (Le Sacre du Printemps) where the scenery is entirely mythic and prehistoric one could hardly expect, of course, such a coincidence to happen. But it does happen.

Among the mountain fastnesses of Kashmir Roerich suddenly comes across the Rite of Spring.

It is Spring Day. The same fires are burning, there are the same costumes and dances, the same sort of music, so that he himself has to exclaim -- "When we composed the Rite of Spring together with Stravinsky we could hardly conceive that Kashmir would greet us with its very setting."

One might almost conclude that Roerich himself was a part of Russian legend, and with all he has done and is doing, he may be for Russia what Wagner will be for Germany one of its most legendary figures.



Roerich's understanding of Opera is that of a musician, and all the movements of the orchestra the voice and the dance appear to him like the colour and movement of his own compositions.

In speaking of his work for the Theatre he says : " I compose a symphony with the music choosing a leitmotiv of colour which corresponds with the tonality of the piece."

He enters into the movement of the Drama , in the same way as the composer , and then translates it into his own Art. This may explain why highly sensitive critics such as Ivan Narodny can hear musical themes whenever they examine any of his large canvases.

The settings which Roerich has made for Opera , Ballet and Poetic Drama are, in many respects the most interesting aspects of his work.

To some extent his pictures may be said to form the background of some invisible drama and it is this which gives them their peculiar atmosphere.

Like the fragments of a Greek column or the infinite in a Japanese work of Art , they suggest rather than complete and engender an air of mystery.

I think this is because the artist himself is charged with all the psychic accumulations of the countries through which he has passed , and whether the landscape be in Spain , in Russia or in far off Tibet, he seems by some rare intuition to apprehend all that has been enacted there.

He is dense with many experiences , like a man that has passed perhaps, through many lives and has travelled so far on the circle that he is round again in the position of a fresh start , a new cycle, already conscious of some new springtide.

The Rite of Spring which was presented in May 1913 at the Theatre des Champs -Elysees, Paris, may , in the future, come to be recognized as one of the most important artistic events of the 20th cent.

It was not the work of any one artist but of several men of genius - Stravinsky, Roerich, Nijinsky, Diaghilew, seconded by a corps de ballet which, I believe, was almost equally inspired.

It was certainly ' monumental ' as Stravinsky had dreamed - a monument to the Russian genius.

At that moment I took part in an advanced Art movement in Paris , and can still recollect that eventful first night. We were young, enthusiastic, and thought that nothing mattered but Art. The piece ended in a free fight while the discussions it had provoked lasted well on into the next morning.

This extraordinary production must have seemed to many a devastating whirlwind come to destroy all the conventions of the Past.

It is significant that Roerich's contribution was, in many ways, far less revolutionary than the other elements , so that some advanced critics to-day are ready to accuse him of being academic.

It is just possible that they overlook - probably ignore - the part played by the painter in this strange production.

Stravinsky is said to have first had the idea from a dream which occurred to him in St Petersburg in 1910, in which he imagined a ballet which should be as massive as a block of sculpture, as monumental as some immense figure in stone.

It was natural then, that Roerich, an artist of neolithic imagination, should have been asked to produce the setting.

As far back as 1900 we find him painting scenes in which prehistoric groups are seen greeting the sun at springtime, and through all his early years he seems to have been haunted by these visions of the Stone Age.

As in the case of the Prince Igor of Borodin he may be said to have been nearer, in some ways , to the sources of the Rite of Spring than Stravinsky himself .

It was Roerich who wrote the libretto and inspired the ritual as well as painting the settings , and Stravinsky seems to have recognized his inspiration by dedicating the work to him.

The extraordinary character of the music , with its deafening hammer blows and monstrous rhythms has caused this to be overlooked , so that critics have generally failed to recognize that Roerich's contribution was all important.



It is significant that in his later works Stravinsky seems to have less driving power behind him. He has made remarkable technical discoveries, retrieved new ground from the past, and gone on in an undaunted spirit towards fresh sonorous feats, but the great winds of the steppe and the tremor of the earth are no longer heard as in this work.

Those who have not had an opportunity of living in Paris and following the sudden changes that have arisen there in all the arts during the last twenty five years will hardly be able to gauge the 'modern' attitude and all its limitations.

When Roerich, for the first time in 1913 presented his opera settings in Paris, many of the leading artists and critics were of opinion that he was - 'The inventor of a new type of stage scenery,' - and his work began to be considered as a revolution in stage setting.

This, however, does not prevent a modern critic from informing us that Roerich's work, after all is - 'of the academic type and compared with the settings which Picasso painted for the Russian Ballet in 1917, it shows how immature the art of stage painting was before the war'.

After reading this sort of criticism one has doubts about the ultra modern attitude.

Much of its outlook becomes provincial being the opinion of a clique and of a clique that hardly ever quits the asphalt.

This is not the place to attack the city, but in future, I risk the prophecy, that the purely urban type of mind is going to be put in its proper place.

That any art could have risen from a stage of infancy to maturity and perfection in the space of four years - above all during four years of war - is of course ridiculous.

I saw most of Roerich's settings for Russian ballet in 1913 and, four years later the scenery made by Matisse, Picasso and Derain for the Diaghilew ballets of 1917.

From this I was convinced that Roerich was a born stage painter and that these other artists - however great they may be as painters - were not in their real element.

It is possible that the Russian temperament is more synthetic than that of the West - the Russian ballet which is a fusion of all the arts - suggests this, and since Roerich belongs to the society which produced such men as Glinka, Moussorgsky, Borodin, Rimsky-Korsakov and Stravinsky it is natural that his Art should in many ways approach their music.

It is certain that his stage settings have the character of great music, are themselves a form of visual music, and that they accompany the movements of the drama in ways that the easel painter is not able to divine.

Compared with the scenery of Roerich the stage settings of Matisse, Picasso and Derain give the impression of enlarged pictures. They have not that inner unity with the drama which Roerich's work shows and they are the work of specialists whose real tendency is to segregate painting from the other arts rather than to approach it.

Just before the war I recollect a meeting at which Stravinsky, Ravel, Picasso and other well known artists were present. From the discussion that arose I understood that the 'subject' in a work of art was going to be taboo. And so it was. During many years a sort of laboratory movement set in and the arts were segregated from one another like chemicals in test tubes.

Any literary or poetic associations in a picture were enough to condemn it and many of the more advanced painters began to produce work which resembled the illustrations to some geometrical problem. I knew one painter who was able to create a new school merely by placing colour schemes together like chords of music.

The subject in a picture began to be looked upon as a limitation, and just as Stravinsky protested against its contaminating influence in music, so painters began to treat it as an inferior element which ought to be excluded from the realms of pure painting.

Such an attitude however, could not be expected to last indefinitely since its value - and it had a certain value - lay in the direction of experiment and research and in its concentration on the purely concrete qualities of a work of art.



I was not astonished then, some years later, to hear from one of the pioneers of the movement that - ' the subject was gradually coming back '.

Efforts to deepen and enrich the technical tradition of the Arts have always been going on. It is possible that the change which took place at the time of Giotto when the Byzantine style was replaced by more natural forms seemed as revolutionary then as modern painting does to day.

The same will occur with the modern elements in all the Arts, what is genuine and of permanent worth will remain, the absurdities will disappear.

It is possible that the fanatical pioneers of these ultra modern tendencies would receive a shock if they were able to look back on modern movements from the future.

Those who admire the jazz and cubist elements in Stravinsky and the fact that he has apparently freed himself from the main Russian tradition which started with Glinka, might be surprised to find that the place eventually assigned to him may be somewhere in his native steppe not far from Rimsky-Korsakov, unless this is taken by Prokofieff.

In a century or so a visitor to any of our large galleries might not find any greater difference between Corot and Picasso than we can discover between Constable and Chardin.

When Roerich designed the settings for the Rite of Spring in 1912, his style was at that time the most advanced and it is a question if any other painter could have approached the heart of the subject with such insight.

Not only did he give the outer sense of Spring - the great spaces of the growing light the hard green landscape caught up by the evening glow - but he also gave that inner sense of the sharp, chill sap rising through the pores of the earth, all the acid activity of fresh vegetation as shrill in its movements as the east wind.

The colours were hard and keen, the forms rough and primitive and what was infinitely old in a circle of ancient rocks seemed to have again come round on the ring of time and pointed to the future.

The most modern technique of to-day could not have done more, not half as much!

With the modern movement which, starting with Cezanne has produced such masters as Renoir, Gauguin, Matisse and Derain, painting is an end in itself and altogether apart from what it may happen to represent.

In the words of one of its foremost interpreters it is an art - ' freed from all traces of representation and sensibility, something akin to the absolute. '

It is obvious that Roerich has other intentions, and that much of his inspiration is derived not only from the subject and the symbol but also from his rare sensibility to the associations and psychic emanations which surround a theme, a legend, a city or a landscape.

It is because of this that he was able to produce those unique settings for the Rite of Spring which gave the sense of an infinitely remote past merging into the great spaces of the future.

But this is also the reason why the rising generation, above all, the younger painters who are brought up in exclusive admiration of all the modern movements between Cezanne and Matisse have a tendency to look on Roerich's style as academic and something nearer to illustration than to painting, something prior to the great technical change initiated by Cezanne!

Such opinions need not trouble us very much since these painters take up just the same attitude with regard to Turner, and it does not need much foresight to prophesy that they and their works will for the most part have disappeared when Turner and Roerich remain to be universally admired.

It would not be difficult however, to show that Roerich was, in many ways, a pioneer in the general movement towards a freer technique, that he was one of the first to repudiate the Naturalism of the past with its fastidious detail, and that his early canvases, such as ' The Call of the Sun ' were among the most advanced types of painting before the War.

In the art of Music Russia has, for a century, been in advance of the West so that the most modern of European composers, Debussy, was content to follow in the footsteps of Moussorgsky.



Moreover the principle creators to day in modern Music are Russian - Stravinsky, Prokofieff and Oboukhoff.

There is reason to suppose then, that Russia cannot have been very far behind the West in the more modern tendencies of Art.

In 1895 a group of well known painters - Vrubel, Serov, Somov, and Roerich began to lead a crusade against academic traditions with very much the same ideals as those which inspired men like Courbet, and Manet and Cezanne.

Roerich's early contact with Byzantine Art gave him an oriental sense of colour, something almost Persian in its richness, whereas Western artists like Matisse only began to acquire it towards 1905, by a careful study of Persian miniature.

Gauguin, perhaps from his heredity, had something of this innate sense of colour, but Roerich, in this respect may be considered to be in advance of the West.

Like the colour tones in the orchestra of Moussorgsky, Rimsky Korsakov, and Borodin he has an oriental wealth and depth which is not to be found in Western painting.

In this he is especially Russian and the same may be discovered in the works of two other well known Russian painters - Gontcharova and Larionov, whose colour schemes have a dash and spontaneity which is not always to be found in the work of their contemporaries Matisse and Picasso.

In some ways Roerich might be considered to be one of the very greatest of scene painters.

The Russians have produced other great stage painters - Bakst, Benois, Gontcharova, Larionov, some of whom have brought stage setting to a science in itself, but none of them have the breadth of power and the wide poetic outlook into the world of legend which Roerich possesses.

In this his creative intuition brings him near to Wagner. He is the counterpart, as it were, in painting of those great creators of Music Drama - Wagner, Moussorgsky, Rimsky-Korsakov and Borodin and he has a sense of rhythm and poetry which is obviously of the same scale.

In the Snow Maiden of Rimsky-Korsakov the artist found a theme well suited to his genius. Here he was at home. This fairy-like legend of Ancient Russia had all the elements that have since appeared in the artist's work. It was full of myth and poetry for it had that poetry of the earth which is always associated with early pagan ritual.

It may have given Roerich the idea of the Rite of Spring, it certainly attracted him more than any other work of the stage so that we find him producing no less than three different settings.

The costumes which he designed for this Opera, for Migir and the Boyars have a Tartar simplicity, a Chinese beauty which show that the artist is himself something of an oriental.

Later, when he came to travel through Mongolia and Tibet he discovered many of these designs and this is particularly interesting, for it would seem to show that what is called Imagination is often nothing but the evocation of our experiences either in the past or in the future.

All the poetry of Russian legend and folklore is to be found in the scenery which Roerich painted for this Opera.

The valley of Yarila with its pine forests and clear vistas recalls the snowy beauty of those landscapes in which he had depicted the exploits of St Sergius. It is something specifically Russian in its northern purity and fresh poetry, something akin to spring torrents and the music of Grieg.

It is not surprising then that Roerich should have been commissioned by the Moscow Art Theatre to supply the setting to Grieg's Peer Gynt.

In the atmosphere of this poetic drama he was so much at home that when the Directors of this Theatre proposed to send him to Norway to study the local colour, he refused, explaining that a close study of the music and the text would be likely to bring him nearer.

In this he was right and when the other artists and actors had returned from Norway they recognized the remarkable truth of his setting.

And he was no less at home in the Drama of Maeterlinck. The settings which he produced for Princess Maleine, at the request of the Moscow Art Theatre, are among the finest stage paintings that have ever been made. Not that they are brilliant in colour or otherwise extraordinary as works of Art, but they are remarkably suited to the Drama.



Here, as with Russian Opera and the works of Wagner, Roerich entered into the tragedy with a leitmotiv of colour. The scheme is that of a nocturne outlined in dark cypress tints and the sombre blue of old towers seen under moonlight.

In the scene of Maleine's chamber, where the unfortunate princess lies listening to her murderer's approach, he has depicted the mediaeval vaultings like the limbs of some giant spider.

This shows to what extent his settings help to create the psychological atmosphere of the Drama.

The costumes have a delicate beauty of design and show that Roerich can be a master of the human figure when he wishes.

In Sister Beatrice, Pelleas and Melisande, Aglavaine et Selysette, he gives us gothic mystery and mediaeval beauty as perhaps no other painter could have done.

Roerich, in his way, is a poet like Maeterlinck, like Tagore, whereas most of our modern stage painters can hardly be included in this category.

His studies in archaeology, his researches into the Stone Age, his knowledge of the mediaeval cities of the north gave him a unique advantage over other artists.

These mysterious corridors, ancient towers, fabulous forests and vaulted chambers are all products of the artist's experience.

He has passed through these fantastic streets and market places in Moscow, in Ancient Pskov, in Nijni Novgorod; he has gone through these underground passages, he has himself lived in these ancient towers.

I remember just before the war losing my way one winter's twilight along the banks of some old waterway outside of Gand. Ancient walls and towers quivered in the slate coloured waters and a wintry afterglow silent and clear as silver peopled the place with ghosts.

There lay the spirit of the North and all the poetry of Maeterlinck.

In later years when I saw the settings that Roerich had painted I immediately recalled this scene.

Roerich who is also a poet of the North has been called the Maeterlinck of painting.

This is true in a sense but only to a limited extent.

As an artist, that is as a poet, Maeterlinck never got much beyond this twilight stage, this pre-war state of feeling which may, for all we know, have been the twilight of a passing world.

To Roerich however, it was but a passing phase, his work pointing rather towards dawn and the light of the Future.

The poetry of Maeterlinck is drawn from that mysterious atmosphere of the North in which the invisible world plays almost as much part as the visible. This is the land of the Hyperboreans, the country of the Beyond, from which Apollo was said, significantly enough to arrive every springtime.

Roerich was born in these regions of myth and legend, he is at home in such an atmosphere, and in painting the settings for Maeterlinck's world he was only continuing much of his former work.

Modern students of Art tell us that the aspect of the world and man's position in it has been completely changed by the discoveries of Science.

"Man may be in the foreground but the drama of man's life is acted out for us against a tremendous background of natural happenings: a background that preceded man and will outlive him; and this background profoundly affects our imagination and hence our art. We moderns are in love with the background. Our art is a landscape art."

This passage which defines the attitude of modern Art and the Drama of Maeterlinck might serve as an excellent description of almost all Roerich's work.

It shows that he is in keeping with his time, that his outlook is the result of Science and its influence; for, as already shown, it supplies that poetry of life which Science at first, seemed to have taken away.

Many of his theatre settings, especially those for Russian opera, are complete in themselves. The scenes from Snow Maiden, Prince Igor and Tsar Saltan have a strange



fascination, a poetic appeal like that of the Arabian Nights, a peculiar property which, at times, evokes - 'magic casements and faery lands forlorn.'

An advanced cubist or futurist might consider all this as foreign to Art, something out of date. The only thing however that will eventually prove to be out of date is a mere sleight of hand void of spirit, and this is becoming common enough.

The inspiration behind most of Roerich's work is something rare, unique, indefinable.

Like the spirit that informs the works of Rimsky-Korsakov and Wagner, Maeterlinck and Tagore, it is the product of centuries of stored up experience, of deep heredity, of the accumulations of spirit.

It is not to be explained or arrived at by any technical system, because, after all, has been said it remains a form of great poetry.

In the work of all real artists and creators there is a preparation, a gradual leading up to some definite style, which afterwards changes under fresh innovations into another aspect.

Beethoven's work has often been treated in this way, by those who, for convenience divide it into three periods. The same might be said of Roerich.

There is the early Russian phase, that of the Theatre, and lastly his Asiatic period.

It is interesting to see how almost all his early work up to the War is a preparation for his Theatre settings.

The scenery he painted for the Maeterlinck dramas was, as we have seen, a synthesis of all those early works painted in the mediaeval cities of Russia.

The scenery for Wagner and Russian Opera might also be considered as a resumé of all those landscapes which he had produced in his native North and in Finland.

It is there that we shall find the natural decor for many of the scenes in Moussorgsky, Rimsky, Wagner and Grieg.

The affinity of these early landscapes with the folk music of the lands they represent is often quite striking.

One need only listen to a concert of Sibelius or, better still, to the folk songs of Finland to see how the landscapes which Roerich painted there near Lake Ladoga will gradually emerge on the mind's eye.

In both there is the same sense of pure and simple lives, of a long forgotten state of innocence still preserved amidst the solitude of forlorn regions, and if the music is melancholic and full of yearning, nevertheless it has a strange depth and poetry which is denied to the city and perhaps unknown to modern civilization.

Roerich has outlined these profound sentiments in landscapes of rare simplicity, where the shafts of the setting sun trail their strange searchlights across the floor of glimmering lakes.

Unless it be in parts of Western Ireland there is nothing more inscrutable perhaps in all Europe than these far off regions: like Tibet, like the landscapes of Roerich they are full of mystery.

This explains why the settings made for Tristan and Isolde evoke as by some magic process the prehistoric coastline of Ancient Ireland.

Roerich is at home in the country of this legend. I imagine that after Snow Maiden this was the theme which came to him most naturally, that it was the work in which he took a particular pleasure and which gave him the greatest inspiration.

It is significant that the style of primitive dwellings, the rocks, mountains and sea coasts in many of Roerich's works suggest scenes from the West of Ireland.

There is the same prehistoric simplicity and those immense stretches of solitude that are peculiar to Connemara.

No doubt he has seen all this amid his own Northern gulfs and in Finland, but I am inclined to think that there is a deeper reason, and that is that much of his work might be defined as a subconscious evocation of the Stone Age.

The atmosphere and scenery of the West of Ireland has probably changed very little since those remote times; it is one of those rare parts of Europe where a prehistoric past has never been trampled on by the feet of civilization.

In all Roerich's work there is a sense of the Theatre and this, because he is a man of action.



His pictures are settings to some invisible drama, some unseen achievement which often refers to the future.

In some of the early canvases such as 'Sea Coast Dwellers' where primitive folk are seen hunting wild duck at dawn, there is a freshness which reminds us of Chaucer. The colour scheme subtle and varied pleases the eye with its delicate repetitions, which render in painting what a Prelude of Chopin gives us in music.

The series of prophetic canvases - 'The Last Angel', 'The Cry of the Serpent', 'The Doomed City', 'The Lurid Glare' and 'Human Deeds' - painted before 1914, and all obviously inspired by the coming war, belong to a category which, curiously enough, modern art critics seem to have overlooked. Had they foreseen one they might possibly have labelled such work 'apocalyptic'.

The tendency of all modern criticism and most modern art, as we have shown, is to decry the subject, to separate the aesthetic qualities of a work from its content, and to consider any work in which the subject is the main pretext as a third rate production.

A well known critic tells us.

"What painters have to do is not to convey sentiments about morals and religion but to create forms which have an emotional significance of their own."

That is exactly what Roerich has done. Not only had he no intention of making a moral or religious statement, but there is every reason to believe that he had not even the idea of announcing war!

It is evident that he arrived at such a revelation by - 'the creation of forms which have an emotional significance', and not at all from a desire to illustrate a subject.

Were it possible to found a new school of painting, after this prophetic series, it might well be called the 'Apocalyptic School'.

Painting of this sort however, is inimitable and consequently could no more give rise to a school than the works of Blake.

It might be easier to imitate Renoir, Manet, or Matisse, to adopt many of their methods and assume their pagan outlook than to follow in the footsteps of such visionaries as Roerich and Blake.

Renoir may be one of the greatest masters of the human figure since Titian but Roerich is certainly one of the most spiritual of masters since Leonardo and Blake.

Matisse who possesses a remarkable sense of the plastic tells us that 'We are born with the tastes and characteristics of our time. We are not masters of our work, rather is it imposed upon us'.

This is perhaps another way of saying that Pheidias has no choice between being Pheidias or El Greco.

If this is so with regard to what Matisse calls our 'sensibilité', our particular way of reacting to our surroundings, then why should not the same hold good with regard to the subject?

Pheidias and El Greco gave us images of their divinities. Renoir, Monet and Matisse - in fact, most of the moderns show, in addition to a remarkable technique, the pagan satisfactions of the 'petit bourgeois'.

The one was probably as inevitable as the other.

Artists to-day assure us that Pheidias really cared little for the worship of Pallas Athene and was only concerned with the craftsman's point of view; that El Greco's real aspiration was not to praise the Holy Trinity but to create great dramas from the rhythmic alternations of light and shade - in short, that neither of these masters was very much interested in the nature of his subject.

There is no way of proving such a statement. They were born into the nature of their subject as historically as any modern is born into a period of 'genre' painting or still life. They certainly had the same intense feeling for the form of their divinities as Cezanne showed in his still-lives, the only difference being that the moment in which Pheidias lived - the age of Salamis was godlike and that of Cezanne 'scientific'.

At that time the rigid separation of the aesthetic value of a work of Art from its subject had not yet set in, and it is a question if the whole process is not something of a surgical operation due to a general decay in plastic vision.



In France the movement began with Cezanne who showed that he could extract something far more vital and stimulating from an old hat and a clay pipe than David and his followers had done with a whole pantheon of classical divinities.

It is obvious that great painting of an indifferent subject such as Cezanne gave us in many a still life is of far more value than pompous histories worked out in an Art which eventually came to differ very little from coloured photography - the sort of thing that Poynter, Collins, and Alma Tadema perpetrated in England, Bougereau and a long line of academicians in France.

This reaction however has already done its work - at least in France. After all it was a reaction and a very necessary one, but if painting were to continue on the lines of the later cubists, and all interest in the subject were to be eliminated, Art would only be the poorer for it, and, in the long run deprived of its *raison d'être*.

El Greco who may have inspired Cezanne with much of his technique and who has taken by storm most modern craftsmen, is now looked upon by the advance guard as 'the greatest of all painters'.

If he returned however, he would likely understand very little of the modern attitude to his work.

I doubt if he could have shared the exasperation of our leading English critic who tells us that 'Subject is the only thing in a picture which nine thousand nine hundred and ninety nine people out of ten thousand can understand at all'.

It is not certain whether there was such a distinction in his time, and there is every reason to think that he was as interested in the nature of the subject as in his treatment of it.

Greco had a profound knowledge of the philosophical and theological ideas of his age; he is said to have possessed a very important library and everything goes to show that his view of the subject was anything but that of an artisan.

The stress laid upon the 'artisan' element in painting, since the time of Renoir and Cezanne, upon the nature of Craftsmanship, on what the French call '*métier*' has led many artists to the belief that the subject is something extra-pictorial something extraneous and foreign to a work of art.

In music we shall find the same outlook. Stravinsky turns away from the ultra musical elements in Scriabin, his theosophy, for instance, as something harmful and foreign to Art, and this attitude, like that of the painters, has had the effect of making the artist concentrate on his craft.

When everything has been said, however, from this standpoint, there still remains the fact that painting, like poetry and music, is a language, a means of communication and even if we could confine it to the pattern on a Persian carpet, an arabesque or a carved figure with no associations, it would have to convey through pattern, form and colour some particular phase of what Matisse calls '*la sensibilité de l'époque*'.

This is much easier with a subject than with pure decoration.

Most modern artists even when, for aesthetic reasons, they steer clear of direct representation do not care to ignore the subject and the most spiritual among the moderns Gauguin and Van Gogh refused to do so.

Almost every modern painter has some special atmosphere, some particular phase of life which, for temperamental reasons, he prefers to any other and to mention the names of such painters as Renoir, Cezanne, Seurat, Monet, Gauguin, Van Gogh, Matisse, Bonnard, Picasso, Derain, is to call up an almost similar variety of subjects.

Some of these masters seem to have had very little imagination.

Cezanne, for instance, was often glad to get his inspiration out of a catalogue or from other painters.

Turner and Roerich however, are so richly endowed with imagination that they can give us a vast panoramic view of life, an epic in painting.

For this very reason they are considered by many present day craftsmen and critics as ultra pictorial and illustrators perhaps, of some literary or poetic vision of life rather than pure painters.

Merely from the technical standpoint however, Turner, in some directions may be said to have done as much for modern painting as Cezanne. He may not have laid the foundations of a new order like the Master of Aix, but his tremendous pioneer work in the rendering of light and atmosphere helped to create Impressionism and all those movements that



led to modern painting.

He was something more than a mere craftsman however, for he had the imagination of a great poet, and his immense epic of land and sea which ran into some twenty thousand paintings and drawings has a depth and grandeur that sets him by the side of Shakespeare.

This is an element which many of the modern and more unimaginative painters cannot forgive. To them Turner is an illustrator.

With Roerich the case is somewhat different. There is obviously less of the literary or poetic appeal in him than in Turner. His mountain fortresses and citadels are not particularly romantic or sentimental, we see them for what they are, for what his painting has made of them, and, in the great majority of cases, his pictures, like those of Gauguin or Cezanne appeal to our plastic sense, to our delight in colour rather than to our interest in what they represent.

There are, however, quite a number of works which attract us by the nature of the subject by the legend or mythological episode which they convey.

The same sort of thing however is to be found in all great painting, and it is difficult to find compositions of any considerable size in which either the subject or the plastic element does not predominate.

Ruskin, writing on this aspect of Art, almost a century ago, and, of course from quite a different approach than that of to-day says: - "The style is greater or less in exact proportion to the nobleness of the interests and passions involved in the subject"

To the modern critic who has got rid of all those extraneous elements which a moralist like Ruskin required in order to clinch his dogmas such a statement now seems obsolete, it has the ring of the 19th century ecclesiastic about it.

But Ruskin goes on to say: - "In nine cases out of ten, the so called historical or high art painter is a person infinitely inferior to the painter of flowers or still life"

Here he shows himself well aware of the modern attitude and, almost half a century before Cezanne, he lays stress on the artisan qualities in Art, its aesthetic ~~sense~~ values.

Provided the painter be sincere however, Ruskin's first statement is well worth attention.

If one goes deep enough into the question of the subject and its influence on art it all comes to a question of mythology.

Science has changed our sense of values; it has revealed the whole universe in a drop of water and made us feel the glory of light reflected from a door.

A still-life of Cezanne shows us the monumental grandeur hitherto unsuspected in the common objects of every day life and our whole outlook has broken away from the values and conventions of the past.

There are reasons for believing that we are moving towards a fresh synthesis, a new mythology in which other values will go to build up the spiritual architecture of the future.

It is this which Roerich, in many ways in advance of his time, already senses.

The subjects which he paints are almost always sacred subjects. They are related to all the heroic thoughts and sacred places of the earth, through which he not only glances from some new angle into the Past, but looks forward to the Future.

Compared with most of the other painters of our time, whose outlook is largely neo-pagan and materialistic, Roerich is pre-eminently a sacred painter.

Ruskin says: "The habitual choice of sacred subjects implies that the painter has a natural disposition to dwell on the highest thoughts of which humanity is capable; it constitutes him so far forth a painter of the highest order."

This is probably a view which the Future will come to adopt but from a totally different line of approach, in fact, so different as to appear new.

The religious attitude will have become mystical, the moral outlook scientific and the historic element will be in great part legendary or mythological.



When we come to compare Roerich's art with that of other well known painters of to-day we are obliged to admit that it belongs to a different line of development.

He cannot be judged according to the trend Art has taken in Paris during the last twenty five years, for he has less need, perhaps, of successive revolutions in style.

In 1900 Prof. Cormon recognized that Roerich was in advance of the style of painting then prevailing in Paris, when he said - 'We shall learn from you.'

Unlike most artists of to-day Roerich has never looked upon Paris and its modern developments in art as an indispensable centre.

His attitude to all these new movements, which he seems to have appreciated at their real worth, has always been one of independence.

Much of the modern technique he has discovered for himself, and very wisely he has evolved a style of his own which owes little allegiance to contemporary methods, but conveys his peculiar vision of the world as no other could have done.

As a matter of fact Roerich does not belong to the Western developments of Art but to the Byzantine tradition.

This explains his independence with regard to the more recent movements.

Nearly all modern art is the result of a series of revolts against those academic conceptions into which the Greco-Roman traditions of the Renaissance finally degenerated.

Roerich's art however, derives from a tradition which goes beyond the Renaissance, and beyond Giotto, and one might almost say that this dispenses him from taking up the position of many modern painters towards the past.

For him the past is much more likely to be represented by Byzance and the Orient, in which we find ~~traces of the~~ no traces of the Greco-Roman cult or the anatomical drawing of the Renaissance.

Having once revolted against the petrified formula of the schools and created the organic style which he required, Roerich has had no further use for abrupt changes but has gone on gradually enlarging and simplifying his technique, his principle object being not so much to experiment as to construct.

There probably never was a period in which Art has had to undergo so many changes and to submit to so many new influences as that of the last fifty years.

From the time of Courbet and the realists until to-day, painting appears to be in a state of perpetual revolution absorbing and assimilating new ideas, constant changes in technique and a multitude of strange influences that surpass in number and variety anything of the kind since the Renaissance.

Chinese, Japanese, Indian, Persian, Cretan, Mohammedan, Mexican and Egyptian art together with Negro sculpture have all left their impress, so that with the exception of the few modern masters who have always known what they wanted the world of Art, during the last twenty years, has had a striking resemblance to the political world!

It is perhaps significant that the latest of all these influences is that of Byzantine Art.

Henri Matisse may be considered as one of the greatest specialists among the modern masters. He has assimilated almost every one of these exotic trends, and, after a lifetime of arduous technical research and immense experience we find him curiously enough drawing near to the Byzantine tradition.

Modern critics who are interested in such an approach have completely changed their attitude to Byzantine art. They admit that their knowledge, at the moment, is insufficient for them to go deeper into the question, but there is no longer the old tendency to look upon Byzantine work as something immature, stereotyped, relatively lifeless.

Blake, who was always a century or more in advance of everybody else, said that the Byzantine style had been given him through divine revelation - which it probably was.

In view of what Roerich has told us of the profound character of this art, and of the devoted attitude of the ikon painters these latest developments in Western technique are particularly interesting.

This makes Roerich's position all the more significant, all the more modern.



It is now known that the landscape element in Byzantine Art was derived from China, so that his return to mountain landscape is a sign that he belongs as much to the Orient as to the West.

The position of the younger artists in China to-day is somewhat similar to those of Europe. They are in revolt against the petrified traditions of the Past and, at the same time, under the necessity of assimilating a mass of modern influences and Western technique quite foreign to their genius.

The more conservative Chinese look upon these changes as undesirable and tell me that they can only lead to a hybrid form of Art. Here I think they are mistaken.

One of the most imposing things in Art is to notice how a great tradition overcomes all obstacles and innovations and, in the long run, allows nothing unworthy of it to impede its majestic flow.

The Chinese tradition in art is, by a long way, the most important that we know, and there is every reason to believe that it is strong enough to assimilate all that is foreign to its nature and, in course of time, move on towards the creation of New Beauty and a renaissance of Chinese painting.

In France we see the great tradition overcoming a multitude of heterogeneous elements, not to mention such incongruous influences as Cubism and Negro Sculpture, all of which fall into their proper perspective as time goes on, and now appear to be nothing more than stimulants which may have helped to renovate the main stream of French art.

From watching the work of several of the leaders of modern Chinese painting I have the impression that when China has finally assimilated Western technique and returned to her main tradition, the resulting style may be nearer to that of Roerich than to anything in the West.

If the landscape painters of the Sung dynasty were to return and to begin work with our modern outlook and technique they would paint very much I believe like Roerich.

For Roerich, I could well imagine to be a reincarnation of one of those great Chinese masters - whether Ma-Yuan, Li Lung Mien or Sia Kuei - I cannot say.

Like them he is a Master of the Mountains.

And this relation of his to Ancient China and to the China of the Future seems to me one of extraordinary interest.

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III

By his activities in America, his tireless creation of fine work, and his stage decorations for almost all the great operas of modern times Roerich might be considered to have a place among the titans of Art, for he has an output approaching that of Rubens, Titian, Turner or Hokusai.

It was not until he set out for Asia however, that the unique character of his genius began to find scope for its full expression and then on an unprecedented scale.

Other well known explorers - Dr. Sven Hedin, Prjevalski, Kozlov, Aurel Stein, Paul Pelliot, Bacot and Younghusband had ventured through Mongolia, Tibet, and parts of Inner Asia, but however valuable and unique their work of exploration may have been all, but, a few of them, went there and returned as foreigners.

Roerich seems from the very first to have had the conviction that he was 'at home', and he and his cultured family, who not only speak the language of the Lamas but understand them intuitively, were received as few others have ever been.

As an explorer he succeeded where others failed, and there is no doubt that the spirit in which he entered these countries had much to do with his success.

Asia is above all things spiritual, and those who venture into these mysterious parts are spiritually controlled, whether they know it or not.

Roerich did not enter Asia with the intention of merely collecting information, nor did he go there as an invader or intruder, but rather as an Asiatic, perhaps as a Lama who finds himself back again in "his own country".

The Siberian writer George Grebenstchikoff who has written so knowingly and sympathetically of the Roerichs, assures us that on his mother's side Roerich is descended from an ancient Russian family, the Kalashnikovs, who were of Mongolian origin, moreover he adds: "There was nothing therefore, surprising in the fact that Mongols from Ordos, as I have been told, seeing Roerich, took him for one of themselves."

Let us hope that they did, for, in an urbanized world where everything is becoming stereotyped and subject to mechanized utilitarianism, Mongolia, like Tibet, remains one of the few countries where a sense of living poetry and mystery still exist, and where, as Roerich himself tells us - "The people possess great knowledge and spirituality."

In his march across Asia, Roerich discovered an unprecedented wealth of subject matter which it has fallen to the lot of few artists to behold.

His paintings of Mongolia and Tibet can be counted by the hundreds and it is curious to see how these mysterious landscapes are adapted to his style, how well his style is able to reveal for us the rare beauty of these regions.

Perhaps there could be no stronger proof of the Asiatic character of the Russian genius than these remarkable paintings.

They are, as it were, the continuation of all his previous work, of his scenery and settings to many an opera, of his rendering of Russian folk lore and legend, of those paintings which depict the temples and minarets of many an ancient Russian city.

In that fascinating series "Sanctuaries and Citadels", in those shrines and fortified temples overhanging the precipices of Tibet, and in the hill towns of the Himalaya, we meet with the settings of many a Russian ballet and opera which the artist had conceived more than twenty years before.

It would seem then, as if his giant march across Asia was an advance into the country of his own imagining, into those regions which his inner vision had perceived almost from the time he began to paint.

Almost all the work achieved by Roerich in Asia is an illustration of that fine saying of Plotinus: "It is a faculty of the soul corresponding to this Beauty which recognizes it." For the soul of this great painter is Asiatic and no one since the great masters of Ancient China disappeared has done so much to evoke the hidden beauties of Asia.

It has been said that colour is the language of the gods. It is certainly the language in which Roerich has evoked the gods of Asia. There is, moreover, somewhere a saying of ancient India that: "The deeper the nature of the thought we wish to express the more it ought to be steeped in the fire of colour."



In these great canvases we shall find a world of thought which is far deeper than that generally met with in painting, and he has taken care that, like light, it should dawn upon us through the finest colours.

And colour is perhaps the most striking feature in all his work, its hall mark, so to speak, its particular distinction. It is natural that this should be so for colour is a sign of joy and vitality, of health and virtue. It is the garment of beauty, the sign of youth, the symbol of springtime and the impetus to all fresh enthusiasms and beginnings.

It is of the nature of fire and of flowers, of the fire of thought and the flower of thought, and it is all this because it is an emanation of Light.

It is significant that the two great masters of colour Titian and Turner were men of extraordinary health and vitality. The first continued to put forth an uninterrupted succession of masterpieces, until ninety nine years of age; the second was constantly going on foot for thousands of miles across Europe and produced something like twenty thousand pictures and drawings.

Roerich by his continuous output, his untiring energy and, above all, by his wealth of colour is of the family of these great creators.

It would be difficult to find a parallel among modern colourists, and perhaps quite unnecessary, since Roerich, in all he represents, is unique, incomparable.

Gauguin perhaps, in some ways approaches him because he also ventured into unknown lands, employed both Eastern and Western methods and was a master of colour, but it is in Asia that we can best discover his like.

Some years ago I was fortunate enough to examine a valuable collection of works from Turkestan. There I beheld hieratic splendours and a knowledge of the mysteries of colour which the West, perhaps, has hardly ever realized.

There is much of this in Roerich, whose work, from the point of colour perhaps has often more affinity with that of ancient Turkestan than with modern art.

However this may be, the fact remains that for many years he has been located in Central Asia working, at times, alongside the Lama painters of the temples near Tibet, rather than with the specialists of Montparnasse.

At first sight the dazzling character of his mountain masses seems almost theatrical, but on examination we discover that this brilliant coloring is the outcome of close concentration and a remarkable observation of Nature, seen from heights where the atmosphere has a purity never met with here below.

It would be very unwise to judge of Roerich's work offhand and only after a slight acquaintance. Neither the plastic elements of the composition, the colour scheme, or the psychological expression can be estimated from a rapid glance.

It took the painter Henri Matisse 37 years to fully explore all the aesthetic values in one of Cezanne's large compositions, and I have come to the conclusion that in order to really appreciate all the values in much of Roerich's work it might take as long, although the reasons for this are of quite a different order.

There are many who might consider that life is too short for such an understanding, but these are the people who do not care for Art. Fortunately, however, there are not a few who are delighted to know that such rich mines of the spirit lie all about us only waiting for our quarrying.

Without the treasures left us by the great Artists, by Bach, Beethoven and Moussorgsky, by Titian, Turner and Roerich, life would be incomparably poorer and deprived of much beauty.

This alone makes Roerich's movement on behalf of Culture a flash of inspiration, a work of genius, for, as time goes on it will be seen that this is the way, perhaps the only way, of raising this world's aspirations and desires so as to deal with its evils at the root.

In many of those large canvases in which Roerich depicts some episode from the life of a saint, a mountain hermit or some great Lama, he is evidently telling a story and ninety nine people out of a hundred will be interested in what he represents.

But the same may be said of almost any large picture by Poussin or Rubens, both of whom knew how to satisfy the public interest on this score, and, at the same time, build with their subject a wonderful architecture from balanced forms of light and shade and rhythmic patterns that would satisfy the most exacting critic of style.



The modern attitude therefore, which tends to look upon the subject matter of a picture as something negligible is, as we have explained, a form of reaction.

On the whole it has done a great deal of good, for it has concentrated the attention of artists and critics alike on the real values of a work of Art, rather than upon the fictitious values that arise from the subject and its associations.

In short it has helped to draw a sharp line of distinction between Art and Illustration. Raphael however, is an instance of how the subject of a work of art may be of vital importance.

No one who is inwardly alive can look upon his famous cartoons without a feeling of 'malaise', the feeling that something is not altogether right.

This 'something' is the subject or rather our reaction to it.

Our interest in the story of these cartoons is not perhaps a very lively one, with the result that we derive a dry stereotyped impression which chills us and leaves us indifferent.

If we make abstraction of the subject, as a modern artist or critic would do, we shall find that our interest will be greatly increased.

One might imagine that Raphael himself was moved very little by the nature of his subject, and one has only to glance at one of his fine portraits to see the difference between the influence of a dead subject and a living subject.

There is much of this sort of thing in Art, and everyone with a sense of living beauty must recognize that a translation of Greek tragedy, Roman casts, the subject of many of Poussin's works, and such dramas as Racine's Britannicus are, after all, things that leave us rather chill and indifferent.

When we turn to Roerich's great canvas - The Commands of Rigden Djapo - we get quite another impression. Even if we do not at first understand the subject of this remarkable picture, we are immediately drawn to it, and although we may not grasp all the aesthetic values which it contains nevertheless we react to them.

The subject matter of much in Poussin and Raphael was probably more or less obsolete in interest, during their lifetime. To day it has a fossilized character which is hardly saved by a consummate technique.

In Roerich's work however, the Future looms large. There is no danger that the subject matter will seem obsolete in a century from now, on the contrary, it may take some time before the West recognizes its real significance.

Founded upon the Tibetan legend of Shambala, it shows the royal Lama, Rigden Djapo, King of Shambala, giving his messengers their instructions.

The King, a figure of giant dimensions is seated on his throne, in the heart of the mountain.

Around him two great aureoles of <sup>light</sup> cast their rays on the horsemen before him and throw the rest of the landscape into shadow.

This is the case, I think, where the plastic and illustrational qualities of a work of Art, are seen to be evenly balanced, a rare thing in art, and one which leading critics are only ready to discover in a few great painters like Rembrandt, Rubens, Titian, Raphael.

The picture which is built up largely from two tall mountains, situated among one of those endless vallies of Tibet, seems to me particularly interesting because the meaning transpires in great part from the technique.

The figure of this supreme Boddhisattva, who might be a great horseman or Siva himself the Central Energy, in his dancing form of Nataraja, is shown here as the heart of fire and dynamism. The aureoles of light which surround him have a gyratory movement which suggests an immense spiritual dynamo.

He imparts light and energy to his warlike disciples who start off immediately to battle with the darkness which overwhelms them so soon as they pass from his presence.

The mountain, at the heart of which, he is seated, seems to undulate towards the left like a cone of white fire, and the second mountain which rears its mass of dark inertia in the opposite direction establishes the chiaroscuro and amplifies the gyratory movement.



The forms which have an almost sculptural quality seem chiselled out of the rock and this enhances the plastic expression of the whole composition.

When I first saw this picture it called up to my mind one of Rimsky's great operas The City of Kitege- which may mean that there is some underlying rhythmic connection between the two works, the same sort of rhythmic wave length.

It certainly has many of the qualities of Russian music. Its rhythmic appeal is very great and the outline everywhere takes on that majestic movement which we associate with the shifting of great waters.

Between Poussins work and this picture there is all the difference between the music of Gluck and that of Moussorgsky.

Like Russian music itself, its asymmetric planning indicates an art which is nearer to that of the Orient than to the symmetric art of a Gluck or Poussin.

Its rhythms show that ample and spontaneous beauty which we find in some of the great aspects of Nature, through it we divine something of the spirit of Eschylus moving in that large free style which was discovered by Moussorgsky.

And the more we contemplate this picture the more we think of Blake, for among all the great painters of the West, Blake, alone perhaps approaches art from the same plane as Roerich.

He was a visionary who received revelations from another sphere and these he translated with equal facility into painting or poetry trusting to his inspiration to find the right expression.

Judged from the purely esthetic outlook he is not a master of technique in the sense that Roerich is. Probably most critics of the modern belief would class him with such artists as Redon and Gustave Moreau whom he resembled at times superficially.

His position however cannot be circumscribed by purely technical values, according to the exclusive methods of to-day, for there are too many unknown quantities in his work.

Standing alone amidst the narrow, uninspired and somewhat conventional society of his day, he towered up over all with the primordial grandeur of the Hebrew prophets and the great seers of Ancient India.

In the last half century he has done more than any other great writer or poet of the past to inspire the world of Art, and it is not certain yet whether his attitude to painting is not destined to influence the future.

There is a certain parallel perhaps between Blake and Cezanne. Both men showed an almost religious devotion to art, both were isolated during a long lifetime, and yet their approach to art was almost opposed.

They had this in common; both despised Art which was merely illustrational but, whereas Blake held painting to be an instrument of poetry and vision, Cezanne strove to eliminate these elements and to retain nothing but esthetic values.

Cezanne, by his lifelong sacrifice to pure esthetics, made one of the greatest discoveries in modern times; namely, that plastic expression, when it is pursued far enough, can lead us to realize spiritual or imaginative values.

It is possible that all genius is a receptor of sound waves or light waves emanating from the same Centre, and that these take the form of scientific, musical, poetic, or artistic discoveries according to the nature of the recipient.

Thus we can trace the same movement, the same materialistic outlook in Zola and the science of his time as in Cezanne- an inordinate belief in Matter, in material ways and means. In those days machinery had begun to loom large and Cezanne may be said to have accomplished through the mechanics of painting what science and machinery had achieved in their own way.

Cezanne showed his greatness in being able through sheer force of intellect and by an almost unprecedented gift of plastic sensitiveness to build up pictorial architectures endowed with a sort of spiritual significance.

He seems to have achieved this through some deep understanding of the rhythms and patterns that underlie the physical aspect of things, and to have looked so deeply into the nature of appearances that he finally came to recognize the cosmic consciousness latent in all forms.

It is remarkable how near Cezanne comes to the Chinese conception of Art.

Many centuries ago a Chinese writer on Art tells us: "The artist with his sovereign



Power seizes on Nature and transforms it. He does this not because he believes he can improve it, nor because he wishes to imitate it, but because he wishes to become one with it. In this way he creates in the spirit of Nature something unseen before."

This would suggest then, that the modern scientific attitude to painting initiated by the Impressionists and perfected by Cezanne is leading towards some new interpretation of Ancient Chinese art.

Perhaps it is only in France that such a movement could have taken place, for in France alone, there is that fine balance between the heart, the intellect and the senses which allows of such a spiritual paganism.

Remy de Gourmont who, in this respect, was the most French, the most Mediterranean of all French writers stated that 'the soul could only be understood through the senses, the senses through the soul.'

When we come to painters like Blake and Roerich we shall find this attitude to life and approach to Art almost reversed.

With them the spiritual outlook dominates, and one feels that their Art exists for revelation and not as with Renoir for the refined pleasure of the senses.

Blake wrote " Shall painting be confined to the sordid drudgery of facsimile representations of merely mortal and perishing substances, and not be as poetry and music are, elevated into its own proper sphere of visionary conception? "

The first part of the phrase corresponds largely to the modern view, although it was written 150 years ago, the latter part of the sentence may I think refer to the future.

Blake made the mistake of imagining that most artists had visionary conceptions like himself, whereas most artists, so far as I can see, base their inspiration on the appearance of this world.

There is a movement however, in the last few years which suggests an underlying drift in the sense implied by Blake but it is too soon to determine it.

When we are through with our innovations, our researches into the metaphysics of spatial dimensions and the chemistry of colour, it is possible that there will be a tendency to construct.

Even Cezanne was haunted all his life by a desire to compose great architectural poems after the manner of the Venetians.

There is no doubt that Roerich's work belongs to this order of painting.

With Vroubel he is one of the most visionary painters we have had since Blake, and if on the whole he remains nearer to life and closer to normal humanity this is because he is greater as an artist.

It is questionable if the painter can dwell constantly in the Invisible like many poets and musicians. His art is based on the visible and he quits the world of appearances at his risk and peril.

When Blake speaks with lofty scorn of: " The mortal perishing organ of sight ", we feel, that for a painter, this is going rather far.

We can imagine that had Cezanne overheard this sort of thing he would have taken the precaution to steer clear.

Ingres, on the other hand, might have rejoiced to hear that "all who neglected drawing and ' the sharp distinct outline ' were demons, and it would have given him an excuse to cast his great adversary Delacroix into the limbo that Blake had prepared for all those who did not believe in " the hard wiry line of rectitude."

Blake's inferno must have been ' full up ' for it included almost all the Venetians and Dutch masters.

Obviously he got nothing from the Venetians and all the important innovations of Baroque painting - its movement in depth away from the picture plane and its underlying connection with music - for example, seems to have completely escaped him.

His writings on Art and kindred subjects are a weird amalgam of profound wisdom and much nonsense. He was always original however and had a sublime indifference to traditional beliefs and hardened conventions.



His attitude to oil painting is an instance - "All the old little pictures are in fresco not in oil. Oil was not used except by blundering ignorance till after Vandyke and became a fetter to genius and a dungeon to art. Oil deadens every colour and in a little time becomes a yellow mask over all that it touches. This is an awful thing to say to oil painters; they may call it madness but it is true".

On the whole there is much to be said in favour of Blake's opinion. Many modern painters prefer water colour because as a medium it is more precise and immediately responsive to their vision.

Cezanne, for this reason, often preferred other methods than oil, especially in his last period, when his vision was getting more etherial and spatial.

Oil has a material side which almost precludes the rapid rendering of an inspiration and suggests the heavy orchestra.

It is significant that the Primitives did great things without it and that Blake and Roerich have chosen to do the same.

Despite his lack of education, his poverty and a general opposition, Blake became a great poet and one of the most original painters that ever lived.

This alone raises many queries. When we consider the immense number of wealthy students who have frequented the Universities of the world since Blake's time, all of them equipped with the finest literary and artistic training available, and that few have achieved lasting fame in the arts; when we remember that some of the greatest painters in recent times were peasant types like Cezanne, madmen like Van Gogh, or vagabonds such as Gauguin, then we begin to doubt and wonder whether our modern commercial civilization is not in many ways foreign to the creative arts and inimical to genius.

The life of the Spirit would seem to be something illogical and strange, something beyond our control and subject to vast injustices.

But Blake rouses doubts of another sort. He suggests spiritual values.

There is a little picture of his which represents Christ young, alert and advancing with firm and irresistible step while, above his head, glows the flame of a star.

It is the picture of a star walking upon earth and the sort of vision that Ramakrishna would have had. Many of us would gladly exchange almost any ecclesiastical masterpiece and its convention of the dead Christ for the spiritual life in this little picture.

It may sound out of date to many to speak of the spiritual element in art.

Modern writers when they use this term apologize and add 'for want of a better word'.

Here one feels inclined to join with them since the word has lost all its goodness being used all day long by preachers, who are as far from Blake or Ramakrishna as they are from the cosmic vision of Cezanne.

On the whole we should strive to get rid of fossilized phrasing and hollow convention and move towards some new creative vision of life.

Unfortunately there is a good deal of the 'parvenu' in many modern movements and not enough respect not only for the past but for anything.

When advanced pundits in free verse declare that Byron wrote no better than an average schoolboy; when modern French writers round Paul Valery are ashamed to have Victor Hugo among their books, it is time to turn to the mountain and listen to Roerich.

Immediately he informs us: "In Art there is neither young nor old, ancient or modern, but only the Beautiful. If we try to force the Beautiful into the pigeon-hole of some preconceived idea, we shall only get ugliness. Fortunately for humanity the Beautiful is the great highway which leads to eternal Unity, whereas vivisection is intolerable".

This is what one might call the oriental view, the synthetic vision of things.

It is refreshing to hear this language from a great painter and, in some quarters, it is very much needed.

During the last twenty five years we have been able to watch all these modern developments in art - Cubism, Pointillism, Futurism, Synchronism, Fauvism, Surrealism, etc. rise to pre-eminence and disappear.

If one talks with the best type of painters in Paris to day, one soon discovers that these terms are out of date and rouse no great interest.

Whatever value such movements may have had has been absorbed, and the Tradition which has asserted its sway, continues in its pursuit of Beauty.



In England, which is always thirty years behind France in questions of Art, the revolutionary element is likely to continue. Whether they will get back to the main English tradition of Crome, Constable and Turner, on new lines, one cannot say but there is every reason to think so.

For the moment, they will have enough work to get rid of all the pseudo Art that has been fostered on the English race by the Royal Academy since the early days of Victoria.

While the best French painters have had to pass through years of constant change, upheaval, and dogmatic assertion, Roerich has been moving steadily about the surface of the earth painting beautiful things in his own way and generally for deep reasons.

His technique has probably been acquired only at the cost of much labour. As he says himself: "All creators of their own style have a difficult fate - the ascent to the summits is not easy."

One might go to much trouble in trying to situate the style of Roerich's work, one could compare its plastic qualities, in some ways, to Puvis de Chavannes or to Gauguin and much of his colouring to the finest things of Van Gogh, but these are only partial resemblances and his style, like that of Turner, cannot be included in any school.

The sense of rock and stone in all Roerich's work is something that no one can miss.

One imagines that he could have been a great sculptor. In his pictures he certainly knows how to carve stones, and, in some ways, resembles Mantegna who was really a sculptor, I believe, who had drifted into painting by mistake.

Roerich's sense of the bony structure of the earth, and the architecture of its mountain masses is almost unique in the history of painting.

Like his penetrating discovery of the beauty of the Stone Age, it is without parallel.

This gives to much of his work a solidity of structure which recalls Cezanne.

It is the lack of this quality in Monet and the Impressionists which seems at times almost irritating.

One can admire the lacework mesh of colour, but these evanescent and fugitive visions only leave us with the feeling that they lack bodily foundation, in short, the solid substructure which we demand in a picture as imperatively as the bones in our own bodies.

I do not know whether the artists who built the Parthenon would have cared for Impressionism, I hardly think so, its lack of foundation would have disturbed them.

Cezanne's brushwork has this solidity, and if one will take the trouble to study him for several years, one will eventually discover that Greek sense of luminous proportion and solid structure which we associate with the beauty of the Erechtheum.

Roerich has been called a great Theosophical painter, I believe, but this is somewhat misleading. Most of the theosophical paintings I have seen go off into smoke, whereas Roerich's pictures stand foursquare on the most solid foundations.

Roerich is, first of all, a great painter, after which he may be many things, he may even take an interest in the best type of theosophical literature, but I do not see any need to fix a label on him.

The more one studies Art and comes to understand it, the more one realizes that the great things in it are due, not so much to some particular period, school, or sect, but to some great and independent personality.

Roerich then, is architectural and structural like Cezanne, but after the manner of some Mongolian Cezanne.

His 'Maitreya on the road' is a good instance of this quality. Built up of rocky planes and mountain masses it satisfies the eye by its solidity and intricate arabesques and the beauty of the distant snow peaks is not to be forgotten.

It reminds one of Eschylus. In struggling with the texts of Eschylus I have often perceived what one gets from this picture - a sense of rugged grandeur expressed through forms of an architectural solidity. I refer here to the language itself rather than to the ideas, to the peculiar substance of these Greek phrases which stand out like rough blocks of marble with that strange primitive appeal which we find in the very earliest monuments of China.

Roerich, by his innate genius for all that is mythic and prehistoric, by what one might call his 'chthonic' power, his sense of the mountain, seems to me to approach nearer than any other painter to the greatest of all the poets.

How foolish then are those who are ready to judge such work after a passing glance.



There would seem to be some mysterious link between certain artists and poets which Time and Space are powerless to change.

This giant statue of Maitreya is, after all, a form of Prometheus, of Prometheus the Victorious, whom the prophetic Eschylus foresaw so many centuries ago.

And who knows if those etherial hymns and amazing choruses which Shelley wrote for his Prometheus were not inspired by the coming of Maitreya?

That Shelley knew nothing of the prophecies relating to Maitreya only shows how deeply he was inspired. Nothing could be worthier of so sublime an event as these great choral hymns, and, in Shelley's poem, as in the world of to day we find Asia waiting!

The pure luminous colours of Shelley's poetry is not often met with even in literature. We shall find it however in Turner and in Roerich whose work as we have seen ranges from the rugged grandeur of Eschylus to the etherial qualities in Shelley.

His painting of the two great Chinese philosophers, Lao-tzu and Confucius is an example of this colouring. One has only to glance at the resplendent region through which Confucius is passing to recognize the landscape of Shelley's Prometheus.

It is the landscape of the higher regions of the mind and that rare type of luminous beauty which is accessible perhaps only to the divine mind of a Shelley, a Turner or a Roerich.

Neither of these paintings display the massive character of the Maitreya of the Road but they possess remarkable colouring and a peculiar treatment of the subject which, to day is of particular interest.

In the ~~picture~~ of Confucius there is no particular anecdote, no definite action to draw off the attention from the aesthetic qualities of the picture.

We can if we like consider that the white poney is a very precious sort of animal who will lead his master safely along the difficult road of perfection, but then we are starting off like those learned treatises on Dante's work to spoil the Art.

The painter, I think, instinctively refrained from anything symbolical or theatrical, any easy or inartistic way of holding the attention. It is all pure art and one can admire its beauty as one admires a Persian painting.

The style is Chinese rather than Western, the near ridges being outlined in the fashion of Wang Wei, the far away peaks reminiscent perhaps of the manner of Ma Yuan.

Confucius himself has, perhaps, no more plastic importance in the picture than the ancient cedars or rocks about him. He is part of the texture, of the colour scheme in which he retains his natural proportions.

This, of course, is very Chinese, for the artist in China never had our strange notion that man is the centre of the Universe.

The Greeks and Christian philosophers of the Middle Ages are possibly responsible for this conventional view, which, after all, is untrue to the nature of things.

One has but to walk through a gallery of our historic Great, where military heroes with crimson uniforms and scarlet faces threaten the humble mountain ranges with their butchering tools to understand where the difference lies.

When Cezanne painted a portrait he seems to have given the same attention to a door handle as he did to an eye brow; the whole surface was of equal value to him.

In this picture Roerich has done something of the same sort. There is a kind of similarity between the two painters, in so far as both show the Chinese attitude to life which is not centred around the human personality but recognizes a sort of latent consciousness, a cosmic consciousness, in all things.

Cezanne's saying that "the artist is the means by which nature becomes self conscious" alone suffices to show what a great artist he really was.

His idea that the emotion of a work of art must emanate like perfume from its essential form, rather than from any associated idea, has tremendous consequences and constitutes one of the very greatest discoveries in Western art.

It may not be new since it recalls the strange bronzes of the Chou dynasty but Cezanne's scientific and technical method of approach, so peculiarly European, is new.

The more one reflects on such a vision and its implications the more one realizes how all merely illustrational art must eventually come to be ranked with photography.



When I first came to Paris, just before the war, I found myself, by chance, in the studio of one of the most successful portrait painters, along with some disciples of Cezanne. This distinguished artist thought fit to let us have his opinion of Cezanne. He carefully explained that the latter did not know how to draw, much less paint; that ~~that~~ he had always been a failure and, in fact a sort of charlatan.

After this he gave a glance round his palatial studio filled with the effigies of celebrated people, to show how important his opinion really was.

The Cezanne enthusiasts explained to me afterwards that the portraits we had seen were just rubbish; as a matter of fact they were facsimile productions with a slight twist to give the illusion of style. Of course they had a great success.

In a fashionable world where people put on evening dress to absorb cocktails and listen to the worst sort of jazz, this sort of distinguished vulgarity will probably always succeed.

The only way out of such a preposterous state of things is, as Roerich indicates, through Culture.

Roerich's picture of Confucius produces its complex of emotions in a way, difficult to define, but somewhat after the manner of Cezanne.

Our impression is derived exclusively from the beauty of the picture. There is a sense of perfection, of perfect beauty, but there is no ready made symbolism, no dramatic incident to take the place of art.

The quiet beauty of the work has something mysterious, for if we study it carefully it will come to suggest the passage of a great spirit.

In the other picture, where Lao-tzu appears riding on his faithful beast there is still less to arouse our interest. Even the ox, turning its head indolently about, is not really going anywhere.

The whole scheme is very Taoist, insomuch as nothing is going on, in the Western sense, and I think that the painter may have given us here not a symbol but an expression of Lao-tzu's difficult doctrine of inaction.

If so, he did it unintentionally, by inspiration.

It is pure art and not limited to any particular signification. We could perhaps interpret the picture in a half symbolical way; we could suppose that the avenue of bamboos represents a series of gothic arches and is, in fact, the porch of some natural Cathedral. All this would begin to hint at Lao-tzu's deep sayings about Nature, and eventually lead us to some definite statement with all its limitations.

Roerich has too free a conception of things to paint a symbol or a meaning.

He may have gone deeply into the thought of Lao-tzu and Confucius, but he is too genuine an artist to give us an intellectual symbol of these things.

He is himself, perhaps, a sort of modern Confucius or Lao-tzu and he sees much of what these great thinkers saw, in his own way and through his own art.

By a rare coincidence, I gather from the dates on these pictures that I must have been discussing the philosophy of Confucius and Lao-tzu, with a group of Chinese students about the time Roerich was painting them.

The discussion which took place under a cherry tree lasted on and off for a month or more and I can remember no definite conclusion or statement, but only an all pervading impression, what one might call a climate of opinion, which left one with the feeling that Confucius and Lao-tzu had been evoked rather than explained.

Something of the sort occurs in Roerich's art. It does not illustrate, it does not express itself in symbols, nor does it treat the subject as matter of dramatic interest, but rather radiates a complex impression of fine form and colour which conveys the subject to us in a way we did not anticipate. In other words its technique is Chinese.

Those who are under the impression, probably from reproductions, that Roerich's art borders on illustration, take a very shallow view. No art could be more esthetic.

The subject never monopolises the attention or overshadows the plastic qualities; on the contrary, in a great proportion the subject is almost negligible.



A great deal has been written about Roerich's position as a Teacher and Leader and Creator of World Peace. His efforts in these directions are unique and worthy of the attention they receive. I prefer however to put the accent on Art.

I believe that if half the world were to take a very great dislike to politics and superfluous factory life, and a very great liking for Art, Life everywhere would be brighter and better.

It is significant that Roerich himself, in almost all his writings and messages, always puts the emphasis on Art.

In everything he objects to mere theory and abstraction and insists on creation, realization - that is, on Art, in the widest sense of the word.

"We can often see that the real teaching of life is transformed by rhetoric into abstraction and intangible cloudiness for the appeasing of the weak will. To make this artificially created abstraction a reality is the next task of Culture"

From this we see what a real and practical sense Roerich attaches to the terms Art and Culture. There is much in his attitude to Art which reminds us of Goethe.

Goethe displayed the artist's synthetic sense of life in almost everything he wrote and said, so that if we compare his works with those of other critics and philosophers, we shall discover all the difference between the living and the artificial.

Goethe however lived in a world of Culture, before Culture had been replaced by Civilization, so that what he said and thought came naturally and in harmony with his surroundings.

Roerich is living in a world which has got beyond the stage of Civilization and arrived at a state of Mechanization. Everything to day is founded on numbers and machinery. Political power is based on the greatest possible number of votes, which is the greatest possible amount of ignorance. Art, Literature, Music, and Scientific productions, on their selling power, which, in the case of cheap literature degenerates still further into crime.

It is obvious that only a general world wide movement in the direction of Culture can redress such a situation.

It is very significant that Roerich is conducting his efforts on behalf of such a movement from the Himalayas.

Here his environment like that of Goethe's, is, more or less, in harmony with his inner aspirations and he finds the power and inspiration to undertake what no one in our large mechanized commercial centres might have attempted.

The Himalayas constitute that part of the world which towers up beyond all our narrow prejudices of race, religion, languages and customs, and, because of this, it would seem to favour a broader and more universal style both in thought and in Art.

The poets of Ancient India seemed well aware of this when they said that a million ages of the gods would not exhaust all the spiritual treasures of the Himalayas.

Roerich's outlook on all the movements of to day is absolutely above prejudice, and, one would no more think of fixing a political, religious, philosophic or artistic label to him than to the Earth itself.

In this he is a Master of the Mountains.

There are other reasons however, I think, why the Higher Powers have set him in the midst of Asia to attempt this rather stupendous undertaking.

After two centuries of contact with the West, Asia still remains more or less in possession of her ancient culture.

In India the Aryan tradition yet retains some of its vestiges and although India cannot return to her past, for the same reason that Europe cannot go back to her Middle Ages yet it is from what still remains of her ancient traditions that she can best derive the inspiration to build a New Age.

E.B. Havell the former Principal of the Government School of Art in India, has given us a series of works on Indian Art and Culture which, as art criticism, alone is of more importance to us today than anything of Ruskin.

After battling for years with Western pedagogues and utilitarians he finally convinced the Government of the truth of his astounding claim that: "The Indian village



master builder , uneducated as he was , could erect more perfect buildings than the best educated and most talented artists of Europe and America."

He pointed to the splendid culture of the Aryan tradition which went back for several thousand years , and to the fact that 'India was the only part of the British Empire where the esthetic sense of the people , in spite of all that British philistinism had done to suppress it, influenced their every day life.'

Since then many changes have occurred. There has been a Buddhist revival ; the founding of a Hindu University in Benares, and research work started on such texts that relate to ancient Indian literature, art, philosophy, music and dance.

These are now attracting the attention of a Western elite , and there are signs perhaps of some sort of intellectual cooperation.

If India ever does succeed in renewing on modern lines what Havell calls " the wonderful organization of her village communities and the splendid culture which grew out of them " then Europe must benefit as well.

For Europe to-day is more in need of Culture and a New Aristocracy than India where much of the ancient spirit still survives in a quiet way.

But it will have to be an Aristocracy based on spiritual power and not one based on money or political power.

Such an aristocracy must possess something of the character of the Rishis and Brahmins of ancient India , who did not live to accumulate wealth or political power but to dedicate their immense spiritual resources to the welfare of the people.

There is however a very good reason why Europe should cooperate with India in the task of creating a New Age of Culture.

The two fountains from which Europe once drew the waters of the spirit - Palestine and Greece have run dry , and if we wish to renew our spiritual life we must look to the fountain head which is in India.

And just as the rivers of the earth rise in the Mountains , so the sources which supply the waters of the spirit , take their rise in the Mountains of the Spirit - and these are in Asia.

Because Roerich is a Master of the Mountains and draws his inspiration from these infinite sources, his messages are likely to be impersonal and , in the widest possible sense, for the general good.

E. B. Havell had pointed out how the Central Administration in India with its government files and the rigid nature of its legal and educational machinery was dangerously out of touch with living India and how the public buildings in Bombay and Calcutta 'flaunt before the native gaze the banalities and vulgarities of the worst English 19th cent architecture.'

The Government to do it justice , after some enquiry admitted the truth of many of his claims , but had they taken steps to cooperate earlier with Aryan India and helped her to develop her traditions, according to her natural genius, perhaps, much of the dissension that we see to day might have been avoided.

Moreover things have moved very quickly in the last few years and there are very palpable reasons why the leaders of Western thought should drop their statistics for a moment , and examine more closely Roerich's appeal for Culture.

The movements in the Far East have completely changed the situation and unless some world-wide movement for Peace based on Art and Culture occurs, Europe will find herself some day confronted with a second Ghengiz Khan .

The great question , if we only knew it, which confronts the world of the future is : Where is the spirit that can convert the power of Ghengiz Khan into that of Maitreya?

India, just because she sees more profoundly into life than other nations , may someday lead the world in bringing about a religious crusade on behalf of Culture and Unity.

One has no need to be a great prophet to foresee that the future of the white races in Asia - and perhaps in Europe, will depend very largely upon India, upon the power of India to provoke a world-wide religious movement on behalf of Peace and Unity.



As a boy, I had to do with a schoolmaster who objected to my taking what he considered was an undue interest in the Kuen-lun mountains. He told me that it was more important to know the cotton statistics for Manchester. These I learnt, but put on a blue tie in protest. Thirty years later a high Buddhist authority from the mountains in China explained this early interest of mine and convinced me that on some matters Asia knew more than Europe.

To day we get little but statistics; in the newspapers, on the radio, in parliament, everywhere a profound, one might almost say a religious belief in facts and figures.

Neither facts nor figures however have any deep signification and if we continue to neglect Art and Culture for a purely intellectual training based on financial and industrial technique, we shall some day discover that the spiritual climate has gone completely dry and left us on the edge of an abyss where life has no meaning.

It is interesting to see how Roerich has been moving for years through the most remote and unknown parts of the earth, through those regions which are the farthest of all removed from our factory life and factory ideals.

One feels that he went there in answer to a call from the Higher Powers and that it is his contact with these high regions that has inspired all his work - regions where the sources of spiritual power and transcendent beauty are still untouched by the evil influences of a mechanical civilization.

As he himself tells us: "When you already know the beauties of Asia, and are accustomed to all the richness of its colours, nevertheless they again astonish you, and again elate your feelings, so that you feel able to accomplish the impossible!"

In "Altai-Himalaya" which is a record of his travels through Inner Asia we get a type of book which is remarkably rare. The beauty of the book is evident. When one first comes across those passages where the painter mentions the giant mountain ranges of Altai, Tien-Shan and Kuen-lun one recognizes a vital sense of beauty.

One might have waited another thousand years before meeting with quite the same spirit.

By the quality of his painting and the poetical insight of this book, Roerich has done for his age what Shelley and Keats did for theirs, he has given it a fresh sense of Beauty.

And it is a beauty which is well suited to our time, for it is one which has been acquired by heroism and adventure.

These sentences jotted down by the camp fire and along the edge of limitless deserts have the spatial qualities of fine paintings.

If a publisher were to present us with a selection of these vivid pen pictures, joined to their appropriate reproductions, we should have an ensemble of beauty, as rare, in its way as the poems of Li-tai-pai or the Odes of Shelley and Keats.

In Sikhim he tells us "Every mountain summit is crowned by a beautiful Mendang with its wheels of life, its prayers carved in relief and its niches for seats from which you can behold the image of the far off distance."

Here lamas and travellers are meditating. Here banners are fluttering. Here each rider will slow down his horse."

At once we can see the landscape with its immense vistas and the come and go of travellers. The picture has a sort of mediaeval beauty which recalls the Canterbury Tales for it has this in common with Chaucer's world - it is far removed from factory sites and builded areas!

His sense of the mystery of great mountain ranges is the finest of its kind in Western literature or Art. I know of nothing approaching it unless in the work of certain Chinese painters.

He has an ear for the sonorous echoes of these heights. The Altai ranges which he loves for their fresh northern beauty, for their lordly cedars and spring torrents he assures us are "the most blue, the most reverberent of mountains."

And when he alludes to the Kuen-lun range we have a thrill of delight, because no one has ever yet written precisely in this mood: "Beyond Beluha\* there appears the crests of Kuen lun, so beloved to the heart, and beyond that the Mountain of the Divine Queen"



He makes allusion to many mysteries, overheard in the temples, or at evening round the camp fire, mysteries that relate to the sacred mountains - Kailas, Moriah, Meru and Altai and all these he resumes in one great line :

" But now has come the time of the illumination of Asia . "

The prophecies relating to Maitreya - the Coming One, have inspired much of his Art and writing, and it is this which gives so deep a character to all his work.

Again he mentions the fabulous range of the Kuen-lun, " With its blue inclines of immeasurable antiquity, all so variegated and glorious and sweeping, the far off peaks silhouetted like pure white cones, etched in white outline upon the cobalt of the sky, as upon some old Chinese landscape."

In the morning he remarks that : " The eastern mountains are crystal blue and the foothills of the Himalaya are of sapphire "

His knowledge of Ancient Cults, of Buddhism, Lamaism, and Tibetan traditions would seem to be innate. He shows a sympathetic understanding of all that is going on in these remote regions, and would seem himself to be a part of it.

In Ladak he discovers the wild beauty of those ancient strongholds - Maulbeck and Lamayura.

" Whoever built Lamayura and Maulbeck knew what was true beauty and fearlessness. Before such a vista, before such decorations, Italian cities pale.

And these solemn rows of stupas are like joyous torches. Where lies a country equal to these forsaken spots? Let us be just and bow before such true beauty "

There is something historic in this last sentence. It marks a turning point in our history, for it is the recognition of a superior Beauty in Asia.

And here Roerich would seem to be the advance-guard of a New Age of another Renaissance.

No one before him has done so much to bring before our eyes the beauty of Asia, and it is always Beauty that claims his attention, for he is well aware that it is the one thing that is immortal.

In Himalayan Sikkim he visits the mountain monasteries and their names rise in crescendo - Chakong, Pemionchi, Rinchenpong, Sanga Chelling, Daling, Tashi-ding, as he sets them before our eyes in a vista stretching for forty miles.

He notes the fairy-like beauty of these places - " surrounded by peach and rose flowers intertwining orchids and wild peonies ", where " when the high currents are tense, gongs and bells resound at dawn and at evening like silver "

And this recalls the fact that a great part of Asia owes the treasures of her spirit to the mountains.

Unlike the West which derives almost all its culture from the cities, Asia has developed her Art and religion, her philosophy and poetry, in great part, among the mountains.

And the result is that our life has become almost wholly intellectual, inartistic and mechanic, whereas that of Asia has remained spiritual and based on art.

In exploring these unknown parts and in discovering the beauty of such traditions, Roerich has done something of lasting value, something far more important for us of to day than the exploits of Marco Polo.

In a few words he gives us a pen picture worthy to rank with the finest of the Dutch Masters: " In Maulbeck we visited a Tibetan home of the old order. From the balconies there appeared a wonderful view encompassing all the mountain. The rooms were peaceful and near the door a girl was squeezing out vegetable oil for the lamps. Behind her hung the skin of a yak, and her head was crowned by a weighty headdress of turquoise. "

Here we have a Tibetan Vermeer seen at a spot where perhaps no white man had ever intruded. The unique quality of Roerich's art, of his expedition through Central Asia, of his researches into Asiatic art and legend and, in fact, of almost all his writings is its poetry. Perhaps not one out of an hundred explorers would have given us just this quality. They would have thought it their duty to collect information and scientific observation and to conform exclusively to the modern scientific trend - so sterile and vain in many of its aspects.



Roerich himself seems well aware of the deadening effects of certain 'scientific' attitudes when he contrasts the impression made by Tibetan banner paintings, among their native mountains, with that derived from them in our Museums where we examine them with respect or else with a clerical sense of the scientific.

The way we have been moving since the nineteenth century does not suggest that for the moment Asia need envy us enormously. Many of our scientific applications may, unless there is some serious reaction, land us in a negative and disastrous state of things.

We have only to plunge out of the glorious sunlight into any of our Underground Railways 'in the leafy month of June' and find ourselves wedged in with thousands of citizens slowly destroying their eyesight in order to learn about the latest crime, and we shall begin to have doubts about machinery and printing presses. One glance at the atrocious advertisements and at the employees struggling against microbes with their disinfectants, and we are more and more disinclined to listen about the backward conditions of Asia.

It is in moments such as these that we remember 'The Book of Wisdom' a picture in which the painter shows us a young lama seated ~~seated~~ near the precipice, and studying a sacred volume, before the most magnificent panorama that this world possesses.

Roerich is right then, when he insists upon the importance of art, because it is the one power that can effectively deal with those evils that have arisen from a mechanical order based on the utilitarian and commercial ideals of the 19th century.

But from Roerich and the mountains we can, if we care, derive an endless source of joy an inexhaustible stimulant to higher things.

For when we examine carefully the character of his art, the depth of his writings, and the wonderful discoveries transmitted by him regarding those finer energies which are the basis of all life, we have to recognize that all this constitutes one of the most powerful antidotes known to us, against the worst evils of our mechanical civilization and the dark forces about us.

And a sense of the Beauty of Asia is not the least of his qualities, in fact, it is one of the rarest.

He has the artist's and poet's eye for fine things, and even while leading his caravan through the robber infested regions north of the Tian-Shan, he will find time to note "The Beauty of wild peonies against blue snow mountains and chryoprase of the hills of Dzungaria" which reminds us of the Chinese poet who wrote so long ago:

'The snow has gone from Chung-nan; spring is almost come

Lovely in the distance its blue colour against the brown of the streets.'

In these short pen pictures there is much of the spirit of the Chinese poets - Tu Fu, Li-tai-pai, Lo-Yu.

"The cuckoo ruminates on his long life. White linen is spread on the meadow and a samovar is boiling. The eyes of violets and the white of yellow narcissus are woven into a carpet of many hues. A row of boatmen stir their canopied boats. Oxen drag themselves along and the wheels grind there where three hundred year old plantains and tall poplars guard the ways"

A miniature half Persian, half Chinese and replete with the beauty of Asia!

Again, as he prepares to cross the great desert he tells us:

"Early are the stars aglow here. Towards the East, undiminished flames the triple starred constellation of Orion, the constellation which finds its way through all teachings."

And we are reminded of those fine lines of an ancient Chinese poet who wrote:

"In the distance perceptible dim, dim - the fire of approaching dawn.

And a single row of stars lying to the west of the Five Gates"

Roerich's work may be said to supply what the world most lacks - a sense of the Poetry of the Wild, of lofty mountain regions, of mystery, beauty, and rare colour, and, withal, signs of some approaching aristocracy of the spirit.

And in all his work he would seem to operate from some immense ring of time only perceptible to himself. If, in the west he divines the Beauty of the Stone Age and the Druidic landscape of a far off past, in Asia he has approached the early myths and legends with the sympathy, intuition and inspiration of an Asiatic.



It is surprising to see how the style of some of these paintings of Central Asia recalls that of the art of the Han dynasty .

They have much of the concentration , the simplicity, the 'raccourci' of those early ornaments in jade and this is very significant because the technique of such work was something half spiritual.

And he has gone so far round the ring of time as to have advanced into the Future.

In the Louvre gallery in Paris ( Section : Jeu de Paume ) there is one of his most remarkable landscapes entitled ' Paysage du Thibet ' ( Castles of Maitreya ) .

It is a work which is in some ways a sign of the Future and, I have reason to believe that it is in advance of our time. As I was examining it , on one occasion, some youthful sportsmen came along and catching sight of the picture gave a long drawn whistle.

From this I inferred that they thought the work was a knock out . And so it is.

The coincidence struck me. I realised that the younger generation is, after all, on the side of Roerich and that, from every point of view, he is not in the rear of our modern movements, as many might like to think, but a long way ahead !

The modern craze for hiking , camping and for winter sports is perhaps the best thing that has happened with us for many years.

Those who return from the mountains can hardly contain their delight , they are literally intoxicated with the air of the heights and the beauty of the scenery.

This is significant because Roerich has been living a great part of his life in this way and it would suggest that the healthiest elements in the West are, by the general trend of life itself, being brought into line with his own simplicity.

And just as Cezanne by means of a purely material approach attained to a spiritual insight into the world of forms and appearances, so the younger generation , the advance-guard of the West may have begun its ascent toward the heights - in its own way.

Some day we may be in a position to recognize that the sphere of the spirit and that of a higher dynamism are one and the same.

At that moment there will be a world-wide interest in Roerich's work , for it will be generally felt that he alone among the great painters of our day has been consistent in painting the landscape of this higher sphere.

This picture in the Louvre, therefore, is a sign of the Future. These precipices of dark cobalt with chasms of purple carry their meaning by sheer force of colour.

Nothing could be more modern than the treatment , for the subject is completely lost in the aesthetic qualities of the work , so that most of the other exhibits in the gallery appear illustrational.

The technique is not European but something rather akin to that of the Brahmanical artists of Ancient India , whose art was a form of Yoga.

These sanctuaries and citadels seem to have been forged by the red and golden fires of the spirit and they convert the world around them to a royal purple !

I thought of the phrase that I had heard pronounced more than twenty years ago by Guillaume Apollinaire the inspirer of almost all the movements in modern painting :

" L'instinct est retrouvé " ( Instinct has been recovered ) and standing before Roerich's ' Castles of Maitreya ' I could not refrain from triumphantly exclaiming " L'esprit est retrouvé "

A little further on we can see the works of Bakst, Benois, Gontcharova and other well known Russian artists who, with Roerich, created those fine stage settings for the Russian Opera in 1912.

At that time there may have been some similarities of style , to day the difference is startling. Roerich would seem to have advanced as far, in matters of style, as his caravan has gone into the heart of Asia. There is nothing to resemble this picture in the whole gallery . It suggests some fine lacquer work dense with time which has been kept in one of those great temples at Nara. In colour alone, it is something far and remote from Western civilization . Intuitively one thinks of Nara and its ancient shrines and, this is perhaps no chance association.



For the period of Nara, the age of the Tang, of Li-tai-pai, of Kalidasa and the great bronze Vairocana Buddhas, was an age of art. It was the moment when Buddhism leaving its pure abstractions joined with art and science to explore the Cosmos and give life its highest possible value.

This is exactly what Roerich is asking us to do.

He may, for all we know, be round again on the spiral of Time to a point corresponding to this rare period, a point which, from his high station in the Himalayas, he proclaims as the Age of Maitreya.

Whether such a parallel will be justified some day, it is too soon to say, It is sufficient, for the moment, that the style and coloring of one of his pictures is able to suggest it.

It would be a mistake to judge of Roerich's art from reproductions.

Many of his larger works are impossible to reproduce in monotone since the composition itself is dependent upon the colour scheme.

In the case of such a work as Paysage du Thibet, a monotone plate only gives a false idea of the artist's work.

Without its marvellous coloring this picture loses all its value, all its meaning.

There are cases however, where monotone reproductions come out very well, but these are nearly always those works where outline predominates and the drawing is an integral part of their beauty.

Many of these smaller reproductions show a finesse and definition which reminds us of the perfection of Chinese poetry.

Others, like that grove of bamboos in the Himalayas, evoke subconscious states which we only meet with in the more esoteric Poets such as Hölderlin or Yeats.

In 'Sanctuaries and Citadels' he shows us the rare proportions realized by these Lama builders of Tibet and Central Asia. These 'fortresses of thought' reflect the beauty of the surrounding peaks. Their stone piles seem to have grown from the precipices and the rocks with all the natural beauty of the cedar or the pine.

Roerich reveals their wonderful symmetry by setting their great towers in the same plane as that of some distant peak, and this gives us the impression of an architectural grandeur worthy to stand alongside that of Edfu.

One feels that those who built these places were aristocrats, in the real sense of the word, and akin to the builders of our great cathedrals.

The passage of Roerich through Central Asia then, was an event of no little importance in the world of art. Had he brought back work, merely illustrational, it would have been a great achievement, but when we consider that most of these paintings are works of a high order then it becomes incredible.

Few artists in Europe could have sustained so great an output under such difficulties and hardships. The overcoming of obstacles however, is one of Roerich's favorite doctrines which makes him a sort of trait d'union between Nietzsche and Asia.

The real Nietzsche was much nearer to the builders of these Sanctuaries and Citadels than to those who have made a caricature of him.

After his contact with these strongholds of Tibet there would seem to be a corresponding change in Roerich's style. The soft rhythms of much of his early work with their Hindu outlines changed to a harder and more Chinese type of Rhythm. Between his latest production and those early Russian paintings there is all the difference between the jagged precipices of Tibet and the suave contours of northern Russia.

There are times however when a fusion of these two tendencies gives a rare product which comes very near to what we might call perfection, something that suggests Mozart or Sophocles.

His picture of Mongolian dancers moving round a magic circle is a work of this order.

The gigantic banner paintings, as high as a temple, stretched on scaffolding make a scenic background beyond which stand a range of mountains.

The materials and surroundings before us do not differ very sensibly from those of a country fair. The effect however, is so surprising that compared with this rustic mise en scene, our grand opera seems unsatisfying and artificial.

The thing is as fine as one of those Athenian choruses of Sophocles. It has the vital beauty of whatever pertains to folklore and plain air. The proportions are of an astounding harmony. It is as if the Great Ones on the banners had answered to this



invocation and cast their influence on all around. We are irresistibly attracted to the profound and simple beauty of these people, whose style has nothing in it that is foreign to the march of the stars or the solemnity of the mountains. Marvellous Mongolia!

Had Roerich painted nothing but this picture he would have done something inimitable, because he would have been the first to reveal the inner beauty of this distant land.

There is another picture 'the Messenger', a figure standing in a sort of spiritual silence before an open door, which was painted many years before, but which has much the same spirit as that of these dancers.

One feels that in such work the artist had attained to that perfect poise which is synonymous with spiritual insight.

In the paintings 'Menhirs in Mongolia' and 'The Guardian of the Chalice' there would seem at first a risk that the artist should allow himself to give more attention to the archaeological contents of the picture than to its plastic qualities.

These weird monoliths seem to threaten the composition, by their uncompromising attitudes, and break the harmony of its design. But if we grow familiar with it we shall find that the artist has overcome an aesthetic difficulty by the weight of foreground which, by its horizontal movement corrects this impression and restores the balance.

It is just this sense of difficulty overcome which gives value to such a composition.

'Menhirs in Mongolia' is a typical Roerich landscape because the impression that it leaves is not so much that of any particular scene as of a state of mind, of vision into a world of the Beyond. It is a druidic landscape where the ridges of the hills and the shapes of ancient stones have been worn smooth by the winds of countless ages.

And the artist looks upon it all with the eye of an ancient Druid, almost with the age long experience of the crescent moon. One feels that his vision is older than that of many a Lama, that it partakes of that immense antiquity which characterises the Celt.

Time has carried away everything superfluous and left only the essential, the substratum of life. One has only to think for a moment of the landscape of Constable or Corot, gay with oakwood and willow, to realise the stern architectural character of this art.

Although painting is one of the oldest of the arts, landscape painting, in the West, is but a recent development which seems to have sprung up about the time when the symphony broke away from the polyphonic music of the Church, in order to develop into the great and independent art of Beethoven.

The Chinese practised the art of pure landscape something like a thousand years before the West, which would seem to show that in some ways they were much more cultivated.

If Claude Lorraine was the father of Western landscape, and the Dutch showed an early delight in natural scenery, it was not until the time of Constable and Turner however, that a general interest in the art began to be felt.

It is from these two painters that France derived, for the most part, her landscape art and brought forth Corot and the school of Fontainebleau.

Landscape therefore, is a comparatively modern development, and Turner is still what Ruskin claimed him to be, 'the greatest of all landscape painters.'

Ruskin wrote several volumes to show Turner's truth to Nature and Claude's untruth.

To day his arguments have less weight since as Apollinaire showed "La vraisemblance n'a plus aucune importance." Modern critics reverse Ruskin's judgement of Claude for purely aesthetic motives. Neither Ruskin's criticisms nor the opinion of modern critics however, need trouble us if we examine Turner's work for what it can give us.

And we shall find there something unique, something beyond analysis, something utterly defying imitation - the presence of that imponderable element we call 'great poetry.'

Wandering all over the Europe of his day, Turner seized the spirit that is in places, the poetry of sea and earth and sky.

Having had occasion recently to go through central France all along the Loire I kept an eye open for the Turners that loomed up - Orleans, Amboise, Beaugency, Blois, Loire-side: Tours - and there they were these majestic chateaux and cathedrals, just as he had seen them more than a century ago, for Turner only saw what was enduring in the beauty of water, sky and stone.



Turner undoubtedly is one of the greatest creators in landscape that ever lived and , after him, I believe comes Roerich.

Roerich, in common with our epoch is vast and far stretching, with a sense of Asia rising on the horizon . But the spirit is the same ; he has an eye for the poetry of places and landscapes and like Turner he has the wizard touch which is the privilege of genius.

The landscape painter , like the poet, is born and not made. Great landscape is something akin to great music, it is a spiritual construction the ingredients of which may be no more than the stones in a cathedral.

Whether the poetic radiations of such a work derive exclusively from the plastic design, or from remote and subtle associations beyond analysis, is of no consequence, , the result is all that need concern us.

And here Roerich approaches very near to Turner. He is one of the few who have built up a great art out of landscape, an art in which " more is meant than meets the eye."

Such an art is typically modern. It has something "~~insaisissable~~ ' insaisissable ' as the French would say, something in common with the more subtle kinds of music.

Turner was in advance of his time and in advance of Ruskin , whose rather objective outlook may have made him miss not a few of the rarer qualities of his idol.

In some of his unfinished works such as Chichester Canal there is a subtle appeal, far ahead of his age which puts him in touch with the symbolists and with musicians like Debussy and Duparc.

Turner whose work contained all the poetry of Scott, Byron, Wordsworth and Shelley, was a prodigious artist, and of such marvellous industry that it would require at least a hundred years merely to copy all he produced.

Since his time, there have been highly productive artists but few who possess his exquisite 'finesse' , his sense of the etherial regions of light.

Roerich has this in common with Turner - he is a great poet. If Turner went on horseback and walked all over Europe to produce what has been termed 'A poem of matchless splendour and beauty' , then, Roerich has done much the same for Asia.

Moreover both artists have the same profound adoration for Nature.

By day and night Turner made his way past forests and mountains and along the sea coasts visiting almost all the ancient cities and monuments of Europe.

The very titles of his pictures have a strange appeal - " Steamboat off the harbour mouth making signals and going by the lead." "The author was in this storm the night the 'Ariel' left Harwich" The title alone, as well as the word 'author' suggests that Turner was, in fact, a great poet whose medium was painting.

And while his more successful contemporaries never left their fashionable studios in town, here he was getting himself bound to the mast of a sinking vessel in order to paint a shipwreck.

The same sort of thing seems to have happened to Roerich. We find him at work under difficulties which would have been quite enough for men like Scott and Nansen , and yet he goes on producing remarkable works amid the glaciers and precipices of Asia with the thermometer a long way below zero.

And all the time the great pundits of Cubism, Futurism and Post Impressionism have never left the urban machinery that makes for fame - their hotels, telephones, press connections and café congregations , in which they resemble those dapper little men who haunt the Stock Exchanges and who, one feels sure, have never seen a tree.

If Roerich's style and inspiration differs considerably from that of Turner , nevertheless he is akin to him in his wide survey of Nature and in what might be called his reading of the earth.

Turner's work conveys a wonderful impression of dawn and sunset, of the toilers on sea and land, of ancient cities, of the immense panorama of the past, of life holding on its way through storm and darkness, and all this, in a way that neither poetry nor history could have attempted.

If Roerich has given us the Chateaux of Maitreya and the Citadels of Tibet in heroic mood, rather than the Chateaux of the Loire in the romantic way, this is because our century is quite another matter and because he is the advance guard of our time.

There is one aspect in which he approaches Turner nearer than anyone, he is the greatest painter of mountains that has appeared since the death of Turner.

His realm is not altogether the poetic world of Wordsworth and Shelley but rather that



of Ancient Myth again stirring with life and pointing to the Future.

"The sign of Maitreya" gives us this mythic atmosphere of the mountains.

A Tibetan surrounded by lofty peaks is praying before a colossal rock carving of Maitreya and suddenly catches sight of the Great Horseman as he manifests himself riding in the shape of a cloud. The picture which has the incisive beauty of the best Indian and Japanese work, has an epic grandeur which recalls the movement of the Homeric hexameter.

I am inclined to think it corresponds to reality, that it is not a mere product of imagination. Such things have occurred to many of us and to Roerich, I could imagine, more than to most. They are signs of a New Era, of new psychic perceptions, of a subtle world which is all about us, waiting until we are sufficiently evolved to perceive it.

One of the most genuine of modern mystics E. Carpenter went so far as to suppose that Nature was constantly communicating with us through such signs and waiting for us to evolve to a point where he could read them:

"It may take us a long time to learn that the lines of the sea and sunset sky, these forms and colours of the trees and flowers are the expression of ideas waiting perhaps through the ages for their interpreters."

Roerich is such an interpreter, and in this respect he is a long way ahead of most of the other painters of our time.

This element which is present, to more or less extent, than in all his work differentiates him from such great poets as Turner and Shelley, otherwise he is the only artist perhaps, since their day, who possesses the same rare sense of luminous beauty.

In the "Guardians of the Entrance" we have an imagery which might well be that of some modern Book of Revelations, or the frontispiece to one of Roerich's own remarkable books - "Realm of Light".

A warrior, wrapped in tongues of flame, stands on guard at the entrance to the Realm of Light, which glimmers below through an abyss in the mountains.

It might be the approach to that mysterious subterranean kingdom of the Agharti, about which much has been written in recent years; or it may be an image of what one has to confront if one really wishes to attain to light.

This may be one of those works which has caused Roerich to be known as a 'theosophical' painter. Theosophy has come to mean a great many different things since the time of Plotinus, on the whole, they are live things, and most of those who attack these movements with the facts and figures of crystallized creeds hardly ever produce anything inspiring themselves. Nevertheless, Roerich's work has a wider appeal than 'theosophy', Eschylus wrote nearly one hundred tragedies the very titles of which disclose a world of heroes and demi-gods, whose history is raised to the higher realms of myth. Roerich, at times, approaches very near to these tremendous personages of Eschylus. In his latest works in which he is never tired of depicting the mountains and the colossal rock carvings of Maitreya, there is an Egyptian grandeur which recalls the great tragedian.

His work is more comprehensive than that of any modern scientific outlook whether of the theosophical or psychological order, for he is in touch with all the great religions, myths and poetic legends of the past and this gives colour and concrete value to his work.

His religious outlook would seem to differ from that of most people in being much more religious. Most believers adhere to some particular scheme or creed to which they attach more importance than to the living spirit. Roerich's belief reminds one, in some ways, of Wordsworth's; it is something that saturates all his art and writings and at every moment of the day. This is significant when we remember that Wordsworth had the same adoration for mountains. It suggests that all deep spirituality is derived from the mountains, and that the lofty regions of the earth are, as it were, the dwelling place of the Higher Consciousness.

The Greeks who are supposed to have never left the city, the polis, and to have created there that peculiarly flourishing business known as politics, were not always indifferent to mountains and natural scenery. It might be possible for an art critic to show that the beauty of Greek sculpture and architecture was derived, in great part, from those exquisite proportions of cape and promontory and mountain that can be seen from the Acropolis. The cult of such high places as Olympus, Parnassus, Hymettus, Taygetus,



and the fact that their holy oracle was located amidst the towering precipices of Delphi shows that ancient Greece, long before the day of its sophists and politicians knew the power of the mountain.

In China, this cult for the high regions of the earth lasted longer than with any other race. Three thousand years of Art, Poetry and Philosophy, inspired, in great part by the mountain, made China one of the most cultured races of the world.

It is the only race that has possessed a religion of Culture, as Roerich understands it, and one of the elements of this religion was a cult of sacred mountains.

It is well to remember this when we are studying the work of Roerich for there is certainly a link between his art and this spirit of the ancient Chinese.

Since the days of Ancient China no one has striven so consistently as Roerich has done to paint the spirit of the mountains.

It is possible that the mountain meant much more to the Chinese than to us.

In Chinese the sign for 'man' when combined with that for the 'mountain' gives the compound for 'spirit', and Chinese literature, whether it be that of the poets, buddhists or taoists is full of reference to the mountain.

"There where lofty peaks glitter overhead and the waterfalls resound, man attains to perfection"

"The sages, poets and saints come from the mountain and return there."

"Towards the evening of his life he departed for the mountains and was transformed into spirit."

This is in striking contrast with the West which has generally looked upon mountains with an unfavourable eye, considering them, more or less, as the abode of robbers and an hindrance to civilization.

This uncultured attitude lasted almost to the time of Wordsworth and at the period when the wealthy Chinese mandarins together with the philosophers and artists abandoned their palaces to retire to the mountains as to some earthly Paradise, mediaeval Europe, as one witty historian informs us - 'left that pursuit to the Devil.'

Ruskin writing after Wordsworth took much trouble to prove that few painters before Turner had taken any particular interest in mountains.

His story of the influence of the mountain in our religious and artistic development is not a very cheerful one, for, neither in art or religion has Europe depended upon the mountain to the same extent as in Asia.

One might almost say that the great things in Asiatic art and Religion came from the mountain, whereas in Europe they arose from the cities and the plain.

The cathedrals are an instance; whereas in Asia many of the sacred mountains such as Mt Omi in China and Mt Hei in Japan are covered with temples almost to the summits.

We are apt to forget that Asia possesses an immense number of sacred mountains, giant ranges whose influence may have given rise to such noble spiritual architectures as the Mahayana, a metaphysical structure as sublime in its way as the Himalaya.

The innumerable saints and enlightened Ones who have dwelt for milleniums among these mountains have bequeathed an inexhaustible treasure of spirituality which lamas and hermits from Mongolia to the Himalayas have handed down until to day.

We read of a Chinese emperor who, more than forty centuries ago, derived his wisdom and system of government from 'The Great Teachers of the Snowy Range', and, to day Roerich assures us that the New Age and its Enlightened Ones will arise from these same regions.

And if life is too short for us to fathom all the subtleties of Buddhist learning with its 84,000 doctrines, nevertheless we can penetrate much of it and get some idea of the inexhaustible spiritual treasures which have been kept for us in the temples and mountain fastnesses of inner Asia.

Whether the sacred character of the Mountain in Asia be derived from the almost unending succession of saints and hermits who have dwelt there or from the intense purity of the air of these high regions, joined to the magnetic power which all great mountains possess, is difficult to determine.

Those who live there subsist on little, very little, and seem to despise all those physical comforts which they have left below in their ascent to the Absolute.

All this is in striking contrast with Europe whose lofty regions are, to a great extent,



associated with dairy produce and hotel comforts.

If we cannot compare Cardinal Wolsey, who succumbed beneath the weight of his silver plate, to Padma Sambhava ; or Francis Bacon weighed down by a mass of learning that had neither light or heat with Milarepa, who knows if such a difference does not reside in the transcendental power of great mountains ?

The higher altitude refines and detaches and seems to impart that energy which finally kindles with light and heat.

The city, on the other hand, may lead to nothing more than the accumulation of wealth, luxury and social distinctions.

'To live in those spots that most men avoid brings one nearer to the Tao ' is an ancient Chinese saying.

And perhaps nothing is more imposing in the vast annals of Chinese art and poetry than the influence of the mountain, which recurs, again and again, with its constant leitmotiv.

If we glance back through the last two thousand years of Chinese poetry picking out a volume, at random, from any of the Dynasties we shall always meet with the sign for the mountain. And we can go still further back to the Yi-King, the Book of Changes, that is, three thousand years ago, and we shall discover a whole philosophy pertaining to the mountain.

The early period of Chinese culture, of which so little is yet known, is, perhaps, the most fascinating of any. The natural simplicity of its art and doctrines has the beauty of precious jade, and the sacred character of jade it should be remembered is something coeval with the cult of great mountains.

The more we study this early Culture, the more we are convinced that Roerich's discovery of the universal beauty of the Stone Age is well founded.

In the Chou King, the Book of History we read of an Emperor Chun, making an offering of consecrated jade to the spirits of Heaven and Earth, and are told that the ceremony took place at the summit of the sacred Tai Shan more than forty centuries ago !

When, after ten centuries or more, Taoism, Buddhism and Confucianism became the recognised cults, they all continued this adoration for the mountain.

We have heard much of the decadent forms of Taoism, of Chinese superstition, and the absurd rites of Feng-Shui, the geomancers art. These judgements are, in some ways perhaps superficial. No doubt these cults are decadent like many of our own but the spirit that originally informed them was anything but ridiculous.

The bronze art of this early period which has been revealed to us only in the last thirty years, is now recognized as something unique, and its technical qualities are considered to surpass even those of Greek art.

The same may occur with these so called superstitions, and with increased knowledge we shall find that many apparently ridiculous practises are, in reality, the vestiges of a lost science.

Ancient China seems to have known far more than we of to day about the advantages of certain geographical positions.

Here is the picture of a Chinese landscape which has remained unchanged throughout the Ages.

" A temple in honour of the Taoist deities, who protect the city, crowns the summit of the mountain, and a pagoda, within the walls, increases the favourable influences of the place ; moreover, it receives a sympathetic current from the great Feng Shui pagoda, ~~within the walls~~, on another height, to the south of the river."

This would seem to show that Ancient China possessed a science of magnetic currents which has been lost.

The cult of sacred mountains which dates back some five thousand years or more may for all we know take its origin in the still more remote period of the Stone Age.

When Roerich, with scientific proofs, shows us that the Stone Age was a time of Art and Culture, we feel that he refers to the period which Chuang-tzu describes as the Golden Age when men were able to walk through fire.

Such an age-long cult of the mountain cannot have been without its influence upon art, and it is not surprising that some of the greatest painters of China were painters of the mountain.

Whether such an influence had the effect of making Chinese landscape art more spiritual than that of other countries is not easy to say, but no one will deny



that it has a rare transcendent quality which we do not meet with elsewhere.

Dr Oswald Siren who has gone deeper into the question of Chinese art than anyone of our time says :

" The Chinese artist to a certain degree freed himself from the tyranny of bodily limitations and centred his consciousness in spiritual nature, and he was thus free to express abstract conceptions in a less conventional form. He withdrew himself from his lower consciousness, from subservience to the laws of nature through a process of abstraction which, indeed, to some extent is operative in all artistic creation, but which is carried much further in Chinese art than in that of the Western races."

The study of Chinese art has brought this eminent critic to quite other conclusions than those of most modern writers on art.

" If one explains art purely through technique one describes merely the various elements in the genesis of artistic creation. One will be saying nothing about the spiritual mystery which gives the art its power of fascination. "

" We have hardly ventured to draw the natural conclusion that the highest expressions of man's soul life, one of which is art, must have their origin in a spiritual will "

This conclusion, opposed in most ways to modern thought, is interesting because it is inspired, to a great extent, from contact with Ancient Chinese art.

Elsewhere the same critic explains how Byzantine Art approaches nearer to the lofty refinement of the Chinese than Gothic art, for instance, which was always close to realism.

The spiritual quality of art, then, increases as one goes East, and we shall find that the highest qualities of a work derive as Haich-Ho told us, so many centuries ago, from 'The fusion of the rhythm of the spirit with the movement of living things.'

Such a survey of the Chinese temperament and the cult of sacred mountains brings us very near to Roerich. He belongs, at least in spirit, to this tradition. His vision is very different to the urban outlook of to-day, it has the span of immense deserts, the elevation of great mountains and a primordial character and directness which we seem to have lost.

He is filled with the idea of reconstruction, of building up a new world by means of art: " You know that outside of art religion is inaccessible, outside of art the spirit of nationality is lost, outside of art science is dark"

It is well to note that Prof. Alexander, one of the most scientific and mathematical minds of to-day comes to much the same conclusion.

" The Western world is now suffering from the limited moral outlook of the three previous generations, during which the most advanced industrial countries treated art as a frivolity.

" The soul would wither without fertilization from its transient experiences. This fertilization of the soul is the reason for the necessity of art."

" The importance of a living art which moves on and yet leaves its permanent mark can hardly be exaggerated "

When Roerich insists upon the all-importance of art in daily life he is therefore proclaiming what the most advanced psychologists of our time are beginning to discover.

But his conception of art differs in many ways from that of the past, to him art is synonymous with the highest form of activity.

" We are introducing by all means art into all manifestations of life. We are striving to show the quality of creative labour which can be known only in the ecstasy before the beautiful. This is the all-vibrating Nirvana, not the false Nirvana of immobility but the Nirvana of the noblest and most intense activity. Obstacles are only new possibilities to create beneficent energy. Without battle there is no victory."

Here he strikes a note which brings art into harmony with the other activities of our time. We think of Eschylus rather than of Burne Jones and realise that if the future takes this dynamic view of art then the world may, as Dostoevsky and Roerich have proclaimed - be saved through Beauty.

His vision of a 'Nirvana of the noblest and most intense activity' suggests a New Buddhism based not so much on the activity of monks as of artists.



The Roerich family, who direct the Himalayan Research Institute, form a remarkable advance guard for the understanding of Asia, and if ever another Renaissance should result from a spiritual cooperation of East and West they will have contributed to it much as the Lorenzo family helped on the Italian Renaissance.

Dr George Roerich, the artist's son, has shown scientific powers of observation in his 'Trails to Inmost Asia'\*, a detailed account of the Roerich expedition through Tibet and central Asia. He is a distinguished orientalist, possesses a knowledge of many of the Central Asian dialects as well as Mongolian and Tibetan, and is the author of an Anglo-Tibetan dictionary. His publications on Tibetan painting and the native religions and cults of central Asia give a good idea of the value of the work being done at the Institute.

Svetoslav Roerich, well known by the portraits he has executed of his father, is, we feel certain a born portrait painter. It will be interesting to follow his evolution in contact with Buddhist portrait paintings, an art which carries with it a sense of higher dimensions.

Madame/Ivanovna Elena Roerich, the untiring companion of the artist in all his explorations and lofty achievements, possesses a rare comprehension of Asia and the Future and one which is not only intellectual but spiritual.

She has proclaimed the Era of the Mother of the World; founded in America the 'Universal Unity of Women' and done perhaps more than anyone to raise the world's conception of womanhood to a high ideal.

From her messages and writings one can gather to what extent she is in contact with the highest sources of inspiration in the East, and how to the artist himself she must have ever been a light like the Pleiades - 'shedding sweet influence'.

It is this link with the Asia of the future which makes all Roerich's work so vital and fascinating. He looks forward to a New Era, a beneficent Age, and to the coming of Maitreya in which he has as firm a belief as any Asiatic. Here one feels sure that he is right.

The accumulated spiritual forces of Asia are immense and once they are stirred to new life they will attract the whole world into their orbit.

'If the Crusades gave rise to a whole epoch, then the Age of Maitreya will be a thousand times more significant'

Such is the message of Roerich who looks upon Culture as a power no longer partial and opposed to its surroundings, but universal like the beauty of the Stone Age.

His vision stretches from this early age of beauty to the coming age of Maitreya, which he tells us will be a period of great art, universal peace and construction.

His intense belief in the power of Beauty to transmute evil into good is at the foundation of all his work. This brings him very near to Plato, and still nearer to the ancient Chinese who seem to have carried this belief to more spiritual conclusions than the Greeks.

When he tells us that: 'Culture and the achievement of Empires have been constructed by Beauty' we know that he has looked with a sympathetic eye on the art of all the ages, and that there is little that has escaped his attention.

Unlike Blake he has no prejudice in matters of technique.

He considers oil, tempera, water colours, or pastel as so many means to the same end, like the instruments in an orchestra or as he puts it 'like the intonations in the voice of an orator'

Moreover he considers such exclusive ideas a matter of chance, and due, in great part to childish impressions.

"We all hear of exclusive ideas. Some painters and amateurs prefer oil to water-colour or pastel; others prefer sketches to finished pictures, or monumental works to miniatures. These are subjective tendencies inherited, often enough, from early childhood when they may have heard that only oils had value or thought water colour very attractive.



We ought to care for creative art however, in all its forms, for it would be wrong to reject any of its possibilities.

In the same way sculpture, paintings, mosaics and ceramics can all combine when they are due to the same inspiration.

If we compare the works of different epochs and nations we shall see that their variety can very well harmonise, provided we select them not by their superficial aspects but according to the underlying spirit that connects them.

In this way the works of the Primitives can very well be exhibited by the side of Persian Miniatures.

Certain Chinese, Japanese and African works will be found to be in harmony with modern masters like Gauguin and Van Gogh, because there is the same creative spirit in both."

Here he is touching on what may well be a work of the future, the discovery of the same spirit, underlying the most varied forms of art, often centuries apart and separated by the oceans. In this way the immortality of the spirit will be made visible and the Museum, no longer an exhibition of dead chronologies, will have recovered its original sense of Museum - a temple of the Muses.

This tendency to always prefer the living spirit to the dead letter will be met with in all that Roerich has to say on the subject of Art, Religion or Education; it is this which makes him a 'live man' and keeps him continually in the forefront of all the spiritual movements of our time.

He has an innate sense of creative art, of the superiority of the constructive spirit.

"What beauty there is in the word 'creation', in all languages it convinces by reason of its power and possibilities it opens up, for it is the symbol of joy and movement and of everything that breaks down the limits of dead convention. It is something that can overcome the 'impossible', lead us towards the conquest of fresh possibilities and procure the victory over routine and shapelessness. Movement is of its very essence and we might define it as an expression of cosmic law and of Beauty itself!"

Such writing has the victorious, optimistic outlook which we always associate with Emerson; like the work of Emerson his sayings have a fresh early morning spirit.

It would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of an artist such as Roerich for the world of to-day. In almost every one of his activities - through his paintings, poetry, prose writings, messages, educational institutions, Culture associations and peace pacts, he is always doing what is most urgent and necessary at the moment, urged on by a fiery desire to make things better for the world at large.

The commercial and industrial world of to day is not such a delightful place that it can afford to neglect art and the universal aspiration towards Beauty.

Having had occasion recently to visit a manufacturing district, I came across one of those gehennas where a whole population including the children are being sacrificed to the Moloch of Industry.

Enormous coke factories blackened the spaces around, killing off both the children and the blades of grass, while the poisoned air, for a radius of two miles, converted all things animate and inanimate into a leprous mask of the most hideous poverty.

But on returning, in the evening to my hut, among the woods, I beheld a marvellous sight. Overhead in a flowering apricot tree was a bullfinch, his rose tinted plumage harmonizing with the screen of pearl pink blossoms now afire in the setting sun, and the background of the picture was pure turquoise set with silver of the crescent moon.

The jewelled play of light within this magic web of colour was something which surpassed the masterpieces of the Orient.

Such a violent contrast with what I had beheld earlier in the day made me realize what a formidable will to Beauty exists in Nature, and one which, in the long run, it may be dangerous to thwart.

One might imagine that in our world of to-day such beauty is, at best, a fragile thing destined to be trampled underfoot by the first munition factory that comes along.

It is just the contrary, it is the factory that is in danger. High explosives are far too precious to their owners to be wasted on natural scenery, much less on the crescent moon. They will be reserved almost exclusively for the industrial Moloch, with the result that all factories in the future will have to make themselves small and probably disappear underground.



Fortunately there is a more peaceful solution, and one which Roerich is never tired of ~~and one of~~ proclaiming and that is through art.

In a world saturated with art and accustomed to what is beautiful - these infernal regions which are often more deadening than anything in Dante, would no longer be tolerated.

For a world given over to construction and the bettering of life, would, in the long run, come to care very little for negation and destruction, whether it take on the form of poisonous factory areas or of war.

But Roerich has an almost Shakesperian confidence in the inherent goodness of the human heart.

"Humaneness which is common to all ages and peoples is something ineradicable. No matter what narcotics, alcohol and nicotine may do to kill it, it may somehow, somewhere be awakened."

It is upon this 'heart foundation', he foresees, that the future will be built. For this radiant lotus of the heart shines against the dark hatreds of political and sectarian beliefs, much as the radiant beauty of spring contrasts with the blasted world of the factory area.

And art is not different from this luminous source, it is one and the same, and a part of Nature's invincible will towards Beauty, so that when we behold a vision of fiery colour amidst April trees, we are looking at the same spirit of Beauty that informs the work of a Korin or a Roerich.

For Roerich by his many sided activities shows how the foundations of the heart, the desire for peace, the creative energies of art, and the beauty in Nature itself, are all a part of the same ray and emanate from the same visible and invisible sun.

As an artist he is unique in having entered the Asia of the Future where he has discovered all these beneficent energies centred around the glorious name of Maitreya.

He has been drawn towards these mountains from within rather than from without and does not behold them merely with the bodily eye; so that when he paints them icy Thang-La range glittering at the gateways of Tibet, we get the impression of a range of spirit mountains whose ghostly white peaks and cupolas bar all ingress into the forbidden land.

And again, when he paints the Mountain of the Five Treasures, the vast Kinchenjunga, we seem to see a spiritual citadel towering high up above all thought, a magnificent expression, as it were, of the Mahayana.

This is because the artist himself is intensely aware of all the hidden mysteries in these high regions.

"All Teachers journeyed to the mountains. The higher knowledge, the most inspired songs, the most superb sounds and colors are created on the mountains. On the highest mountains there is the Supreme; the highest mountains stand as witnesses of the Great Reality."

This gives to his lofty peaks and precipices of the Himalaya an eerie aspect where the light of the sun itself, striking high up in strange and unaccustomed ways, seems like the rays of some distant star.

Sometimes he conveys the sense of what is fabulously old, as in that picture of Kailasa, the sacred mountain of Tibet, where the sea-green tints suggest the play of light in antique jade, and the spirit of the place itself is half sonorous.

If Roerich is comparable to the great Chinese painters of the mountain, because like them he has divined something of the impersonal mystery of the Universe and its giant principles in one respect he is very different and that is, in his use of brilliant colour.

The Chinese, for the most part, used monochrome tints, the abstract character of which helped them to realise a sort of superconscious vision. It might be expected therefore that Roerich's brilliant coloring would tend to present the physical aspect of things rather than their spiritual significance or our mental vision of them.

All those who have had visions from a higher sphere must have been impressed at the beauty and intensity of their coloring and, at the same time, have recognized that the shapes and forms which flashed before their inner eye were those of this world.



Roerich's visions are of this order . He does not avoid the outer world :

" We should never object to realism in its tendency to life," he tells us , and instead of withdrawing into a world of symbol and abstraction he evokes the mystery latent in life and in landscape through beautiful constructions of form and colour.

But he looks upon the forms of this world from a sphere of intense spiritual effort and activity, which gives his work a unique quality where colour takes on a supernatural glow.

If we want to find a parallel to this sort of work, we must go back to Dante , the greatest artist among the poets.

For Dante is full of this sense of pure luminous colour of ' the sun shining in the heart of the ruby' . Above all he is the poet of the transcendent beauty of light , of the light of the visionary world and that of the high places of the earth. In this and in his attachment to what is real , Roerich is akin to him.

Like Dante he is a visionary ever climbing to higher realms, and the further he ascends the more he sees how all things glow with radiant colour.

It is because of this altitude of his inner and outer vision that his mountain slopes flame like the petals of great flowers.

These mysterious citadels which stand on guard over precipices of pure cobalt ; these mighty walls which seem to support the roof of the world are all seen as Dante would have seen them tinged with the : "Dolce color d'oriental zaffaro" and as terrace after terrace, range after range, rise through the whole scale of blues, from hazel to the darkest sapphire we get the effect of visual music rising to some great climax.

And whether it be the fire of the sun, the fire of space, or the fire of the spirit that has gone to the forging of these splendid visions, they are all, like the work of Dante, the expression of some living flame - di fiamma viva.

This would suggest that the world is again returning to the higher peaks of the mind, to those spiritual realms which are the home of light and colour.

As Roerich himself puts it : "Colour sounds the command of the Future. Everything black, grey and misty has already sufficiently submerged the consciousness of humanity. One must again ponder about the gorgeous flower colours which always heralded the epochs of renaissance. "

Roerich in painting and Scriabine in music are the two outstanding artists in modern times who have led the way toward these higher regions. There is a certain resemblance between their work and both attained to those crystal clear summits of art which the Western world would seem almost to have forgotten since the time of Dante.

Scriabine, perhaps, comes nearer to Roerich than any of the great Russian composers. At present he is not recognized everywhere, especially in France, at his proper value , perhaps because he was too spiritual, too advanced and too high for the general public.

The Future however, will come to see that with Roerich he attained a higher form of art than any of his contemporaries. Like Roerich he was strongly attracted by the East and had likewise a desire to achieve a synthesis of all the arts , and to explore their relations with the science of sound and color.

If he stopped short perhaps, towards the end, held up to some extent by the intellectual barriers of Western Theosophy, Cabalistic magic , and Scientific dogma, none the less his music always rose to the Future and is , perhaps, the most original and inspired of all modern music.

While death cut short Scriabine in his dealings with magic, Roerich went on, advancing boldly into Asia , until he had contacted those finer forces which are so much higher than magic or scientific dogma , being themselves of the nature of light.

In this he would seem to have attained much that Scriabine foresaw and desired , for when we examine these rare canvases which burn with the intensity of blue flames we realize that the lofty aspirations in the Prometheus have been fulfilled.

These mountain masses poised like ~~flames~~ flames have the beauty of great diamonds, and an incisive perfection of form which recalls the terza rima.

His latest work has something universal in its ample directness, and if it often touches on the high levels of Dante and Scriabine , on the other hand it displays a vast taoist simplicity which is characteristic of the Orient and of Tagore.



About ten years ago I was led by a sign to perceive the advent of a new style.

I awoke at dawn to find a magnificent white peony aflame with the rays of the rising sun, and in its fiery form perceived the outline of the Himalaya.

The incident roused me and I went into the garden, which in the silence of early morning seemed to stretch for miles. As I walked down the avenues towards a grove of giant cedars I had a sudden vision of the vastness of Asia, not merely of her physical aspects, which might be compared with those of America, but of her metaphysical and spiritual grandeur which can be compared with nothing of the like on earth.

I saw the great avenues of Peking, the colossal architecture of its gateways, those great metaphysical structures which surpass even Aristotle in grandeur, and all that I knew of ancient China and India was suddenly resumed in an image and in the word Himalayan.

But it was not so much a vision of the past as of the future which the word evoked, for all these values appeared anew, in fresh forms, in a synthesis of which the dynamic outlines had the character of great fine aircraft.

And the term Himalayan seemed to me to refer to a new style which would be universal something which might equally apply to a great airport laid out with glittering waters like a modern Versailles, as to anything in Asia.

Some years after when I came to see Roerich's Himalayan works, and to learn about his outlook I realized the reason for this vision.

The world is gradually moving towards such an ample view of things, slowly steering away from the narrow gothic spirit of the past and its urban darkness and heading for the realm of light the realm of colour.

And in the weaving of this great Future, aircraft are already beginning to move like so many giant shuttles.

The design of this new world is already visible in the tapestries of space, in the spiritual world, and more than any other artist of our time Roerich would seem to have caught their colour.

And when we have gauged the depth of his vision and the sense of his profound language of colour, it is the beauty of his work which will remain with us, and this is something beyond analysis.

Like all true beauty, such beauty sets us free into that higher sphere where all things are related. These rare visions which glow with the pure color of flowers or precious gems, after the manner of some Eastern Veronese, impress us by their bold sweeping outlines. They arouse in us the sense of style that is present in all real beauty and which corresponds with the notion of what is classic.

It is the beauty which we can discover in the span of ancient cedars; in the superb achievement of Venice; in the spacious beauty of some great French park; in the architectural nobility of an ode of Pindar; in the magnificent form of some fine beaker vase of the Ming dynasty; in the living rhythm of a line of Shakespeare; in the vast outlook of a poet like Tagore, and it is akin to all these types of beauty because like them it is an expression of an ample state of consciousness.

Knowing that the earth has been inhabited for millions of years, with a continuous procession of systems and religions, Roerich has come to recognize the central truth in all pure art and all genuine aspirations.

The ancient Chinese symbol of the Celestial Dragon is probably the greatest that we know, since we are told that all the thrones of the world were once dragon thrones.

It is the symbol of the power of the spirit, and, at the same time, the symbol of change, and when we come to understand it, we realize that the spirit is always renewing itself in different forms, because art and life are always taking on fresh aspects.

But in all this endless succession of cultures and beliefs the value of Beauty remains constant like the Pole Star.

And because Roerich recognizes ~~the~~ Beauty as the goal to all our activities, and Infinity as the path that leads from the prison of narrow prejudice towards the freedom of the Everliving, he is one of the very greatest spirits of our time.

"The Dragon draws the Pole Star,  
How can Fate,  
Itself be other than a Gulf Sublime,  
The direction of the world is kept beyond



The bounds of Reason,  
Or the reach of Time ;  
Immense within the Immense,  
Range beyond range,  
The mountains rise  
Made infinite and strange.

-----  
Barnett. D. Conlan,  
Spring } 1938.  
France. Equinox }



From the Book  
NICHOLAS ROERICH  
A MASTER OF THE MOUNTAINS.

By  
BARNETT D. CONLAN.

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What then is the nature of Tai Tsung Honourable Ancestor of all mountains? Invested at hour of formation and evolution, with supernatural qualities, dividing northern shade from southern light, it cuts the darkness from the dawn.

TU FU.

At all the important turning points in the world's history, there have appeared great artists whose destiny it was to illumine Life, by giving form and colour to the spiritual tendencies of their time.

Pheidias, a perfect master of all the plastic arts of Greece, revealed the gods, latent in the world of myth and imagination, and his images not only reigned over the whole of the Ancient World, but lasted on long into the Middle Ages.

After a thousand years or so had elapsed, Giotto arose to usher in a New Age and a New Art. Like Chartres Cathedral or Dante's immense poem, Giotto's work, more than that of other painters reflects the essential beauty of Christianity and the aspirations of the Middle Ages. And now when the Wheel of Time is bringing us once more to another ending and a fresh beginning, a great painter, Nicholas Roerich, sounds the note of dawn and resolutely leads the way towards a renaissance of the Spirit.

If Pheidias was the creator of divine form, and Giotto the painter of the Soul, then Roerich may be said to reveal the spirit of the Cosmos.

For this reason he is the chief interpreter of our epoch, and his art is the counterpart of Science itself, since it supplies that religious vision of Life and the Universe which Science had seemingly taken away.

The Art of Roerich, therefore, like the Art of Pheidias and Giotto is a sacred Art and if it is not centred exclusively round the human form, that is because it is modern and moves with the spirit of our time.

If Pheidias had a close affinity with Aeschylus, and Giotto with Dante, then Roerich, by his immense faith in the power of Culture may be said to continue the work of Goethe.

Among the world's great artists he is unique in having formed societies all over the world with a view to promoting the love of Art and Science. In New York alone, he has built a cathedral of Art which contains a variety of Art institutions together with a thousand of his own masterpieces.



Such an activity would be hard to match at any period of the world's history, and we have to go back to the Middle Ages, to great builders and educators such as St. Thomas Aquinas, if we are to find a parallel to such untiring energy.

It is perhaps in the order of things that Nicholas Roerich should be Russian. So deep and religious an attitude to Art as his could hardly derive from any other race to-day, and his universal culture, his vast outlook which stretches throughout Europe, Asia and America, comes of a race which is half Asiatic, and which contains in itself a sort of synthesis of East and West.

A well known poet has told us that East and West can never meet - 'Never the twain shall meet'. Roerich, however, who is also a poet, but whose inspiration is not drawn exclusively from the past and the appearances of this world, not only points to an understanding between East and West, but assures us that a New Era, a New World more spiritual than that of the old order, will arise from such a meeting.

He is for union rather than separation, for he sees with the eye of the spirit as well as with that of the body. Behind these forms and appearances, which are the crystallizations of centuries and refer to the past rather than to the future, there is a world of Spirit, infinitely simple and common to both hemispheres, and on this the Future will be built.

Modern Materialism is the antithesis of all that is meant by the word 'Culture', so that in calling all the advanced spirits of the world to rally round the 'Banner of Culture', Roerich has found the solution.

It is a solution which is the result of deep inspiration and due to a flash of inspiration rather than to any process of reasoning.

Only Culture can deal with the causes which cause all the evil of our time, without wasting energy on the effects.

There has been a general depreciation in the value of words so that a 'saint' has come to signify almost the opposite of its original meaning.

Saints like St. Bernard and St. Thomas Aquinas, however, possessed a spiritual energy which it would be difficult to parallel today. They travelled all over Europe at a time when travelling was a danger and hardship. They built schools and convents, educated the nations, and by their supreme energy, directed and guided the men of war and state, and with all this found time to compose immense metaphysical treatises on the scale of Aristotle.

They were in a state of High War fighting against darkness and barbarianism and fighting with the energy which for quality and continuity surpassed even that of men of war. They were spiritual warriors.



Roerich has much of this untiring energy, for his power is not merely intellectual but spiritual, dynamic, irradiating. He also is a crusader.

H He belongs naturally to that family of higher beings who, irrespective of all distinctions of race, class or academic honours, are guiding and inspiring the world at large towards a more luminous way of life.

In India - which is still the world's great spiritual reservoir - there are signs that man is again beginning to rise towards a higher plane of consciousness.

Such marvellous spiritual energies as Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, Gandhi, Ramana Maharshi and Aurobindo Ghose, such great poets and scientists as Tagore and Jagadis Bose show that a spiritual renaissance has already started, and that India is once again beginning on new and scientific lines to recreate the spiritual splendours of the past.

That Roerich, from his high stations in the Himalayas, should aspire to change the thought current of the world, may seem natural, then, to many out there, but very doubtful of course to most of us over here.

And yet, there are many signs that he is likely to succeed and that Culture will conquer.

In the first place there is the warning of what happened to Confucius; and then, it is not so much the case of one man wishing to change the tendency of all against their will, as of the Voice of Humanity itself calling from the crest of the wave, as to the direction of the waters!

The Irish poet, W.B. Yeats, whose strange and half Mathematical insight into the nature of things almost borders on that of Ancient Tibet, says: 'As I read the world, the sudden revelation of future changes is not from visible history but from its anti-self. Every objective energy intensifies a counter energy the other gyre turning inward, in exact measure with the outward whirl'.

If this be so, then centuries of Materialism must have generated a corresponding power of spirituality, so that there is reason to suppose that we are approaching some immense springtime of the spirit which no power on earth will be able to resist.

In this case, the movements of the future will be on the side of Roerich, a fact which he already seems to anticipate when he writes: "There is no one nation or class with us but the entire multitude of human beings, because in the last analysis it is the human heart which is open to the beauty of creativeness.

And what may seem impossible to many at the moment, might in the end prove to be the inevitable.



When we turn to Roerich's great canvas - The Commands of Rigden Djapo - we get quite another impression. Even if we do not at first understand the subject of this remarkable picture, we are immediately drawn to it and although we may not grasp all the aesthetic values which it contains nevertheless we react to them.

The subject matter of much in Poussin and Raphael was probably more or less obsolete in interest, during their lifetime. Today it has a fossilized character which is hardly saved by the consummate technique.

In Roerich's work, however, the Future looms large. There is no danger that the subject matter will seem obsolete in a century from now, on the contrary, it may take some time before the West recognises its real significance.

Founded upon the Tibetan legend of Shambala, it shows the royal Lama, Rigden Djapo, King of Shambala, giving his messengers their instructions.

The King, a figure of giant dimensions, is seated on his throne, in the heart of the mountain.

Around him two great aureoles of light cast their rays on the horsemen before him and throw the rest of the landscape into shadow.

This is the case, I think, where the plastic and illustrational qualities of a work of Art, are seen to be evenly balanced, a rare thing in art, and one which leading critics are only ready to discover in a few great painters like Rembrandt, Rubens, Titian, Raphael.

The picture which is built up largely from two tall mountains, situated among one of those endless valleys of Tibet, seems to me particularly interesting because the meaning transpires in great part from the technique.

The figure of this supreme Boddhisattva, who might be a great horseman or Siva himself the Central Energy, in his dancing form of Nataraja, is shown here as the heart of fire and dynamism. The aureoles of light which surround him have a gyratory movement which suggests an immense spiritual dynamo.

He imparts light and energy to his warlike disciples who start off immediately to battle with the darkness which overwhelms them so soon as they pass from his presence.

The mountain, at the heart of which he is seated, seems to undulate towards the left like a cone of white fire, and the second mountain which rears its mass of dark inertia in the opposite direction establishes the *ciarscuro* and amplifies the gyratory movement.

The forms which have an almost sculptural quality seem chiselled out of the rock and this enhances the plastic expression of the whole composition.

When I first saw this picture it called up to my mind one of Rimsky's great operas, The City to Kitege - which may mean that there is some underlying rhythmic connection between the two works, the same sort of rhythmic wave length.



It certainly has many of the qualities of Russian music. Its rhythmic appeal is very great and the outline everywhere takes on that majestic movement which we associate with the shifting of great waters.

Between Poussin's work and this picture there is all the difference between the music of Gluck and that of Moussorgsky.

Like Russian music itself, its asymmetric planning indicates an art which is nearer to that of the Orient than to the symertic art of a Gluck or Poussin.

Its rhythms show that ample and spontaneous beauty which we find in some of the great aspects of Nature, through it we divine something of the spirit of Eschylus moving in that large free style which was discovered by Moussorgsky.

And the more we contemplate this picture the more we think of Blake, for among all the great painters of the West, Blake, alone perhaps approaches art from the same plane as Roerich.

Roerich is living in a world which has got beyond the stage of Civilization and arrived at a state of Mechanization. Everything today is founded on numbers and machinery. Political power is based on the greatest possible number of votes, which is the greatest possible amount of ignorance. Art, Literature, Music, and Scientific productions, on their selling power, which, in the case of cheap literature degenerates still further into crime.

It is obvious that only a general world wide movement in the direction of Culture can redress such a situation.

It is very significant that Roerich is conducting his efforts on behalf of such a movement from the Himalayas.

Here his environment like that of Goethe's, is, more or less, in harmony with his inner aspirations and he finds the power and inspiration to undertake what no one in our large mechanimed commercial centres might have attempted.

The Himalayas constitute that part of the world which towers up beyone all our narrow prejudices of race, religion, languages and customs, and, because of this, it would seem to favour a broader and more universal style both in thought and in Art.

The poets of Ancient India seemed well aware of this when they said that a million ages of the gods would not exhaust all the spiritual treasures of the Himalayas.

Roerich's outlook on all the movements of today is absolutely above prejudice, and, one would no more think of fixing a political, religious, philosophic or artistic label to him than to the Earth itself.



In this he is a Master of the Mountains.

There are other reasons, however, I think, why the Higher Powers have set him in the midst of Asia to attempt this rather stupendous undertaking.

After two centuries of contact with the West, Asia still remains more or less in possession of her ancient culture.

In India the Aryan tradition yet retains some of its vestiges and although India cannot return to her past, for the same reason that Europe cannot go back to her Middle Ages, yet it is from what still remains of her ancient traditions that she can best derive the inspiration to build a New Age.

E.B. Havell, the former Principal of the Government School of Art in India, has given us a series of works on Indian Art and Culture which, as art criticism, alone is of more importance to us today than anything of Ruskin.

After battling for years with Western pedagogues and utilitarians he finally convinced the Government of the Truth of his astounding claim that: "The Indian village master builder, uneducated as he was, could erect more perfect buildings than the best educated and most talented artists of Europe and America."

He pointed to the splendid culture of the Aryan tradition which went back for several thousand years, and to the fact that 'India was the only part of the British Empire where the esthetic sense of the people, in spite of all that British philistinism had done to suppress it, influenced their every day life.'

Since then many changes have occurred. There has been a Buddhist revival, the founding of a Hindu University in Benares, and research work started on such texts that relate to ancient Indian literature, art, philosophy, music and dance.

These are now attracting the attention of a Western elite, and there are signs perhaps of some sort of intellectual co-operation.

If India ever does succeed in renewing on modern lines what Havell calls "the wonderful organization of her village communities and the splendid culture which grew out of them" then Europe must benefit as well.

For Europe today is more in need of Culture and a New Aristocracy than India where much of the ancient spirit still survives in a quiet way.

But it will have to be an Aristocracy based on spiritual power and not one based on money or political power.

Such an Aristocracy must possess something of the character of the Rishis and Brahmins of ancient India, who did not live to accumulate wealth or political power but to dedicate their immense spiritual resources to the welfare of the people.



There is, however, a very good reason why Europe should cooperate with India in the task of creating a New Age of Culture.

The two fountains from which Europe once drew the waters of the spirit - Palestine and Greece have run dry, and if we wish to renew our spiritual life we must look to the fountain head which is in India.

And just as the rivers of the earth rise in the Mountains, so the sources which supply the waters of the spirit take their rise in the Mountains of the Spirit - and these are in Asia.

Because Roerich is a master of the Mountains and draws his inspiration from these infinite sources, his messages are likely to be impersonal and, in the widest possible sense, for the general good.

The passage of Roerich through Central Asia, then, was an event of no little importance in the world of art. Had he brought back work, merely illustrational, it would have been a great achievement, but when we consider that most of these paintings are works of a high order then it becomes incredible.

Few artists in Europe could have sustained so great an output under such difficulties and hardships. The overcoming, of obstacles however, is one of Roerich's favourite doctrines which makes him a sort of trait d'union between Nietzsche and Asia.

The real Nietzsche was much nearer to the builders of these Sanctuaries and Citadels than to those who have made a caricature of him.

After his contact with these strongholds of Tibet there would seem to be a corresponding change in Roerich's style. The soft rhythms of much of his early work with their Hindu outlines changed to a harder and more Chinese type of Rhythm. Between his latest production and those early Russian paintings there is all the difference between the jagged precipices of Tibet and the suave contours of northern Russia.

There are times, however, when a fusion of these two tendencies gives a rare product which comes very near to what we might call perfection, something that suggests Mozart or Sophocles.

His picture of Mongolian dancers moving round a magic circle is a work of this order.

The gigantic banner paintings, as high as a temple, stretched on scaffolding make a scenic background beyond which stand a range of mountains.

The materials and surroundings before us do not differ very sensibly from those of a country fair. The effect, however, is so surprising that compared with this rustic mise en scene, our grand opera seems unsatisfying and artificial.



The thing is as fine as one of those Athenian choruses of Sophocles. It has the vital beauty of whatever pertains to folklore and plain air. The proportions are of an astounding harmony. It as if the Great Ones on the banners had answered to this invocation and cast their influence on all around. We are irresistibly attracted to the profound and simple beauty of these people whose style has nothing in it that is foreign to the march of the stars or the solemnity of the mountains. Marvellous Mongolia!

Had Roerich painted nothing but this picture he would have done something inimitable, because he would have been the first to reveal the inner beauty of this distant land.

There is another picture 'The Messenger' a figure standing in a sort of spiritual silence before an open door, which was painted many years before, but which has much the same spirit as that of these dancers.

One feels, that in such work the artist had attained to that perfect poise which is synonymous with spiritual insight.

But Roerich has an almost Shakesperian confidence in the inherent goodness of the human heart.

"Humaneness which is common to all ages and peoples is something ineradicable. No matter what narcotics, alcohol and nicotine may do to kill it, it may somehow, somewhere be awakened."

It is upon this "heart foundation" he foresees, that the future will be built. For this radiant lotus of the heart shines against the dark hatreds of political and sectarian beliefs, much as the radiant beauty of spring contrasts with the blasted world of the factory area.

And art is not different from this luminous source, it is one and the same, and a part of Nature's invincible will towards Beauty, so that when we behold a vision of fiery colour amidst April trees, we are looking at the same spirit of Beauty that informs the work of a Korin or a Roerich.

For Roerich by his many sided activities shows how the foundations of the heart, the desire for peace, the creative energies of art, and the beauty in Nature itself, are all a part of the same ray and emanate from the same visible and invisible sun.

As an artist he is unique in having entered the Asia of the Future where he has discovered all these beneficent energies centered around the glorious name of Maitreya.

He has been drawn towards these mountains from within rather than from without and does not behold them merely with the bodily eye, so that when he paints the icy Thang-La range glittering at the gateways of Tibet, we get the impression of a range of spirit mountains whose ghostly white peaks and cupolas bar all ingress into the forbidden land.

And again, when he paints the mountain of the Five Treasures



the vast Kinchin Junga, we seem to see a spiritual citadel towering high up above all thought, a magnificent expression, as it were, of the Mahayana.

This because the artist himself is intensely aware of all the hidden mysteries in these high regions.

"All Teachers journeyed to the mountains. The higher knowledge, the most inspired songs, the most superb sounds and colors are created on the mountains. On the highest mountains there is the Supreme; the highest mountains stand as witnesses of the Great Reality."

This gives to his lofty peaks and precipices of the Himalaya an eerie aspect where the light of the sun itself, striking high up in strange and unaccustomed ways, seems the rays of some distant star.

Sometimes he conveys the sense of what is fabulously old, as in that picture of Kailasa, the sacred mountain of Tibet, where the sea-green tints suggest the play of light in antique jade, and the spirit of the place itself is half sonorous.

If Roerich is comparable to the great Chinese painters of the mountains, because like them he has divined something of the impersonal mystery of the Universe and its giant principles, in one respect he is very different and that is, in his use of brilliant colour.

The Chinese, for the most part, used monochrome tints, the abstract character of which helped them to realise a sort of superconscious vision. It might be expected therefore that Roerich's brilliant coloring would tend to present the physical aspect of things rather than their spiritual significance or our mental vision of them.

All those who have had visions from a higher sphere must have been impressed at the beauty and intensity of their coloring and, at the same time, have recognised that the shapes and forms which have flashed before their inner eye were those of this world.

Roerich's visions are of this order. He does not avoid the outer world.

"We should never object to realism in its tendency to Life" he tells us, and instead of withdrawing into a world of symbol and abstraction he evokes the mystery latent in life and in landscape through beautiful constructions of form and colour.

But he looks upon the forms of this world from a sphere of intense spiritual effort and activity, which gives his work a unique quality where colour takes on a supernatural glow.

If we want to find a parallel to this sort of work, we must go back to Dante, the greatest artist among the poets.

For Dante is full of this sense of pure luminous colour of 'the sun shining in the heart of the Ruby. Above all he is the poet of the transcendent beauty of light! of the light of the visionary world and that of the high places of the earth. In this and in his attachment to what is real, Roerich is akin to him.



Like Dante he is a visionary ever climbing to a higher realms, and the further he ascends the more he sees how all things glow with radiant colour.

It is because of this altitude of his inner and outer vision that his mountain slopes flame like the petals of great flowers.

These mysterious citadels which stand on guard over precipices of pure cobalt; these mighty walls which seem to support the roof of the world are all seen as Dante would have seen them tinge with the "Dolce color d'oriental zaffiro" and as terrace after terrace, range after range, rise through the whole scale of blues, from hazel to the darkest sapphire, we get the effect of visual music rising to some great climax.

And whether it be the fire of the sun, the fire of space, or the fire of the spirit that has gone to the forging of these splendid visions, they are all, like the work of Dante, the expression of some living flame - di fiamma viva.

This would suggest that the world is again returning to the higher peaks of the mind, to those spiritual realms which are the home of light and colour.

As Roerich himself puts it: "Colour sounds the command of the future. Everything black, grey and misty has already sufficiently submerged the consciousness of humanity. One must again ponder about the gorgeous flower colours which always heralded the epochs of renaissance.

Roerich in painting and Scriabine in music are the two outstanding artists in modern times who have led the way towards these higher regions. There is a certain resemblance between their work and both attained to those crystal clear summits of art which the Western world would seem almost to have forgotten since the time of Dante.

Scriabine, perhaps comes nearer to Roerich than any of the great Russian composers. At present he is not recognized everywhere, especially in France, at his proper value, perhaps because he was too spiritual, too advanced and too high for the general public.

The future, however, will come to see that with Roerich he attained a higher form of art than any of his contemporaries. Like Roerich he was strongly attracted by the East and had likewise a desire to achieve a synthesis of all the arts, and to explore their relations with the science of sound and colour.

If he stopped short perhaps, towards the end, held up to some extent by the intellectual barriers of Western Theosophy, Cabalistic magic, and Scientific dogma, none the less, his music always rose to the future and is, perhaps, the most original and inspired of all modern music.

While death cut short Scriabine in his dealings with magic, Roerich went on advancing boldly into Asia, until he had contacted those finer forces which are so much higher than magic or scientific dogma, being themselves of the nature of light.



In this he would seem to have attained much that Scriabine foresaw and desired, for when we examine these rare canvasses which burn with the intensity of blue flames we realise that the lofty aspirations in the Prometheus have been fulfilled.

These mountain masses poised like flames have the beauty of great diamonds, and an incisive perfection of song which ~~like~~ recalls the terza rima.

His latest work has something universal in its ample directness, and if it often touches on the high levels of Dante and Scriabine, on the other hand, it displays a vast Taoist simplicity which is characteristic of the Orient and of Tagore.

About ten years ago I was led by a sign to perceive the advent of a new style.

I awoke at dawn to find a magnificent white peony aflame with the rays of the rising sun, and in its fiery form perceived the outline of the Himalaya.

The incident roused me and I went into the garden which in the silence of early morning seemed to stretch for miles. As I walked down the avenues towards a grove of giant cedars I had a sudden vision of the vastness of Asia, not merely of her physical aspects, which might be compared with those of America, but of her metaphysical and spiritual grandeur which can be compared with nothing of the like on earth.

I saw the great avenues of Peking, the colossal architecture of its gateways, those great metaphysical structures which surpass even Aristotle in grandeur, and all that I knew of ancient China and India was suddenly resumed in an image and in the word 'Himalayan.'

But it was not so much a vision of the past as of the future which the word evoked, for all these values appeared anew, in fresh forms, in a synthesis of which the dynamic outlines had the character of fine aircraft.

And the term Himalayan seemed to me to refer to a new style which would be universal, something which might easily apply to a great airport laid out with glittering waters like a modern Versailles, as to anything in Asia.

Some years after when I came to see Roerich's Himalayan works, and to learn about his outlook I realised the reason for this vision.

The world is gradually moving towards such an ample view of things slowly steering away from the narrow gothic spirit of the past and its urban darkness and heading for the realm of light, the realm of colour.

And in the weaving of this great Future, aircraft are always beginning to move like so many giant shuttles.



The design of this new world is already visible in the tapestries of space, in the spiritual world, and more than any other artist of our time Roerich would seem to have caught their colour.

And when we have gauged the depth of his vision and the sense of his profound language of colour, it is the beauty of his work which will remain with us, and this is something beyond analysis.

Like all true beauty, such beauty sets us free into that higher sphere where all things are related. These rare visions which glow with the pure colour of flowers or precious gems, after the manner of some Eastern Veronese, impress us by their bold sweeping outlines. They arouse in us the sense of style that is present in all real beauty and which corresponds with the notion of what is classic.

It is the beauty which we can discover in the span of ancient cedars; in the superb achievement of Venice; in the spacious beauty of some great French park; in the architectural nobility of an ode of Pindar; in the magnificent form of some fine beaker vase of the Ming dynasty; in the living rhythm of a line of Shakespeare; in the vast outlook of a poet like Tagore and it is akin to all these types of beauty because like them it is an expression of an ample state of consciousness.

Knowing that the earth has been inhabited for millions of years, with a continuous procession of systems and religion, Roerich has come to recognise the central truth in all pure art and all genuine aspirations.

The ancient Chinese symbol of the Celestial Dragon is probably the greatest that we know, since we are told that all the thrones of the world were once dragon thrones.

It is the symbol of the power of the spirit, and, at the same time, the symbol of change, and when we come to understand it, we realise that the spirit is always renewing itself in different forms, because art and life are always taking on fresh aspects.

But in all this endless succession of cultures and beliefs, the value of Beauty remains constant like the Pole Star.

And because Roerich recognises Beauty as the goal to all our activities and infinity as the path that leads from the prison of narrow prejudice towards the freedom of the Ever living, he is one of the very greatest spirits of our times.

'The Dragon draws the Pole Star,

How can Fate,

Itself be other than a Gulf Sublime,

The direction of the world is kept beyond

The bounds of reason,

Or the reach of Time,

Immense within the immense,

Range beyond Range,

The mountains rise,      Made infinite and strange."



## CO-OPERATIVE PRESS SERVICE

*Recognition, appreciation, and cooperation is extended in this column even where there may not be complete agreement or unqualified endorsement. Similarity of vision and likeness of direction determines our comradeship.*

NICHOLAS ROERICH—A MASTER OF THE MOUNTAINS. By Barnett D. Conlan. Published by Flamma, Association for the Advancement of Culture, Liberty, Indiana. Printed in Allahabad, India. Paper. 109 pp.

It is not only gratifying but highly inspirational to find a lofty subject treated in an appropriately masterly manner. This is true of Barnett Conlan's monogram on *Nicholas Roerich—A Master of the Mountains*, to a degree that has seldom been encountered by this reviewer.

With technical knowledge of his subject the author deals with it in all its external aspects with the proficiency of one who knows. But it is the sympathy, understanding and insight, blended with affection and reverence that enables Mr. Conlan to touch the very soul of the great artist whom he interprets so illuminatingly.

It is solely with the painting of the many sided genius of Roerich with which the treatise is concerned. In that treatment the emphasis falls naturally on spiritual qualities that emanate from the vibrant canvasses of this master of the mountains. He points to the clarity and purity with which truth and beauty shine from out of the blended pigments and impart to the works the unmistakable stamp of immortal greatness.

A fascinating feature of this study is the manner in which Roerich's works are appraised in the light of other art creations by both the old masters and by the moderns. So considered, Roerich emerges as a creator of values embodying the noblest qualities of both the old and the new. This would be so since the elevation, physical and spiritual, from which he works gives him a perspective of time and space that enables him to discern and transmit those attributes of essential Being that are at the root of every true work of art, whatever its period or style.

Nicholas Roerich is a Russian, and it is perhaps in the order of things that this should be so. Says Mr. Conlan: "So deep and religious an attitude to Art as his could hardly derive from any other race today, and his universal culture, his vast outlook which stretches throughout Europe, Asia and America, comes from a race which is half Asiatic and which contains in itself a sort of syntheses of East and West."

The "Master of the Mountains" does his work in the Himalayas. His soul is attuned to their heights and in accord with their sublime majesty. He shares their stability, reflects their serenity, enjoys their breadth of vision. Here his artist soul veritably penetrates to the inmost secrets of the primeval forces that underlie the manifested world. Something of these profound conceptions are transmitted to the world at large in his gorgeous creations of line and color.

The consummate color effects of Roerich's canvasses are compared to both Titian and Turner. But there are values in the works of this master of the mountains that belong only to the heights where the refractions of light are so much finer and purer than in the low lying spaces below.

From such elevation it is only a short step from the perception of the rarest of colors to an inner audibility of the world of tone. And this, too, makes its impress on the master's work. When looking at the Roerich canvasses, sensitives sometimes catch strains of celestial harmonies flowing out from the resplendent play of color.

There are associations with great literature also that become apparent in the works of such all-embracing significance as Roerich's. A very striking illustration of this is given by Mr. Conlan in a comparison between Shelly's *Prometheus* and Roerich's *Maitreya* "There would seem to be some mysterious link between certain artists and poets which time and space are powerless to change," he writes. "The luminous color of Shelley's poetry is not often met with," he adds further. "We find it, however, in Turner and Roerich whose work ranges from the rugged grandeur of Aeschylus to the ethereal qualities of Shelley."

Nicholas Roerich is a master of the mountains in more sense than one. Mr. Conlan observes that he is perhaps a reincarnation of one of the ancient



lightens and lifts the entire vibratory rhythm of the earth and all that lives upon it, thus drawing it closer to the glad time when its attunement will be too high to know the separative rhythms that produce the curse of war.

For one possessing the "blessed sight" Christmas night is indeed a holy watch night in which the splendors of heaven bend down and touch the heart of the earth and of man.

### THE MASTER JESUS

The following is a copy of a letter preserved in the Vatican Library in Rome. It was addressed to the Roman Senate by Publius Lentulus, "President of Jerusalem". He was the Roman proconsul at the time of Tiberius and the predecessor of Pontius Pilate in Judea:

"A singularly virtuous man has arisen and lives among us; those who accompany him call him the Son of God. He heals the sick and raises the dead. He is tall and attracts all eyes. His face inspires both love and fear. His hair is long and blond, smooth down to the ears; from the ears to the shoulders it is slightly crinkly and curly: parted in the middle, it falls to either side in the fashion of the Nazarenes. The cheeks are quite pale, the nose and mouth well formed; the short beard is full, worn divided, and like the hair is the colour of a ripe nut. His glance is full of wisdom and candour. His blue eyes are sometimes lighted by sudden flashes. This man, usually gentle in his speech, becomes fierce when he reprimands. Yet even then there emanates from him a serene self-possession. No one has seen him laugh, but many have seen him weep. His tone of voice is grave, reserved and modest. He is as beautiful as a man can be. "He is called Jesus, the Son of Mary.

### Redemption



"Wielder of infinite power!  
Enjoyer of infinite bliss!  
Master of infinite wisdom!  
Why dost Thou come like this?

"Seemingly worn and haggard;  
Seemingly wracked with pain;  
Seemingly utterly puzzled;  
Seemingly all in vain!"

\* \* \*

*"The woes of the world are heavy  
The faults of the world are great;  
I have assumed its burdens;  
I will redeem its state.*

*"Then shall My infinite glory,  
Which Thou hast known in part,  
Reign for unnumbered eons,  
Enthroned in every heart."*

From *The Infinite Glory* by Malcom Schloss



Chinese masters and says that he went into Tibet not as a visitor, but as "a Lama who finds himself back in his own country."

"Because Roerich is a master of the mountains, and draws his inspiration from infinite sources," says Mr. Conlan, "his messages are likely to be impersonal and in the widest sense for the general good." They are eminently universal in character and have achieved a world-wide distribution. "It is certain," writes Mr. Conlan, "that Roerich has founded an Empire of Art, the first of its kind, and that he has ambassadors of art and culture in all the civilized countries of the world."

This great master is above all a crusader of culture. Beauty is his "pole star" and "art for the people" is his slogan. In the words of Mr. Conlan, he is a universalist "after the manner of some giant tree, rooted in some particular spot and sending its branches out over the whole world."

Roerich has often been called a Theosophical painter. This is partly because of his choice of subjects treated, but more because of the "other-world" atmosphere which they radiate. In the estimation of Mr. Conlan, Roerich "is certainly one of the most spiritual of masters since Leonardo and Blake."

The esotericist understands that the approaching new Air Age will bring the discovery of many new color tones finer and more ethereal than any which physical sight has known previously. This supreme master of color has already begun to touch some of these higher tones. They reflect in lights and shadows upon his canvasses like infinite heralds of wonders yet to be. It is in harmony with this fact that Mr. Conlan writes: "The design of this new world is already visible in the tapestries of space in the spiritual world, and Roerich, more than any other artist of our time seems to have caught their color."

The author's final summations of this incomparable Russian master's work are given in the following beautiful words: "And because Roerich recognizes Beauty as the goal to all our activities and infinity as the path that leads from the prison of narrow prejudice toward the freedom of the ever-living, he is one of the very greatest spirits of our times."

—C. H.

**THE INFINITE GLORY.** A new volume of mystical poetry by Malcolm Schloss, author of *Songs to Celebrate the Sun*.

Ralph Waldo Trine calls *The Infinite Glory* "power clothed in simple beauty—to be read, not once, but many times over, for the beauty of imagery—for the realization of the divine in the human—for a richer, fuller life."

Ruth St. Denis calls it "rare, authentic, spiritual—a joyous realization of God raying out effortlessly into sheer lyric beauty." Don Blanding calls it "powerfully inspirational and vitalizing."

*The Infinite Glory* contains 55 poems. It is divided into four sections: The Glory of God in Nature, The Glory of God in Human Relationship, The Glory of God in Essence, The Glory of God in Human Perfection. Bound in orange cloth, with a cover-design, hand-lettered by Malcolm Thurnburn, stamped in gold on the cover. \$2.50 for the regular edition; \$5.00 for the cooperative, signed, numbered edition of 250 copies. Order from Malcolm Schloss, 720 Equitable Building, Hollywood 28, California.

**NOW IS MY TIME** By Svend Raasted. J. F. Rowney Press, Santa Barbara, Calif. 1944, 80 pp. Blue board, \$1.00; deluxe leatherette, \$1.50.

It is the Spirit of the New Age, the Spirit of God within man that speaks through these pages. They serve to emphasize the God immanent rather than the God transcendent. Also they stress the opportunity that comes to humanity in this great hour of its age-long progression to take a long step forward.

The Voice that communicates itself through the recorded utterances of this little volume is sweetly encompassing in tenderness, love and compassion. It tends to stabilize the restless, questioning mind of the hour in the soul certitudes that belong to eternal being. *Now Is My Time* assures us that *Now* is also *Our* time.

**COSMIC CAUSATION IN GEOPHYSICS.** By Paul Councel. Astro-Guidance Educational Society, 5405½ Carlton Way, Los Angeles 27, Calif. 1945. 28pp. 50c.

This very unusual contribution to the science of astrology was reviewed in



these pages several months ago but as this work has since then been considerably revised, enlarged and brought out in printed form it deserves repeated mention. The treatise is too important not to be brought to the attention of all those who are prepared to benefit by its original and significant contribution to the higher science of the stars. The content of the brochure is indicated by the topics treated, which include: The Time-Table of World Evolution; The Four Seasons of the Pleiades; The Polar Cycle; The Earth's Magnetic Sphere; Map of the Heavens and the Earth; The Pericyclic Revolution of the Poles; Space, Time and Interval; Mathematics of Diurnal Time-Space Displacement, and The Pyramid Clock.

It is a highly specialized piece of work and of great value to those who are delving into the deeper phases of astro-physics.

#### "PASSING ON"

Among the late Brown Landone's many writings is a brochure entitled *My Joy in Passing On*. It is a "sermon of joy" written to bring peace to the soul when a loved one passes on, the transition being compared to the passage from a tiny room here to a mansion of a thousand rooms of greater activity and joy. The booklet has 24 pages is priced at 10 cents and is obtainable from Brown Landone Memorial Foundation, Orlando, Florida.

### IMMORTALITY NOW

#### "In Him is Life"

A Co-ordinated Effort for a Threefold Truth Message Serving  
Marriage -- Birth, -- Bereavement

This work is now in its tenth year. During this period it has served numberless thousands who have been reached with a helpful, inspiring, comforting message.

Everything is done voluntarily and anonymously. The Co-ordinator contributes both time and money. There are no material gains sought or received by anyone connected with the work. It is an effort centered entirely in giving. The rewards, for such indeed there are, come to the spirit self. They are of the kind that moth and rust do not destroy.

The genuine altruism motivating this work cannot but stir the more generous impulses in all who receive them. "Your anonymous way of doing good is very unusual and commendable," writes a Bishop. One who had received the bereavement folder responded by saying among other things: "You are the only one who in my great pain did not descend like a vulture to prey on my purse." These reactions are representative.

Many have been most grateful for the opportunity to render the kind of a service that has been organized by *Immortality Now* because it can be done in so many ways, at so many points and at times and for periods suitable to varying conditions and circumstances. It can, moreover, be carried on by anybody and from anywhere.

If you are not already familiar with this Aquarian spirited enterprise we suggest you write to the Central Station for information. There will follow only what you request and desire. No obligation; no solicitation. Whatever results may come of it can bring gain only to you yourself and those whom you may choose to serve. Send your inquiry to P.O. Box 87, Utica, N.Y.

### Networks of Light and Goodwill

Let there be light! Let the will to good prevail! Such is the invocation of multitudes the world over. But for the most part it is unuttered and undirected. It is neither strong in faith nor clear in knowledge. Hence its power to transform is not great.

To bring this desire for light and this impulse to good into greater awareness and to marshall their energies into consciously directed purposes for world rehabilitation is the task being carried on by souls in all parts of the world who are linked inwardly, and sometimes outwardly as well, in furthering a common purpose. Since this work is carried on by units of three, a number