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H E L E N A   R O E R I C H

Madalene Lehrer



ODE TO A PORTRAIT

I sing my song to her, but silently,  
For heart-strings harmonize the melody.  
The image of her lovely face appears  
Still nearer when my eyes are cleansed by tears,  
And thoughts reach out to touch Infinity.

\* \* \*

A nameless yearning seized my soul one night,  
And with a sigh I wondered: If I might  
In some mysterious way have one desire  
Fulfilled, to what prize would my heart aspire?

Then suddenly - a Voice arrested me  
With one stern word of great Authority!  
In breathless awe I listened, not to lose  
A single syllable, but It spoke only: "Choose!"

It found me wholly unprepared to say  
What boon I craved; and, trembling with dismay,  
I begged for time to ponder carefully  
The gift which, somehow, would be granted me.

I searched the secret places of my heart  
To find the hidden wish. Would it be Art?  
Or Knowledge? Wealth or Love? or Fame? I knew  
The choice - irrevocable - would be true.

Again the Voice pronounced austere: "Choose!"  
On impulse, then, with no time left to muse,  
I felt impelled to answer the command  
With measured words: "I wish to touch her hand!"



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In stunned surprise at last I understood  
The heart's most poignant Call! Oh, if I could  
Fly quickly to her side - to find none other  
Than my beloved, spiritual Mother!

But how? Impatient with delay and slow  
Peregrination, now I longed to go  
In swiftest flight of spirit! Instantly  
A door was opened - someone greeted me.

"I shall not waken her," softly I said,  
"But only wish to stand beside her bed  
And gently, reverently touch her hand -  
For I was told to 'choose' - you understand."

It was no dream, and yet - how can this be?  
The wish - was it fulfilled? Oh, let me see  
Some reassuring sign! Perhaps a book  
Will indicate the page where I must look!

The paragraph to which my finger led:  
One hundred twelve! There joyously I read  
Within my treasured volume, "Hierarchy,"  
The wondrous answer in all certainty!

\* \* \*

The portrait's aura glows in radiant rings -  
The calm, compassionate eyes gaze into mine -  
A tremor in my heart evokes a sign -  
Perhaps she hears my song, as love's bright wings  
Caress the Cosmic harp's vibrating strings.



Many years ago, while on a brief visit to New York, I saw for the first time <sup>a</sup> ~~the~~ great collection of paintings by Nicholas Roerich. To me they were the "openers of the gates" - to limitless worlds of beauty and spiritual unfoldment. But, one glimpse of these symbolic works of art was not enough, and an acute longing to see them again consumed me.

Seven years later, happily, came an opportunity of viewing again (~~a collection of~~) his remarkable paintings. Stepping into the gallery I instantly sensed an atmosphere of tremendous inspiration. Still, it was not on the Roerich paintings that my eyes first fell, but on a life-size portrait in the center of the opposite wall. ★

"Who is that beautiful woman?" I exclaimed eagerly, going toward it oblivious of all else - for the portrait was a magnet - it drew my feet as well as my eyes. Her serene, yet glowing, expression held me for some moments; then gradually Professor Roerich's paintings of the majestic Himalayas compelled my attention, and I was transported with the joy of seeing them. Yet even they appeared to pay homage, as it were, by surrounding and creating a setting worthy of the truly radiant jewel in their midst - the portrait of Helena Roerich.

★ (BY SVETOSLAV ROERICH)



Now, how does one reveal the most profound spiritual experience? Surely it varies with different individuals, although the desire to share with others the exultation must be common to all. Some persons would feel the need to proclaim immediately their joy to all the world. But some would hesitate to state the nature of their experience except to family and closest friends. And still others would be reluctant to speak about it at all, even though wishing to share with dear ones the blessings which they have received.

So it was in my case. It happened shortly after midnight, on August 16, 1955, while performing some small household duties before retiring for the night. It was sudden, unexpected. Several times afterward, when on the point of speaking about it, I remained silent, and could only hug the memory in secret, like a miser hoarding treasure. For many months ordinary words seemed utterly inadequate to communicate the transcendent reality of the experience.

But, powerful uplifting emotion, no matter how securely guarded in the heart, has a way of growing and expanding until it demands to be released and shared, for the chalice overflows; and for me the precious drops became the words which, seemingly with a will of their own, flowed forth in a cadence of verse, endeavoring to express the ineffable joy.

MADALENE LEHRER

M. L.



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