

"BRIDGE OF GLORY"

It is the veritable spirituality of Prof. Roerich's art that creates its deep significance and beauty. For the leading reaction that is awakened in anyone who beholds his art is a deepening of his spiritual consciousness, and therein lies the essential greatness of Prof. Roerich's art.

His paintings convey inner messages. Even more, they convey encouragement, urging us to seek with greater faith and zeal for the essence of life.

Those of us who have seen Prof. Roerich's paintings know that they touch this vital spark in man.

Let us consider that picture in the Museum known as the "Bridge of Glory". In the foreground the picture presents a caped figure bowed forward as if in prayer. His gaze is fixed upon a vast expanse of blazing rays, radiating from a large ball of light which occupies the center of the background. The presence of a contrasting atmosphere, the dark rising ridge of hill in the foreground, the silvery lake in the center, the misty expanse of gray mountain in the rear, all serve to bring out in more vivid relief the central elements of the painting.

We learn that it simply represents St. Sergius beholding the Northern Lights and at the same time contemplating the "Bridge of Glory" that unites all men.

How we thrill as we regard the painting for, following the example of St. Sergius, we too are reminded of the all-embracing perfection of the most perfect being, which opens our hearts for other human beings, too.

It beckons us onward. It urges us to reach forward and join the great spirits who rejoice in the service of humanity and unless we endeavor to obey this inward call, we cannot do full justice to the beauty, the vision and the glory that is Prof. Roerich's art. And even though we cannot claim to do so adequately, yet, one thing we can fully affirm and reiterate, the joy and gratitude that is ours for having been permitted to share with this artist his concept that inspired us with a rare moment of nobility, knowing that in these rare moments, we are in contact with the essence of life.

"THE MIRACLE"

There is a deep symbolism in all of Prof. Roerich's paintings. Each one carries a complete story of its own. Consider, for instance, the painting entitled "The Miracle".

On the canvas itself we see a rocky and mountainous plateau, broken in two by a deep gorge. The gorge is arched by a bridge of rock, beyond which is visible an aureole of unprecedented splendor, a splendor which presumes a light source of supernatural beauty. In the foreground several men, absorbed in worship, kneel with their heads lowered. The visible image is now complete, but let us read more carefully into the picture. There is something very strange about the bridge of rock, for if we observe it more closely, it assumes the appearance of a windowless house opening into a gorge below. Is it not conceivable that this enigmatic bridge represents in a symbolical manner our life with all its experiences, most of which are rugged as rock? Men usually misunderstand and misuse their experiences. They construct out of them a solitary cave, they do not see that they are thus at the same time building their own prisons, which not only isolate them from their fellow men and leave them alone in the darkness of their self-centeredness, but also block their path to "The Miracle".

And again, the bridge is high-arched. Can it not be that this steep ascent--this climbing that is necessary in order to see the light source directly--has yet another deep significance? It is only when we begin to be inwardly active and start to elevate our inner selves above the ground of prejudice and superstition, that we can discover in ourselves and in our fellow men the eternal light--while from our present standpoint we can see at best only a weak and distorted image of this life wonder.

To the creator of this painting, Nicholas Roerich, art is the means by which he expresses his conception of life; he brings us in his life's work artistic beauty combined with noble contents. We who are striving to come nearer to the light, are especially thankful to him for this picture: It strengthens our faith in the realization of "the miracle" which in every human soul, somewhere beyond the bridge awaits discovery. It gives us courage to ascend, thus approaching the light which signifies work and sacrifice, in the service to humanity, and love toward our fellow men.

"THE TREASURE"

There are times when in the depths of our sufferings we grope around in the darkness in search of light and begin to wonder how this darkness can ever come to an end. We feel, then, a certain loneliness, as we lose sight of others in this awful dungeon of the mind. But then it happens that we begin to hear most unusual music--and our "ear within" begins to listen--and we begin to find our way towards the light and towards the others who have made us listen in a most unusual way.

I had such an experience the other day when I came to visit the Roerich Museum and listened to what Prof. Roerich had to tell me in his unusual way. While feeling my way in the darkness and turmoil of my own mind, and while looking at the paintings, I was suddenly filled with such a deep feeling of peace that I could no longer stay within the limitations of my own mind. I had the desire then to forget about my lower self, to follow Roerich into the future, into the joy that can come only after suffering, into the peace that can come only after long conflict of the deeper self over the lower and with the victory of the spirit. This was the message Prof. Roerich gave me through several of his paintings. But when I listened to the message he brought me in "The Treasure", I experienced the deepest feeling of joy and reality.

There I saw a man who had found a long sought for treasure that was hidden in the mountains disappear into the background of Truth. I felt then that this was a world of reality. A world where beauty and truth had come to the surface and where ugliness and falsity was vanishing into Truth and Beauty. And often now, too, in my striving I picture life in the future and in the New Era, and again Roerich's vision occupies the horizon. Harmony and unity are "the treasures" that will make these dreams a reality.