

Schools

(Diary Leaves)

BY NICHOLAS ROERICH



CULTURE represents a synthesis of learning, general education and inborn abilities. Not only the book, but the inner level of the family and teacher, are the factors which form the world-outlook of the youth. Someone or something opens the gates into the Future. Everyone can remember from childhood moments of exaltation, when suddenly the heart was set atremor with inner realization. A beautiful unforgettable moment! In the depths of consciousness there is retained for ever the gratitude to the teacher or to the revealing circumstance. These thoughts will create the beginning of co-operation—the radiant foundation of progress.

Schools, co-operation and an open eye to new achievements are the Gates to the Future, friends of this or that school may also be of great usefulness. While teachers and parents will be to a certain extent subjective, these friends of the school can always bring to it something new and unexpectedly useful. Besides, the students themselves would often like to listen to and exchange thoughts with some new individual outside those making up their daily routine. Strange as it is, often the word of a well-wisher will be listened to with even greater attention than the advice of the everyday teacher. This is one reason why the friends of the school work can be of an especial advantage.

Likewise in the formation of all useful co-operative institutions there will pervade a wholesome growth of educational work. I recall how we rejoiced when in the Latvian Society was set forth the idea of a co-operative bakery in the

interests of good health. I bring up this example precisely for the reason that I have often had to listen to the surprising question; what relationship can a bakery have with art and science? Then I have again been obliged to remind about the relationship of bodily and spiritual bread. The late president of the Latvian Society, Doctor F. Lukin, an unforgettable friend and co-worker, appreciated fully well such combinations which are unexpected for certain people. If we say that science and art are for all life, then too all life, in its lofty quality, will be for science, for creativeness, for beauty, for all that is Highest.

Separate friendly guilds and co-operatives can only strengthen the understanding of the unity of the creative principle. On the one hand, people will gather together for conversations and lectures and various manifestations of art. This is certainly needed. It exercises and sharpens thinking, and welds people together in friendly agreements. But in addition, any joint work is also useful, illuminated with the same lofty concepts.

At one time in the School of the Society for the Advancement of Arts, in Russia, among the two thousand students, over half of the children were of the working class, as well as workers themselves from different factories. From this a noteworthy result was disclosed. All these working people, by manifesting in the factory the new data obtained in our free school, drew the most attention to themselves and secured the best jobs. Thus we had still another clear example of how much the instruction obtained immediately contributed to receiving higher and more responsible work.

Besides the various classes in applied arts and crafts, all these working people remained in close communication with the examples of beauty in the Museum of the Society, and seeing these earlier attainments, uplifted and refined their consciousness.

Such a reaction of examples of art should especially at this time be strongly mentioned. Perhaps one has had occasion to hear people ask, even those who have passed through the higher educational institutions, — what is the need for the existence of Museums in the presence of such

2

a great number of unemployed? Indeed, such an opinion would show a complete ignorance of methods of education. Of course unemployment, so aggravated just now, results primarily from insufficient or defective education. This means that all Educational Societies must be more active in order to eradicate such opinions arising out of ignorance. It should be considered why these higher educational institutions, which strive only to a narrow specialization, do not give a broad view about the paths of education. Can schools possibly exist without libraries, museums, laboratories, without all those things which irreplaceably point to the higher forms of reality?

It may seem strange to some that one is obliged just now to speak about the utility of material examples. But life unexpectedly gives deplorable indications which show the necessity of these affirmations, even for people who have completed the higher educational courses.

We have always encouraged lectures and classes in the museum rooms themselves and in the laboratories. The very atmosphere of these sanctuaries, filled with models and examples, already intensifies the consciousness. Throughout life we have not been adherents of the abstract. On the contrary everything vital, everything applicable, has been able to arouse a true joy of realization. All Societies must also be directed to the same vitality. They should not be limited to a narrow program. Each country, each society, all forms of education evoke particular possibilities. If in one place they will be concerned about a bakery, then in another they may wish to have a press, or bookshop or some other completely unexpected synthesised form of work applicable to life.

We have already had exhibitions in hospitals, in prisons, in schools. Continually as a result of these exhibitions have been made the most touching inquiries. From this can be seen how much the popular consciousness needs and strives for enlightening food. Only let it be given with good will easily, freely, in full mutual respect and sympathy. All such useful beginnings can be carried out in any scope whatever. Chiefly, they require first of all good

will, being in need of no particular expenditures. Nowadays this last circumstance has a special significance. The world, shaken by moral and material crises, at present often neglects educational necessities. Therefore educators are compelled first of all to think about ways and means not requiring special outlays.

On these good paths, so much true and joyous usefulness can be created by all who generously and smilingly share their experience. Again let us not think, that since libraries, museums, theatres and laboratories exist, this means these matters have been attended to in sufficient measure. All this exists as ready material which must be brought into the popular understanding in the most beautiful and useful form.

Exploratory expeditions traverse a country by one path. But this still does not mean that this whole domain has already been investigated. A thread of cognition has been cut, but the whole broad expanse has still not been explored. Likewise precisely the various scientific and artistic manifestations in the population enlightens only one stratum of the people yet so much remains unattained. If even among comparatively educated people you can encounter signs of absolute ignorance, then all sorts of remote settlements are truly deprived of vitalizing knowledge. Look upon their pastimes, upon what fills their leisure time, and you apprehend how indeferrably needed is the bringing of useful knowledge. Good co-workers must untiringly enter into all the strata of life and with great patience introduce the lifegiving truths.

Every cultural institution whether large or small can form groups of devoted workers who, besides mutual meetings and self-education, will undertake visitations to all places where they can bring a refreshing usefulness. All these organizations are not made for an egocentric purpose, on the contrary they must serve only as a possibility for countless new branches.

How joyful can be the meetings of such co-workers, when each one can recount where he has succeeded in bringing something useful. No crises can prevent these

useful informations. So many enlightening possibilities can be whispered to people who, perhaps through ignorance, are already on the brink of despair.

When the institutions of various countries are in co-operation, what an excellent exchange of possibilities can be established. Where there is patience, there can be no defeats in the lofty tasks. Where there is courage, there are no locked gates. Thus in the years of crisis let us speak about what is available for all constructive plans. If everyone everywhere were well and secure, there would be no need for those S. O. S. calls, these life-boats in all directions. Let no one think that this would be within the limits of arrogance, if he desires to bring to the general use the experience which he has gained. This is not pride but a sacred obligation. Surely it is permitted to no one to be a miser and to bury his silver in the earth for it to become blackened there. As they say in the East: "From buried silver thy face also will become blackened". Let each one in good co-operation, in true altruism for those around him enlighteningly make better everything possible. Let him take no thought about whether the matter be large or small, but let it be useful. To bring the useful is each one's obligation. At all times those who desired the good have been cast into prison, defamed and slandered in every possible way. Yet as a lofty sign of the good, they even came out of their bonds strengthened and radiant. Precisely these stigmata imposed on them by ignoramuses would be manifested as a sign of honour and of creativeness of good. It would be truism to repeat about the usefulness of obstacles, but let us not cease to confirm this ancient truth again and again. Those of our friends who will strive to carry broadly useful knowledge, will assuredly encounter many obstacles, it cannot be otherwise. But precisely then they will call to mind clearly and enlightenedly the Covenant: "Blessed are the obstacles — by them we grow". And grow they will for the true enlightenment of people. Among all beginnings, pay especial and urgent attention to schools and co-operatives. Essentially they will both be the banner of true progress.
