

# The Scholar

Vol. XV]

FEBRUARY 1940

[No. 5.

## Good Speed!

(Diary Leaves)

By NICHOLAS ROERICH



ALMOST hundred years ago the celebrated Russian author Gogol amidst his remarkable letters and addresses to friends writes the following unfading thoughts :

" I see and hear all ; your sufferings are great. For one with such a delicate soul to endure such gross accusation ; with such exalted feelings to live in the midst of such coarse loutish people such as the dwellers of the commonplace small town in which you have taken up your abode, whose one unfeeling gross contact is vigorously to smash the best heart's treasure even without knowing it, to strike with the paw of a bear upon the most refined chords of the soul, which have been given for singing out heavenly sounds,—to disrupt and to wring contempt from the despised—all this is grievous, I know. Your bodily sufferings are no less burdensome. Your nervous ailments, the anguish by which you are now possessed.—all this is heavy, ponderous, and I can say nothing more to you than only—grievous ! But here is consolation for you. This is only the beginning ; there will be still more affronts to you ; you will still engage in the severest struggles with scoundrels of all sorts and with shameless people for whom nothing is sacred, who not only promote that odious matter about which you write (i. e. signing a strange name),—to dare to impute a most frightful offence to an innocent soul, to see with one's own eyes chastisement striking at the slandered one and not to shudder,—not only a similar odious matter but others many times more heinous about which a single narrative can forever deprive of sleep a compassionate man. (Better for these people not to be born at all ! The whole host of heavenly forces shudders at the horror of the punishment beyond

the grave awaiting them, from which no one can deliver them). You will encounter countless new and entirely unexpected blows. Anything may happen to your almost defenceless career. Your nervous attacks and ailments also will become still more severe, your anguish will be more deadly and your sorrows more devastating. But remember: not at all have we been called into the world for picnics and feasting—to battle have we been summoned hither; we shall celebrate the victory there. And therefore we ought not to forget for an instant that we have entered the fray, and it is not for us here to select a place of lesser danger; as a good warrior each one should rush thither where the battle is hottest. On high the heavenly Captain looks over us all and not the least matter escapes His gaze. Do not shirk the field of battle, but, having drawn near to the fight, seek out a strong enemy, not a weak one. For fighting with small grief and little afflictions, you do not receive much glory. Forward then, my excellent warrior! With God, good comrade! With God, my excellent friend!" (1846).

Of course this was said by an imaginary person in a play by Gogol, himself the writer, the thinker. He was one who had the right to say "I see".

We do not quote from the Exhortation of Gogol for the reason that his book happens to be at hand. It is not as if this volume has been casually purchased, wherein Lomonosov and Derzhavin are also significantly spoken about. Not by accident has come with us through Chinese and Mongolian lands the Russian searcher of hearts "I see and hear all." For a long time this fellow-traveller has been close by, "therefore let us go and see and hear."

"I see and hear all." If someone is only slightly concerned, he will not hear everything. He may not know how to hear. If one has developed within himself this capability in good, in courage and steadfastness, then he distinctly fixes different degrees of hearing, but it is possible both to hear all and to find a place for everything. Gogol, who described conflict so remarkably who went through all the hardships of life to the great and the luminous, knew that the knowledge of dangers is guarding in advance against fear. Preparation for the worst will always provide the possibility of intensifying special forces. Many are the forces in man, only it is needful to draw them out of their repository in good time. Such store-houses are deep and the entries to them are complicated. It is possible to study the locks upon them in company with the great (guides? Vedantists?). One needs to be assured of these great fellow-travellers. One needs to feel that he will not be exhorted into anything wrong and then it is easy to proceed, then all illusory obstacles resolve themselves into a peculiar pattern.

Between fellow-travellers there will be no ugly thoughts, the abusive word is entirely excluded as vestiges of the animals roar. It is very important that fellow-wayfarers should not even casually make use of filthy names among themselves. Let us not demand love immediately, which does not come so easily, but mutual respect on the path is indispensable.

In caravans one can observe how sometimes, by following people's thoughts and feelings, the animals themselves imitate their conduct. One has had occasion to see how at the irritation of people up to that time friendly, the dogs hurled themselves at each other, and the horses and camels took fright. Such graphic indication, about which experienced caravaneers distinctly know, should remain in the memory of all fellow-travellers.

This fellow-wayfarer is already a co-worker, yet this co-worker has not been accidentally encountered. Joint action remains inevitable. It stays somewhere for ever. The inexperienced think; let us separate and all will be ended. But the matter is not altogether thus. Even on the purely material plane you see how boomerangs return. He who acts in conscious responsibility already understands that by each action is tomorrow's day being forged.

An enemy of the human race invented all forms of intoxication. In it is contained loss of responsibility. What ugly accumulations result from any intoxication? Therefore fellow-wayfarers are temperate.

People remember that, "you go for a day but take bread for a week." This has been said as a result of large experience; verily, of any kind of bread one needs to take a seven fold quantity. Likewise wisdom enjoins that parting is more joyful than meeting. Of course meeting presupposes parting, yet each parting already forbodes meeting. And on what paths the meeting shall be, let us not concern ourselves, provided the paths be those of good.

Gogol, in all his <sup>peaceful</sup> sincere aspirations nevertheless speaks about battle. No other name is fitting. But Kurukshetra is also battle. All peoples know such battles for in no other <sup>way</sup> wise can you call this advancement. When, then, the heart shall be maintained outside of any intoxications, it will very subtly give one the sign as to where the front is being established good and strong.

"Forward, then, my excellent warrior."

And from ancient times sounds the call of the Anguttara Nikaya to the same spiritual battle: "Warriors, warriors, we call ourselves. We fight for noble virtue, for lofty effort, for sublime wisdom, for this reason we call ourselves warriors!"

# The Interpretation of Shakespeare's Hamlet.

By KRISHAN KUMAR

"But virtue, as it never will be moved  
Though lewdness court it in a shape of heaven,  
So lust, though to a radiant angel link'd  
Will sate itself in a celestial bed,  
And prey on garbage".

*Hamlet, Act 1, Sc 5, 53-57.*



ALMOST every year a new treatise comes to light on Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Masterminds are baffled by this "Marvel of subtle and penetrative thought", and there are not wanting eminent critics who declare it a "wrangle over psychological problems". Multitudinous theories have been propounded to explain the central idea round which the plot revolves, and though they all agree in each disagreeing with the others they neither severally nor collectively offer a satisfactory solution of the "vague and twilight-like mystery" that envelops the character of the hero. Yet, barring a few fantastic theories (as, for instance, that of Vining's that Hamlet was in reality a woman in the guise of a man in love with Horatio, or the perverse psycho-analytic view that Hamlet was a "fixed" neurotic suffering, unconsciously though, from the Oedipus Complex, his thoughts being fixated to his own mother), they are all, in a way correct, and despite the conflicting divergence that exists in them each one of them contains a germ of harmony and truth. My aim in these pages, however, is not to interrogate the existing theories about the play, far less to expose the points where they err, but to collect and coordinate the concurring parts into one whole like a piece of close-knit tapestry with all its diversity of hues.

But let me, in the first place, assure the detractors of the play that far from being "an artistic failure" *Hamlet* is Shakespeare's greatest triumph, and if all his plays were doomed to perish save one, though Dr. Bradley and his friends might insist on keeping *King Lear*, I am sure were Shakespeare to vote, he would vote for his *Hamlet*. Those who take refuge in the conclusion that the play is "inexplicable

1. Andrew Lang: "A History of English Literature".
2. Ibid.
3. Verity; *Hamlet*, p. XLI.
4. Vining: *The Mystery of Hamlet*, 1881.
5. Sigmund Freud: "A General Introduction to Psycho-analysis" New York, p. 294.
6. T. S. Eliot: "The Sacred Wood", p. 98.