

RICH POVERTY

By Nicholas de Roerich

"Paupertas, impulit audax,
Ut versum facerem....."

HORACE says: "Poverty impelled me to inspiration."

It is astonishing when we recall that so long as St. Francis was the rich middle-class citizen he did not attract anyone's attention. But as soon as he wedded Signora Poverty and entered upon his spiritual path he became the world Saint whose name and image kindled and inspired myriads of hearts towards achievement.

Perusing the pages of the most varied histories of men we always come to the same unwavering assertion, that wealth is not notable in history as the best means of achievement. Sheik Humayun at the birth of his great son Akbar was so poor that he could not give more than a few grains of musk to his friends as the customary gift distribute on such occasions.

The bankers of Babylon were very rich, but history has not preserved their names. Such names are useless in the narrative of human achievement so long as they did not sponsor cultural work. The chronicle of the movements of humanity remain for the unprejudiced onlooker as something remarkable according to its inner justice.

Contemporaries create many lies and injustices, but time itself makes some significant changes in accordance with the laws of existence. Contrary to these contemporaries, these laws bring into relief all progressive movements and remove into the abyss everything illusory, accidental and transitory. After all, history does not forget, and sometime, perhaps after whole centuries, will accord due justice to a heartfelt human striving towards general bliss.

The history of humanity in its essence remains human in the full sense of the word. Thought of gain, self-love, wrath, and cruelty always remain last in some shameful places, and no gold, no porphyry can conceal either ignorance or destruction. At the same time, each creativeness, each true constructive striving remains unforgotten. Besides history, with touching attention, unknown though it comes, never forgets to stress everything selfless. Although in its own way, everything which strives towards the bliss of humanity, is marked. The same history brings us a multitude of the most unexpected information which, when analyzed, make an unusual mosaic, out of which much that is instructive for the future can be drawn by everyone.

Lessons From Coins

Let us remember the most conventional token of human existence—the coin. In this question as well as in many others the history of China affords an unforgettable example. During the movements of our expedition in the remote regions of China we encountered an unusually curious situation in monetary tokens. First of all we were warned by experienced people not to accept silver bars, even though they were marked with governmental seals. For often, inside the silver bar, copper was skilfully inserted. We were frequently confused also by the current silver coins which were accepted and evaluated quite differently in various localities. In one city they preferred the coin with a head of Li Hung Chang with six letters; in another they wanted to have seven letters. Some preferred coins with feminine images and others did not wish to have Chinese moneys, demanding Indian rupees, or old Mexican dollars.

As a climax we were offered as change some wooden sticks with

carvings, with the statement that these signs were the best because they were issued by gambling houses. Thus, above all the heads of Li Hung Chang, the citizens suddenly placed their trust in the little sticks of the gambling house, finding them of indisputable value. With all the diversity of Chinese monetary symbols, the little sticks of the gambling house nevertheless remained unsurpassed in their originality.

Knives As Money

Penetrating deeply into the history of China, we may truly find all types of curious examples of monetary symbols, but after the contemporary little sticks of the gambling house, the most startling perhaps and the most significant form is the money-knives of the Ju Dynasty, 715 to 431 B. C. Among the myriads of curious monetary forms corresponding to various aspects of trade, we have not encountered anywhere else the form of a knife. Perhaps in our day of decadence, depression, budgetary failures, the inner meaning of the knife-coin might be very significant. The debtor would say to the creditor: "Wait a bit, I shall return it to you in knives." Or "I have saved quite a number of knives for you." How many misunderstandings would arise by reason of such knifely discussion at the various councils of the League of Nations. But in the Chinese knife-moneys there was also maintained the traditional Chinese refinement. Their form is very beautiful. And the ring on the handle indicates that they could either be tied or strung to something and could be carried about with one. From our judiciary point of view, how many misapprehensions could such money create in the hands of robbers, who would try to convince one that those were pen-knives.

But it is significant that the refined fantasy of the ancients considered it possible to link the conception of a monetary symbol precisely with a knife. For no one has ever yet utilized for a monetary symbol some holy image as such, which could also serve some sacred purpose. True, upon later coins, there were images of deities, but they were applied as symbols or as guardians of a certain city or country. Who knows, perhaps to some of our contemporary bankers, the image of a knife would be especially attractive and close.

Thus, the history of humanity in some seemingly foreboding tokens brings to us the correlation of symbols. The knife, more than any other, is a cruel symbol, a piercing one and crude. But the monetary sign with all its conventionality is likewise not divine.

History has not forgotten to relate that even Confucius, great in his love of peace and justice, was so persecuted by his contemporaries, that he had to keep ready a harnessed chariot and spent a great part of his life in forced migrations. But history has rejected into the abyss the names of these ignorant persecutors. But Confucius not only has remained in memory, not only has he lived through milleniums, but his name has become even more strengthened in the contemporary consciousness.

Martyrdom

To speak of persecutions of contemporaries and of the just evaluation which followed would mean, first of all, to expound the history of contemporary religions, the history of all teachings of the world, the history of all creative strivings. Already more than once, we have recalled that there should be issued parallel with the book "Martyrs for Science" also a book "Martyrs for Art", "Martyrs for Creativeness",

"Martyrs for Bliss". Within recent times we were witness to the fact that Edison during a session of one of the academies, was called a charlatan for the invention of the phonograph.

The very same talk was supplied even very recently in the editions of some dignified encyclopedias to some very respected and remarkable names. It is instructive to observe how in subsequent editions, these denominations were shamefacedly eradicated. History itself began to set up its indisputable evaluation and the conventional ignorant judgements of contemporaries began to dissolve in shame, giving place to more fitting denominations.

In all manifestations of life we constantly see this crystallization of values, brought about by the cosmic consciousness. For some reason or other, some signs and symbols become obliterated, but others cross through unharmed and remain instructive through all the perturbations and tempests. The wise ancient Chinese for some reason linked the symbol of the monetary sign with the symbol of a knife. And this symbol, time has brought to us unblemished. So also, untarnished and vivid, time has brought to us the images of St. Francis, St. Theresa and St. Sergius and all those heroes of achievement, mighty in spirit, who, having renounced all the conventionalities of an imperfect earthly life, strove towards true values. And the great poet, Horace, was not only unashamed, but spoke with great dignity of the significance of poverty for his inspiration. And the remarkable painter, Van Gogh, in sending to his cruel landlord his cut-off ear instead of rent, seemed to remind him of the ear which should know how to listen. If people would only understand where are the true values, the values truly needed by them, where lives that generous poverty which is richer than any riches!

Certainly no one would state that trade is not needed. On the contrary, each barter within the limits of culture should be welcomed. Therefore in our World League of Culture is included the participation of industrial enterprises; only they should be directed along cultural paths. But one ought always to remark that the cornerstone does not belong to capital and trade, as was so often signified during these days of perturbation. In true cooperation, upon cultural standards, every labour, every trade and every production will only serve to enhance the Beautiful Garden.

We Have Forgotten

In his "Nibelungen Ring," Wagner presents many cosmic moments. Unforgettable also remains the significant dialogue of Wotan with Mime in which Wotan permits Mime to ask him three questions. Wotan replies to all questions beyond the clouds and the underworld cunning questions of Mime, but, wandering far, Mime forgot to ask that which was most necessary for him. Wotan said to Mime, "Thou hast wandered far, thou hast risen to the clouds and penetrated under the earth, but that which was so needed to thee, thou did not ask. And now thou wilt be mine." Has not humanity, in all its errands and waverings, forgotten to ask about, and to think of that which was so indeferably needed?

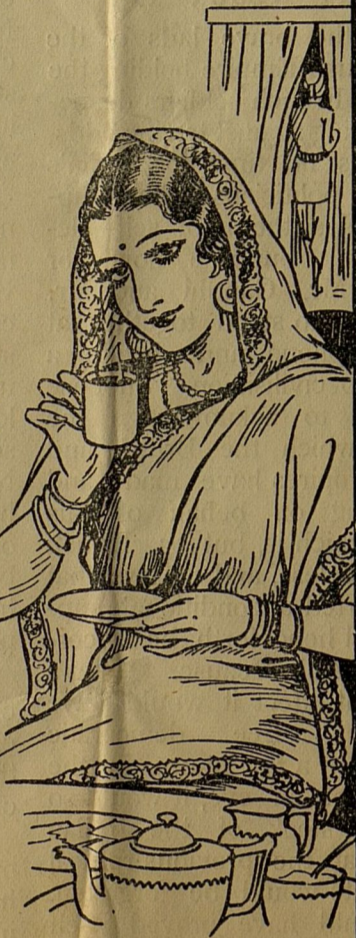
The book *Fiery World* says, "Thus the dark forces have brought the planet to such a condition that no earthly decision can restore the conventional welfare. No one can believe that the earthly standards of yesterday are applicable tomorrow. Thus, humanity is again in need of understanding the meaning of its short presence in an earthly state. Only by a basic definition of its existence in a dense condition and the understanding of the subtle and fiery world, can one strengthen one's existence. One must not think that a spectre of trade can even temporarily afford a

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firm existence. Life has turned into trade; but which of the Teachers of life were traders? You know the great symbol of the driving of the money-lenders from out the temple; but is not earth itself a temple? Is not Maha Meru the foot of the Summit of Spirit? Thus one can point out to the inhabitants of Earth upon the destined peaks.

"Let us not forget that each moment must belong to the New World. The World of thought constitutes the living link between the Subtle and Fiery Worlds; it enters as the nearest impetus of the world of fire. Thought does not exist without fire, and fire is being transmuted into creative thought. The manifestation of thought is already realized. Likewise shall be realized the Great Fire—Om."

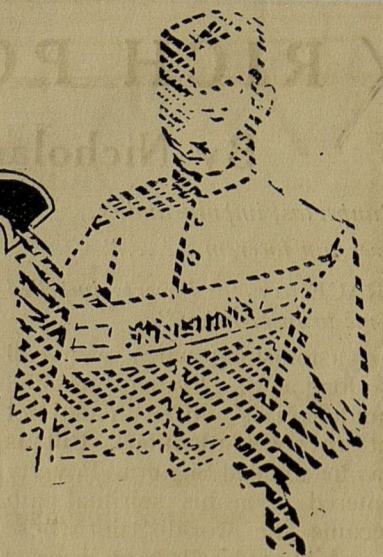
The same book reminds us: "People affirm that before a war or

calamity, forest fires and other conflagrations take place. It does not matter whether these always occur but it is significant that the people's belief notes the fiery tension before world catastrophe. The wisdom of the peoples allots to Fire a remarkable place. God visits the people in Fire. The same fiery element was chosen as the highest Court. The annihilation of evil takes place through Fire. The manifestation of mishaps is followed by burning. Likewise, in the entire trend of people's thinking, one can see fiery paths. People lighted the oil-lamps and people carry the torches manifested at services. Solemn is the fiery element in the people's understanding! Thus, let us draw not from superstition, but from the people's heart."

"Sincere self-perfecting is not (Continued on page 10)

Glimpses Behind The Headlines Of

FRONT PAGE NEWS



WHAT ABOUT IT?

WITH the brave lads of the British Empire holding the seas, with French soldiers desperately striving against terrific odds, surely it is no time for India's theoretical politicians to harp upon the useless theme of self-determination. Suppose now for instance, Mr. Gandhi and Mr. Jinnah were to stand together at the microphone and dictate a message to civilisation. Suppose they were to acknowledge the sacrifices which the British and French Empires have made and are making on behalf of this country, which is, but for British aid, defenceless, and declare that whole-hearted unconditional support would henceforth be accorded to the Allies' cause. What a magnificent effect it would have upon the free democratic peoples. In a few hours, in the twinkling of an eye, it would so raise the stock of the Indian people that the previous refusal to cooperate would be forgotten. India would have proved itself worthy of a place immediately within the British comity of nations. The American people would change their present opinion that an undue advantage is being taken of the Empire's difficulties; that while brave men are dying Indian politicians are striving to attain their own particular ends. What about it?

The British Gesture

It is never too late to do what is not only sound, practical common sense but the acknowledgement of a vast spiritual affinity which has been brought into being. Too much has happened for the British Empire and France to go their separate ways. On too many occasions have the French and British been mutually tried and proven to permit of any future estrangement. Side by side on the battlegrounds of 1914 they have fought and conquered; in doing so many of them have died; in the same deep pits their bodies have been committed to the grave.

The poppies of Flanders, the green corn of spring will break above their commingled dust. Partakers in the hardships, perils and sacrifices that go to the making of an undissoluble bond of comradeship which are inseparable from war, so too shall they participate in the glory of the new world which the British and French Empires will together evolve.

Events Repeated

It was Lord Salisbury who said "Study big maps". On the Indian frontier this maxim we know holds good. No thumbnail sketch will show the difficulties of getting troops, using the miniature railway transit, into certain advanced positions, nor will it disclose the difficulties which our troops must overcome, through traversing mountain ranges, or

circuitous and narrow roads. Norway was an example of difficult country dominated by a few strategical points of a paramount importance. These the Huns annexed through treachery.

This is no time for recrimination; with the French armies in extremis the task which devolves upon the British Empire cannot be regarded as other than stupendous. It is no time to dwell upon the circumstance that a long-planned carefully elaborated scheme of treachery, not only in Norway but elsewhere, must have escaped the vigilance of our agents abroad. But it would be dangerous to believe that the treacherous cycle has been completely traversed.

In the last war the Huns treacherously invaded Belgium and caught us at a disadvantage; in the present conflict there was treachery from within.

Out-gunned, out-manned and out-maneuvred, the French army has practically been rendered innocuous. Yet, despite the overwhelming initial advantages which the Huns have so far obtained, they will not attain to ultimate victory. We have to increase and utilise those vital essentials to victory which the enemy cannot match or set aside which are out of his own reach.

The advantages which he gained in 1914 did not prove permanent; so it will be in the crusade which Britain is waging to-day.

Tension

No matter how good the intention, seemingly, most Indian writers lapse eventually into the same non-progressive groove.

What a pity it is that Britain cannot see the necessity for making India free here and now. The present rule in ex-Congress provinces is akin, so they say, to a dictatorship. A small amount of reflection would convince one that at the moment dictatorships are the only possible methods of government. In democratic countries, democracy has been supplanted by strong executives: it is better served so. Freedom has been sacrificed for the time being, so that it can ultimately be preserved. In such a crisis as the world is now facing, surely the discontinuance of salaries of legislative members is a minor incident.

Panic and white heat has been reached in India, says one writer. Well! one is inclined to ask, what must be the temperature in Paris? Why not count your blessings and attribute them to the right source?

Italy and South Africa.

Italy's intervention in the war, said General Smuts, is a direct menace to the security of the Union.

It is obvious that Italy aims at a larger African policy which is in line with the well-known aims of Germany for a great empire in

Africa. Mussolini hopes to have a considerable share in the African "fruits". Ever since the Italian attack upon Abyssinia South Africa has been apprehensive; now there is no room for doubt.

Not easily can even such a rich country of sturdy manhood as South Africa organise an adequate defence against modern methods of war. It has seen how inadequate are obsolete war weapons and methods, even when backed up by a magnificent personnel, against a mass air and mechanised attack. But Italy will meet her match in the forthcoming struggle.

War Aims And India

It is time that Indian Hindu leaders forsook their tub-thumping proclivities for something more practical and useful. There is much confusion in a multiplicity of seemingly contradictory statements.

If as Mr. Gandhi declares a Nazi victory would "shake the very foundations of world history and render India's freedom valueless," then the duty of Indians is plain:

Of what use is it to harp upon the theme of self-determination and to talk, as Maulana Abul Kalam Azad talks, about India minding her own affairs; whose affairs is it, pray, that the Allies are minding? What other interest matters so vitally as the defeat of the fascist powers?

It is this failure to distinguish between what is of vital consequence and what is not that characterises the Hindu leaders, which does so great a disservice to their cause.

Under any circumstances the contribution of Congress towards winning the war cannot be overwhelming.

An Unwilling Ally

Despite the frenzied shouts of the Fascist youth, there are many people who believe that war if carried to the doorsteps of Italy will expose in no uncertain manner the inherent weakness of the Italian internal position. For a weakness there undoubtedly is.

The Italian soldier has no terrors for the French Poilu, and the French navy is equal to the Italian force. Stalin has a poor opinion of Mussolini, regarding him as a bundle of verbosity, fisticuffs, and rhetoric; but Stalin himself will not bear a too careful analysis.

The British troops in the Near East will bear comparison with any troops in the world, and Italian coastal towns may realise the power of the allied forces. Nobody is convinced that in will, hatred or determination the Italian opposition to Britain is on a par with that of Germany. The consensus of opinion is that Italy was ordered by Germany to enter the war.

Silence Is Golden

Stalin latterly has brooded silently over the spectacle of the success of the Nazi avalanche. Not for a moment does he believe that Hitler has abandoned his idea of wresting the Ukraine and other spoils from Russia. The recent movement of troops from the Caucasian to the Ukraine front is significant. A Germany with its man-power depleted and its resources spent might not be able to undertake any immediate movement to counteract Russia, with whom Japan seems to have found agreement.

It is significant too that Turkey is striving to bring about a Russo-British understanding.

Since the other great powers are busily engaged in fighting, Russia holds a particularly good position: perhaps the balance of power is in her hands. Stalin may not act yet; he may await a fuller development of the war situation, but there are possibilities here. The Lithuanian business is a minor detail.

The Next Move

The question might well be asked what the intentions of Italy now are? That a plan was formulated at the Brenner is certain: it would be foolish to think otherwise.

Mussolini's capacity for creating the utmost discomfort to the Allies whilst keeping out of the war has been extraordinary. His nuisance value may have been as big an asset to Germany, under the circumstances, as his actual intervention.

What the major Italian move may be it is difficult to guess. There is a suggestion that a double attack on Southern and Eastern France is planned, Germany moving from the Swiss frontier and Italy coming over the Alps, with a naval attack on the South of France. It is in the Balkans however that Germany and Italy in cooperation would, if successful, have the most valuable success. But here

they would be up against a strong opposition: though Bulgaria who has hitherto always jumped the wrong way may consider that by backing the Axis she is on a good thing. It may not however prove to be so.

Training Of Pilots

There is no limit to the number of pilots it might be possible to train in India, but the dearth of skilled mechanics is a serious drawback: since this so some provision must be made whereby the ambitious youth of this country can qualify for the mechanical role. It is not nowadays possible to maintain an air force at concert pitch without the provision of a highly trained mechanical staff. The complex machines of today demand skilled attention.

So far aviation in this country has been disappointing. For more than a decade Civil Aviation Clubs have been operating, and yet the number of current flying licence holders has not exceeded 500 a year, and that in a population of 350 million.

The flying problem is not easy since there is no surplus of skilled labour and a dearth of planes.

The turning out of 1200 pilots a year with the mechanical and other difficulties surmounted, should be an easy matter. The financial hurdle, since India most probably will have to foot the bill, will not be easy: indeed very potent changes in the financial structure may be necessary.

THE WHIP

(WEEKLY)

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