

The Twentieth Century



THE ARCHIVE OF
NICHOLAS
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MUSEUM

DIARY LEAVES

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GATEWAYS

Let us inscribe on the shields of cultural educational institutions and the covenants, ancient yet for ever alive, because in them must be affirmed the unity of all creative forces leading to advancement. Let us say :

“Art will unify all humanity. Art is one—indivisible. Art has its many branches, yet all are one. Art is the manifestation of the coming synthesis. Art is for all. Everyone will enjoy true Art. The gates of the ‘Sacred Source’ must be wide open for everybody, and the light of Art will influence numerous hearts with a new love. At first this feeling will be unconscious, and how many young hearts are searching for something real and beautiful! So give it to them. Bring Art to the people where it belongs. We should have not only museums, theatres, universities, public libraries, railway stations and hospitals, but even prisons decorated and beautified. Then we shall have no prisons.”

“Humanity is facing the coming events of cosmic greatness. Humanity already realizes that all occurrences are not accidental. The time for the construction of future culture is at hand. Before our eyes the Revolution of Values is being witnessed. Amidst ruins of valueless banknotes, mankind has found the real value of the world’s significance. The values of great Art and knowledge are victoriously traversing all storms of earthly commotions. Even the ‘earthly’ people already understand the vital importance of active beauty. And when we proclaim Labor, Beauty and Action, we know verily that we pronounce the formula of the international language. And this formula, which now belongs to the museum and the stage, must enter everyday life. The sign of Beauty and Action will open all gates. Beneath the sign of Beauty we walk joyfully. With Beauty and Labor we conquer. In Beauty we are united. And now we affirm these words—Not on the snowy heights, but amidst the turmoil of the city. And realizing the path of true reality, we greet with a happy smile the future.”

Many primary concepts have become obscured in usage. People utter the word museum, and remain far from the thought that Museum is the Museion, in Greek the House of the Muses. The dwelling of the Muses is manifested first of all as a symbol of unification. In the classical world the concept of the Muses was not at all something abstract; on the contrary, in it was affirmed the living fundamentals of creativeness everywhere—on the earth, in our dense world. Thus long ago, from the most remote ages have been affirmed the bases of unity. All human examples clearly speak about the fact that in union is strength, in goodwill and co-operation. The Swiss lion steadfastly guards the shield with the inscription "In Unity is Strength".

The school prepares for life. The school cannot give only specialized subjects, not affirming the consciousness of the pupil. Therefore, the school must be equipped with all kinds of useful appliances, selected objects of creativeness, thoughtfully compared libraries and even co-operatives. The last circumstance is enormously important in the realization of the contemporary general social order. From the youthful years it is easier to accept the conditions of rational exchange; it is easier not to sink into self-interest; into concealment and egoism. The school co-operative society is established naturally. Children and youth love it when to them is intrusted serious labor, and therefore according to each one's abilities must be widely opened the gates of future attainments. The principle of collaboration, of co-operation, can be vitally applied also in the structure of the school buildings themselves, these Museia of all the Muses. Can there be hostelries attached to the school buildings? Assuredly. It is even desirable that people who have gathered together for the good tasks of Culture should have between themselves possible greater communion. And if newly approaching people should wish to find themselves in such co-operations, this must only be welcomed. He who unites himself to Culture must inevitably receive one or other of its gifts. In such a manner, the school building will be not only a direct source of light for youth but also will be made a wide disseminator of knowledge for all who wish to draw near. Of course, eternal learning is ageless. The acquisition of knowledge is infinite and in this is eternal beauty.

Any feeling of selfish gain is already not culture, yet earnings and payment for work is a legitimate right, a right based on life, on knowledge, on the worth of the individual. Conventional values will always fluctuate. It is uncertain what metal will be recognized as being the

most precious. But the value of spiritual creative labor throughout the history of mankind has remained a stable and universal treasure. Whole countries live by means of these treasures. All revolutions, in the long run, merely confirm these values; people invite honored guests to these feasts of Culture. Entire ministries are instituted in the name of these immutable values. People sensibly try to preserve and care for such universal memories of Culture. The Red Cross cares for health, but there will be a sign which guards Culture; it will be a League of Culture.

It is urgently needful that steadfast beacons of Culture rise up amid world agitations and perplexities. If someone thinks there are already enough schools and all kinds of educational institutions, he is mistaken. If there were enough enlightenment, humanity would not stand on the threshold of terrible dissolutions and destructions. All have seen enough dark ruins. Every newspaper speaks about destructions and and increasing misfortunes. It was long ago said that at the base of all terror and destruction lies ignorance. For that very reason the bringing in of increased enlightenment is the most immediate duty of humanity. Peace through Culture. And who, then, does not aspire in his heart for peace, for the possibility of peaceful and creative labor, for transforming life into a garden of Beauty ?

And again, no garden will blossom and be fragrant, if there be not vigilant supervision over it. The earth must be made better, the best dates for sowing must be chosen, the best seeds selected and the best day of harvesting calculated. Accurate computations should be insisted upon. The engineer, the builder, knows these calculations in order that the foundations of towers conform to their summits. The human heart knows also another unfailing fundamental. It knows that public opinion must in every way be sympathetic towards cultural structures. If philanthropy is manifested as a sacred obligation of people, the more so is enlightenment, as the basis of healthy generations of all earthly evolution, manifested as the nearest and most sacred duty of every inhabitant of the earth. Culture is not the share of the wealthy; Culture is the property of all the people. Each one in his own measure and his own goodwill can and must resolutely bring his seed into the common granary. Co-operation as the basis of existence is manifested also as mutual aid. If one section suffers from disorganisation, then the others come to his assistance.

Culture does not produce slander and malice. Evil is the coarsest form of ignorance. Evil, like darkness, must be dispelled. The inflow of Light already disperses darkness. Each co-operation in the name of Light, by its very existence, already opposes the chaos of darkness. The workers of culture must in justice see to it that no one of those united to the work of enlightenment should suffer. Sympathetically and heartily they must stretch forth to each other the hand of true assistance. Yet again this will be no abstract goodwill; each co-operative foresees the possibility and necessity for such assistance.

We have always stood for the social principle. In my stay in Russia accepting the leadership of an extensive educational institution, I first of all applied as a condition the establishment of a Council of Professors intrusted with the right of making decisions. A general matter must be solved in common. Likewise, every financial problem found itself in the hands of a particular committee composed of experienced financial experts. In addition, a very strict Auditing Committee was in control of all accounts. Seventeen years of work merely confirmed the fact that the social principle must lie at the base of a common task. Very recently I happened to meet in different countries our former students. I find that in their opinion and recollection their past experience is heartily esteemed.

We also had a publishing house. There were exhibitions, lectures and discourses; there were many workshops where the children of local factory workers received the fundamentals of their future work. There was also a medical section. There were discussions and conferences dealing with various questions of Art and Pedagogy. There was a Museum.

We write upon the shield words which we shall never disavow. We shall look upon co-workers, upon students, upon all those uniting themselves, as upon the nearest workers and friends. We shall not be distressed by difficulties, for without difficulties there is no attainment. And we shall always steadfastly remember that all labors must be truly useful to humanity. Therefore, the quality of these labors must be lofty. Likewise, lofty must be the mutual heart quality, for inseparable are heart and culture.