

treachery on the part of his chaplain. There were no limits to the amazement of his retainers who knew about the offence of the chaplain, when they found out that not only was he neither cast out nor executed, but even received an especially savoury food. When finally they asked the lord what this meant, he said: "One should not kill a priest. You see how fat he is. If we add to him still more succulent viands, this will deprive him of all mobility and activity." And, calling to his chief cook, the lord said to him: "See that the chaplain does not grow thin, and if he doubles in weight you will receive a handful of gold from me."

This means that the fetters of to-day, the shackles of luxuries, prove to be very powerful. Yet in the base, nevertheless, will lie an animal fear for the belly and self-gratification.

If on the one side we confront the immobility of self-enjoyment and on the other remember the example of terror at the flies, then it becomes perfectly clear that by some sort of admonishments people need first of all to be freed from fear.

Poor sick dog. He fears the flies. And all of us regret seeing such senselessness. But surely people are not distempered dogs, and it would seem they should be able to render themselves account as to where precisely are the flies and where an actual danger,—in the full significance of this word.

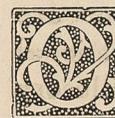
Muscaphobia is not worthy of people.

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Muscaphobia

(DIARY LEAVES)

BY NICHOLAS ROERICH



OUR dog Nokhor is sick. In English the canine plague, is called distemper, that is, disorder or derangement. The definition is entirely correct. Indeed, there takes place in the dog complete disorganization, both physical and psychic. Besides a queerness in eating, walking, and in relationship to his surroundings, all kinds of fears have been displayed. To all these varieties of fear has been added still another curious manifestation. We have noticed that Nokhor suddenly turns himself around impetuously as if to some invisible thing, jumps up, and, tucking his tail between his legs, flees into some corner. Knowing that dogs often see things invisible to us, we attributed these inexplicable movements of terror to something not understood by us. The explanation proved to be a very prosaic one. In the spring-time, there appeared the first tiny flies and it turned out that precisely these were the cause of this fright.

Certainly in a normal condition the large dog would pay no attention to these first tiny flies. But the disorder of distemper obviously made out of these small insects some imagined monsters. Anything may be expected from a sick dog. All of us merely regretted that the disorder could inspire absurd ideas to such an extent. Of course, the most unimaginable considerations are manifested to people during insanity. Moreover, the preciseness and concreteness of these imaginings is always striking.

Whoever has heard how sincerely a sick man describes something as if seen by him, is amazed at that inexpressible conviction which permeates all the details of the description. Even when you yourselves distinctly know there was not and could not be anything like it, nevertheless you experience an unpleasant sensation at the heaping up as of actual details.



Recalling all the tales about fear which agitate people who are considered normal, you are involuntarily reminded about the muscaphobia of the dog. Indeed, our time is full of all kinds of confusions. Indeed, in such tense times the imagination is in an especially painful mood. But for all that; when you encounter obvious muscaphobia, you are always sincerely sorry for such people, these biped rational beings who so shamefully doom themselves to illusory terrors.

Among these terrors is conspicuous the egotistical surmise: What do they think about me? Moreover it is completely lost sight of about whom precisely the suppositions are being made. Is it what the fly thinks, or the pig, or the wolf, the dog? Is it what the lowest rascal or the worthiest man thinks? The consideration is completely lost, that one cannot occupy one's attention equally with either the opinion of the lowest rascal or with the thought of the worthiest man.

In moments of illusory terror people completely forget that the thinking of the lowest criminal scoundrel does not coincide with the judgement of the worthiest cultured thinker. On the contrary, it would be unnatural if low mean thinking could go along the same paths as the thought of the loftiest being.

In illusory terror people forget that either they would wish to be considered from the viewpoint of the criminal dregs or else they wish to base themselves upon the judgements of pure and lofty minds. Of course, both do not coincide by any means.

One has had occasion to see people deeply distressed by the fact that some base evil person spoke abuse of them. When asked—would you then rejoice at words of praise from the mouth of this scoundrel?—they immediately reply with a shudder: that would be still worse than the abuse. And in reality this would be worse than abuse. In fact by such praise they would be classed with him who did the praising. Actually they would show themselves to be the recognized criminal scum of humanity, and this would be the worst that could happen.

Yet in order to be able to reflect clearly about this choice, one needs first of all to cure oneself of fear. In this cure one needs to render a full account as to precisely where the powerful monster is and where are those flies of which the miserable sick dog is so afraid. When a man is fearful, when he has allowed terrors to take possession of his very essence, then everything surrounding him begins as it were to cry out about all his fears. In the course of time, in another frame of mind, under other conditions, the man sees that the monsters which frightened him were tiny flies, already stuck in sugared fly-trap. The formerly terrifying flies have themselves rushed at the sugar which betrays them, and will be thrown out with the other rubbish.

The plague of fear prevents a man advancing freely. In the fear of things the man prefers to rot in the cellar rather than to look up at the Divine Light. When someone tells these frightened ones about strong people who though only as cabin-boys yet saw the world, such a courageous decision appears the frightened one as insanity. Indeed fear prevents them even thinking about movement. And here our Nokhor, miserable, has buried his nose in a dark corner and probably fears the tiny flies more than anything in the world.

It is related that certain travellers in Central Africa, among tribes of cannibals, have seen a cage in which were being fattened some captives from a neighbouring tribe for the table of the local chief. Naturally, the travellers wished to help these doomed ones and bought their freedom. But the captives had no desire to leave their cage because they were afraid they would not be fed so well and would have to move somewhere. Either they were devoured or they were not—this remained for them the only question, whereas ready food for everyday was more important to them than any other considerations. About the future they probably did not in general even know how to think. But the smell of food enchained them more strongly than any shackles.

We are reminded of another story, this one from the Middle Ages. A certain great lord received evidence of