

# ROBOTS

(Daisy Leavitt)

By Nicholas Roerich

*"Eve", the Robot, was exhibited for the first time in England at the Science Boys' Exhibition. It can lift a machine-gun at command."*

## ROBOTS

By Nicholas Roerich

Many millions of unemployed and hungry men are in search of labour ready to apply their energy and skill to any work, only to be saved from want and hunger. But they are threatened not only by being taken over by the State but also by the advent of robots. It is possible that in the future the confusion man's mind through will be necessary safety along the lines of robot mechanism, forgetting the true meaning of their earthly destination?

THE ARCHIVE OF  
NICHOLAS  
ROERICH  
MUSEUM





## ROBOTS

(Diary Leaves)

*By Nicholas Roerich*

*“Eric’, the Robot, was exhibited for the first time in England at the Schoolboys’ Exhibition. It can fire a machine-gun at command.”*

This is the caption under a photograph of a steel monster, which recently appeared in one of the local newspapers. In the rotogravure section of the New-York Times is depicted a scientist of Massachusetts making some complicated calculations and the caption says that he is inventing brains for a robot. Thus in all corners of the world humanity is not preoccupied with devices of self-perfection but is busy with perfecting monsters which should replace man in various fields. Thus the very quality of man’s labour is substituted in our civilized world by conventional properties of soulless automats.

Many millions of unemployed and hungry ones are in search of labour, ready to apply their energy and skill to any work, only to be saved from want, and hunger. But they are threatened not only by living competitors, but brains are even invented for some robots. Is it possible that to all calamities and malicious confusions man’s trend of thought will be directed chiefly along the lines of soulless mechanization, forgetting the true meaning of their earthly destination?

Music is canned, art is on films, lectures are on the radio, ships run without captains, bombing aeroplanes fly without a pilot, and as a climax of mechanization

and crown of annihilation of the human spirit stands the war through poisonous gases and biological extermination of all that lives. The old ordinance that all living should live, begins to appear as something out of date. Instead of mighty symphonies and inspiring operas the saxophone is howling and men move slowly in the mechanical dance macabre”.

We want to think that this is an exaggeration. Perhaps the invasion of robots under various garbs and masks is not as threatening, but to this effect testify many newspapers and communications from all parts of the world. From everywhere reach us wailings not only about the unemployment but also about the deadening of the spirit. The inspiring spiritual leader T. L. Vaswani regrets in the Woman's Magazine "Mira" the rapidly growing tendency to cynicism. He pointed out that hero-worship was the basis of an individual's advance and a nation's progress. Cynicism was a form of disintegration. Our need was a new integration of thought and life. He had rightly referred to cynics as 'crows'. Hero-worship was the "spring of national life"

From a different part of the world echoes: "We want a heroism which is heroic in its own secret thoughts. We want heroes who slay dragons in private. We want royal courage which strangles an unworthy impulse as soon as it is born...It must be his nature to be heroic".

And we also hear: "Look around; There is depression. There is despair. We need reconstruction, regeneration, rejuvenation. The ancient Bible prayed: 'Tamaso ma jyotir gamaya'—through darkness lead us, unto light. Yes, the path to Light passes through the

realm of suffering and sorrow!" Verily, this path is being fulfilled. Darkness became so dense that drowning in it, people cease to desire light. Under the eyes of hungry hecatombs of grain are being burnt. Millions of cattle are being destroyed in order to clear them out of the way for some speculation and it is argued that some people who will remain, will derive an unusual benefit from this procedure. But who will it be, who will survive and remain? And will he not then encounter some long ago wound up robot and will the latter not smash his head by his usual mechanical movement, while the last mechanical record will be finishing playing a jazz on the theme of Chopin's Funeral March?

At the same time despite all these terrible signs we cannot be pessimists. We know that the robots will manifest themselves in all their mechanical ignorance. Precisely they, as it already happened, will stop the traffic. They will not deliver an urgent message; they rusty from fog, will steer the ship towards a fatal rock. It is difficult to imagine, who will prove to be more destructive—the robots wound by a mechanical hand or that anticipated inhuman biological war, which is discussed in the newspapers.

Perhaps some people hope that nothing altogether will remain of our civilization, not to mention culture. But then the shameful pages of newspapers with their columns about poisonous gases and biological war-fare would decay in first turn. I recollect how H. G. Wells, making a speech at a dinner, said: "Do not be surprized, if this piece of glass shall some day become a rarity for somebody!" This joke expressed a genuine irony in regard to sad reality.

And still, above all robots, above all vipers of godlessness and dark ignorance beautiful hearts of co-operation are born. True, they are rare. It is also true that everyone who enters this path encounters many difficulties. Black stones are showered at him. All robots and venomous manhaters would like to see destroyed everyone who thinks of creative co-operation. There is not even a shadow of a possibility for the dark ones to convert to their faith or rather atheism, those young ones devoted to the true cognizance of the heart. Therefore darkness condemns them to annihilation and there is no such malevolent invention and slander which would lose the opportunity to destroy each ray of light.

But the ancient Rishis have foreseen precisely this hour of darkness which is the testing stone for those in quest of Light. These seekers of the good know these obstacles are not accidental and must be conquered. Amidst true seekers there are also many pseudo-seekers. There are many of those Nicodimusses of the Night, who whisper sweet words at night and are ready to betray at day time. Give them the smallest test to express their own tendencies and at once they will disappear into the abyss from where they came.

Ask whether this Nicodimus would sacrifice for the sake of the good a night's sleep and he will hasten to disappear in order not to burden himself with the slightest effort. But not for them lives man. People live for the sake of those devoted hearts, the mere mentioning of which multiplies one's strength. Those who cling to darkness will abide with it, but those in quest of Light shall reach it despite all dark obstacles.

The Book "Fiery World" ordains: "Someone supposes that he can attain cosmic consciousness, but

let him rather think of the purification of his heart. Let him not imagine himself as the conqueror of Cosmos, but let him desire to purify his consciousness from dust. One cannot penetrate beyond the boundaries of the law without the desire to approach it transfigured. Precisely the baker of spiritual and physical bread must not think only as how to satiate himself.

“A physician advises a convalescent not to think of the past sickness and persuades him to think of the future and happy circumstances. Thus not only physically but also spiritually every reminder of the past sickness is cast aside. In all cases of life it is advisable to use this plain method. Especially during fiery activities when the fire is atremor from darkness, one should not think of darkness and its reaction on fire. The manifestation of the future will kindle the heart. The most depressing can be dispelled by the future. Fools scream about a finite life but can eternal life end? So many horrors must be committed in order to infringe life! Even beasts dare not be reduced to dust of an abyss.

“Amidst psychic diseases, the most disagreeable and almost incurable are treason and sacrilege. Once a traitor always a traitor. Only the strongest fiery blow can purify such contaminated brains. If such criminal state occurs from obsession, such cause is not consoling either. Can one imagine co-operation with a traitor or one who commits sacrilege? They are like a plague in the house. They are like a decaying corpse. Thus the Fiery World has no consolation for traitors and blasphemers.

“Courage coordinates with caution, for else courage will be madness and caution will turn into cowardice.

Those who imagine the entire complexity of the fiery waves can evaluate the advice of caution. A Yogi does not forget caution, for in it will be contained the respect to the great element and reverence for the World of Fire. One can see how one has to strain caution passing amidst rows of subtlest vessels. If these products of fiery work demand such care the fiery waves themselves multiply the path of your heart's observation". Precisely through this observation of the fiery heart and vigilance one can unerringly discriminate where lies this life-creating striving and where is the mechanical seal of the robot.

My friends, many robots are at work now. There are all kinds of conventionalities, deadening forbiddances and rusty creaking of wrath and all other properties of mechanization and all kinds of technocracies—all these dark evils will be conquered by the fiery heart. When I think of you, who gather friendly in the name of true peace and cooperation my heart always fills with joy. Working all day, giving your energy sometimes to routine work, you find strength to gather in the evening with all the vitality of spirit for uplifting spiritual deeds.

Honour to those who inspire you to strive to these achievements, honour to you who find within yourselves the indefatigability and patience to transmute the routine of life into a radiant, beautiful garden.

---

These storms will pass away, but keep the little lamp of Ancient Idealism burning, akindling, in a little corner here, in a little corner there. Eternal is the Wisdom of the Rishis, the Light of the Vedas is, Eternal.

—Vaswani.