



TIBET

(DIARY LEAVES.)

BY PROFESSOR NICHOLAS ROERICH.

"The grandeur of nature in Asia, revealing itself in endless forests and tundras of Siberia, or in the waterless deserts of the Gobi, or again in the colossal mountain ranges of the inner continent and rivers thousands of miles long, running from here into all directions—this nature depicted itself with the same spirit of an overwhelming grandeur in a wide flat upland which forms the southern half of the central part of this continent." In such expressions Prjevalsky speaks of Tibet.

Everything that is said about Tibet is full of significance, whether it be by Plano Carpini, or Rubruquis or Marco Polo or Odoric of Friuli or any of the many other travellers. They all saw some of the unusual in Tibet. And thus Tibet has remained as something unusual.

It is said that Lhasa will now have a radio. Automobile roads are being mentioned, as well as airways. In other words some interesting mystery is being attacked from all sides. It is long since Waddell wanted to tell us about Tibet, but after all he did not say so very much. Mrs. David-Neel said more but she primarily stressed the tantric side.

At present many countries are divided as if into two distinct existences. One mechanical, robot-like, technocratical—contained within these conventional bounds. And machines are climbing the mountains, and above the highest peaks hover airships, and various appliances, exact and not exact, calculate and measure. Precious metals are substituted by paper. In other words the old bazaar is ameliorated into a modern bazaar with all its "improvements." And yet in all these newly technocratized countries there remains also the

old country with all its fundamental treasures, advantages, achievements and strivings.

In our days the demarcation lines of the world are very uneven. There was a day when one could speak of retrogrades and innovators. There was a time when the stone age was easily followed by the bronze age, but now everything has become much more complicated. The stone age has contracted the iron age. Retrogrades and innovators have now received new ranks. The retrogrades have absorbed the mechanical conventionality. True innovators have lovingly contracted the ancient wisdom. For this reason in technocratical countries it is but with difficulties that one can draw the line of demarcation.

Probably in Tibet on one side the radio will make its voice heard and the mountain air in many places will be polluted by the refuse from factories. And yet Tibet—the Unusual—will remain.

We have just mentioned of hidden things. There may be many kinds of things hidden. We have met visitors from most remarkable places, who have never noticed anything.

There once existed a game, in which the players unexpectedly asked each other: "what do you see". And the hurried answers were at times very strange. People managed to notice such insignificant nonsense that the simple game sometimes changed into an interesting psychological exercise.

If people would notice everything significant, then no doubt a great many more treasures would have been studied on earth. And yet we see that it is only now that the Roman Forum is being studied. Only now Egypt, Palestine, Greece and Iran open up their treasures. And what shall we say of other less frequented places? Even the kremlins are as yet unexplored. Known frescoes have as yet not been studied in detail. And how much unrecognized has been passed by, as yet without any notice!

Technocracy is especially strong at present. It has calculated everything on paper, but as soon as it comes in contact with actual life, all its most exact formulae are drowned in the mist of nonapplicability. On the everyday plane the telephone rattles unbearably. The howling of jazz-music drills the brain. Loudly resound the slaps on the faces during prize-fights. All this common-place trivality of to-day does not affect that Unusual, extraordinary, for which the human heart is striving.

We have seen people, who were deeply disappointed not only by Tibet but also by India, Egypt and the entire East. Just as unlucky travellers cannot see on misty days the radiance of the mountain peaks, so also were these travellers not fortunate enough to notice the places and circumstances of importance. One can see the beautiful historical Paris, but one may also see it in a very repulsive modern aspect. You may see one New-York, but you may also get into most unattractive quarters.

These two, often mutually excluding aspects, remain everywhere. And therefore there is nothing to fear that the Tibetan uplands—unusual as they are—may become vulgar. Even now you do not see in some Tibetan bazaars anything extraordinary except colourful ethnography. How to penetrate beyond these boundaries? Of course the language is always needed. But the mere physical languages are in themselves not quite sufficient. One must possess an inner language. If it is found—much will become opened, but if it does not resound—then no concord will result.

It is said that especially in the Orient this language of the heart is so required. But no doubt it is necessary everywhere. No matter with what technocracy people may cover themselves, yet they will always come together and separate along other paths. And for these other paths all Tibetan uplands, all depths of the highest mountains will always remain unusual.

The statement of wise travellers, pronounced during many centuries, must certainly have a foundation. These self-sacrificing searchers were experienced. Many of their deductions remain fully convincing. The diaries of these travellers are even now read with great attention, so correctly did they record that which they saw and experienced.

When Franke reported that beyond a certain place in the Himalayas the guides refused to go, stating that beyond those mountains there is something unusual—this serious scientist recorded this statement in full earnestness. And the same unusualness we find mentioned also by that remarkable man of the recent past—Prjevalsky.

The new Dalai-Lama has still not been found—an unusually long period. One remembers the great fifth Dalai Lama. No one knows of the last years of his life when he went away, whither he went? How unusually secret was his departure! This again forms part of the unusualness of Tibet.