Dangerous Diseases

By Mons. Nicholas Roerich.

The Chinese Hospital Dialogue advises:

"Doctor, when I have formed a habit, is it hard to break?"

"I think if you are in earnest it can be done. As the proverb says:

"There is nothing difficult in the world, except the fear of an insincere heart."

It is most touching to see that a modern hospital book closes on such a wise proverb. Verily, remove fear and insincerity and at once the heart will recuperate. How many dangerous diseases have been caused by ignorance and its children: fear, covetousness and malice. As the next progeny of these we find the creeping asp of slander.

Slander is the transmission of a lie. It makes no difference whether the lie is transmitted in light-mindedness or malice or ignorance—it's seeds will be equally destructive. I recall the remarkable reply of Kuindji who himself was against every form of lying. Kuindji was on bad terms with Diaghileff. A certain artist, knowing this and probably anticipating that Kuindji would enjoy a bad report about Diaghileff, told Kuindji some ugly gossip about Diaghileff. Kuindji listened patiently and then interrupted the artist with a thunderous exclamation: "You are a slanderer!" The man, who had transmitted this gossip, after such an unexpected defeat, tried to justify himself by saying that he did not make up that gossip, but that he only transmitted it "for information, even without any bad thought." But Kuindji was adamant, he continued to look grimly at the unfortunate informer and repeated: "You brought me this vile news, consequently it is you, who are the slanderer!"

How many of such self-justifying slanderers intrude upon an atmosphere of creativeness. They scatter the most poisonous seeds and try to cover themselves with the shield of non-responsibility. They, as if, did not think of any consequences, they only repeated it for information, as if every slander and lie is not being repeated "for information only."

It is not sufficiently emphasized that slander and lies are ugly. It is not pointed out that these fragments of darkness encumber and poison space. It would seem that people should know well, how anger and irritation poison the system, but then every liar and slanderer in some measure sinks into lethal hatred and first of all poisons himself. Hatred lives also around jealousy and ignorance and around that same perversity of the thinking apparatus, which is so difficult to heal. A child may be unsociable, queer, suspicious, but it is not born hating; this evil quality is taken up from the many examples, set by the elders.

"Slander, slander—something will always remain!" What malicious care is expressed, in order that something hateful should remain. In this manner certain people are more concerned with the preservation of evil than of good. The good in some measure will always be selfless, whereas evil, first of all, is egotistic. And if a man will begin to assure that he has committed something evil for the sake of good, believe him not; undoubtedly he wanted to justify his selfishness or tried to distinguish himself selfishly in the eyes of a superior.

One has to be surprised how weak are the laws that punish slander. In some countries the prosecution of slander is almost impossible. One can convince oneself only, that not by laws which prosecute slander, but by preventive measures, one may considerably weaken this poisonous asp. This may be attained also in schools, but still more so this can be achieved in home life. Exclude from the family circle all trifling gossip and you will save the younger generation from committing great slander. If youngsters do not hear from childhood any mutual accusations nor any seeds of gossip and slander, they simply will not respond to this type of "recreation."

If at home there is no card playing, then the first foundations of the character will form themselves without the necessity of
murdering the most precious time. The future of family life very much depends upon the parents themselves. Perhaps precisely now one is led to remind of the hereditary possibilities of the family, for very often instead of an attractive principle, the family creates but a repulsive element. And there, wherein lies repulsion alone, there—because of the absence of attraction—lies the beginning of the chaos.

Gossip and slander—what an infamy!

There are many epidemics. It has gradually become evident that not only the generally accepted scourges, like plague, cholera and the other infectious diseases, but also that many other illnesses are contagious. And what if slander also represents a contagious manifestation and moreover an epidemic one? There are many forms of very contagious psychosis. History mentions continuously facts of mass psychosis, which at times took really threatening dimensions.

If one were to investigate the sources of slander, one would no doubt find that in the pure, worthy and cultural atmosphere slander does not thrive. Observe the home as well as social atmosphere of notorious slanderers and you shall find the real seat of this dangerous psychosis. Even ordinary falsehood is not pronounced everywhere. There are such places in the world and such persons, in the presence of whom the slanderer and liar feels himself so uncomfortable, that he will not dare to resort to his favourite malpractise. But where slander is pronounced lightly, there look for an old established evil. The microbes of slander feel themselves there greatly at home.

Let us not feel astonished if among works on psychic diseases there will appear real medical treatises on slander, on its causes and methods of propagation and, let us hope, also about preventive measures.

One thing is clear—that, if life is in need of newly affirmed foundations, then first of all, all fatal epidemics must be overcome. Among these scourges of mankind special attention will be paid to the multiplicity of psychosis. Curing drunkards, drug-addicts, thieves and all criminals in the field of sexual perversity, will no doubt lead also to the cure of one of the worst perversities—the vice of slander.

It will be noticed, how perversities manifest themselves simultaneously. When observing a slanderer or a notorious liar, you will find that the rest of his life is not pure. Undoubtedly he will be subject to other forms of criminality. In future State hospitals, besides the wards for drug addicts, drunkards, thieves and other criminals, there will be one for the most dangerously infectious patients—the ward for slanderers.

An old English law provides that precisely slanderers are punishable by flogging. But let us leave to the psychiaters to decide what measure of healing is best suitable in such a dangerous and abhorrent disease.

When one acquaints oneself with the Pasteur Institute, one will probably be asked not to remain too long in one of the laboratories. You will be warned: "Here are especially dangerous microbes." In future, psychiatric hospital visitors will be asked to leave quicker a certain ward, and it will be added: "The microbes of slander are very contagious!"

II

Friends, on several occasions you have communicated to me about travelling slander. Its forms have become absolutely hideous and false, and can serve only a primitive and low consciousness. I am not entirely astonished at the existence of slander. There are certain species of bipeds which are nourished by fetid decay, cultivated by themselves. The hothouses of evil and darkness are especially luxuriant where they dream of injuring culture. As we have heard from the ancient alchemists, the dark homunculi were generated in dung.

The existence of slander is not new. It is not its existence, but its methods which are absorbing and which must be observed. Withal their many variations, at basis they all manifest their spiritual poverty. After all, as you have already noticed, slander creates inventions which contradict all sane reasoning. As you see, slander does not even concern itself with utilizing facts,
It simply invents. And moreover it invents poorly and ineptly.

Only to those who do not know actual circumstances, will it appear that the inventions of the slander are important. However, slander hopes to influence immature minds or those already contaminated by malice. But everyone who strifes, either by purity of spirit or conscientious knowledge of reality, at once perceives the coarse and spiritually pauperized inventions—Incidentally, it is precisely this quality of falsehood that comprises the very use of the slander. By its raps, it seemingly beats out an accelerated rhythm, a new power of resistance is born. And not only is a new energy born within those who have been slandered, but around them, in an entire stratum of benevolently honest hearts, is created an intense and blissful power. You already know of the active bliss of such a tension of energy. In the article, "Praise to the enemies" it is mentioned how hindrances create new possibilities. But now, after a complete series of new observations, to one's satisfaction, one may be amazed how meagre is slander at its very basis. All its pompousness and intricacy are reduced to the most elemental and crude cunning. Slander degrades itself to the point of using the testimony of an employee discharged for incompetency. Slander does not scruple to use unprecedented apparati. Slander, in its stupidity, tries to confound people with the statement that a writer has never written his works, and a painter never has even touched one of his canvases, and an inventor, of course has stolen all his inventions. The existence of the best achievements in no way confuses the slanderer; in essence he is without hope and in his hopelessness, intentionally working against the evident, he attempts to lance into space a negative conjuration. The worldly safes long since pronounced: "Slander, always slander; something of it will remain". But the Apostle Paul said, far earlier, "Though we seem to ye dead, we live."

Thus do not be disturbed by slander; on the contrary, study its methods. Such tests beautifully strengthen the living experiment. Slander is ejected and annihilated by the quality of benevolent construction. I remember how many even of our close friends, could not understand why in our conversations, we often pronounced the concept of a spiritual battle the concept of spiritual armour, of a sword and shield. But the casting out of darkness of benevolent construction is the spiritual battle itself. The partisans of peace need not fear that an aggressive militarism is contained in the conception of a spiritual battle. No, this battle is only the antithesis of evil. And no one could suggest that we open the doors cordially to each evil, decay and slander. Only sorcerers of a low type would arrange a gathering of corpses, or festivals of putrefaction. Such a spectacle would, first, be hideous and as such, anti-evolutionary and anticultural.

The slanderers, in essence, are murderers and sorcerers, and if we can affront them with the conception of benevolent construction which confounds them, this will be the most fitting and most frigid shower for these perverted slanderous hearts. Hence, studying the methods of slander we shall not remain only observers. Pay attention; when you trace a slanderer and ask him about the sources of his information, he will, never reveal any names. He will not name them, because either he himself is the originator or the closest conspirator in the slander. Certainly, there may also be found such mentally limited persons who, spreading slander, will insist that they are only repeating rumours. Their obscured minds cannot understand that at this instant, they themselves become propagators of slander; in other words they are entirely acquiescing with the slanderers.

I remember how, when my late teacher Kuindji was told of an absurd slander about himself, he shook his head and said, "Strange: I never did anything good to this man". In this sincere remark the teacher, enlightened by life's experience, expressed one more characteristic of the circle of slander. Truly it is multifarious! It is strange to observe how it is at times born purposelessly and in unconscious evil. The folk-wisdom has pointed out a special type of simpletons, of slanderers, who do not even remember the evil they generate.
God preserve us from such simpletons. Frequently they are not simpletons at all but are, above all, recruits of the dark forces by reason of their ignorance. But ignorance is a crime; this was already stressed in remote antiquity. And each crime, according to the law of justice will be exposed sooner or later. But a moment of shame is hardly agreeable even to a low and coarse consciousness. Even a dog shuns being shamed. The simpletons of slander are not so numerous after all; slander is an evident generator of evil; therefore, each slanderer belongs, by his very condition and fate, to the dark kingdom. Each advice to disregard slander is not sound advice. One should pay attention to each manifestation; for every poisonous gas, one should have counter-gas. Let us remember that slander is anti-cultural; that in every false information, there is slander. And according to the Biblical expression, the slanderer, like a dog will eat its own filth. The Bible also says: "From time immemorial, the devil was a slanderer". These are the ones who concern themselves with slander.

Finally, slander is the only measure of consciousness and the testing stone of the power of achievement.

Leonardo da Vinci having been often attacked by slanderers said: "Patience for the insulted ones is same as a garment for the freezing ones. When the frost becomes more severe, put on warmer clothes and you shall not feel the cold. Similarly in days of slander and offence, increase your patience and offence shall not effect your soul."