Membra Disjecta

By NICHOLAS ROERICH

SET, the god of darkness, scattered the limbs of Osiris throughout the world. Isis, disconsolate, collected the scattered parts and then joyfully set them together. We know of similar legends in other lands, and from the most remote times, people have feared dismemberment and dreamt of unity. The Tower of Babylon is symbolic, for, by stimulating the peoples' sensuous egoism, it ended in a deplorable division of languages.

From the most ancient times we have heard of some sort of unity, of wholeness of body. This cannot mean that all peoples adhere together like a single body, nor that the walls of our houses should fall and all life be mingled like water in a bottle.

It is evident, then, that it is spiritual unity which has been aimed at everywhere and from times immemorial. It was long ago proclaimed as in a dream that if people abandoned the condition of beasts and came to trust one another with love, faith and hope, the mother of these three — Eternal Wisdom — would guard against all senseless quarrels and misunderstandings.

It is possible, of course, to set love, faith and hope in any order that one pleases, although there will be always those who hold that one of them takes precedence over the others. All these principles of life, however, must be taken to heart, whatever their order of sequence may be.

Without hope one cannot advance; without faith, there is no refuge; without love, you will become a monster. Without these three luminous daughters, the mother will not appear, for upon what else is the Great Wisdom founded?
Humanity has been broken up and disunited through forgetfulness and by wandering off the highway of evolution—both of which are inadmissible.

How are we to collect the scattered limbs of Osiris, when Isis, despite her wisdom, remained disconsolate, for she was well aware of all those obstacles which had been artificially created to prevent unity.

At present, when the scattered limbs are further apart than ever, and disjoined by chaos and gigantic upheavals, unity is all the more difficult to attain.

Leagues and councils have been summoned, many of them sincere in their intentions, and all have made an effort to remind humanity of what was so urgently needed. The fate of such institutions and their helplessness when it comes to a practical solution is obvious.

Messengers of goodwill are passing through the world, many of them not known to political circles, but above all such efforts for peace, we continually hear the order being given to adhere 'to strict business principles.'

And as a result of such principles we get fresh rifts and further signs of disunity.

It is impossible to encroach upon anyone's soul because this home of the higher feelings is not subject to 'strict business principles.'

Without heart and soul, however, business principles merely degenerate into a gnashing of teeth, a dance of death, a rattling of dry bones, in which all hope of ever uniting the world into a body is impossible.

Hurricanes, earthquakes, droughts and floods ought to recall the fact that strict business principles are inadequate and that when fires have broken out, persuasive words will only turn to ashes.

These strict business principles in all their ugly conventionality are most probably at the root of all our divisions. People no longer think of mutual assistance, prosperity or future good fortune, but only of covering sheets of paper with figures which may be relied upon to make a total but are deeply misleading in their meaning.

Something inimical to the structure has insinuated itself into the foundation of our thinking, and the building falls.

Every useless destruction, every case of mutual oppression, will only tend to scatter and isolate the limbs of humanity.

If anyone full of goodwill towards his neighbour only meets with abuse and threatening fists, then what sort of agreement can be made?
Are not the messengers of goodwill often enough little more than tragic or comic figures? The ambassador whose speech is full of good will while his pockets hide loaded revolvers can hardly be admired.

Book-keeping, with its double and triple entry has now become all important, although the budgets of almost all countries are now in deficit and the only thing that goes to unite them is their common debt. If one were indebted to a good neighbour, all would be well, since one can always come to an agreement with what is good. Goodness and kindness can overcome all obstacles.

If all our plans run in evil channels and are partitioned off by 'strict business principles' then it will be difficult to cross these barbed wire fences, and all our benevolent feelings are likely to dry up. One should not imagine that the withered blossoms of benevolence have no influence on the world's harvest, or that a dried-up root will not stop the growth of other roots. Evil, once it is sown, produces the most unexpected seeds and this often enough at long intervals.

May God preserve the world from such seeds!

We often read, in fairy tales, of dead water and living water, by which the limbs of heroes, scattered abroad by evil agents, were made whole again.

Popular wisdom, then, has always forseen that the body of the hero will eventually be restored. Sometimes the hero is destroyed by the envy of his brothers or relatives but, in the end, the popular wisdom of these old tales 'always restored the scattered parts.

Historical problems are generally solved in the popular consciousness and, if not settled at the round table, they find their cultural-historic solution in the life of the people. Much has been destroyed by violence, but much has also been built from the life of the people and the solutions discovered in its consciousness.

If one speaks with the wise ones among the people, they will tell one that the scattered limbs of humanity will eventually be joined together again. The steady toil and creation of the worker is something that goes deeper than any 'strict business principle'. By his constant and unswerving activity he is welding together the scattered limbs of humanity. That which is not settled within the narrow limits of the round table is decided on the immense stretches of the harvest field.

And the Mother Sophia, the Great Wisdom, how can she be disconsolate, since she is the Mother, the Great Wisdom?