Editor's Note: The Quarterly feels particularly happy to be able to offer its readers the article which Nicholas Roerich sent us from his home in the Himalayas at Naggar, Punjab, India. This is not only because all Delphians whose course includes the subject of art become acquainted with his paintings, but because of the work he has done for international unity. His famous slogan "Peace Through Culture" appears on the Roerich Peace Banner shown above. On October 10 Roerich societies in 24 countries will celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of his artistic, literary and scientific activities.

Exhibitions were lately held in Europe, demonstrating the idea, of which I had already occasion to write and speak several times. From the point of view of the history of art, it is always most important to reveal the so-called unknown artists. The names of great masters are very often in public judgment collective conceptions. When looking over the standard handbooks on art, we will find in addition to the well-known celebrities numerous names, whose creations are not commonly known. And yet these artists lived to old age, worked incessantly, and had as their teachers great masters.

About an exhibition in Paris the press reported the following: "An exhibition of sixty paintings, acclaimed by connoisseurs as highest works of art but bearing the signatures of unknown artists, was organized in Paris under the patronage of Georges Huysmans and was heralded to be the most remarkable of the series of thirty exhibitions of the Parisian season."

Exhibitions of unknown artists reminded old collectors and critics of many episodes concerning mistakes of judgment committed by the best authorities on art.

One of them narrates: "Thirty years ago I got the idea of submitting to the jury of an exhibition a small Roman landscape painted in light-yellow and bluish colors and also a pen-drawing representing a peasant with a large hat. Both paintings were flatly refused. And yet the landscape was by Corot and the drawing was nothing less than one by Rembrandt himself."

Another art critic added that paintings by unknown authors were now and then acquired by the largest art museums and believed to be by known great masters. On a recent exhibition of old Italian art in Paris, there was exhibited the famous Open-air Concert, previously catalogued by outstanding authorities as a Titian, and now regarded as a masterpiece of Giorgione.

Such anecdotes remind us of the famous saying of Toulouse-Lautrec "a painting should be perceived by the heart." In other words, a painting should be valued on its merit and not because of the signature. This French artist adds: "What would it matter if an image of an Evangelist turns out to be not by Velas-

* An artist's portrait of Professor Roerich.
quez, if its high quality ranks it equal to the brush of the latter!"

We can remember many facts from life, which prove on what quicksand conventional judgment is based. In the Metropolitan Museum of New York there is a painting attributed to Massys, which is actually a painting of the very interesting but completely unknown master of Netherlands, Haselaer. His signature, which I and the well-known authority on art, senator Semenoff-Tianshansky, have seen, was evidently removed by its previous owner. On the market it is of course an entirely different thing to sell an unknown Haselaer or to have the opportunity to offer a famous Massys.

I have myself seen a written certificate by a well-known authority stating a painting to be a Rembrandt. Yet from this painting there had just been removed the name of Jan Victor—a distinguished pupil of Rembrandt. I also remember a landscape of the XVIIIth century, under which was visible an older signature of the XVIIth century. One may cite many stories which eloquently prove that a painting should be judged not by the signature, but on its merit.

There are two types of collectors. One group requires first of all only the name. The other demands an artistic quality. For the collectors of the former type there have been created the innumerable fakes. A rather rude art dealer used to laugh: "A signature costs but a couple of shillings!"

If even to-day, before our very eyes, there disappears a signature from a painting, then evidently such sinister episodes took place also in the past. It is said about a well-known collector that he always carried with him a phial with alcohol and while bargaining for a painting he washed off the signature, in order to decrease the value of the painting. Many tragedies indeed have taken place around art objects. We ourselves were once horrified at seeing how a restorer reduced a beautiful painting to a seemingly dilapidated condition, in order to purchase it cheaply.

Everyone has heard of the destruction of masterpieces of Leonardo by religious fanatics and cruel invaders. I remember how a beautiful sketch by Rubens was used as cardboard for the binding of a book. An excellent portrait by Brulow was covered by an ugly landscape. Under the excellent painting attributed to Ingres was discovered the signature of his collaborator Carbonniere. In all countries there has always taken place an intentional or involuntary shifting of names and definitions. Together with revaluations and fashions, every century had its own conventionalities. Instead of true revaluation, new concealments are taking place.

But let us not dwell on old art only. The problem of contemporary art is still more acute. May the examples of the past teach our generation to open their hearts to young artists. And after all who can affirm, who are unknown and who the known artists, and to whom are they known or unknown?!

I have been told of a most remarkable collection of "unknown" French artists of the recent period. A collector from Marseilles began...
to collect paintings of artists who died very young or who in despair discarded art. A large collection was assembled. A visitor who did not know the names might have thought that they were paintings by Degas, Monet, Manet, Rafaelli, Menard, Latouche and other celebrated French artists. This collection contained also some strongly individual conceptions. It became quite clear that at some time an enterprising person may arrange from such a collection a most striking and significant exhibition. Besides paintings of artists who died early in life, there were those of artists who considered themselves découragé. And it is yet another question whether they were all right considering themselves failures. Sometimes a terrible injustice brings people to this entirely undeserved self-estimate.

A friend of ours, when saying "unknown" always used to add "unknown to me." And in this he was quite right. How can anyone say that a person unknown to him at the moment and in a certain place, may not be greatly revered by other people elsewhere? Such a consideration should be understood by many people nowadays. Otherwise, in self-conceit, some persons may imagine, that if they do not know something or do not accept it, then all other people also do not know and do not admit it. Such is the usual vanity of the ignoramus. Besides, the question of being known or unknown is one of the most conditional. This definition is based on many casual circumstances, both conscious and unconscious. Many excellent geniuses received recognition only after their death. For some curious reasons people seem to value only the factor of death in their judgments.

Hélas! Because of crass ignorance so often the ugly dance macabre replaces the beautiful predestined Dance of Life.

May exhibitions of "unknown" artists remind once more of the conventionality of human judgment and may they create one more act of justice in the contemporary world.

We all know of the martyrdom of scientists like Copernicus, Galileo, Paracelsus, Lavoisier and other innumerable sufferers for truth. There exist entire books dedicated to these martyrs of science and next to them there should also exist volumes "Martyrs of Art and Culture." However, once we know that artists are priests of the beautiful we also know all unavoidable attributes of attainments.

We know not only of ancient Herostates who destroyed the beautiful. Even in our days, Sargent's painting was barbarously cut in the Royal Academy in London. A vandal slashed Millet's Angelus in the Louvre and another brute in 1912 stabbed Repin's Ivan the Terrible at the Tretiakov Gallery in Moscow. Much has been written about vandalism. We introduced the Banner of Peace as a Red Cross of Culture, to protect real treasures of humanity. And now let me mention another hidden but cruel vandalism, which quietly existed in the life of many nations.

When studying old Masters, we often find that many very good paintings were for some reason overpainted by inferior artists with entirely different subjects. It is obvious that the old painting had become old-fashioned and the artists simply used the wood as material for his modern and more fashionable creation. One should not think that only paintings of secondary importance were subjected to such barbarous manipulations. On the contrary amongst the recorded cases we find some very important names which to-day occupy a place of honor in the history of art.

I have personally seen an old replica of the well-known painting by Correggio, which is in

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*"Tibet," a painting by Nicholas Roerich. It is interesting to know that one of the artist's sons, Dr. Georges Roerich, is famous as a Sanskrit and Tibetan scholar.

Courtesy Himalayan Roerich Society.*
the National Gallery in London and on this replica I could clearly see the outlines of an ancient portrait and indeed the panel on which it was painted proved to be far older than the replica.

Once we had occasion to witness how from beneath painting of the XVIIth and XVIIIth centuries there appeared in good condition beautiful originals by Lambert Lombard, Rogier van der Weiden, Adrien Bloemart and other artists equally renowned.

Such examples show to us that vandalism is committed not only by the hands of an infuriated mob, but also secretly, in highly distinguished dwellings, for the sake of vanity and prejudice.

Beauty cannot be guarded by orders and laws alone. Only when human consciousness realizes the inestimable value of beauty, its power of creating, ennobling and refining, only then will real treasures of humanity be safe. And one should not think that the vice of vandalism belongs but to the past ages, to some notorious invaders and conquerors. We see that vandalism of many kinds takes place even today. Therefore the endeavor to protect and save beauty is not an abstract nebulous move, but is imperative, real and undeferrable.

Verily, education in art and beauty is a necessity. And although it is a “beautiful” necessity, yet it is a necessity with all its duties and obligations. We always rejoice when we see that thoughts are being transmuted into action. Such transfiguration is manifested by a true œuvre, a clear yet at the same time an almost untranslatable word. One can say “creative work,” yet something more profound and summarizing is expressed in this French concept.

About art in all its manifestations people are accustomed to judge very lightmindedly. Some have read two verses and already speak with authority about the poet. Some have seen three or four paintings or reproductions and already pass judgment on the artist. From one novel they fix the position of a writer. One book of sketches is enough for an irrevocable opinion over a cup of tea.

More than once it has been noted in literature that the celebrated “cup of tea” binds one to nothing. And perhaps the pronouncements at the dinner table likewise are not binding, yet they often have very profound consequences. In such conversations over a “cup of tea,” people do not think about the fact that the separate productions are only as the petals of the entire œuvre. Even an experienced horticulturist or botanist would hardly undertake to form a judgment about an entire plant from a single petal of its blossom.

- Left: "Madonna Oriflamma" (Madonna of the Banner) by Nicholas Roerich. Right: One of Roerich’s pictures of the high Himalayas. Since taking up his residence in India, Roerich has dedicated hundreds of paintings to the majesty of these mountains. Courtesy Himalayan Roerich Society.
In all kinds of creativeness—in literature, in music, in the graphic arts—everywhere an attentive and careful correlation is decidedly necessary. It is well known how much has been attributed to authors, which was entirely alien to them, based on incomplete quotations from some train of thought. You know that not only casual people take it upon themselves to pass judgment. In each domain dwells a self-appointed judge.

It is said that the valuation by critics changes three times in a century, that is, by generations. To observe these deviations of evaluations is very instructive. How many irrelevant considerations will influence public opinion! Competition of publishers or greed of the dealers in artistic productions, finally any of the various forms of envy and enmity are so complexly reflected in appraisals, that for the future investigator-historian it is often completely impossible to discriminate. A great number of examples of this could be adduced.

Let us not bring up certain episodes out of the world of collectors, when competition led these people to most unworthy conduct. It is only important to remember that appraisals of creative work are singularly tortuous and personal. We recollect how a certain music lover warned a well-known musician not to play on a particular day because an influential critic had a toothache. But when to all these mortal chances there is united the wish in general not to acquaint oneself with a man’s entire work, then his situation becomes truly tragic.

Let us recall any prolific author. Can one form a judgment about him without knowing the sequence of all his works? One can, indeed, estimate separate productions of the author, but then this will be an opinion which concerns the production itself but not all the man’s creative oeuvre. It is not alone the biography of a great personality, for it is still more valuable to follow the accumulation of creative power and all the paths of its expression. Thus once again we see how significant in its meaning is the word oeuvre. It impels one to reflect particularly, broadly, it impels one to outline the entire manifestation and comprehensively to examine its influence and consequence.

History, passing from personal oeuvre, appraises also the oeuvre of an entire nation, of a whole epoch. If the historian does not teach himself in the small and accessible, then by what means can he draw near to and encompass broad problems? Before thinking about such comprehensive tasks it is necessary to reflect about conscientious judgments of parts, of individuals. He who sets himself the task of always staying within the bounds of truths learns to discriminate in all fortuities and to compare causes and effects carefully.

Just now, when there is so much destruction and upheaval, each clear, honest, exhaustive understanding of a subject will be an especially needed contemporary task. We have just read how Stokowski has definitely expressed himself about the harm of mechanical music for true creativeness. Stokowski has justly reminded us that even between the very vibrations transmitted directly or mechanically there is an enormous difference. Certain instruments are generally imperceptible in mechanical transmission.

In a time when music and scenic design and the graphic arts have been subjected to mechanization, precisely then must the appraisals of creativeness be still more precise, profound, and well-grounded. At this very moment, when it is the modern practice to strive for the brief, the staccato, and the casual, it is especially necessary to aspire for evaluations on the basis of the entire oeuvre.

Greetings to all true lovers of the Beautiful, who help to make the oeuvres inconnues known and revered.