Paths of Blessing

By Nicolas Roerich
(The world-famous Russian Artist)

IV.

"Tell me who are your enemies and I will tell you who you are."

My friends, do you love your enemies?

Learn to be "proud" not of your friends alone, but also of your enemies. It is a pity that you do not love your enemies. You ought to love them. They are such painstaking beings. They work so hard for you. They know more about you than you know yourselves. In their painstaking efforts they ascribe such subtle inventions to you. In their conception you become both all-powerful and omnipresent. And often your enemies help you and your loftiest ideas. And so often do the blows of your enemies forge new and invisible friends for you.

Having finished their "business," your emboldened enemies will take their seats at councils and meetings and will begin to settle your affairs without you. But the creativeness of life will turn all their decisions upside down like Wagner's Mime; these dear foes of yours will not know exactly what they are saying. Afterwards they will come with explanations, but they will still remain your enemies, until they feel the impact of the spark-arrow. Then, becoming impoverished, they also become both cautious and seeing. And then all is as it should be.

Your foes are often angry. Now he who is wroth is already powerless and is dangerous no more. Having exhausted their cries, they seek to crush you with silence, but how pleasant is work amidst silence. Both with their cries and with their silence they profit you. Ah, dear foes! if you could sometimes see what a little mannikin it is that sets you at us. Even the rudest hearts would be ashamed of such a guide and ally.

I say nothing about all those cases when open enemies have forced you to look around, to verify your knowledge and to go on with renewed persistence.

Blessed be the enemies!

"But why do you occupy yourselves with your enemies? Are not all your friends enough for you?" you may ask.

Of course I am not speaking for myself and, perhaps, not for you either. But I am speaking for the younger generation. It often knows not how to act towards its first enemies, and instead of simply crossing the river, it piles rock upon rock, losing valuable creative time. Yet at every minute someone could be taught and rejoiced. Rejoiced not with money, but with the joy of coming to know new distances.

If the whole world were to rejoice, were it only for a moment, all the dark walls of Jericho would fall instantly. But it is yet a far cry to the joy of the whole world.

Often we learn a thing so thoroughly that should it turn out to be all wrong, we still persist in our opinion; instead of gaining a third eye, we reject the two we have.

Passing along a forest road, try, having gone ahead of your fellow-traveller, to slip unnoticed into the undergrowth and let him pass ahead. Then you may call to him from behind, but he will only increase his pace and hear your voice before him. For his brain knows that you are ahead.

Why do people never see a blue horse or a green face? Because, notwithstanding what is evidently right, their fettered brain knows that which does not exist in reality.

How many disputes about life, religion, knowledge, beauty, have not been brought into being by fettered brains. Bound in the fetters of schools which are prisons.
So do your enemies know so many things absolutely that they will even help the culture of the future. They will help it unexpectedly for themselves.

Have they not resolved to crush you with their “splendid” material attainments and things. They have raised the standard of their finished life, their finished race. In the pride of their knowledge of their completeness they have cut down all the “unnecessary” wires. What does the poor Spirit matter before the might of warehouses crammed with manufactured goods, even though the goods be rotten? The enemy are already preparing to triumph and to chant hymns in honour of their negation. But a “silly” thing takes place. Someone or other does not want to take their goods. Time is spoiling their stores, and to judge by their appearance they are not fit to lie beside the products of the most ancient epochs. And from behind that heap of rubbish there will arise, victorious and irrefutable, only the creations of the Spirit.

Let us glance at the museums of our planet, say a thousand years hence. What will our descendants find remaining from our days? they who will have long known both atomic energy and the power of harmony. Books and newspapers, paper, woven stuffs—all will have turned to dust, cement and iron will long have become rubbish. All colours will have turned to yellow and gray. Many statues will have fallen to pieces. What is left of our cemeteries will have become beggarly ruins. And by the side of this sorrowful picture there will still remain the monoliths of ancient days which have known more than once the meaning of a thousand years.

Many of the works of your enemies will be swept away by time. True, in the battle of purification some of your friends will perish also. But those who understand what harmony is will be preserved. For they know that harmony consists in the correspondence of all parts and all materials. He who knows what he is working for and what he is expressing, will also create the correspondence of his materials. He will understand how to preserve books—the scrolls of knowledge. He will understand that it is absurd to erect a statue of cement or paint a picture with colours which he knows to be bad and on rotten canvas. Gradually people will come to understand what must be preserved and how to preserve it. To preserve it as a trace of the spark of divine energy.

But that one may know, one must think, one must create the moments of this exaltation, of this process of learning.

Many people go to church at the end of the week. Many people recall at the end of the week what accounts they have to pay. But very few people think, even once in a week what, during the past seven days, they have given in the sphere of beauty and knowledge. And it is in vain that art knocks at these closed doors. This knocking of the heart disturbs the brain no more than the rattling of the wind. Only the shutters are closed more tightly and silken curtains deny all access to the fresh air.

No one is obliged to love art. The majority of conversations about it are carried on not for love of it, but only because it is proper to do so. Nevertheless, art and knowledge progress.

A gradually increasing electric current gives an increasing light. Then the light blazes up with special brilliancy, and, for us, goes out; but the dynamo works with still greater energy. This means that our sight no longer perceives the vibrations of such a tension. But the invisible light keeps growing.

Or a train of goods-cars begins to move before your eyes and hides from you a wondrous landscape. The train increases its speed. In the intervals between the cars bits of landscape begin to flash. The train runs at full speed and you seem to see, as it were, through it, the whole continuous landscape. The obstacle of the physical body has vanished.

In the dark we often do not see a growing light. But, for that, if we concentrate we shall again begin to see, through our physical sheath, the true world, in its true movement.
So even now we often are unable to perceive the increased vibrations of cosmic movements. But through the chain of railway trucks we are already beginning to distinguish the mountain peaks to which destiny is bearing us.

We have recalled the contemporary conditions of creative work. We have recalled all the Golgothas of difficulty and the feats of attainment. Of course, the circumstances of art and knowledge in modern life are abnormal. Of course we must know this and remember it every hour. But if all is moved by creative love, by the miracle of beauty and the wisdom of knowledge, you will be unable to overthrow this triangle, for each side of it shows the other two.

And now, if we know that the young generation remembers the might of these pillars, it will, of course, carry the consciousness of this through all the difficulties of life. And when we speak of brotherhood, love, harmony, we are not repeating absurd, unbecoming, old-fashioned words, but words pertaining to the immediate practice of life. A miracle is being performed in the midst of life, in the midst of action, amidst intense harmony. The visions of night are being transformed not into fables, but into phenomena of happy communication with the paths of the Blessed.

The window opened into the darkness will bring us the voices of the night, but the call of love will bring the answer of the Beloved.

A new world is coming.

Books of the Month

Mr. Hudson on “Little Things”—Viscountess Wolseley on County Traditions

By S. L. Bensusan

Mr. W. H. HUDSON, author of “The Naturalist in La Plata,” “Idle Days in Patagonia,” and other books that none of his readers would willingly forget, has added another wonderful volume of sketches to his collection. He calls it “A Traveller in Little Things.” Some of the essays have appeared in The New Statesman, Saturday Review, and elsewhere, and the publishers are J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd. The title of the story was given to our author by a commercial traveller in a Glasgow hotel, who, after listening to Mr. Hudson on questions of agriculture said: “I perceive that you know a great deal more about the matter than I do, and I will now tell you why you know more.

You are a traveller in little things—in something very small—which takes you into the villages and hamlets, where you meet and converse with small farmers, innkeepers, labourers and their wives, with other persons who live on the land.”

Mr. Hudson has accepted the description for a title, and really it is an excellent one. Little things may have exquisite beauty, certainly those that Mr. Hudson has to offer are singularly attractive. He takes us to strange places, to South American cattle ranches, and strange towns set upon the edge of the prairie, then he brings us back to England, to Wiltshire, Somersetshire, Devon, sometimes I think, as in the case of “The Sampire Gatherer,” to the other side of the country.