Worms
By NICHOLAS ROERICH

ALL kinds of injury are contained in foul-speech. In each
noxious speaking can be found all abominable and shame­
ful vices. Each evil speech contains in itself hatred and
falsehood and treachery and all that which so impedes the well-being
of humanity.

Even if ignorance shall lie at the base of all these vices, this still
makes it no easier for the contemporary consciousness. What profound
turpitude is contained in any treachery, in each falsehood, in slander
and in a desire to injure one's fellow. Long ago these vices were
placed in a group of the most abominable bestial manifestations.

The Apostle Paul, in his first epistle to Timothy, places falsehood,
slander, perjury, in the series of the following loathsome manifestations.

"Know ye, that the law has been established not for the righteous,
but for the lawless and the unruly, the impious and the sinful, the
corrupt and the profane, for the offenders against father and mother,
for murderers."

"For lechers, sodomites, kidnappers, slanderers, human beasts,
liars, perjurers, and all the others who are opposed to sound doctrine."

You see in what a shameful list has been included liars and
slanderers and all spoilers. And yet how easy it is amidst contem­
porary civilization to utter falsehood, slander, treachery, and all that
can arrest the growth of useful things. There has even been spoken
about a selflessness of evil, which in its violence actually reaches the
point of self-abnegation. There are those who are prepared even to
smite themselves provided they can sow evil.
Of course it is so easy to perform any treachery. Sometimes people do not even render themselves account that by a word or deed, they destroy that very thing with which yesterday they were in agreement and which they served. Some small evil-speaking has taken place, it may be from external irritation or it may be from some deeply concealed thoughts. Yet here these apparently small causes incite a man to begin to commit treachery, even though therein he harms himself.

Indeed, each treachery, as does each falsehood and slander, first of all bounds back upon the evil-speaker himself. This remains an immutable truth. But it makes it no easier for the well-being of peoples the fact that any traitor or slanderer receives what he deserves. Nevertheless the places overgrown by the weeds of evil speech require much effort in order to clean them up again.

Evil speech, indeed, does not fall from heaven. It is begotten in the lowest strata of life. It grows slowly but inexorably, if only it be sown. At first the man learns to smile evilly, to shrug his shoulders evilly, then to utter the evil jest; he is elated by the irritation or the approbation of his companion, and then imperceptibly he becomes accustomed to the basest evil speaking.

Evil speech, the same as invective, is first of all a vicious habit. The Apostle was absolutely right in placing falsehood and slander in the list of offences contrary to nature. In the eyes of civilized society, any of the vices named by him are manifestly inadmissible. But not so with slander and treachery. Certainly they have not been expelled from the way of life, like bestiality. And of course all this testifies identically to a beastly state.

Noxious insects breed from filth and negligence. From such carelessness are also born the worms of treachery. People are advised not to feed dogs on raw meat. From raw meat worms appear in them, which are sometimes very difficult to get rid of. Are there not contained in meat-food all those grossnesses of life which are so injurious? Are not the worms of slander and treachery bred from the same causes as in the case of dogs?

Sometimes people attempt to explain treacherous and slanderous actions by small-souledness. In the last analysis, what is smallness of soul? After all, there certainly is the seed of the spirit in everyone. But it can become covered with dust and relegated into the cellars of the consciousness. Then it is more accurate to say, not small-souledness but mean-souledness. And this vice will also not be entirely natural, but will be engendered in the ugliness of a mouldy way of life.

The infectiousness of vices can be observed even in the smallest of them. In any group one has but to fall in with one or another vice to which one is attracted, and sooner or later one becomes a follower of
it. Sometimes such an inwardly prepared follower will even condemn the vicious qualities observed by them. But then, little by little he will catch the pernicious habits. It is striking to observe how gradually a vicious habit takes root. Undoubtedly the man is ashamed of it. At first he unfailingly tries to conceal it, but later, seeing obvious examples of it and noticing that those surrounding him do not all change their attitude towards him, he wears his odious habit outwardly. And so no matter, he continues to dwell in a human-like society.

All kinds of worms exist. Physicians affirm that certain of them are extremely difficult to eradicate and their return is always possible. But no organism is wormy from the beginning. These vipers insinuate themselves very gradually, from envy, from self-pity, from stupidity, and in general, from ignorance.

These pernicious worms are not spoken about in schools. They may be discussed only when they have appeared in some unseemly behaviour. But of course then it will be too late. Then is required not a prophylaxis but some special measures with the taking of not very pleasant remedies. The majority of people are very careful of their taste and do not like bad-tasting medicines. If a physician prescribes them, such people will try to consign these medicaments to the trash bin. It is better not to acquire the worms than to contend with them later.

There exists a terrible malady, the final stage at which all the pores of the body begin to give out worms. It is said that King Herod ended his life in such a fetid dissolution. Yet in each breath the stubborn traitor and slanderer exhale these same horrible worms, in their invisibility still more dangerous.

Yes, in the case of dogs worms are acquired from raw meat; from some such raw meat are bred the human worms which infect the whole surrounding atmosphere. From such meat people reach such a state of torpor that they lose the faculty of distinguishing colors, and they cannot listen to and understand the simplest things. Is this not from cannibalism?

In dogs worms are acquired from raw meat. Whence then comes that human grossness which reaches such a state of ravenousness that even the most steadfast ties find themselves broken. From very imperceptible vulgarities and meannesses are the human worms propagated. The example of the worm-eater King Herod has been noted down in history. Not without cause has the animal-like state of Nebuchadnezzar also been related. People try to avoid and to destroy rats which are the bearers of contagion. Then what about worms, both visible and invisible?
I have always been unreservedly of the opinion that any attempt at an adequate solution of the social problem must necessarily be based on a complete reorganization of the economic system.