I began collecting wolf and lynx skins. The Slavs also had to have arms. A village blacksmith, covered with soot, forged a real iron sword for me, made to resemble those found in the Kurgans. For a long time this sword hung in the store room. George remembers it.

The Fiery Sword.—1913. The fiery sword is brought to the sleeping sentinels. My painting, the "sword of courage" is now a necessity. The dates are being fulfilled. At the beginning of 1914 "The Red Dawn" ("With the Belgian Lion"), "The Cry of the Serpent"; "The Crowns" (disappearing in the clouds); "Human Deeds"; "The Doomed City" were hastily executed, together with all those pictures whose meaning we only understood later.

The "Fiery Sword" is for the threshold of a new world. And now in 1939 we recall these three swords.

In Western Tibet, three swords have been carved on the rocks from time immemorial. The boundary? Victory? The symbol of the three swords comes to memory.

"The Sword of Courage"!

GOODLINESS OF QUALITY

In the time of Akbar, it was forbidden, under severe penalty to sell perishable colors. Again, the ancient shastras speak about the good quality of paints. It would seem that civilization ought to have increased the durability of materials. But civilization aims at other goals. It has abandoned the humanities and forgotten about quality. Certain machine-made products lack durability when compared with those of the past. As to artists’ materials, they have had to suffer considerably from "civilization". Thus many colors cannot stand the sulphur fumes and other chemical effluvia with which the atmosphere of cities is now filled. Instead of preservation there is a loss of value. If gasoline fumes on the Paris boulevards have caused the trees to wither, one can imagine how similar emanations can harm people in body and mind.
Louis XIV's cynical saying, "After us, the deluge," may well be applied to the contemporary spirit. It is a kind of Pharisaism. With a sanctimonious modesty people will often say: "It is for us to be concerned whether the art of to-day is going to last. Let time itself be the judge". Such people know quite well that this is to deprive the coming generations of all that has been done for their sake. Archaeology provides striking examples of the durability of various materials. Should we not be grateful to those workers, known to us, thanks to whom, we can study and be enraptured by objects which have come down to us through the course of thousands of years? Some may say that it is certain whether the planet will last for long: that astronomical and cosmic research shows us that earthly materials are not everlasting. Yet so long as the earth exists, one should think of keeping materials in good condition so as to avoid corruption and destruction.

YET THE THIEF IS NOT FOUND GUILTY

Nasr-ed-Din relates the following about a Hadji:

"A donkey was once stolen from a Hadji. The next day he complained to his friends and asked their advice. One of these advised him to put a lock on his stable door. "What is the use," observed another, "when the door falls in as soon as it is forced?"

"Then, why not build a high wall round the stables? A man cannot lead out a donkey without your knowing it. Where were you when he led the donkey from the stable?"

"At night I lock my door from within and put the key under the pillow, so that no one can come and lead away my donkey."

In this way they overwhelmed the Hadji with useless advice.

At last he lost patience, saying "My friends, all you say refers to the past and is no good now, but do you think I am wholly to blame? Is not the thief for something in all this?"