



NOTES



The Japanese and their Dead

Protestantism would cut us off from our dead ruthlessly, telling us that to pray for them, even to imagine we can help them, is superstition. Catholics know that the dead are not separated from them and that in the Communion of Saints there is a bond between living and dead that will last until all are united at the end of the world. However, Catholics as a rule are apt to be too unmindful of their duties to the dead, and in this respect they might well profit by the example of the Japanese, whose feeling for their dead is a wonderful thing. Lafcadio Hearn says:

"It is a feeling of grateful and reverential love. It is probably the most profound and powerful of the emotions of the race,—that which especially directs national life and shapes national character. Patriotism belongs to it. Filial piety depends upon it. Family love is rooted in it. Loyalty is based upon it. The soldier who, to make a path for his comrades through the battle, deliberately flings away his life with a shout of *Teikoku munzai!*; the son or daughter who unflinching sacrifices all the happiness of existence for the sake, perhaps, of an undeserving or even cruel parent; the partisan who gives up friends, family, and fortune rather than break the verbal promise made in other years to a now poverty-stricken master; the wife who, ceremoniously robes herself in white, utters a prayer and thrusts a sword into her throat to atone for a wrong done to strangers by her husband,—all these obey the will and hear the approval of invisible witnesses. Even among the sceptical students of the new generation, this feeling survives many wrecks of faith, and the old sentiments are still uttered: 'Never must we cause shame to our ancestors'; 'it is our duty to give honor to our ancestors.'

If We Remembered

"Were there suddenly to arise within us," Hearn goes on, "the absolute certainty that our dead are still with us,—seeing every act, knowing our every thought, hearing every word we utter, able to feel sympathy with us or anger against us, able to help us, able to love us and greatly needing our love,—it is quite certain that our conceptions of life and duty would be vastly changed. We should have to recognise our obligations to the past in a very solemn way. Now, with the man of the Far East, the constant presence of the dead has been a matter of conviction for thousands of years; he speaks to them daily; he tries to give them happiness; and, unless a professional criminal, he never quite forgets his duty towards them. 'No one,' says Hitata, 'who constantly discharges that duty will ever be disrespectful to the gods or to his living parents. Such a man will also be loyal to his friends, and kind and gentle with his wife and children: for the essence of this devotion is in truth filial piety.' . . . The Japanese never think of an ancestor as having become only a memory, there dead are alive."

We too have the certainty that our dead live. But unfortunately our conviction lacks reality. If we are asked do we believe, we unhesitatingly say we do; but if anybody observing us without bias were asked if we believed he would say he did not see any great reason to think so, at least as far as the practices of most of us go. Our belief in the Communion of Saints, like so many of our beliefs, badly needs treatment—treatment by prayer and meditation on the Last Things.

"The Book of Wonder"

The publishers of "The Modern Library" have included in their list Lord Dunsany's *Book of Wonder*. The volume is published at 85 cents. The new publication will help to make known to a wider circle of readers the magic, singing, delicate prose of the head of the House of Plunket. Here once more is the enchantment of those other works of his that have fallen into our hands. Passages like the following are stamped with his genius and as unmistakable as lines of Dante or Vergil:

"And many were moved to anger, for they hoped for some bloody quest; but the old lords chamberlain said, as they muttered among themselves in a far dark end of the chamber, that the quest was hard and wise, for that if she could ever weep she might also love. They had known her all her childhood; she had never sighed. Many men had she seen, suitors and courtiers, and had never turned her head after one went by. Her beauty was as still as sunsets of bitter evenings when all the world is froze, a wonder and chill. She was as a sun-stricken mountain uplifted alone, all beautiful with ice, a desolate and lonely radiance late at evening far up beyond the comfortable world, not quite to be companioned by the stars, the doom of the mountaineer."

"In the valley beyond Sidono there lies a garden of poppies, and where the poppies' heads are all a-swing with summer breezes that go up the valley there lies a path well strewn with ocean shells. Over Sidono's summit the birds come streaming to the lake that lies in the valley of the garden, and behind them rises the sun sending Sidono's shadow as far as the edge of the lake. And down the path of many ocean shells when they begin to gleam in the sun, every morning walks an aged man clad in a silken robe with strange devices woven. A little temple where the old man lives stands at the edge of the path. None worship there, for Zornadhu, the old orophet, hath forsaken men to walk among his poppies."

Three Irishmen in recent times have had the gift of magic prose. You find it in Wilde's plays and in his "De Profundis." Padraic Pearse, whom Maxwell killed because he loved his country, had it too—there are pages in his plays that move the soul like fairy music. Dunsany is the last of them and without a rival in his own sphere. They are examples of what can be done with the

English language when the Celtic magic is added to Saxon at its best. Do not forget that when Dunsany was asked the secret of his style he said that his mother made him read the Bible as a boy and forbade him to read the daily papers. The influence of the Bible is plain in his pages; and to its "sweetness and light" he adds the true Celtic glamor. In the works of English writers there stands alone but one passage that can compare with the prose of the Irishmen. In that description of Monna Lisa, which you will find in Pater's *Renaissance*, there is the same ineffable charm, the same mastery over little words.

DIOCESE OF DUNEDIN

Last week the Children of Mary, South Dunedin, sent a parting gift to one of their number, Mrs. Reidy (nee Miss Rita Bree) who was married recently and has gone to reside in Invercargill. The gift was a beautiful statue of Our Blessed Lady and artistically illuminated card bearing the sodality's good wishes for Mrs. Reidy's future happiness.

The Sisters in charge of St. Vincent's Orphanage desire to acknowledge a gift of 5/- from "A Client of St. Anthony," and tender their cordial thanks to many friends who have sent donations of fruit for the orphans during the past month.

The ladies of the Orphans' Sewing Guild will begin their charitable work for 1925 on Thursday afternoon in the meeting room of the Children of Mary, St. Patrick's School, South Dunedin. Honorary members may send their subscription to the Sister in Charge, St. Vincent's Orphanage.

At the Theoretical Examinations held in December the following pupils of St. Philomena's College were successful. Senior Grade: Mary O'Brien 61. Intermediate.—(Honors) Mary Brown 99; Mollie O'Malley 98; Annie Preen 97; Ellen Brown 87. Preliminary.—Margaret Brown 98. Miss Annie McGregor passed the Public Service Examination, and Miss Mary Meade was successful in the Intermediate Examination.

The name of Rev. Brother Higgins was inadvertently omitted from those constituting the committee of the Christian Brothers' Rugby League Football Club, given in our last week's issue.

Mr. John J. Noonan announces in this issue that he has commenced business as a land agent in Dunedin. Mr. Noonan was educated at the Christian Brothers' School and has always taken a prominent part in Catholic activities. We are pleased to see our young men branching out for themselves, and trust that their fellow-Catholics will, wherever possible, render them assistance.

The Christian Brothers' wish to thank the kind friends who have helped them recently. Dunedin Catholics are always prompt to assist the Brothers in their needs, and the Brothers assure them that their generosity is greatly appreciated.

Rev. Brother J. P. Doonan, Assistant to the Superior-General of the Christian Brothers, returned to Sydney last week. He had been some time staying with the local community. He was much impressed with our