



NOTES



The Tinkers

Unless you lived in Ireland you would not understand what we mean when we call a man a tinker—with or without an adjective, as the mood may require. Irish people are aware that just as there was a "holy farmer" there was also a "living tinker" whom innocent people invoke in corroboration of their statements just as impious people invoke saints and sacred things. The tinkers are a nomadic people. They wander at their own sweet will up and down Ireland, camping here and there, usually in a sheltered spot beside running water. They marry very young, and they have large families. They may be lax concerning the rights of ownership, and in their dealings at fairs they may act on the horse-dealers maxim: "Do to the other fellow what he would like to do to you, and do it first," but apart from that they are as good and maybe better than other dealers and merchants. Certainly they are saints compared with the sort of people who send to wars the last man but will not send their own last shilling, or with the millionaires who drive large motor cars and make fortunes by engineering trusts and concerns that bring ruin to thousands. The Tinkers are by profession tinsmiths. They mend pots and pans and cans for the neighbors when they settle down in a district for a time. But work at their ostensible calling is only a side-line after all. Dealing at fairs, even fortune-telling, appeals more to them. They will often go away on a long trek to the West of Ireland whence they will return in a few months driving before them a large number of shaggy, rough-haired Connemara ponies, of all ages. These they will sell as they travel, and not infrequently they will sell the buyer when selling the ponies. We wonder if that breed of little horses has been allowed to remain in the West by the mischievous British Government. Of course one often bought as a pony a little horse foal, but that was the fault of the buyer who ought to have known better than to accept as a two year old pony a six months old foal, but usually the genuine pony was a wonder. For years, in our school days, we rode a Connemara pony and we have never since seen an animal of the species that could compare with him for cleverness, endurance, and sure-footedness. He was not a comfortable horse to ride over a bank but he always got there if left alone. His ascents and descents were perpendicular and abrupt, and disconcerting to a rider who did not know what to expect. Single banks, double banks, blind fences, loose stones in gans, and other puzzles that disturb the peace of mind of a young thoroughbred had no terrors for him, and as far as we know he reached an honorable old age without ever falling or getting a cut on his snowy skin. He was no exception. Many Irishmen can remember ponies of the same quality, quiet, playful, long-suffering, clear-eyed animals with ugly intelligent heads that made friends for them at once. However, we are wander-

ing away from the tinkers. We intended to explain before losing our way on the side-issue of ponies why it is that tinkers who are not unpopular have after all so bad a name that one calls others "tinkers" with no intention of being complimentary. Well, here is the reason: One day when St. Patrick was a slave in Ireland a wild boar rooting in a field turned up a lump of gold, and Patrick brought it to a tinker, and the tinker said: "It's nothing but solder, give it here to me." Patrick did not believe him and brought it to a smith, and the smith told him it was gold, and with that gold Patrick bought his freedom. Ever since that day smiths have had luck and tinkers have been wanderers over the face of Ireland knowing no rest, and everyman's hand against them.

Vain Reading

The mind must not be kept in serious occupation all the time. Now and then, like a bended bow, it must be relaxed in order to preserve its power. Among the many ways of relaxation is reading light literature; and, thus, in its own time and place, such reading is wholesome. Out of the right time and place such reading is every whit as bad as a breakfast on tinsy-cake, ices, and cheese straws would be for the health of an average man. Too much light reading is vain reading. Above and beyond all vain is the reading of light, superficial, emotional spiritual books during the time intended for real spiritual lecture. Golden years ago, in a *capella* on the Esquiline Hill, we heard a German scholar protest vehemently against the foolish, hysterical, sentimental books of devotion that crept in between readers of to-day and the sound, solid, edifying pages of men who had put their whole lives into the books they wrote. Yes, read about Deadwood Dick or Sherlock Holmes when you want relaxation; but for all sort of 'sakes don't read the ravings of the Nun of Kenmare when you want spiritual building up. Go back to the old books and the old writers and they will teach you to live more abundantly. Bishop Hay, Bellesius, St. Liguori, Scaramelli, and many other old writers have more in one page than you will find in volumes of present-day spirituality. And if you want real spiritual science with never a word wasted you must go still further back—to Cajetan, Lugo, Aquinas, Scotus, or Lessius. People in this country do not often delve into these old authors. But if they knew more about them they probably would venture. So, without apologies to anybody, here is the place to introduce them. First we shall take Cajetan.

God's Goodness to Creatures

Communication of self to others is a note of goodness. The higher the good the greater the tendency to lift others to its level. God being infinitely good is moved supernaturally to communicate his goodness, which is Him-

self, to creatures. How he does so Cajetan tells us in few and pregnant words which leave nothing unsaid and an inexhaustible mine for meditation:—

God communicates Himself to creatures, (1) in the natural order, according to which all created things in some measure share in His likeness; (2) in a supernatural manner whereby He elevates intelligent creatures and enables them to have a higher share in His goodness, inchoately by grace, and consummately by the glory that is theirs when they join Him in Heaven where they no longer see Him as in a glass darkly but face to face; (3) thirdly, by a wonderful personal communication through which God unites Himself to a creature and a Divine Person exists in both divine and human natures in Christ made Man for our Redemption.

To the modes of union described so compactly in that sentence, we can add one other. Even after God had done all that for creatures, something remained possible for Christ. With the love greater than which no man hath He died for us on the Cross. His Death meant separation from us, and He did not wish to be separated. Consequently, the night before He suffered He instituted the Blessed Eucharist through which He might not only abide with us on our altars, but even become the food of our souls. Unless you eat the Flesh of the Son of Man and drink His Blood you shall not have life in you: it was that we might have life, and more abundantly. He came on earth. And when leaving the earth He left us His Body and Blood to be the food and drink whereby we might obtain and sustain that life.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

R.P.S.—Our illustration was taken from a picture post-card published from the *Orphans' Press*, Rochdale, England.

S.M.M.—For the information of our correspondent and others interested, we reprint the syllabus for this year's examination in Irish History:—The period to be studied will be the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and the opening of the nineteenth century to the time of the passing of the Act of Union. Thus, the period covers roughly two hundred years. It embraces many of the most important events in the story of Ireland. Pupils will learn of the appalling persecutions under the Penal Laws, and of the inhuman massacres of Catholics, during the regime of Cromwell, at Drogheda and Wexford. The gallant figures of Owen Roe O'Neill and Patrick Sarsfield march across the pages. How Ireland kept faith with England at Limerick, and how England broke the treaty "ere the ink wherewith 'twas writ was dry," will sink into the memories of the young. They will follow the fate of the Wild Geese, whose narrow graves were made by the hands of strangers on the "far, foreign fields from Dunkirk to Belgrade," where they fell in battle. The immortal story of Grattan's victory, and the shameful records of the treachery by which England secured the Union will terminate the period, and in between these