

THE TEA HOUSE OF JAPAN.

Written for *The Register*.

The onward march of Western civilization is fast supplanting native customs, habits and methods. A walk down the principal streets of Tokio would now be disappointing to the curious traveller intent on seeing 'things Japanese' in their native and pristine simplicity. Street cars, electric lights, telegraph poles and bicycles, all tend to render the scene too familiar and prosaic for the most imaginative to grow enthusiastic over. Among the few institutions that have successfully escaped the contagion of modern influences is the tea-house. There one may enter without fear of being confronted with electric call-bells, or waiters arrayed in conventional dress-suits. Japan under the old regime is faithfully mirrored in all the surroundings, and though one may occasionally see there a stray fork or spoon yet it is a "*vox clamantis in deserto*," and seems peculiarly out of place, a stranger in a strange land. There are of course many different grades and classes of these houses, from the simple wayside house where the visitor sips his tiny cup of green tea, and partakes of a modest plateful of sweetmeats to the large and more pretentious establishments with their retinue of servants and sumptuous bill-of-fare. But the difference is merely one of size and price, and they all closely resemble one another in essential characteristics. The European guest must remove his boots on entering; the spotless maistresses are never defiled by contact with anything that touches the ground in walking. With the native of course it is an easy matter to step off the *geta*, or wooden sandals.

Having seated yourself, you presently see a pretty *mesan* or waitress with gaily colored robes, and perhaps a touch of rouge and a suspicion of powder on her brown cheeks, glide into the room with tea and confectionery. She squats down on the floor very gracefully, (chairs are never seen in these places), and having poured out your tea, will probably enter into conversation, not betraying the slightest signs of either hesitation or shyness; and no matter how personal her questions become, you cannot find it in you to take offence, so artless and naive is her manner. An English traveller tells of how one of these waitresses after asking him every conceivable question, found him to be a widower with three children, and straightway offered to marry him.

Should several in a party visit one of these places, the girls respectfully retire after supplying refreshments, and if their presence is again required it is quickly obtained by the simple natural expedient of clapping the hands. A party of natives is often seen seated in a circle and sipping *saki*, Japanese wine from tiny cups in a very mysterious and solemn manner. In proportion as the fumes of the wine gradually mount to their heads this solemnity disappears, their faces are relaxed into cheerful smiles and their punctilious politeness is replaced by a more free and easy manner. Soon dancing girls appear on the scene, and in a very short time the party are having an uproariously good time which continues late into the night.

Unless a regular meal is ordered the bill is not called for, the guests leaving what they think sufficient on the tea-trays. If a party make a long stay and fare sumptuously, in addition to the regular bill, the waitresses are invariably rewarded by an honorarium, in proportion to the means and generosity of the givers.

A tea-house of any size, usually boasts of a beautiful little garden, fitted up as only the Japanese can, with a little pond, spanned with tiny bridges, and in which wild water lilies are

growing, while beautiful carp and gold fish are seen gleaming and darting to and fro among the stones and water plants. A guest can always be assured of being royally treated at one of these old-fashioned places of entertainment, and a visit to one of them cannot fail, in the words of the Mikado in the opera, to afford "a source of innocent merriment, of innocent merriment."

When cherry blossoms are in season, the tea houses frequently serve cherry blossom tea, made by steeping the blossoms in hot water. The result is a delicious drink, slightly bitter, yet pleasant to the palate. Of sweetmeats there is a great variety. The cakes made of rice flour and flavored with peppermint, etc., are in great favor, while other cakes of every color and shape are to be had in abundance. A familiar and to European eyes an unpleasant-looking article, is the *shushi*, made of cakes of boiled rice, on the top of which are laid thin layers of raw sardines. This is a very popular dish, and when once the taste has been acquired—and it is an acquired taste—they are not bad eating in spite of their unsavory appearance. In the better classes of tea houses, one can get the *unagi meshi*, the most delicious dish to the foreign taste in the whole Japanese menu. It is prepared by spitting eels upon strips of thin bamboo, and then roasting or frying them, and when done serving them upon rice, with *ghoyu* or Japanese sauce to flavor. The *unagi-meshi* is a dish which the writer has no hesitation in recommending for trial to the most fastidious gourmet, and is satisfied that once tried, it will find lasting favor.

In the evening the verandahs are gaily festooned with many colored lanterns, and the guests, clothed in their loose and flowing robes, pass the evening in conversation or amuse themselves by playing different games. *Ken Go* and Japanese cards are among the most familiar games with which the Japanese while away the cool hours of the evening. *Go* is chiefly played by elderly men to whose staid temperament the more lively games of the young people are distasteful. In principle it is much like chess, and is quite as scientific. *Go moku nariabi*, familiarly known in this country as *Go-bang*, is a very much modified form of this game, and is considered quite beneath the dignity of the practiced *Go* player. *Ken* is a very exciting game to watch, and a group playing it presents a very strange and fantastic appearance to the uninitiated, who might imagine them to be performing mysterious rites to some unknown god, were not merry peals of laughter and a constant interchange of pleasantries an inseparable adjunct. As many persons as wish to play it squat around in a circle and make certain signs with their hands. These signs are in themselves no easy matter to learn, especially when they follow one another with lightning rapidity. Every sign has its counter sign, and the person failing to give the correct counter-sign pays a certain penalty previously agreed upon. It is a never-failing specific for a fit of the blues and never leads to ill-feeling or hard words. These and many more sights are to be seen in any tea-house in Japan. The waitresses and the general guests are always polite and good-natured, and nothing that could offend the sensibility of the most fastidious is ever seen or heard in them. The singing of the dancing girls in an adjoining apartment, separated only by a thin sliding door of bamboo network covered with paper, might sound discordant and unmelodious to ears not trained to enjoy Eastern music, and which consequently cannot appreciate the beauty of the wild minor strains, which these daughters of the flowery land lustily chant forth, to the great edification and delight of the pleasure-seeking Japanese. At no merry-making or occasional of festivity

are these fair singers ever absent. May the tea house with its varied attraction and its old fashioned customs long continue to successfully resist the disintegrating influence which the advent of foreigners and foreign manners is exerting on all the customs and institutions which have made Japan a favorite spot for the curious tourist, the travelling artist, and the writer of books of travel.

Imperative Need of Intelligent Faith.

The arguments advanced against religion are more plausible now than formerly, because urged in the name and with the authority of science; the poison of error is most subtle and most potent where its existence is least suspected. It is found in books, newspapers, magazines; in works of art, history, literature, philosophy, and religion, as well as science; it is concealed in sermons and public discourses, and oft-times plays havoc in the simplest social gatherings. Everything that comes under the magic spell of science—and here I mean infidel and agnostic science—is affected by the ubiquitous poison. The whole intellectual atmosphere is polluted with it, and the only saving antidote is a strong, healthy, intelligent faith.

I lay special stress on intelligent faith, because this it is which is often, alas! so sadly lacking. If our people were better instructed in the errors and methods of the dominant teachings of the day, they would not be so exposed as they now are. Forewarned, it is said, is forearmed, but forewarning in the present crisis is not sufficient. We must arm those who look to us for help and guidance with the helmet of faith and the shield of impregnable truth. We must meet the enemy on their own ground, and assail them in their chosen coigne of vantage. We must show that the science on which the enemies of the Church are wont to rest their case is sham science, or a science misapplied; that their proofs are but assertions without foundation in fact; that their promises are fallacious, or that their conclusions are false and unwarranted.

A Famous Painter to Become a Monk.

James Tissot, the world famous French painter, is about to become a monk of La Grand Chartreuse. Tissot's remarkable series of pictures illustrating "The Life of Christ," it will be recalled, was one of the attractions at the salon in the Champs de Mars this year. This work attracted great attention, especially in the religious world, and the pictures were widely commented upon. Tissot formerly had a studio in London, and there he painted some of his finest works, among them being "Ball on Shipboard," "London Visitor," and "The Thames." He is in his fifty-eighth year.

The earliest method of spinning was by bunching a few fibers and rolling them into a thread with the hands.

A cathedral is being built in honor of St. Vincent de Paul at Tunis, on the very spot where the saint was sold as a slave in 1605.

The death is announced of the Abbe Fortin, parish priest of Chalotte, near Montargis, whose works upon astronomy made him a great authority in French agricultural districts.

Twelve Franciscan Fathers labor for the salvation of souls in Alexandria Egypt. On every Sunday and holidays they deliver six sermons to the faithful in six different languages.

FACED OUT.—None but those who have become fagged out, know what a depressed, miserable feeling it is. All strength is gone, and despondency has taken hold of the sufferers. They feel as though there is nothing to live for. There, however, is a cure—one box of Parmelee's Vegetable Pills will do wonders in restoring health and strength. Mandrake and Dandelion are two of the articles entering into the composition of Parmelee's Pills.

Archbishop Corrigan.

A writer in the *New York World* gives a graphic sketch of Most Rev. M. A. Corrigan, the distinguished metropolitan of New York, which presents some interesting views about the character and home life of this worthy son of the church. The writer is probably a non-Catholic, but he aims to be honest and fair. He writes as follows:

In speaking of himself his grace is modest.

"I am only a plain priest, not wise or clever," he will tell his visitor. "I never had the art to write a book, to originate a great work, to evolve a great idea. I am content to do my duty as a priest in my own way. I am not interesting."

His stature is above that of the general, and in bishop's robes, with alb and mitre, he appeared not only tall but almost stately.

Ring or knock at the door of the archbishop's residence on Madison avenue, some evening, and when a trim waiting maid has looked you up and down, inspected your credentials, and convinced herself that you are not on evil bent, you may be ushered through a lofty hall into a square and silent ante-room.

Should you be fortunate enough to know his grace ere long his step will be heard coming down the stairs, and presently a quiet priest, in a dark soutane edged with red, will walk towards you, holding out his hand. This you may grasp or kiss according to your faith.

In his expansive moments he settles himself in his chair, stretches himself comfortably, looks you squarely in the face and chats away.

His grace is at his best on these occasions.

He is a very firm believer in the value and the power of prayer. He swears by faith more than by works, though he works constantly.

His favorite books are first, the immortal "Imitation," and next a Spanish work, "The Spiritual Guide."

We may imagine that, if Heaven had willed that he should not be what he is—a priest—Michael Augustin Corrigan of Newark would have made an able, admirable lawyer.

In the days when he was president of Seton Hall, the famous college, his choicest comrade was the future barrister, Frederick R. Coudert.

He and Coudert would spend hours and hours together—arguing possible cases, thrashing out nice points, and drawing legal inferences.

His Grace's strength lies in his love of detail, his doggedness, his tenacity. He may not fly high, but he burrows patiently.

He takes deep interest in sodalities, in revivals, in the adjustment of old pious schemes to modern circumstances.

The Catholic summer school he lately visited at Plattsburg is an example of revivalism. His grace would tell you that the early Christians had something very like the Plattsburg lecture plan.

You could not well imagine any man more different than his grace from his great forerunners, Archbishop Hughes and Cardinal McCloskey.

Archbishop Hughes, all fire and flame and light and energy; a zealot. Cardinal McCloskey, more mild and sweet; a temporizer; a pencemaker.

From his youth upward his heart turned towards the church. He wished to be and worked to be a priest.

"Only a plain priest," who longs to work out his own quiet way.

But destiny has brought him more than this.

The Pope has made the plain priest one of his high archbishops.

In another column will be found an open letter from a prominent physician relating the facts of a cure of consumption after the patient had reached the last stages of this hitherto unconquerable disease. The statements made are really remarkable, and mark another advance in the progress of medical science. Our readers will find the article well worth a careful perusal.