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The Religion of the Home.

Three stages of ancestor-worship are to be distinguished in the general course of religious and social evolution; and each of these finds illustration in the history of Japanese society. The first stage is that which exists before the establishment of a settled civilization, when there is yet no national ruler, and when the unit of society is the great patriarchal family, with its elders or war-chiefs for lords. Under these conditions, the spirits of the family-ancestors only are worshipped;—

Each family propitiating its own
 dead, and recognizing no other
 form of worship. As the
 patriarchal families, later on,
 become grouped into tribal
 clans, there grows up the custom
 of tribal sacrifice to the spirits
 of the clan-rulers; - this cult
 being superadded to the family
 cult, and marking the second
 stage of ancestors worship.
 Finally, with the union of all
 the clans or tribes under one
 supreme head, there is developed
 the custom of propitiating the
 spirits of national rulers. This
 third form of the cult becomes
 the obligatory religion of the
 country; but it does not

replace either of the preceding cults:
 The three continue to exist together.

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Though, in the present
 state of our knowledge, the
 evolution in Japan of these
 three stages of ancestor-worship
 is but faintly traceable, we
 can divine tolerably well, from
 various records, how the per-
 manent forms of the cult
 were first developed out of
 the earlier funeral-rites.
 Between the ancient Japanese
 funeral customs and those
 of antique Europe, there was

a vast difference, — a difference indicating, as regards Japan, a far more primitive social condition.

In Greece and in Italy it was a very custom to bury the family dead within the limits of the family estate; and the laws as Roman laws of property grew out of this practice. Sometimes the dead were buried close to the house.

The author of La Cité Antique cites, among other ancient texts bearing upon the subject, an interesting invocation from the tragedy of Helen by Euripides: — "All hail! my

father's tomb! I buried thee, Proteus,
 at the place where men pass out,
 that I might often greet thee;
 and so, even as I go out and in,
 I thy son Theoclymenus call upon
 thee, father!... But in ancient
 Japan, men fled from the neigh-
 -bourhood of death. It was
 long the custom to abandon,
 either temporarily or permanently,
 the house in which a death oc-
 -curred; and we can scarcely
 suppose that, at any time, it
 became customary to bury the
 dead in proximity to the habi-
 -tation of the surviving members
 of the household. Some Japanese
 authorities declare that in the
 very earliest times there was no

burial, and that corpses were
 merely conveyed to desolate
 places, and there abandoned
 to wild creatures. Be this as
 it may, we have documentary
 evidence, of an unmistakable
 sort, concerning the early funeral-
 rites as they existed when
 the custom of burying had
 become established, - rites which
 are strange, and having nothing
 in common with the practices
 of settled civilization. There
 is reason to believe that the
 family-dwelling was at first
 permanently, not temporarily,
 abandoned to the dead; and
 in view of the fact that

The dwelling was a wooden hut of
 very simple structure, there is nothing
 improbable in the supposition. At
 all events the corpse was left
 for a certain period, called the
 period of mourning, either in
 the abandoned house where the
 death occurred, or in a shelter
 specially built for the purpose
 ; and, during the mourning
 period, offerings of food and
 drink were set before the
 dead, and ceremonies per-
 -formed without the house.
 One of these ceremonies consist-
 -ed in the recital of poems
 in praise of the dead, - which
 poems were called shinobigoto.
 There was music also of flutes
 and drums, and dancing ; and

at night a fire was kept burning before the house. After all this had been done for the fixed period of mourning — eight days, according to some authorities, fourteen according to others — the corpse was interred. It is probable that the deserted house may thereafter have become an ancestral temple, or ghost-house, — prototype of the *Shin-tō miya*.

Little

At an early time, — though when we do not know, it certainly became the custom to erect a moya, or "mourning-house" in the event of a death; and the rites were performed at the mourning-house prior to the interment. The manner of burial was

very simple: there were yet no
 tombs in the liberal meaning of
 the term, and no Tombstones.
 Only a mound was thrown up
 over the grave; and the size
 of the mound varied according
 to the rank of the dead.

The custom of deserting
 the house in which a death took
 place would accord with the
 theory of a nomadic ancestry
 for the Japanese people: it
 was a practice totally incom-
 -patible with a settled civiliz-
 -ation like that of the early
 Greeks and Romans, whose
 customs in regard to burial
 presuppose small landholdings
 in permanent occupation. But

There may have been, even in early times, some exceptions to general custom - at least among certain classes of the Japanese population. It is a curious fact that in some parts of Izumo, the district supposed to have been first occupied by the Japanese, and the most Shintoist province in the Empire, it is an old custom for farmers to bury their dead upon their own farms....

Hilli)

- At regular intervals after burial, ceremonies were performed at the graves; and food and drink were then

served to the spirits. When
 the spirit-tablet had been
 introduced from China, and
 a true domestic cult estab-
 -lished, the practice of making
 offerings at the place of burial
 was not discontinued. To sur-
 -vive to the present time, - both
 in the Shinto and the Bud-
 -dhist rite; and every spring
 an Imperial messenger presents
 at the tomb of the Emperor
 Jimmu the same offerings
 of birds and fish and seaweed,
 rice and rice-wine, which
 were made to the spirit of
 the Founder of the Empire
 twenty-five hundred years ago.

But before the period of Chinese influence the family would seem to have worshipped its dead only before the ordinary house, or at the grave; and the spirits were yet supposed to dwell especially in their tombs, with access to some mysterious subterranean world. They were supposed to need other things besides nourishment; and it was customary to place in the grave various articles for their ghostly use, — a sword, for example, in the case of a warrior; a mirror in the case of a woman; — together with certain objects especially prized during life, — such as objects of precious metal, and polished stones

or gems... At this stage of
 ancestor-worship, when the
 spirits are supposed to require
 shadowy service of a sort cor-
 responding to that exacted
 during their life-time in the
 body, we should expect to
 hear of human sacrifices as
 well as of animal sacrifices.
 At the funerals of great per-
 -sonages such sacrifices were
 common. Owing to beliefs of
 which all knowledge has been
 lost, these sacrifices assumed
 a character much more cruel
 than that of the immolations
 of the Greek Homeric epoch.

The human victims* were buried up to the neck in a circle about the grave, and thus left to perish under the beaks of birds and the teeth of wild beasts. The term applied to this form of immolation, — hitogaki, or "human hedge", — implies a considerable number of victims in each case. This custom was abolished, by the Emperor Muinin, about nine or ten hundred years ago; and the Nihongi declares that it was then an ancient custom. Being grieved by the crying of the victims interred in the funeral mound erected over

* How the horses and other animals were sacrificed, does not clearly appear.

The grave of his brother, Yamato-
 -hiko-no-mikoto, the Emperor
 is recorded I have said: - "It
 is a very painful thing to force
 those whom one has loved in
 life to follow one in death.
 - Though it be an ancient cus-
 -tom, why follow it, if it is
 bad? From this time for-
 -ward take counsel to put
 a stop to the following of the
 dead." Nomi-no-Sukuné,
 a court-noble - now apotheo-
 -sized as the patron of wisdom
 - then suggested the substitution
 of earthen images of men and
 horses for the living victims;
 and his suggestion was approved.

The hitogaki was thus abolished; but compulsory as well as voluntary following of the dead certainly continued for many hundred years after, since we find the Emperor Kōtoku issuing an edict on the subject in the year 646 A.D.:-

Dalry ²⁶⁶

Character type - least

"When a man dies, there have been cases of people sacrificing themselves by strangulation, or of strangling others by way of sacrifice, or of compelling the dead man to horse to be sacrificed, or of burying valuables in the grave in honour of the dead, or of cutting off the hair and stabbing the thighs and [in that condition] pronouncing a eulogy on the dead. Let all such old customs be entirely discontinued."

As regarded compulsory sacrifice and popular custom, this edict may have had the immediate effect desired; but voluntary human sacrifices were not definitely suppressed. With the rise of the military power there gradually came into existence another custom of junshi, or following one's lord in death, — suicide by the sword. It is said to have begun about 1333, when the last of the Hōjō regents, Takadoki, performed suicide, and a number of his retainers took their own lives by harakiri, in order to follow their master.

It may be doubted whether this
 incident really established the
 practice. But by the sixteenth
 century jūshi had certainly
 become an honoured custom among
 the samurai. Loyal retainers
 esteemed it a duty to kill them-
 selves after the death of their
 lords, in order to attend upon
 him during his ghostly journey.
 A thousand years of Buddhist
 teaching had not therefore
 sufficed to eradicate the primi-
 tive notions of the ancestral
 cult. The practice continued
 into the time of the Tokugawa
 shōgunate, when Iyēyasu
 made laws to check it. These
 laws were rigidly applied, —
 the entire family of the suicide

being held responsible for a case of junshi : yet the custom cannot be said to have become extinct until considerably after the beginning of the era of Meiji. Even during my own time there have been survivals, — some of a very touching kind : suicides performed in hope of being able to serve or aid the spirit of master or husband or parent in the invisible world. Perhaps the strangest case was that of a boy fourteen years old, who killed himself in order to wait upon the spirit of a child, his master's little son.

line

— The peculiar character of the early human sacrifices at graves, the character of the funeral rites, the abandonment of the house in which death had occurred, — all prove that the early ancestor-worship was of a decidedly primitive kind. This is suggested also by the peculiar Shin-tō horror of death as pollution: even at this day I attended a funeral, — unless the funeral be conducted after the Shin-tō ride, — is religious defilement. The ancient legends

of Izanagi's descent to the
 nether world, in search of
 his lost spouse, illustrates
 the terrible beliefs that once
 existed as to goblin-powers
 presiding over decay. Be-
 -tween the horror of death as
 corruption, and the apotheosis
 of the ghost, there is nothing
 incongruous: we must
 understand the apotheosis
 itself as a propitiation.

This earliest Way of the Gods
 was a religion of perpetual
 fear. Not ordinary homes
 only were deserted after a
 death: even the Emperors,
 during many centuries, were

would change their capital
 after the death of a prede-
 -cessor... But, gradually,
 out of the primal funeral-
 rites, a higher cult was
 evolved. The mourning-
 house, or moya, became
 transformed into the Ohin Co
 temple, which still retains
 the shape of the primitive
 hut. Then under Chinese
 influence the ancestral cult
 became established in the
 home; and Buddhism
 at a later day maintained
 this domestic cult. By
 degrees the household religion
 became a religion of tenderness

as well as of duty, and changed
 and softened the thoughts of
 men about their dead. As
 early as the eighth century,
 ancestor-worship appears to
 have developed the three
 principal forms under which
 it still exists; and there-
 -after the family-cult began
 to assume a character which
 offers many resemblances to
 the domestic religion of the
 old European civilizations.

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Hanyu

Let us now glance at the existing forms of this domestic cult, — the universal religion of Japan. In every home there is a shrine devoted to it. If the family profess only the Shintō beliefs, this shrine, or mitamaya* ("august-spirit-dwelling"), — tiny model of a Shintō temple, — is placed upon a shelf fixed against the wall of some inner chamber, at a height of about six feet from the floor. Such a shelf is called Mitama-san-no-tana, or "Shelf of the

* It is more popularly termed miya, "august house," — a name given also to ordinary Shintō temples.

august spirits." In the shrine
 are placed thin tablets of white
 wood, inscribed with the names
 of the household dead. Such
 tablets are called by a name
 signifying "spirit-substitutes"
 (mitama-shiro), or by a probably
 older name signifying "spirit-
 -dictos".... If the family
 worships its ancestors according
 to the Buddhist rite, the
 ordinary tablets are placed
 in the Buddhist household-
 shrine, or Butsudan, which
 usually occupies the upper
 shelf of an alcove in one
 of the inner apartments.

Buddhist mortuary-tablets (with some exceptions) are called ihai, - a term signifying "soul-commemoration": they are lacquered and gilded, usually having a carved lotus-flower as pedestal; and they do not, as a rule, bear the real, but only the religious and posthumous, name of the dead.

Now it is important to observe that, in either case, the mortuary tablet actually represents a miniature tombstone - which is a fact of some evolutionary interest, though the evolution itself should be Chinese rather than Japanese. The plain

grave-stones in Shinjō cemeteries resemble in form the simple wooden ghost-sticks, or spirit-sticks; while the Buddhist monuments in the old-fashioned Buddhist graveyards are shaped like the ihai, of which the form is slightly varied to indicate sex and age, which is also the case with the tomb-stone.

The number of mortuary tablets in a household shrine does not generally exceed five or six, — only grandparents and parents and the recently dead being thus represented; — but the names of remoter ancestors are inscribed upon

scrolls, which are kept in the Buendōan or the mitamaya.

Whatever be the family rite, prayers are repeated and offerings are placed before the ancestral tablets every day. The nature of the offerings and the character of the prayers depend upon the religion of the household; but the essential duties of the cult are everywhere the same. These duties are not to be neglected under any circumstances: their performance in these times is usually entrusted to the elders, or to the women of the household*.

note to preceding page.

* Not however upon any public occasion, — such as a gathering of relatives at the home for a religious anniversary: at such times the rites are performed by the head of the household.

Speaking of the ancient custom (once prevalent in every Japanese household, and still observed in Shinto homes) of making offerings to the deities of the cooking-range and of food, Dr. Ernest Satō observes: — "The rites in honour of these gods were at first performed by the head of the household; but in after-times the duty came to be delegated to the women of the family" (Ancient Japanese Rituals). We may infer that in regard to the ancestral rites likewise, the same transfer of duties occurred at an early time, for obvious reasons of convenience. When the duty devolves upon the elders of the family — grandfather and grandmother — it is usually the grandmother who attends to the offerings. In the Greek and Roman households the performance of the domestic rites appears to have been obligatory upon the head of the household; but we know that the women took part in them.

There is no long ceremony, no imperative rule about prayers, nothing solemn: the food-offerings are selected out of the family cooking; the murmured or whispered invocations are short and few. But trifling as the rites may seem, their performance must never be overlooked. Not to make the offerings is a possibility undreamed-of; so long as the family exists they must be made.

Dance To describe the details of the domestic rite would require much space, — not because they are complicated in themselves, but because they are of a sort unfamiliar to Western experience, and vary according to the sect of the family. But to consider the details will not be necessary: the important matter

is to consider the religion and its beliefs in relation to conduct and character. It should be recognized that no religion is more sincere, no faith more touching than this domestic worship, which regards the dead as continuing to form a part of the household life, and needing still the affection and the respect of their children and kindred. Originally it shows dim eyes when fear was stronger than love, — when the wish to please the ghosts of the departed must have been chiefly inspired by dread of their anger, — the cult at last developed into a religion of affection; and this it yet

remains. The belief that the dead need affection, that to neglect them is a cruelty, that their happiness depends upon duty, is a belief that has almost cast out the primitive fear of their displeasure.

They are not thought of as dead: they are believed to remain among those who loved them. Unseen they guard the home, and watch over the welfare of its inmates: they hover nightly in the glow of the shrine-lamp; and the

stirring of its flame is the motion
 of them. They dwell mostly
 within their lettered Tablets; -
 sometimes they can animate
 a Tablet, - change it into the
 substance of a human body,
 and return in that body to
 active life, in order to succour
 and console. From their
 shrines they observe and hear
 what happens in the house; they
 share the family joys and
 sorrows; they delight in
 the voices and the warmth
 of the life about them.
 They want affection; but the
 morning and the evening
 greetings of the family are
 enough to make them happy.

They require nourishment; but
 the vapour of food condescends
 them. They are exacting only
 as regards the daily fulfil-
 -ment of duty. They were the
 givers of life, the givers of wealth,
 the makers and teachers of the
 present: they represent the past
 of the race, and all its sacri-
 -fices; - whatever the living possess
 is from them. Yet how little
 do they require in return! Scarce-
 -ly more than to be thanked,
 as the founders and guardians
 of the home, in simple words
 like these: - "For aid received,
by day and by night, accept,
August Ones, our reverential
gratitude." To forget or

neglect them; & treat them with
 rude indifference, is the proof
 of an evil heart; — & cause
 them shame by ill-conduct,
 & disgrace their name by bad
 actions, is the supreme crime.

They represent the moral experience
 of the race: whosoever denies
 that experience, denies them also,
 and falls to the level of the
 beast, or below it. They repre-
 -sent the unwritten law, the
 traditions of the community, the
 duties of all to all: whosoever
 offends against these, sins
 against the dead. And, finally,
 they represent the mystery of
 the invisible: & when to
 belief, at least, they are gods.

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- It is to be remembered, of course, that the Japanese word for gods, Kami, does not imply, any more than did the old Latin term, dii-manes, ideas like those which have become associated with the modern notion of divinity. The Japanese term might be more closely rendered by some such expression as "the Superiors", "the Higher Ones"; and it was formerly applied to living rulers as well as to deities and ghosts. But it implies considerably more than the idea of a disembodied spirit; for, according to old Shintō teaching the dead became world-rulers. They were the

cause of all natural events, — of winds,
 rains, and tides, — of buddings
 and ripenings, — of growth and
 decay, — of every thing desirable
 or dreadful. They formed a
 kind of subtle element, — an
 ancestral ether, — universally
 extending and incessantly
 operating. Their powers, when
 united for any purpose, were
 irresistible; and in time of
 national peril they were invoked
en masse for aid against
 the foe... Thus, to the
 eyes of faith, behind each
 family ghost there extended
 the measureless shadowy
 power of countless kami;
 and the sense of duty to the

These are
 the spirits

ancestor was reinforced by divi-
 aces of the forces controlling
 the world, - the whole invisible
 vast. To primitive Shinto
 conception the universe was filled
 with ghosts; - & later Shinto
 conception the ghostly condition,
 was not limited by place or
 time, even in the case of indi-
 vidual spirits. "Although,"
 wrote Hirata, "the home of
 the spirits is in the Spirit-house,
 they are equally present wherever
 they are worshipped, - being
 gods, and therefore ubiquitous."

3/10 The Buddhist dead
 are not called gods, but
 Buddhas (Hotoké), - which term,
 of course, expresses a pious

Ward

hope, rather than a faith. The belief is that they are only on their way to some higher state of existence; and they should not be invoked or worshipped after the manner of the Shinto gods: prayers should be said for them, not, as a rule, to them.* But the vast majority of Japanese Buddhists are also followers of Shinto; and the two faiths, though seemingly incongruous, have long been reconciled in the popular mind. The Buddhist doctrine has therefore modified the ideas attaching to the cult much less deeply than might be supposed.

*—Certain Buddhist rituals prove exceptions to this teaching.

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In all patriarchal societies with a settled civilization, there is evolved, out of the worship of ancestors, a Religion of Filial Piety. Filial piety still remains the supreme virtue among civilized peoples possessing an ancestral cult... By filial piety must not be understood, however, what is commonly signified by the English term, — the devotion of children to parents. We must understand the word "piety" rather in its classic meaning, as the pietas of the early Romans, —

that is to say, as the religious sense
 of household duty. Reverence for
 the dead, as well as the sentiment
 of duty towards the living; the
 affection of children to parents,
 and the affection of parents to
 children; the mutual duties
 of husband and wife; the
 duties likewise of son-in-law
 and daughter-in-law to the
 family as a body; the
 duties of servant to master,
 and of master to dependent,
 — all these were included
 under the term. The family
 itself was a religion; the
 ancestral home a temple.
 And so we find the family
 and the home to be in Japan,

even at the present day. Filial
 piety, in Japan does not mean
 only the duty of children to parents
 and grand-parents: it means
 still more the cult of the ancestors,
 reverential service to the dead,
 the gratitude of the present
 to the past, and the conduct
 of the individual in relation
 to the entire household. Hirata
 therefore declared that all virtues
 derived from the worship of
 ancestors; and his words,
 as translated by Sir Ernest
Daito, deserve particular at-
 -tention: -

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8 minutes 15 per second

— "It is the duty of a subject
 to be diligent in worshipping
 his ancestors, whose ministers
 he should consider himself
 to be. The custom of
 adoption arose from the
 natural desire of having
 some one to perform sacrifices
 ; and this desire ought not
 to be rendered of no avail
 by neglect. Devotion to
 the memory of ancestors is
 the main spring of all
 virtues. No one who dis-
 -charges his duty to them
 will ever be disrespectful
 to the gods or to his living
 parents. Such a man also
 will be faithful to his
 prince, loyal to his friends,

Smaller
type
hand

and kind as gentle to his wife and children. For the essence of this devotion is indeed filial piety."

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From the sociologist's point of view, Hira-tō is right: it is unquestionably true that the whole system of Far-Eastern ethics derives from the religion of the household. Out of that cult have been evolved all ideas of duty to the living as well as to the dead, — the sentiment of affection, the sentiment of loyalty, the spirit of self-sacrifice, and the spirit of patriotism. What filial piety signifies as a religious force can best be imagined from the fact that you can buy life in the East, — that it has its price in the market. This religion

is the religion of China, and of countries adjacent; and life is for sale in China. It was the filial piety of China that rendered possible the completion of the Panama railroad, where to strike the soil was to liberate death, — where the land devoured labourers by the thousands, until white and black labour could no more be procured in quantity sufficient for the work. || But labour could be obtained from China — any amount of labour — at the cost of life; and the cost was paid; and multitudes of men came from the East to toil and die, in order that the price of their lives might

be sent to their families. . . I have
 no doubt that, were the sacrifice
 imperatively demanded, life could
 be as readily bought in Japan, -
 though not, perhaps, so cheaply
 because of the difference in economic
 conditions. Where this religion
 prevails, the individual is ready
 to give his life, in a majority
 of cases, for the family, the
 home, the ancestors. And
 the filial piety impelling such
 sacrifice becomes, by extension,
 the loyalty that will sacrifice
 even the family itself for the
 sake of the lord, - or, by yet
 further extension, the loyalty
 that prays, like Kusunoki
 Masashige, for seven successive

lives to lay down on behalf of the Sovereign. Out of filial piety indeed has been developed the whole moral power that protects the state, - the power also that has seldom failed to impose the respectful restraints upon official despotism whenever that despotism grew dangerous to the common weal.

Probably the filial piety that centres about the domestic altar of the ancient West differed in little from that which yet rules the most eastern East. But we miss in Japan the Aryan hearth, the family altar with its perpetual fire. The Japanese

home-religion represents, apparently, a much earlier stage of the cult than that which existed within historic time among the Greeks and Romans. The home-land in Japan never became a stable institution like the Greek or the Roman home; - the custom of burying the family dead upon the family estate never became general; - the dwelling itself never assumed a substantial and lasting character. It could not be literally said of the Japanese warrior, as of the Roman, that he fought pro aris et focis. There was neither altar nor sacred fire:

The place of these was taken by
the spirit-shelf or shrine, with
its tiny lamp, kindled afresh
each evening; and, in early
times, there were no Japanese
images of divinities. For Lares
and Penates there were only
the mortuary-tablets of the
ancestors, and certain little
tablets bearing names of other
gods - tutelary gods... The
presence of these frail wooden
objects still makes the home;
and they may be, of course,
transported anywhere.

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Wind

To apprehend the full meaning of ancestor-worship as a family religion, a living faith, is now difficult for the Western mind. We are able to imagine only in the vaguest way how our Asian forefathers felt and thought about their dead. But this much at least we can understand, — that in the modern Japanese, just as in the ancient Greek or Roman household, each member of the family supposes himself or herself, under perpetual, ghostly surveillance. Spirit-eyes are watching every act; spirit-ears are listening to every

word. Thoughts too, not less than deeds, are visible to the gaze of the dead: the heart must be pure, the mind must be under control, within the presence of the spirits. Probably the influence of such beliefs, unintercepted, exerted upon conduct during thousands of years, did much to form the charming side of Japanese character. Yet there is nothing stern or solemn in this home-religion today, - nothing of that rigid and unvarying discipline supposed by Fustel de Coulanges to have ^{especially} characterized the Roman cult.

It is a religion rather of gratitude and tenderness; the dead being served by the household as if they were actually present in the body... I fancy that if we were able to enter for a moment into the vanished life of some old Greek city, we should find the domestic religion there not less cheerful than the Japanese home-cult remains today. I imagine that Greek children, three thousand years ago, must have watched, like the Japanese children of today, for a chance to steal some of the good things offered to the ghosts of

The ancestors ; - and I fancy that Greek parents must have chidden quite as gently as Japanese parents chide in this era of Meiji, - mingling reproof with instruction, and hinting of weird possibilities *.

* Food presented to the dead may afterwards be eaten by the elders of the household, or given to pilgrims; but it is said that if children eat of it, they will grow up with feeble memories, and incapable of becoming scholars.