

TEMPLES OF THE WORLD. PART ONE.

The Temple is the centre of a Madrian town or village - not only physically, but symbolically. All the important events in the life of the people occur there. There they are married; there they have their children offered and see them being taught. Most important of all, it is there that their children are initiated, and so are able to receive the Sacraments; no longer children but adults.

From this outline, it can be seen that a Temple is not just a place where all the good Madrians go once a week to a Rite performed by the Priestess. Let us consider what a Temple was like 12,000 years ago.

The Temple was perhaps a large granite building, probably looking oblong from the outside. Its size would dominate the town. All round the front and the sides there would be a large paved area where there would be a market 2 or 3 times a week. There stallholders would haggle with the maids and daughters that householders had sent to buy fruit, food or pots. Some old Lady of the Households could perhaps be seen, as they haggled with a carpenter-maid over the price that she was going to charge them for their new wood panel carving for the window.

You might see a maid carrying a basket, and notice that people gave way to her to let her past, and revered her with respect. She might stop at the cloth stall, pick up some silk, and pay the price that the stall-holder first asked. From that you would know that the maid was on the errand of the Temple, and if you looked at the ring on her hand you would know that she was in fact a Lady of the Temple. That is a position

which commands much authority, and the stall-holder would be honoured that she had graced her stall, and would tell her so.

As you go into the Temple, you curtsy in the direction of the High Altar. Having done this, you idly cast your eyes around, and spot with delight your close friend Alcina busily chatting to Donna Chrysothemis. Donna Chrysothemis is only just married, and is very pleased with her title. You walk up to them. You may not greet them while they are talking - it is rude, but you hope to catch their eye, and you do so. They greet you warmly, and you make a small reverence to Donna Chrysothemis. After all, she is a member of your age-group and someone of whom you are very fond. You talk with them a while of the weather, and the crop and who is studying which new craft. You also tease Donna Chrysothemis about being married, and then you, rather shockingly, remind her of the young man who wanted her to marry him. This was rather amusing, as he had sent her poetry. He could not, of course, give it to her, or say directly who it was to and who it was from, for that would be immodest, but as usual there were sufficient clues. Golden Hair Webster could only refer to Donna Chrysothemis, who was the only maid with golden hair to have the craft of weaving, and the Blue Shepherd, although a little more puzzling, was decided finally to be Frickacles, who was the only shepherd who not only wore blue, as three of them did, but had blue eyes to match. The poem had been delivered in the usual manner; pinned to the tree in the courtyard of the house, from whence it had been taken to the Lady of the Household, who had merely smiled and given it to the children (meaning every one) to work out

who it applied to. Donna Chrysothemis had been annoyed and embarrassed, as a maid usually was, but the others had said that she should not be too hard on him; after all, he was a man, and in a way it was quite sweet.

Donna Chrysothemis tries to look disapprovingly at you, but cannot contain the laughter that the reminder causes. The three of you recover, and then walk down the side of the Temple. As you pass one of the groups of people who are seated on the floor on mats, with the Ranya of the group seated in a large chair, you hear the words that you heard only this morning, but this time they are not directed at you, but by a different Ranya at a different child. The maid who is standing disconsolately, with hanging head is a maid of about 17. The Ranya, you notice, has seen you, and so the three of you curtsy and are greeted with a sign signifying a blessing. As you walk on, you hear her say, "Well, Maia, my child, I do not wish for a student who does not pay attention to the words of her Ranya. So it seems then that you must speak with Mistress Sally.* In not paying attention to my words, you are not only being disrespectful to me, but to the whole line of Ranyas that stretch back in time, and upwards to Heaven. For I teach you now as a representative of the Holy line of Ranyas, not as myself. I have had to discipline

*Mistress Sally is the usual familiar term used to describe any kind of willow branch used to keep discipline, from the little switch which stings intensely and stops in a minute, to the great Rod which is used only by a Priestess. A Sally is a bunch of willow twigs tied together.

you once on this subject already this week. Obviously you have not listened to Mistress Sally either. Well, you will speak again with her now. Fetch me the cane- no, I will take the Sally. Now, come over my knee."

You feel very sorry for her, but you know that she deserves it - just as you had that morning. All the other children of the class are very ashamed, but they are not so afraid of pain as the modern age. A little discipline, they know, is good, and although the maid ~~is~~ just about to be spanked with a Sally is being punished in a manner in which children often are, despite the fact that the maid is to marry in the summer, they know that for a childish offence she deserves it.

As you walk on, you hear her return, completely mortified, to her place, and you know that within a few minutes her shame will have disappeared and she will be happy again..

You pass a few more teaching groups; one being taught Tapestry, another drawing. One of the Ancillas is teaching some pupils a sacred poem. You curtsy to all of them as you pass. A movement and sound at the very back of the Temple catches your eye, and you see that the town dance-troupe is practising a Ritual dance-drama to perfect a movement, under the guidance of a Priestess, who herself has often taken the role of a questing soul, or Hera. This time, she is directing the Troupe, but not acting as well. Her Ancilla will play the music for them. Of course, they usually practise in secret, but they have only just started, so nobody will mind seeing them. When the moves are put together, they will only let the Priestess and her Ancilla see them try. Of course, it is no secret what the play is for. It has to be to celebrate Theia's marriage to

Anchises. They will perform in the same ring that the wedding will take place in afterwards. The ring will be made of flowers piled high, and will be just in front of the Rite of Sacrifice Altar. Then there will be games and singing, followed by a feast. Best of all, perhaps, that day will be a holiday for everyone every year until one of them dies. Theia and Anchises are not getting married on one of the specially propitious marriage days; that is very unusual, and there is a good reason. It is thought that her mother will not live until the next usual day, so the marriage is taking place immediately. You hope that her mother will go to Avala, happy to see her daughter married, but you are also not too unhappy at the thought of an extra days' holiday a year. As most marriages take place on a limited number of days, those days are holidays in honour of all the couples who were married then.

You pass through the gated archways into the Grove proper, which is about half the size of the Grove that is used for all kinds of things. This part, which is nearest to the High Altar, is reserved for devotions and quietness only. Many shrines, large and small, lead off behind the pillars to the sides.

You are approaching the Caverna wall, and as you come up to the Great Caverna Gates, the three of you make a deep curtsy to the High Altar. You look into the Caverna through the silver filligree Gates, and see the Priestess feeding the Sacred Flame. If there is a college of Priestesses attached to a Temple, the Flame will be guarded day and night, by Priestesses taking turns. Otherwise, it is fed regularly, and ceremoniously checked during the seven daily Offices, although the Selene Office

(Midnight Invocation) will not always be said. Either way, it must never be allowed to go out. It is put out every year on the day of the Passion, and relit with great jubilation during the Sacrement on Resurrection dawn. You can see the Lady of the Temple moving around, preparing some altarcloths. You all say a Silver Star, and make a deep curtsey to the High Altar. As you move away from the Great Gates, you see the elder Priestess of the two who serve the Temple.

She is sitting in the Confession chair, which is situated between one corner of the caverna and

the last
pillar of
the row.

You curtsey
to her, and
she raises
her hand
in blessing.

You wait
until she
speaks
to you,
greeting
you kindly,
and you go
on to ask
her how
the
rehearsal
with the
dancers
went. She
smiles
and
replies
with a
laugh, that

they should be more circumspect than to practice in the Temple.

She mentions that it has been a little while since you confessed, and motioning to your friends to walk on, she tells you to kneel. Out come your sins from their hiding places! You have been rude to your father, not paid attention to your Ranya, and committed quite a few minor sins. You feel your heart beat loudly. Although you have already been beaten quite hard for the first two sins, it would hardly be surprising if the Priestess beat you as well. Ah, but she has decided not to, that you would benefit from a stiff lecture in her study tonight when everyone is telling stories by the fire, and you are to make three full Rosaries within the next week. She purifies you, and you kneel on one knee and kiss her hand, and run off to catch up with your friends. This earns you a stiff rebuke and a warning from one of the Outer Temple Maids. If it happens again she will tell the Priestess and your mother will whip you when she knows. There are very few things you may not do in a Temple that you may do elsewhere; one of them is buying and selling, and another is running races.

The Outer Temple Maid also has another message - the Temple will be shut tonight from 7 of the clock to 9 of the clock, so the Priestess may make Magic in the Temple. Magic is her path, or at least one of them, and not merely to produce results. When a Priestess studies Magic, her soul moves among high spheres on her path to Our Lady. It is almost time to be home, to take some tea and cake with your mother, so the three of you move toward the big door that will be locked for two hours tonight. At the door, you turn round and make a deep reverence to the High Altar, and then move into the

courtyard. As soon as you pass the prayer wheel you give it a turn, and say "Hail Inanna!" Your friends do the same, and then you walk along the path that leads to your home, watching the golden sunlight play upon the cupolas that crown the roof of the Temple, thanking Her for having made so many beautiful things, such as Temples, the sun, and friends.