

In Memoriam
Fr. Johannes B. Kraus, S. J., 1892-1946
Founder and Editor-in-chief of Monumenta Nipponica

After an interruption of eight years *MONUMENTA NIPPONICA* with this number resumes its rôle as a learned review.

Whilst it is exceedingly gratifying to the present editors to make this announcement, it is with keen regret though with feelings of deep piety that they make known to subscribers and friends the sudden and premature death on March 3, 1946 of Fr. Johannes Kraus, S. J., founder and for many years editor-in-chief of our review. He died of heart failure whilst motoring back to Tôkyô from Sengokuhara near Lake Hakone.

Fr. Kraus was born at Königsfeld near Bamberg (Bavaria). After his arts studies he entered the religious order known as the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) and went through the traditional training of the Society: two years noviciate (in Austria), followed by a three years' course of philosophy (in the Netherlands). These studies were however interrupted by the first World War during which he served his country as a Red Cross aid. 1920-1925 he studied theology in the Netherlands and England and was ordained priest in 1923. The next four years, 1925-1929, he took up special studies in economics and political science.

At the conclusion of these studies he held three academic degrees: the doctorate in philosophy (Rome), a Bachelor's degree in economics and the doctorate in political science (Cologne). Thus qualified he was appointed to the chair of political economy at Sophia University, Tôkyô, where for 15 years he taught with great success until his death in 1946.

When in 1912 young Kraus entered the Society of Jesus, it was with the idea of going to Japan, and this idea was the driving power behind all his work during the 17 years of unremitting preparation for his life-work. His ambition was to help bridging over the gulf between Western and Eastern culture, and the 15 years he was allowed to devote himself to the realisation of this lofty purpose, all too short though they were, were crowned with a fair measure of success.

This was greatly due to the international education he had received in Germany, Austria, the Netherlands, England, Scotland and Ireland. Three years he spent in France, and on his way to Japan he made

shorter stays in Egypt, Palestine and India. Once in Japan, he traveled extensively from Kyūshū to Hokkaidō, and visited Korea, Manchuria and the Philippines. In 1936 he spent eight months travelling all over Europe in search of collaborators for the Catholic Encyclopedia in Japanese of which he had been appointed editor-in-chief under the patronage of Pope Pius XI. Some 200 savants answered his appeal, and thus the work—in four volumes—could be accomplished within the following ten years. However, owing to the war, Fr. Kraus lived only to see two volumes actually published. Of the remaining two he left the assembled manuscripts for his successors to get ready for, and see through, the press.

The tour of Europe proved fruitful yet in another way: the warm reception he met with in interested quarters decisively helped him to mature and soon realise his long cherished plan of a learned international review for things Japanese, entirely free and independent of any political, social or religious partisanship. Thus *MONUMENTA NIPPONICA* first saw the light of day. The title itself was pregnant with meaning: *Monumenta* was to guarantee the serious historical background; *Nipponica*, not *Japonica*, to indicate an open mind for modern ideas; and a Latin title to bring out the international character of the review.

How well he has succeeded, is amply proved by the six volumes he edited between 1938 and 1943 under the most difficult political and economic conditions. The volume for 1944, although ready for the press, could not appear on account of the stringent wartime regime that barred any further publication of the kind.

A by-product of *MONUMENTA NIPPONICA* were monographs dealing with cultural aspects of Japan. For these Fr. Kraus had very far reaching plans. But here too the economic conditions proved a great handicap. Nevertheless in four years he succeeded in publishing eight monographs which were very favorably received and reviewed by the scientific world. Two other monographs and several manuscripts of outstanding merit had *ad interim* to be shelved for the reasons mentioned above. *Nobunaga und das Christentum* by Johannes Laures, S. J., was the first post-war monograph to appear, soon to be followed by Valignano's *Sumario de las cosas de Japón* (edited by José Luis Alvarez).

A remarkable feature of Fr. Kraus' personality was the ease with which he established and maintained contacts with all sorts of persons in the intellectually oriented world around him. And this notwithstanding the fact that his knowledge of Japanese remained rather lim-

ited. This is all the more surprising as he handled with ease four languages: besides German he had English, French and Latin. Greek was no difficulty to him, and Hebrew he knew enough for ordinary purposes. That he could not read Japanese was always a sore point with him, but his colloquial Japanese together with the charm of his personality enabled him to set on foot and keep going such associations as the Plato Society and the Hegel Society.

His literary output was four books and twenty lengthy articles in various European reviews. They mostly dealt with questions of political science. Evidently writing was none of his personal ambitions. Not even in *MONUMENTA NIPPONICA* is there a single essay from the pen of the chief editor. His forte was rather the organizer's gift to bring people together and inspire them to work for a great cause.

The new editors of *MONUMENTA NIPPONICA* are convinced that they can do no better than keep up the lofty ideal of the founder. Then the review will remain a *monumentum aere perennius* in his memory.