

# THE RESTITUTION OF THE BRIDE

AND OTHER STORIES FROM THE CHINESE

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"ONE OLD MAN.....STILL FISHES THROUGH THE SNOW."

**THE RESTITUTION OF THE BRIDE**  
**AND OTHER STORIES FROM THE CHINESE**

TRANSLATED

BY

**E. BUTTS HOWELL**

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY  
A NATIVE ARTIST

**NEW YORK**  
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# CONTENTS

[TRANSLATOR'S NOTE](#)

[THE RESTITUTION OF THE BRIDE](#)

[THE INFANT COURTIER](#)

[THE LUCK OF JO-HSU](#)

[THE COURTESAN](#)

[THE LUCKLESS GRADUATE](#)

[THE SACRIFICE OF YANG CHIAO-AI](#)

# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

ONE OLD MAN WITHIN HIS TINY BOAT, . . . STILL FISHES THROUGH THE SNOW ----- *Frontispiece*

HE PLUNGED OVERBOARD AND WADED ASHORE ---- facing p. 18

HE BENT HIS HEAD ---- facing p. 26

PULLED IT DOWN HILL . --- facing p. 106

THE HALL OF THE ADVENT OF JEWELS --- facing p. 22

## **TRANSLATOR'S NOTE**

## TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

The interest apparently aroused by my previous book of translations \* from the well-known Chinese collection of stories, the "Cin Ku Ch'i Kuan," has encouraged Mr Werner Laurie to suggest to me that I should let him have for publication a further selection of translations from the same source.

with this suggestion I now comply, in the hope that the six tales herein presented will be found of no less interest than their predecessors.

The stories included in my previous book were Nos. 20, 19, 6, 3, and 27.

Of the six tales of the present volume, numbered 4, 36, 9, 5, 22, and 12, no translation in English has ever appeared except Dr Birch's version of Nos. 5 and 12, published about fifty years ago. No. 36 has been translated into Russian, Nos. 9 and 4 into French, and No. 5 into German. I cannot find that any translation of No. 22 has ever before appeared.

As regarded the date of first publication of the "Chin Ku Ch'i Kuan," Professor Paul Pelliot in an interesting article based upon my former book and published in the "T'oung Pao" (Paris, Vol. XXIV, No. 1, 1925/6) has



\* *"The Inconstancy of Madam Chuang, and Other Stories from the Chinese" : T. Werner Laurie Ltd., London, 1925. 10/6.*

shown from sources of information now hardly available in China---where public libraries are unknown---that the collection first appeared between the years 1632 and 1644, and that the stories were the work of at least two scholars whose identity is obscure.

In compiling the notes included in the present volume, I have been greatly helped by Professor Giles' "Chinese Biographical Dictionary" and by various historical works, notably Macgowan's "Imperial History of China" and Li Ung Bing's "Outlines of Chinese History." I have also received from various friends, Chinese and European, valuable assistance which I take this opportunity of acknowledging.



# **THE RESTITUTION OF THE BRIDE**

## THE RESTITUTION OF THE BRIDE

### I

IN the days of the T'ang Dynasty, there lived a man named P'ei Tu. When he was young he suffered from great poverty, not having yet met with any of his subsequent good luck; and a fortune-teller once informed him that the fact that he had lines on his face slanting from his nostrils down to the corners of his mouth indicated that he would meet his death from starvation.

Some time after this he wandered off into the country and visited the Temple of Fragrant Hills, where he found, hanging on the railings of the pavilion built round the temple well, three jewelled belts. P'ei Tu guessed that these belts must probably have been left there by some one who had forgotten them; "How can I, then," he reflected, "injure another for my own advantage, and at the same time lose my own self-respect?" So, taking them into his custody, he sat down and waited.

After some moments a maiden approached, weeping and lamenting bitterly. "My father is in goal," she cried, "and I borrowed three jewelled belts to redeem him from his punishment. When I came here to wash my hands before burning incense in the temple, I inad-

[Page 8]

vertently left them hanging on these railings. If anyone has taken them, may he have pity upon me and return them, so that I may save my father's life!"

P'ei Tu took the belts and handed them over at once to the girl, who thanked him gratefully and then hurried away. Some days afterwards he again met the fortuneteller, who started when he saw him. "Your aspect, sir, has altogether changed," he said. "Did I not predict for you a death from starvation? You must lately have done some meritorious act in an unostentatious manner."

P'ei Tu could not remember anything of the kind, and so he replied that he had done no meritorious act.

"Reflect again, sir," said the fortune-teller. "Surely, a life saved from water or flames, or some such act ... ?"

And then P'ei Tu bethought himself of the three jewelled belts and related the circumstances to the other, who said that that was the act of great merit of which he had spoken. "In later days," he said earnestly, "your happiness, wealth, and prosperity, sir, will be complete! Allow me to congratulate

you in advance!"

And, sure enough, later on, P'ei Tu really did achieve great promotion and success. He became a Grand Secretary and lived to the age of eighty or ninety.

Now, it is common talk that Pei, the Duke of Chin, was a rich and honourable man of constant and unassuming virtue. But it is not generally known that after he had attained to his high position his virtuous deeds were actually greater than before.

Listen now to the old story of how he, of his clemency,

[Page 9]

sent back the Betrothed Bride---a charitable act that has very seldom been equalled.

## II

In the thirteenth year of the period Yuan Ho of the T'ang Dynasty, [1] P'ei Tu led the Imperial troops in a successful attempt to subdue the rebel Wu Yuan-chi of Huai Hsi. He then returned to Court and was appointed Grand Secretary and made Duke of Chin. Soon afterwards the heads of two feudal States which had long been obstinate in rebellion became so terrified of his mighty reputation that they placed their territories at his feet in order to absolve their crimes.

Likewise the Commander-in-chief of the State of Heng Chi expressed his readiness to hand over to him the two districts of Te and Li; and the Commander-in-chief of Tzu Ching also handed over to him the three districts of I, Mi and Hai.

The Emperor, thus seeing that the rebels on his frontiers were all becoming subdued and that all was peace upon earth, repaired the Hall of the Virtue of the Dragon, and cleaned out the adjoining lake known as the Pool of the Dragon's Head. He also built the Hall of the Advent of Heaven's Light, on a magnificent scale with massive timbers and walls.

About this time the Emperor heard that a Taoist priest named Liu Pi had compounded the Elixir of Life, [2]

[Page 10]

but P'ei Tu persuaded him to have no dealings with this man.

Another matter in which he demonstrated his superiority was as follows. There were then two traitorous Ministers called Huang-Fu Pu, who controlled the Treasury, and Cheng I, who was in charge of the Administration of Salt and Mines, and these men were at this time specially addicted to

oppressing and extorting money from the people. They called the resulting funds "a surplus," which they expended for trivial ends solely to flatter the Emperor. These two traitors both held at the same time the office of President of the Grand Council.

P'ei Tu, wishing to abstain from all intercourse with these people, petitioned to be allowed to resign office, but to this the Emperor would not agree. Indeed he accused P'ei Tu of forming secret associations with his own friends, and hinted that he was gradually becoming an object of suspicion. P'ei Tu then declared that the honours that he had already received were too great for him and said that he feared that he would commit some folly in administration. But still he was not allowed to resign.

So to divert suspicion he never spoke of the affairs of the nation, and pretended that he had taken to vicious courses in order to brighten his declining years. Thus it came to pass that the officials of every district kept sending him singers and dancers innumerable, of both sexes, although it should be stated that P'ei Tu never, during his career, demanded presents from anyone at all. But

[Page 11]

flatterers and sycophants wished to curry favour with him and vast sums of money were spent in this manner. Young people in large numbers were frequently kidnapped to this end and after being richly clothed were sent to P'ei Tu with the story that they were either slaves or concubines from the senders' own households.

P'ei Tu never actually refused these attentions, but though he received the presents he took no interest in them at all.

Now it happened that at this period there lived, in the Wan Ch'uan district of the Chin State, a certain man named T'ang Pi. He had graduated as a Chu-jen [\[1\]](#) and had held office as Magistrate at Lung Ch'uan Hsien in the Kua Chou prefecture, and also at Hui Chi in the Yo Chou prefecture.

While he had been at home he had become betrothed to Hsiao-ngo, the daughter of a gentleman of his district named Huang. But as she was at the time too young for marriage, it had been agreed that the wedding should be postponed till she should be of riper years. T'ang Pi had, however, served two terms of office in the south without returning home, so the ceremony had perforce to be postponed still longer, it being impossible for the two to meet.

At the time of our story Hsiao-ngo was just eighteen years of age, and her face was like a beautiful flower, her form as delicate as white jade. She could, furthermore, play upon all manner of musical instruments, such as the flute and the guitar, with all the ability of an expert.

[Page 12]

Now the Taotai of Chin Chou, in order to please and flatter P'ei Tu, the Duke of Chin, had selected a bevy of damsels of surpassing loveliness. Five had he chosen already, and he lacked only one more to be their leader, for it was necessary that she should be more attractive than any of the others.

Hsiao-ngo's reputation for beauty was reported to him, but he knew that the daughter of one of the gentry was not easily acquired. He nevertheless got together 300,000 cash and handed this sum over to his subordinate, the magistrate of Wan Ch'uan, with orders to see what he could do in the matter. The latter was exceedingly anxious to please his chief, so he sent messengers to Mr Huang's house to explain what was wanted. Mr Huang represented, however, that his daughter was already affianced and that therefore no such proposals could be entertained. The magistrate tried over and over again to move him, but to no avail.

Just at that time the festival of Clear Brightness [1] came round and Mr Huang went out to worship at his family burial-ground, leaving Hsiao-ngo at home by herself. The magistrate heard of this, and, going in person to Mr Huang's house, he laid forcible hands on her and had her carried off in a sedan chair, sending two old women to look after her. He despatched her without a moment's delay to the Taotai's yamen at Chin Chou, where she was handed over, and before he left Mr Huang's house he threw down the 300,000 cash on the floor as the price of the maiden.

[Page 13]

By and by Air Huang returned, and, when he found that his daughter had been abducted by the magistrate, he hurried off to the town where he heard that she had been sent on to the prefectural capital. He thereupon made his way there without delay and laid his case before the Taotai with prayers and lamentations.

"Your daughter's beauty and accomplishments," said the official, "are most unusual. She has already been sent to the Prime Minister's palace, and he is certain to become very much devoted to her. That is surely better than making her into a mere household drudge, the wife of an ordinary man. Besides, you have already pocketed my 600,000 cash. Why do you not hand over the money to your son-in-law that was to have been, and tell him to use it in getting some other maiden to be his wife?"

"The magistrate came into my house," answered Mr Huang, "and threw the money down upon the floor. I did not pocket it. Moreover it was 300,000 cash and not 600,000; and I have brought the money back with me. All I want is my daughter and not your money."

The Taotai then became angry and struck the table with his hand. "You have received the price for your daughter," he cried, "and you are trying to cheat me of 300,000 cash. You have come here expressly to create a disturbance. What sort of behaviour is this? Your daughter, I tell you, has been sent to the metropolis, to the Prime Minister's palace, and if you want her back you had better go there for her. I see no purpose in your continued presence in this place." Mr Huang was alarmed at the Taotai's rage and after stammering forth

[Page 14]

a few words of repudiation of the other's accusation he did not venture to say anything further, so, with the tears running down his face, he made his way out of the yamen. He stayed a few days in the city to try and get some news of his daughter but could get no tidings at all, so he went home with a heavy heart.

The Taotai on the other hand had got together a considerable sum of money and purchased some magnificent garments resplendent with jewels and clusters of pearls, and the six damsels were dressed therein and looked like fairies from paradise. He bought instruments of music for them, and every day they practised together in his yamen. When the birthday of the Duke of Chin was at hand, the damsels were sent to him with the congratulations and compliments of the Taotai.

The latter had thus spent a considerable sum of money and had put himself to great pains, to give the Duke a rare pleasure. But in the Duke's palace there was already a surfeit of singers and dancers, for beautiful damsels were sent to him from every direction and no one knew how many there were already. These six ladies that had been sent from Chin Chou therefore passed their time pleasantly enough in the palace, but the Duke himself was actually not aware of their existence. It is so often the case that flatterers spend their money in vain, for all are alike.

[Page 15]

### III

And now let us turn to T'ang Pi, who, his term of office having expired, was returning home, and was due for promotion.

His thoughts lay constantly with Hsiao-ngo, who had long since grown up, and he was most anxious to return and marry her, for, as he thought, he could go and report himself at the metropolis after the ceremony.

So, packing up his official and private belongings, he started off and at length arrived at his home in Wan Ch'uan. On the day following his arrival he went to call on his intended father-in-law, Mr Huang. The latter guessed that he had come to make arrangements about the wedding and did not wait for him to speak but at once told him all about the abduction of his daughter from first to last, omitting no detail.

T'ang Pi heard him out and then stared at him in dismay, his mouth wide open with astonishment. At last he gnashed his teeth and spoke with the utmost bitterness.

"Even the most devout lover," he declared passionately, "if he holds an official position, is uncertain of his movements and cannot protect his lady. Of what further use is life to me?"

"My worthy son-in-law," replied Mr Huang in an endeavour to soothe him, "you are young yet and of great talent. You will not fail to find a very eligible bride elsewhere. My daughter has not had the good

[Page 16]

luck to become your wife, and has met with this misfortune it is true, but I beseech you not to take it too much to heart or you will do damage to your future career!"

But T'ang Pi was so angry that he could scarcely breathe, and was for going off at once to try conclusions with the Taotai and the magistrate, but Mr. Huang besought him again.

"The girl is gone, I fear me," he said, "and no good will come of making further trouble. Moreover I hear that Grand Secretary P'ei has got her. There is no one above him but the Emperor; and if you attempt to thwart him in his heart's desire I fear that it will react most unfavourably on your official career, my worthy son-in-law." And with these words he had the 300,000 cash that the magistrate had given him carried in and laid before T'ang Pi, saying: "This money might help you to find a bride. The little piece of carved jade that you gave to my daughter as a betrothal present, she is, I fear, still wearing on her person, and that I cannot return to you.

"But above all, my worthy son-in-law," he went on, "you must not allow the loss of my daughter to divert your thoughts from more important matters."

"I am now thirty years of age," returned T'ang Pi, with two streams of tears running down his face, "and have lost this bride of mine. There is an end to all my prospects of matrimony, and I have ruined my whole life to gain the miserable advantage of holding a paltry official position. I have no desire for any future promo-

[Page 17]

tion." And having said these words, he gave way to his great emotion and he and Mr Huang, who was also greatly moved, wept together for a great while.

T'ang Pi, however, could not find it in his heart to take the money that he had been offered, and went home without it. Next day Mr Huang went to T'ang Pi's house and exhorted him again to go at once to the metropolis and get his orders for his next official post, and then by degrees he might bring himself to take further steps to find a wife.

The younger man at first refused to be guided by this counsel, but at last, after having been exhorted continuously for several days, he could no longer hold out, for he was beginning to believe that he would not be able to bear continually moping at home, and that after all he had better go to Ch'ang An and obtain an audience, which might have the effect of dispelling his melancholy.

So he forced himself to choose a lucky day, and, after hiring a boat, he set forth. And Mr Huang hid the 300,000 cash on board and told T'ang Pi's servants secretly that they were not to inform their master until they were two days sped on their journey and that it was for use in the capital to help him to find something handsome.

When the money was shown to T'ang Pi he had no words to express his gratitude, and he told his servants that it was the price for Mr Huang's daughter and that he himself could not touch a single cash.

After a few days they arrived at Ch'ang An and the

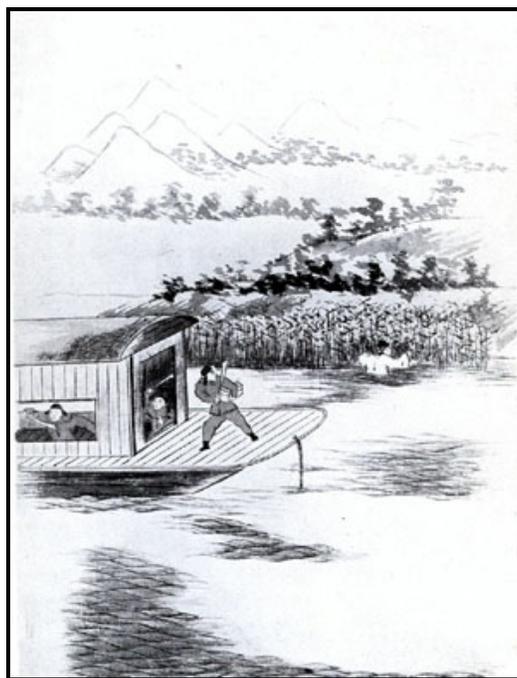
luggage was carried ashore and taken to an inn quite close to the palace of Grand Secretary P'ei. And early and late Tang Pi walked up and down in front of the palace in the hope of being able to get some tidings of Hsiao-ngo.

Next morning he went to the Board of Civil Office to register his name and hand in his credentials for scrutiny. On his return to the inn he had his dinner and then went back to keep his vigil in front of the palace. And the days seemed all too short, for he walked up and down in front of the palace every day and all day for a month or more, but he never got a whisper of news.

He watched the crowds of officials going in and coming out like ants; but how could he go up and ask any one of them a question on so delicate and complicated a matter?

At last the official orders were published and T'ang Pi found that he had been appointed a sub-prefect at Hu Chou. This was again a southern post, but he had already held office there and he was quite pleased at his re-appointment. He waited till his new credentials were issued and his luggage packed up again, and then he hired a boat and started. He got as far as T'ung Ching and there he unfortunately encountered a band of robbers; for, as the old saying has it: "A wealthy traveller is as a beacon to the violent."

He had allowed news of his 300,000 cash to leak out and envious feelings were thereby aroused. This resulted in a most unfortunate calamity, for the robber band followed him from the capital to T'ung Ching and



**He plunged overboard and waded ashore**

formed a secret understanding with some of the men on his boat. They waited till nightfall before beginning their operations, but T'ang Pi was not fated to die this time, for when they boarded the junk he happened to have strolled to the bows, and then, when he saw that danger was imminent, he at once plunged overboard and waded ashore in haste to save his life.

He heard the robbers at their fell work, and then the junk was poled away and he never even heard whether his body-servant's life was spared or not. But there was no doubt about his baggage, for everything that he carried with him was lost and he escaped with nothing but his bare life.

## IV

But the loss of his money and possessions seemed but a small matter in comparison with the loss of his certificates of office, his credentials and his Imperial commission, which were all likewise missing. Thus he had lost his appointment and no remedy seemed possible.

"I am truly a most luckless person," he reflected, "and calamity overwhelms me. If I were willing to return home, I could hardly go back with so little prestige: if I were willing to return to the capital and throw myself upon the mercy of the Civil Board, I have not a single cash for the needs of the journey. What am I to do? I have neither friend nor relation in these parts who would lend me money, and I see nothing for it but to

[Page 20]

become a beggar or else to throw myself into the river and thus end my life altogether."

But then he went on to reflect that he was, after all, a stalwart and promising young man, and that it would be a great pity if he were to come to so ignominious an end. So he continued to sit by the roadside, thinking and weeping, and turning over everything in his mind, but he could devise no suitable plan. From midnight he sat on till daybreak, and then, as luck would have it, he was unexpectedly confronted with a way out of his difficulties.

For once when he looked up he observed an old man coming along the road with the help of a staff, who on seeing him halted and said: "Why, sir, may I ask, are you weeping thus?" And in answer, T'ang Pi told him how he had been robbed on the way to take up his official appointment.

"So you are an official, honourable sir," answered the old man, "I beg that I may be pardoned for my lack of respect. My humble roof is not far from this place; may I venture to invite you in?" And the old man led T'ang Pi down the road for about one li to his house, where, after they had entered, he made an obeisance to him.

"The name of this old person," said the old man indicating himself, "is Su, and my son, who is called Su Feng-hua, is even now holding office at Hu Chou as a sub-magistrate. So he is actually under Your Honour's orders. If Your Honour wishes to go again to the capital, this old person would be very

willing to offer

[Page 21]

some slight assistance in the matter of travelling expenses."

And so saying, the old man forthwith prepared in haste wine and food and waited upon T'ang Pi; and after that he produced a suit of new clothes which he presented to him, and then with both hands he laid before him twenty taels of pure silver to help him to pay his way to the capital.

T'ang Pi thanked old Mr Su again and again, and at last took his leave and set forth alone on his road.

On arrival at the capital, he went again to the inn where he had stayed before, and the landlord, when he heard of his misfortune, was most sympathetic towards him. T'ang Pi at once betook himself to the Board and handed in a sorrowful petition setting forth his case, but the official who interviewed him took a severe view of the matter.

"You state," he said, "that your commission and other credentials have been stolen, but you adduce not the slightest proof of your story. It is thus difficult to decide as to the truth of your statement." And though T'ang Pi besought him with tears for five days, he was not permitted to take up his appointment.

His stock of money was soon exhausted in feeing the attendants of the Board, so he returned to his inn and wept again, sitting in melancholy with the tears streaming down his face. And while he sat there he suddenly looked up as his door opened, when he saw a man looking in at him. The man was of about middle age and wore the hat of a private individual, a purple shirt and

[Page 22]

trousers, a leathern belt and black boots; he looked, in fact, like a secretary in some government department. He then entered and saluted T'ang Pi and sat down opposite him.

"Where, sir," he asked politely, "is your home, and what, may I ask, is your business in this place?"

"Ah! do not ask me, sir," replied T'ang Pi, "for if I were to tell you I should overwhelm you with the flood of my woes." And as he spoke the tears ran down his face like water dropping through a sieve.

"Nay, sir," said the other; "let me but hear what disagreeable circumstances trouble your honourable mind. And please give me the details of your case, for it may be that we shall be able to discuss the matter."

"Your servant's name," said our hero, "is T'ang Pi. My family home is in Wan Ch'uan Hsien in Chin Chou. I have just been appointed sub-prefect at Hu Chou. But as I journeyed thither and after I had arrived at T'ung Ching, I happened to fall in, contrary to my expectation, with a band of robbers, who stripped me of all I possess; and of my official credentials and my commission there remains nothing

whatever. It is therefore difficult for me to proceed to take up my appointment."

"That you were robbed on the highway," replied the man in the purple shirt, "is surely by no means your fault. Why, I suggest, do you not report the details of the case to the Board of Civil Office and apply for the issue of duplicate documents? There appears to me to be but little difficulty in such a course."

"I have already done so," cried T'ang Pi; "I have

[Page 23]

begged and implored them over and over again, but alas I have not received the favour of their sympathetic permission. It is thus equally difficult for me to go or to stay, and I can see no way out of my unfortunate situation."

"At the present time," answered the other, "Duke P'ei is often in a compassionate mood and very willing to help people in difficulties. Why, sir, do you not go and lay your troubles before him?"

And on hearing this speech, T'ang Pi wept all the more. "I implore you, sir," he said, "to abstain from mentioning that name to me, for by so doing you stab me to the heart!"

At these words the man in the purple shirt started, and asked what was the reason for such a speech.

"In my youth," replied T'ang Pi, "I was betrothed; but, owing to the fact that I had to serve two periods of office in the south, my wedding could not be celebrated. And in my absence the Taotai and the magistrate dared to abduct my intended bride, who was forced to become a member of an orchestra of damsels for presentation to the Duke of Chin. Thus it was that I was compelled to remain unmarried and homeless. And though the Duke is not actually responsible for this disaster, yet it was because he consented to receive gifts and accepted the flatteries of others that the Taotai and the magistrate were so anxious to please him in this matter; and thus it is that I hold him to be the cause of my losing my wife. How, then, can I possibly go and see him?"

"And as touching this lady to whom you were be-

[Page 24]

trothed, sir," asked the man in the purple shirt, "what, may I ask, is her name, and what betrothal gift did you give to her?"

"Her name," replied T'ang Pi, "is Huang Hsiao-ngo, and my gift to her took the form of a piece of green jade, most elegantly carved, which at the present time is still in her possession."

"Well, I may tell you," then said the other, "that I am myself a member of the Duke's personal bodyguard, and have constant access to the inner apartments. I will therefore make enquiries on your behalf."

"She who enters a noble household," answered T'ang Pi, "is never heard of again. But it might, perhaps, be possible for me to send her a letter by you, sir. If you would be willing, of your kindness, to serve me in this way, I would desire intensely that she should know of my sufferings on her behalf; then shall I be able to close my eyes when I die."

The man in the purple shirt expressed his willingness to do what he was asked, and then rose to go.

"To-morrow, at this time," he said, "I hope that I shall have some good news for you," and so saying he saluted T'ang Pi and strode out through the door.

After he had departed, T'ang Pi thought over the conversation that had just taken place, and he began to regret what he had said. "It may well be," he reflected, "that that purple-shirted secretary is a spy sent out by the Duke to ascertain secret matters. I certainly did say several things that could hardly be considered complimentary, and indeed they might be held to be distinctly

[page 25]

provocative of resentment. And if he were to repeat them to the Duke they might arouse his wrath. I should have been more careful; there may be very uncomfortable results from this matter!" And he did not close his eyes in sleep all the night, but lay awake and longed for the dawn.

Next morning, after making his toilet, he went to the palace to see what might be seen, but was told that the Duke was not transacting business that day and was keeping to his private apartments. But nevertheless T'ang Pi observed official messengers coming in and going out in a constant hum and bustle, though he did not see the man with the purple shirt among them. He waited about for a long while and at last went back for his mid-day meal, after which he returned and resumed his vigil before the palace, but obtained no tidings whatever. By and by, when evening drew on, he came to the conclusion that the purple-shirted stranger was only a gossip and a deceiver, so he sighed deeply and walked slowly back to his inn.

He was just going to light his lamp in his room when he looked out through the window and saw two men who looked like official messengers coming towards the inn. They entered in a great hurry and seemingly full of importance and cried out: "Is sub-prefect T'ang Pi within?"

Our hero, in a fright, at once hid himself round a corner and did not dare to reply. But the innkeeper came forward and asked the men who they were.

"We are messengers," was the reply, "from the

[Page 26]

Duke's palace and come about his business. We bear a message from His Excellency to request sub-prefect T'ang Pi to come and speak with him."

The innkeeper then pointed out T'ang Pi to the men, so he was obliged to step forward and confront

them.

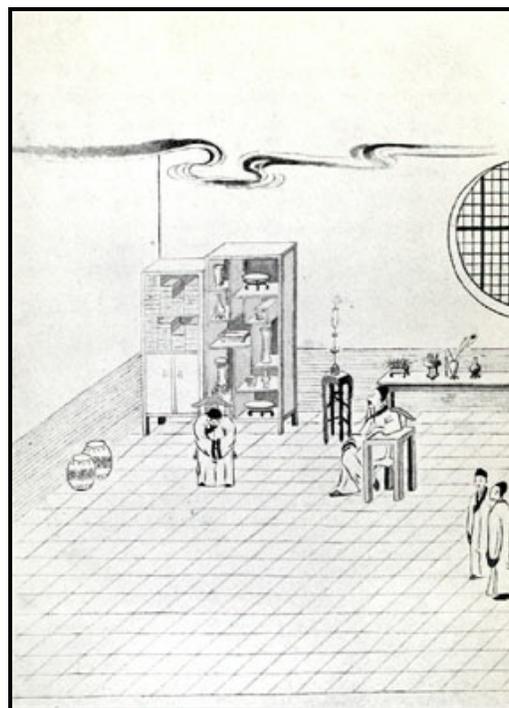
"I have as yet failed to call and pay my respects to His Excellency the Duke," he said. "I am at a loss to understand why he can have sent for me. Moreover I have no official garments here and could hardly venture to go as I am."

"His Excellency is even now waiting for you," the messenger said, "and the sub-prefect can hardly refuse his invitation." And so saying they placed themselves one on each side of T'ang Pi, and, catching hold of his arms, they urged him forwards out of the inn and very quickly arrived at the palace.

When they came to the entrance hall, T'ang Pi was requested to sit down and wait a few moments while His Excellency was informed of his presence, and then he would be invited in to see the Duke. The two messengers disappeared, but in a short while they came running back and said: "The Duke is not to-day transacting business, but is within in his private residence. Be pleased to come with us."

Then, one walking before him and one behind, they led him round corners and along corridors, a long way through the palace, and all was blazing with lanterns and as bright as daylight.

At length he was ushered into a small room lighted by a single pair of candles placed one on each side of the



**He bent his head**

[Page 27]

apartment, and there was the Duke, dressed in private attire, standing politely and waiting for him.

T'ang Pi quickly made his obeisance, and then knelt upon the ground, the sweat pouring down his

back; nor did he dare to lift his eyes to the Duke's countenance. The latter, however, motioning to the attendants to raise T'ang Pi from the ground, said: "When I receive visitors in my private apartment, there is no necessity for them to be so exceedingly polite." And he told the attendants to bring forward a chair for him.

T'ang Pi, murmuring that he could hardly presume so far, took his seat respectfully at one side, and then only did he venture to raise his head sufficiently to take a stealthy glance at the Duke's countenance. To his dismay he saw that the latter was none other than the purple-shirted stranger with whom he had conversed at the inn the day before.

His fears then increased ten-fold and the sweat started out afresh all over him: he bent his head till of his face only his eyebrows were visible, and he hardly dared to breathe, even through his nose.

## V

Now it was the practice of Duke Chin, in his leisure moments, to walk abroad in disguise in order to obtain information concerning the affairs and the opinions of the people; and after he had met T'ang Pi in the inn on the previous day, he returned to his palace and made inquiries after Huang Hsiao-ngo. He called her into his

[Page 28]

presence and found that she was truly of exquisite beauty. He asked her whence she came, and, seeing that her account agreed with what T'ang Pi had told him, he requested to be allowed to see the piece of carved green jade; and there it was indeed, worn carefully upon her arm.

"Your affianced husband is here," he said to her very sympathetically, "would you like to see him?"

Hsiao-ngo burst into tears. "Though I am very beautiful," she said, "I am also very unlucky! I had imagined that we were parted forever. Whether I see him or not I must leave to Your Excellency to decide. Your insignificant handmaiden would not venture to express a wish in this matter."

The Duke nodded and told her to withdraw for a while; and he then secretly ordered his attendants to prepare a set of clothes fitted for a noble bride and to get together one thousand *tiao* of cash, and furthermore sent to have a form of official appointment made out, giving instructions that the space for the name should be left blank. On this he filled in T'ang Pi's name in his own handwriting, and then he ordered a messenger to go round to the Board of Civil Office to look up the record of his credentials and of his brevet as newly appointed sub-prefect of Hu Chou and have duplicates made out.

Everything was thus made ready in detail; and when T'ang Pi arrived with his mind full of the most dismal forebodings, he little guessed that the Duke had none but good intentions towards him.

[Page 29]

And so his mind was wonderfully relieved when he heard the truth.

"What you said yesterday when we met," said the Duke, "filled me with anxiety and remorse on your behalf. I am quite unable to prevent people from sending me presents, and thus I am the innocent cause of you two having been separated when you were to have become husband and wife. I am indeed highly culpable in this matter."

T'ang Pi at these words rose from his seat and fell prostrate before the Duke. "This unworthy person," he said, "has met with the worst of ill-luck, and was, in fact, quite dazed thereby. Yesterday I must have grievously offended Your Excellency by my rash words, and I acknowledge that I have merited death by my conduct. But I implore you of your magnanimity (which is as vast as the ocean) to pardon me!"

The Duke, however, requested him to rise. "Today," he said, "is a most auspicious date. Permit me, sir, to act temporarily in the place of your parents and fix it as your wedding day. Here is a slight matter of one thousand strings of cash for your travelling expenses, which I would wish to present to you as a recompense, in some measure, for the wrong that I have done to you. And after your wedding you can proceed, at your convenience, to take tip your official post."

T'ang Pi could find no words to express his gratitude, and could only bow repeatedly; nor did he venture to ask any question about his official post.

Just then wedding music was heard sounding

[Page 30]

sweetly and clearly in the inner apartments, and through the door was seen a procession of attendants bearing red lanterns and coming two by two across the courtyard. They were headed by an orchestra composed of a bevy of young ladies; and lastly Huang Hsiao-ngo herself appeared, heavily veiled but looking like a slender flower of jade and followed by an escort of elderly attendants. T'ang Pi, in his fear (for how could he recognise his betrothed?), felt inclined to take his leave and retire, but one of the elderly ladies said: "Now let the young couple salute one another as ceremony demands."

A red felt carpet was spread, and T'ang Pi and Hsiaongo took their places thereon, facing one another. To the Duke also they made obeisance four times, and he, standing at one side, acknowledged their salutation. Thus the ceremony took place.

A sedan chair was waiting for Hsiao-ngo in the courtyard; she stepped into it and was carried away to the inn, while the Duke exhorted T'ang Pi to lose no time but to follow her immediately. He rushed off in haste, and when he arrived at the inn he heard the sound of many people talking together, and the noise that they made was like the bubbling of water boiling in a cauldron.

He looked round him and saw boxes filled with silks and money and guarded by the two men who had

come to summon him on the previous day. On his arrival they placed in his hands a small casket sealed with a paper seal, written in the Duke's own handwriting, and on opening it he found therein his commission appointing him as before to the sub-prefecture of Hu Chou. His

[Page 31]

delight at this knew no bounds, for there he was with Huang Hsiao-ngo in the inn. And theirs was no common joy.

## VI

T'ang Pi now had, indeed, his commission and his bride both safe, and furthermore was in possession of a thousand strings of cash for his travelling expenses; after being like a tortured soul in the 18 hells he was suddenly transported into the 33 circles of heaven. Thanks to the great-heartedness of the Duke, he was now provided for in the most thorough fashion.

The next day he called again at the Duke's palace, but was told at the gate that the Duke would not trouble him further and that it was not necessary for him to express thanks again, so he returned to the inn and for the second time assumed his official robes and prepared himself for the journey.

Before he left he purchased some male and female slaves to attend upon himself and his bride during their travels, and the two set off for their home to pay their respects to Mr Huang, the father-in-law. And the latter, on seeing them once more, was like a dry tree which again sprouts in the spring, like a broken lute again restrung. His joy knew no bounds.

After a few days sojourn the newly married pair proceeded to Hu Chou, where T'ang Pi assumed charge. And he felt so grateful to Duke P'ei that he had a statue

[Page 32]

of him made in fragrant Aguru wood and bowed down before it both morning and evening with a prayer for his unlimited happiness and longevity. And the Duke lived afterwards to an age of over eighty, and his sons and grandsons were without number.

And all men said that this was the direct result of his virtues.

## THE INFANT COURTIER

### I

AN influence benign floats over the Palace.

The spring has returned to the City, for half of the first moon has sped. [\[1\]](#)

The Ice-wheel hangs overhead, all bright with the blooms of the cassia. [\[2\]](#)

Her light overflows and illumines the densely-packed street and the market-place ringing with song.

The flowers of the fragrant hibiscus fill the air with their scent.

Aloft in the Tower of the Lotus the pearly blinds are raised

And the Emperor scans the glad scene, lit up by the silvery light of the lanterns.

He sees the beauteous damsels crowding together amid the piping and singing;

Precious ornaments shine in their hair.

(The Holy One even desires to mix with the crowd).

Each one is bedecked with gay silks and sweet-perfumed satins.

'Tis indeed a delight to mingle with such a gay throng.

The breeze is soft and the night is warm;

The shadows are dark, and the music of laughter is heard.

The white moths hover above, whirling together, alighting on every head.

How joyous to see once more the customs of ancient time in the city,

And to feel again that a great peace broods over all.

This verse, composed in the measure known as "The Fairy Bird of Good Omen," was written in the Shao Hsing period of the Sung Dynasty [1] by one K'ang Po-k'o, a poet of great talent. His home was originally in the north, but when the Kin Tartars made rebellion he followed the Emperor to the south, crossing the great river. The Princes Ch'in and Shen recommended him to the Emperor and he received largely of the imperial favour. This verse, which refers to the goodly Feast of Lanterns, the Emperor esteemed highly, and the gifts which he bestowed upon the author were of gold and silk.

Now in this verse there is an allusion to the pleasure of seeing again in the city the customs of ancient times, for it was composed soon after the terrible year Ching K'ang [2] when during the disturbances the Emperors Hut Tsung and Ch'in Tsung were carried off into captivity and the territory of Honan was entirely occupied by the Kin barbarians. But Prince Kang [3] was attended by good luck after bad and escaped over the river. He was made Emperor and reigned in peace in his small territory, snatching here and there an interval for pleasure among his cares, for it pleased him to imagine that the times

[Page 37]

of prosperity were come again. It was for this reason that poets of that age all made similar verses as a means of dispelling care and inducing feelings of joy.

The poems of this period cannot, however, compare in excellence with those of previous times---with a similar poem, for example, by Li Ch'i Ch'ing written in the measure known as "The Joy of Pouring Wine," which may be quoted here:

In the Palace garden the sound of the water-clock dripping the hours away can be heard;  
And the makers of gay-painted lanterns all work without ceasing.  
The genial south wind spreads its warmth over all;  
And within the twelve gates of the Precincts the changes of spring can be seen,  
For thrice five days have sped and the time of Yuan Hsiao [1] is at hand.  
The Ch'an's [2] silver rays are now full, and light up  
The high-lifted towers of the palace.  
Beneficent influences hover above  
And the Emperor favours the Hall of Green jade with his presence,  
Passing through gate after gate of the walls which surround it.

The holy candles are lit and nigh outshine the stars;  
By the Emperor's side are great lanterns. the bird-wing screens are before him.

[Page 38]

On either side the musicians assemble and sweetly discourse,  
Their pipings and flutings are heard far and wide.  
The morning dawns but the crowds are still there,

A myriad courtyards could not contain them, and they shout with a mighty clamour:  
"Each year may we see the Holy One thus in his state."

This poem describes the conditions in the palace precincts during a period of peace and prosperity, and in truth in Sung times the Feast of Lanterns was regarded as a most important one. Lamps and bonfires were lit in the greatest abundance; the Emperor himself came to look on, and it was said "The palace guards do not close the precincts to traffic at night, and even the water-clock abstains from recording the hours and urging departure."

Thus the youths and maidens of the city wandered about all night and there was no restriction to their wanderings, so that there were many secret meetings of youth and maid; also the "rats and dogs" pilfered and stole, giving much handle for talk.

At that time Li Han-lao made a poem in the measure known as "The Nun," indeed a fine composition:

The fifteenth day has come to the City of Heaven.  
The streets are lined with lamp-lit stalls, each covered with "flowers of fire," [\[1\]](#)  
And between surge the crowds of sight-seers.

[Page 39]

Who shall say that those of the city do not love spending their money?  
Processions of gaily-clad folk, waving their lanterns of gauze, have just passed along  
With shouts to the crowd to give way, making small their bodies.  
And there can be seen many youths and beautiful maidens  
Hand in hand or standing shoulder to shoulder, whispering one to another.  
From east or from west, what households claim these maidens,  
Vying with each other in beauty, their hair gay with blossoms?  
Slowly they sway along in the fragrant breeze, the gaze of everyone fastened upon them.  
I see them standing in the shadows, standing without number, dressed one and all like immortals,  
And the onlookers lose their senses at so fair a sight.  
As for me, I had better speed home by the light of the moon,  
For my eyes, ever greedy for beauty, can scarce support such a strain.

In this verse also allusion is made to the fact that on the night of the Lantern Festival there were those who took advantage of the crowds and bustle to do things that should not be done. On this I will not dwell, but will ask you to heed the following tale of an occurrence that took place on a certain anniversary of this festival, a story strange indeed.

[Page 40]

In the days of the Emperor Shen Tsung [1] of the Sung Dynasty there lived a famous Minister of state named Wang, who was canonized after his death as Hsiang Min Kung. In his life he bore the single personal name of Chao, and he and his whole family dwelt in the Capital. The establishment that he maintained was exceedingly large, and for richness, luxury and magnificence was unsurpassed.

Our story opens on the 15th day of the 1st moon in a certain year of the aforesaid emperor, the beautiful Feast of Lanterns. It was before the infamous Wang An-shih [2] had come into office. His code had not yet been introduced and in every district the country was devoid of adversity; the people at large carried on their avocations in tranquillity, and a great peace brooded over the land.

And in celebration of the festival every family and household exploded their firecrackers and lit up their lanterns. The festival had indeed begun on the thirteenth night, and in every street and marketplace rejoicings and merry laughter sounded without cease. But the fifteenth was the night of nights, and in accordance with the yearly custom of that time the Emperor himself emerged from the palace precincts to spend the night in viewing the illuminations and the crowds of people, and all the youths

[Page 41]

and maidens of the city came out to gain a sight of the Heavenly Countenance.

Every year on this night, since the prevalence of cloudy weather commonly made it difficult to rely on the undiminished radiance of the full moon to make night as bright as day, it has always been the custom for everyone to light lanterns of all kinds and of fantastical shapes, and so the people speak of "The Moon amongst the Lamps." The spectacle thus presented is a magnificent one.

On the night of our story, the wife of Hsiang Min Kung, with all the women and girls of the household, great and small, every one dressed in her best, came out attended by servants holding round them a cloth barrier so that they might wander in the streets and see the illuminations.

For you must know that the women of high officials in those days, fearing lest they should be jostled in the streets by the crowds, to the outrage of propriety, always used, when they walked abroad, such a protection of silk or cotton which encircled them completely and formed a screen from the importunities of the common herd. In the days of the Tsin Dynasty purple silk was often used, or even gold brocade. Such was the practice of the great ones of the land.

Now Hsiang Min Kung had a certain son, whose place was thirteenth in the family for he was the youngest of all. His milk-name was Nan Kai and at the time of my story he was but five years old. He was of wonderful intelligence and unusual beauty, and it need hardly be

[Page 42]

said that the women of Hsiang Min Kung's household all prized and guarded him with the greatest solicitude; there was not one, great or small, who did not love him.

On this occasion the young master was also present in the streets to look at the lanterns. Like the

others he was dressed in his best, and he wore upon his little head a wondrous cap. It was embroidered all over with large ocean pearls as big as beans and arranged into the likenesses of phoenixes in pairs and of peonies. And in the midst of the pattern was a single cats-eye which sent forth a gleam as of fire, and all around it were other precious stones of various colours, such as jade and turquoise. No one knew how much money the cap might be worth.

Hsiang Min Kung had ordered one of his servants, a man called Wang Chi, to carry the child on his back and to accompany the women to see the illuminations. Now this Wang Chi was a man who knew the proprieties and he said to himself, "I am a man; I can scarcely venture to go within the curtain among the ladies. I will therefore walk outside it." And when he got to the gate of the Imperial City known as the Gate of Virtue Manifest, it happened that the Emperor Shen Tsung had just ascended the gate tower, where it was his sacred wish that the eyes of the multitude should rest upon him. The bodyguard had orders not to prevent this relaxation from the usual custom, and he stood there on the tower with the huge lanterns, called Leviathan Lamps, shedding their beams upon him. Clouds of fragrant incense filled the air around, the strains of pipe and drum playing

[Page 43]

imperial music were heard, while below the tower passed the processions which had been arranged for the edification of his sacred glance, and all around was a sea of human beings, so closely packed that no space was left between body and body.

Wang Chi, who was in the thick of the crowd, became tightly wedged in by the press. This he found most uncomfortable, because, with the child on his back, he had to stand on tip-toe and crane his neck to see anything at all. He stood there in this position with his face upturned and his eyes staring at the Emperor; and presently the crowd became denser and denser and he was hemmed in more tightly than ever. His legs became smitten with cramp, his back and his shoulders ached and he was wet through with sweat and panting with fatigue. But no relief seemed possible.

Suddenly, however, he felt somewhat more comfortable and lighter. He was glad of the relief, and straightened his back and stretched out his legs, and, more at his ease, he looked his fill at the gay scene, when all at once he remembered the child that had been entrusted to him, and putting his hand behind him he found that the young master was no longer there, nor did he know how long he had been gone. He looked hastily all round him but could see no one but strangers, and there was no sign of the child.

An agony of fear and remorse smote him. He started to search for the young master but found that he was so hemmed in that at first he could not move. In his terror and apprehension, he strove until his bones were weak

[Page 44]

and his muscles numbed, and eventually succeeded in reaching a spot where the crowd was somewhat thinner and there he fell in by chance with a number of the other retainers from Hsing Min Kung's household.

"Have any of you seen anything of the young master?" he asked them.

"The young master was entrusted to you to carry round on your back," was the reply. "Why, then, do you ask us?"

"I was just where the crowd was most dense," answered Wang Chi, "and somebody, I do not know who, took him off my back. I thought it must be one of you, my brothers, from the yamen, who, seeing my strength failing, took him away to carry him for me for a while. I was glad enough to be relieved, but the crowd was so thick that I could not see who it was, although I did my best to do so. Do you mean to say that you have not seen him?"

"You great fool," said one, for all had become thoroughly alarmed at this speech; "This is indeed no joke. You go about in a great crowd like that and lose the child, and then you come here where there is no crowd and look for him! You are merely wasting time by so doing. We must all disperse and go again into the crowd and look for the child."

So Wang Chi and all the rest went back again into the press, and each one pushed this way and that, calling and shouting for the lost boy, but they could not make themselves heard for the noise and bustle. It seemed foolish to make inquiries in so vast a crowd, and they

[Page 45]

got tired of looking about and became hoarse with shouting, for of course they could find no trace of the child. So after searching for a long time they all met together again, and not one had anything to report and all were in a great state of alarm.

"One of our party may have found him after all," said one, "and carried him home."

"But we are all here," replied another. "Who could have done so?"

"In any case let us go home and find out," suggested Wang Chi.

"He has certainly not been taken home," said the eldest of the party. "That cap on his head is gorgeous enough to excite the greed of anybody. Some evildoer must have stolen it and the child into the bargain. We had better not alarm the ladies unnecessarily, but I think that it would be wise to go home and tell the master, so that he can have runners sent out at once to try and trace the thief."

When Wang Chi heard the proposal to report the matter to his master, he became limp with fear.

"What is this talk of telling the master?" he asked. Let us rather first make further inquiry ourselves. There is no immediate need to report the matter, for there are many people in the yamen, and to alarm all of them without justification would be a pity."

But none of the others was of this mind, and they all went home in a body, where careful inquiry was made as to whether anyone had seen the young master indoors. When, however, it appeared that he

had not been seen,

[Page 46]

there was no help for it but to report his loss to his father. But no one dared to say straight out that the boy had been lost, and a great deal of hesitation and stammering ensued.

The marked appearance of nervousness among his servants did not escape the notice of Hsiang Min Kung, who called them up before him.

"You did not stay very long outside," he said, "Why have you returned so early? And what is the matter with you all? You look as if you had all been frightened or had lost your wits."

So then they told him the story of how Wang Chi had lost the young master in the crowd, and Wang himself came forward, and, kneeling down, kotowed and said that death should be his portion for his carelessness.

But Hsiang Min Kung did not betray the smallest apprehension.

"He will come back by himself without fail," he said with a smile. "There is no reason for you all to be so perturbed."

"But some evil-doer has probably stolen him," they said. "Pray, sir, notify the Governor of the city at once and tell him to send out his runners to search, for otherwise he will be irretrievably lost."

Hsiang Min Kung, however, shook his head.

"No need!" he remarked, shortly, but his serenity was by no means shared by his servants.

"This matter," they said among themselves, "is as important as the sky is vast, and as pressing as a conflagration. How can His Excellency regard it as a

[Page 47]

common occurrence, neither changing countenance nor exhibiting emotion? His mind, on the contrary, appears as unclouded as a cup of melted snow!" And they were so disturbed that they went out and reported the matter to their mistress, who was within the curtain.

The latter immediately hurried back to the yamen in the utmost alarm, and with tears in her eyes implored her husband to take the necessary steps, but all in vain.

"If it were any other child that had been lost," he said, "it would be necessary to take immediate steps to look for him. But my son Thirteen is different. He will come back safely, without doubt! Do not fear."

"But even though this son of yours be very clever," replied his wife, "he is so young and so very small, a babe but five years old! In so great a crowd he could very easily be knocked down and crushed to death; how can you expect him to return unaided?"

"Evil men are constantly stealing children," the nurses said. "They put out their eyes or cut off their feet! A thousand tricks they have to injure them so that, by exciting compassion, they may be the more successful in begging alms! If a search is not at once made, the young master is sure to fall a victim to their poisonous ways!"

And all the women fell a-weeping and lamenting. "If His Excellency will not order the Governor to make a search," they cried, "he could at least put up a few proclamations offering a large reward to anyone who should bring him back. Then there would be a chance that someone who has seen or heard of him may come and give us news."

[Page 48]

Then arose a scene of the greatest confusion, each one giving advice and expressing opinions; but Hsiang Min Kung was not any more perturbed than before.

"You are all talking quite unnecessarily," he said. "He will return safely in a few days!"

"The precious little jewel!" said his wife. "How can you remain so calm and talk so callously about him?"

"Put your trust in me," replied Hsiang Min Kung. "I will be responsible that he will be restored to you as before. I pray you not to be so excited!"

But his wife was not thus to be comforted, and the nurses and servants also put no faith in what their master had said, so messengers were sent out in all directions to look for the lost boy.

### III

I must now relate how Nan Kai was stolen from off the back of Wang Chi, and what happened to him.

They were in the very thick of the crowd and everyone round about them was pushing and shouting, when suddenly a man at Wang Chi's side reached out and very gently took the child off his back. Wang Chi was so occupied in gazing about him, and Nan Kai was also so engrossed in the spectacle, that neither of them noticed what had happened.

But when the man had got the boy safely on his back and had begun to push his way out of the throng, Nan

[Page 49]

Kai became aware of what was happening and said: "Wang Chi, where are you going in such a hurry?"

And then he looked down and saw that it was not Wang Chi at all that held him, for his cap and his clothes were not those of the servant. And although the child was so very young, he was, as has been said, very wise, and guessed at once that it was some evildoer who had hold of him and was trying to kidnap him. He was about to shout for help, but on looking round he saw no one whose face he recognized.

"It must be my pearl cap that he wishes to steal," he said to himself. "If he carries that off by itself it will never be seen again. I will therefore hide it, for they will find me much more easily than the cap." So he took off the cap and stuffed it up his sleeve, saying nothing further and not becoming in the least alarmed but allowing the man to carry him off as if he had noticed nothing.

When they got near to the East Gate of the Imperial city, however, Nan Kai saw four or five sedan chairs being carried along towards him, one behind the other.

"These chairs probably contain officials or people of rank," he said to himself, "and if I do not call for help now I may not get another opportunity." So waiting until the foremost chair was opposite to him, he reached out suddenly and grasped the pole, at the same time shouting as loudly as he could: "Thieves! Thieves! Save me! Save me!"

The kidnapper, when he heard the sudden screams at his back, was completely taken by surprise and leaped

[Page 50]

in terror at the thought of capture, so, throwing Nan Kai down from his back to the ground, he darted off into the crowd near by and made off as quickly as he could.

The occupants of the chairs heard the screams of Nan Kai and looked out through the curtains to see what was the matter. Observing on the ground a dear little child, with clean face and newly shaved head, they were very pleased and stopped the chairs. One beckoned Nan Kai to get up and draw near, and then asked him whence he came.

"I was being kidnapped!" said the child.

"And where is the one that was taking you away?" the man asked.

"When I called out," the child replied, "he went off into the crowd. Who knows where he is now?"

The man in the chair, seeing that the boy answered so sensibly, stroked his head, and, telling him not to be alarmed, took him into his chair, and, lifting him up, placed him on his knee. The chair-bearers then resumed their way and entered the palace by the eastern gate.

Now the man in the chair was none other than one of the Palace eunuchs, a person of great power and high position; and, when the Emperor had seen his fill of the sights of the city, this eunuch had been sent back in advance to the palace with four or five of the other attendants to prepare a meal for His Majesty. They were on their way back when they heard the cries of Nan Kai and they carried him with them on their errand.

On arrival in the palace the eunuch ordered his

[Page 51]

attendants to conduct the child to his own apartments and, after wrapping him up warmly, to give him some fruit and sweetmeats to eat, and he charged them most strictly that he was by no means to be frightened, for it is ever the case with eunuchs that they are very fond of children.

Next morning early the eunuch went into the imperial presence and after kotowing made memorial as follows:

"The Heir of All the Ages is informed that Your slaves after attending upon Your Majesty at the Lantern Festival last night, encountered a lost child outside the East Gate of the Imperial City. We brought him back into the palace with us, hoping that it should prove a lucky omen for Your Majesty's prospects of an heir. If it should be so, the joy of Your Majesty's slaves would know no bounds. It is not yet known to what household the child belongs, nor, in the absence of Your Majesty's commands, did we dare to make any arrangements as to his disposal. We have thus come to request that orders be issued."

Now the Emperor Shen Tsung had, at this time, not yet had an heir born to him, and it was just this matter which was exercising his mind. So he eagerly welcomed the suggestion made by the eunuch.

"Yes!" he agreed. "It might well prove to be a most auspicious omen." And his heavenly countenance was suffused with joy and he ordered that the child should be brought before him at once. The eunuch therefore went back into the inner apartments and soon

[Page 52]

returned carrying Nan Kai with him. But before he brought him out he cautioned him.

"The Sacred One has ordered you to be brought into the Presence," he said. "Now, when you enter, do not be afraid!"

Nan Kai understood at once that this meant that he was to see the Emperor, but he was neither alarmed nor excited. He merely put his hand into his sleeve and pulled out his little pearl cap and put it on his head as he had worn it on the previous day. And although the little fellow had no idea as to the proper ceremonial to be observed in the Emperor's presence, when he was brought before the Son of Heaven he put his fists together and knelt down and kotowed several times.

The Emperor stamped his feet in pleasure at the sight.

"Little boy," he said, whose son are you? And can you tell me your name?"

Nan Kai straightened himself up before replying.

"Your servant's surname is Wang," he said. "And I am the youngest son of Your Majesty's minister, Wang Chao."

The Emperor was surprised to find how politely and unhesitatingly the boy spoke, and put another question to him.

"How did you come here?" he asked.

"It was because of the festival last night," Nan Kai replied. "All our household went out to see the illuminations and to gaze at Your Majesty's Sacred Countenance; and in the press of the crowd I was stolen by a thief, who took me off on his back. But as he sped away I saw

[Page 53]

the palace chairs coming, so I called for help. Then the thief ran off and your servant came with their Excellencies, the honourable eunuchs, to this place. Thus have I been able to achieve the wonderfully good fortune of having Audience with Your Majesty."

"And how old are you?" asked the Emperor.

"Five years old, Your Majesty."

"Since at so tender an age you are able to answer my questions so cleverly," went on the Emperor, "your father is indeed to be congratulated upon such a son. So you were lost last night. How anxious they must all be at home for you! We must send you back at once to your father; but it is to be regretted that the thief was not caught!"

"But, Your Majesty," said Nan Kai, "it will be a very easy matter to find the thief."

"Indeed," replied the Emperor; "and how do you think that that can be done?"

"Because when he carried me off on his back, Your Majesty," answered the boy, "I saw at once that it was not one of the servants that held me, so I took from my head the pearl cap that I wore and hid it. And on this cap, Your Majesty, my mother had threaded a silken string to which the needle was still attached. This she had done to avert evil; and while I was still upon the back of the man, after I had taken off my cap, I pulled out this thread and secretly sewed it into his collar so that he might be known afterwards. So now, if Your Majesty commands that spies be sent out, and if they can find a

man with a piece of silk thread stitched into

[Page 54]

the collar of his coat, then they will have found the man who stole me last night, and they can arrest him."

The Emperor started in surprise at this speech.

"What a very remarkable child!" he exclaimed. "He is so small and yet has such wonderful resourcefulness. We will keep him here until the thief is caught and then send him home." Then, turning to the attendant eunuchs, he said: "We must certainly show this wonderful child to the ladies of the palace." And he sent an urgent message to summon the Empress Ch'in Sheng.

The imperial orders were quickly transmitted and the Empress appeared.

"Here is a good child," said the Emperor to her after receiving her salutation. "You may keep him for a while in the palace. Look after him well, for it may be that he may prove an auspicious omen in the matter of an heir to the throne."

But the Empress Ch'in Sheng, although she thanked the Emperor for his favour, did not understand the reason for his commands and appeared full of curiosity and doubt, so the Emperor said to her: "If you desire to understand why the child is here, take him into your apartments and ask him, and he will tell you all."

So the Empress took Nan Kai off with her into her private apartments, while the Emperor wrote a secret order which he entrusted to the eunuchs to transmit to the Governor of the city and in which were set forth full details of the stealing of the child; and a limit of time was set in which the thief should be arrested.

When the Governor received this order he saw that it

[Page 55]

was no common case of arrest and that not the least delay was permissible, so he sent at once for the officer of the day in charge of the police, Taotai Ho.

"Today I have received this secret order from His Majesty," said the Governor to this officer. "And I give you three days in which to catch a certain band of thieves who committed a crime on the night of the Feast of Lanterns."

"Is there any clue, or have you any information concerning the goods which were stolen?" asked the Taotai. "For it will be difficult for me to effect any arrest if there is no other information."

Then the Governor told the Taotai to come closer, and whispered to him the story that he had received

of the silken thread being stitched into the collar of the thief, and when the Taotai heard it he said that he thought that the arrest ought to be able to be made within the limit of three days provided that the utmost secrecy were observed.

"This is the Emperor's direct command," replied the Governor, "and you must carry it through. It is by no means an ordinary case of the arrest of a robber and you must take every possible precaution against failure."

The Taotai agreed and departed, going to his own office, and there he called together a number of his most astute spies, with whom he talked the matter over.

"There must have been many who took advantage of the crowds on the night of the Feast of Lanterns to commit crimes of various sorts," they said, "and a large

[Page 56]

number of households must have suffered. Although, as it happens, this particular child was recovered, the thefts in most cases must have been successfully brought about. It was only last night, and the thieves are probably still enjoying their profits amid the wine shops and low haunts of the city. They cannot have dispersed yet, and although we do not know their names or hiding places, yet we have this one clue and they ought by no means to escape. We are many and we must search until we find them, dividing up into small parties and making inquiry everywhere."

So that night they all went out, some in one direction, some in another, for all knew the lie of the streets and where were the tea houses and the wine shops. In each they searched most carefully for suspicious characters, listening cautiously behind doors and peeping round corners.

## IV

Now the thief who had abducted the little son of the Wang household was a celebrated criminal who went by the name of The Hawk. His band consisted of about a dozen men, whose invariable plan was to go about amid large concourses of people and commit lawless acts of thieving and abduction.

He had for some time on the previous day been lurking about the gates of the Wang household, listening, and watching all those who went in and came out, and, seeing the young master dressed tip so smartly coming out on

[Page 57]

the back of one of the servants, had followed them closely. And when they got to the Gate of Virtue Manifest, where the crowd was thickest, he watched for his opportunity and then took the child from the servant and went off with him on his own back. He never suspected that so small an infant would have the cleverness to cause any trouble beyond being frightened and crying, and he anticipated no

difficulty whatever. He was therefore most surprised when they fell in with the chairs and the child raised cries of alarm. So he hurriedly threw the boy down and made off, nor was he aware that upon his collar a mark had been secretly set, whereby he could afterwards be recognized. This indeed he would hardly have divined even if he had been possessed of magical powers.

Afterwards when he had made good his escape and joined his confederates they all produced their plunder. There were women's hair ornaments, gold and jewels, pearls and jade, sable ear-caps, foxtail wraps and other valuables of every kind. Only the leader was empty-handed.

He explained the reason for this to the rest, and they asked him why he had not made off with the child's cap.

"Well, his clothes were covered all over with jewels and valuable buttons," 'The Hawk' replied. "On his arms and ankles he had bands of gold, and he was only a little thing of four or five years, and he himself would have fetched two thousand cash. Why should I have let him go?"

[Page 58]

"And where is he now?" the rest asked. "It appears that you bit off so big a mouthful that you were unable to chew it!" [\[1\]](#)

"It was only when I got near the palace chairs that he began to scream," replied the man, "so I suppose that he went off with them. The attendants were as fierce as tigers or wolves, and that they did not fall upon me and capture me was a heaven-sent stroke of luck, Why should I in such circumstances have looked for gain?"

"You have indeed had an evil experience," said his friends, "and it is lucky that nothing worse befell you. And now that we are all united once more, let us eat and drink that our recent alarm may be dispelled."

Now it was their practice for one member of the band to act as host for the day, each one in turn, and, after selecting a wine shop that was little frequented, they repaired thither to feast. This place was near the jade Ferry Gardens, and one of the spies named Li Yuan happened to be making his inquiries in that neighbourhood when they were in the wine shop. As he passed outside he heard them shouting over their games of forfeits, and, being a shrewd man, he went in and took good stock of the customers. He observed the band, who by their appearance seemed to him to be suspicious-looking characters, so he took a seat at a table a little apart from them and called for a meal.

After the attendant had placed the wine cup and chopsticks in position, the spy rose, and, with his hands

[Page 59]

behind his back as if in thought, he walked up and down the room scrutinizing each man carefully out of the corner of his eye. And among them, sure enough, there was one with a piece of coloured silk

thread showing beneath his collar.

Li Yuan knew at once that this must be the man whom he wanted.

"Kindly wait a few moments with my wine and food," he said to the attendant. "I am going out to call in a friend of mine to share my meal."

He hastily left the wine shop. When outside he whistled shrilly, and seven or eight other members of his party quickly came up.

"Have you found anything?" they asked.

"The man, without doubt, is in there," he replied, pointing with his finger at the wine-shop door. "I am quite certain that it is he, and we must watch outside till we are joined by some more of our men and then we can all go in and arrest the whole gang of them, for there are others with him."

One of the posse made off like the wind and quickly summoned about ten more runners. They all then burst into the door of the wine shop together, shouting: "In the name of the Emperor! We have come to arrest the man who stole on the night of the Feast of Lanterns, and we call on the inmates of this house to help us so that he shall not escape!"

On hearing the name of the Emperor called upon, the inmates of the wineshop knew that it was a serious matter, and all the waiters, cooks and scullions, armed

[Page 60]

with knives and pokers, came in to help. Thus of the gang of thieves not one escaped but all were arrested and soon tied up in bonds.

Now it is generally the case that when a thief sees a yamen runner it is like a mouse which sees the cat; at once it crouches down to the ground. And when a runner comes in contact with a thief it is like a crane when it comes across the lair of a snake; it can generally tell by the scent whether the snake is at home or not.

These two bands of men, runners and thieves, had frequently been at close quarters before. The runners had often demanded money from them, to be applied to charitable purposes, in order that the thieves might be allowed to ply their calling, or when one of their party was arrested, in purchase of his freedom.

But on this occasion the Emperor himself had set a limit of time for their arrest; moreover the mark was there upon the collar of their leader as a proof of their guilt, so that the matter of their release was not one which could be entertained. They were all therefore securely bound, the coat of the leader having first been removed. They were all quaking with terror and their faces were as pale as dust, although there was not one who was not vehement in protestations of innocence. Their persons were searched and each one was found to have booty upon him. Then all were marched off at once to

the yamen of the Governor.

The Governor, when their arrival was reported, went straight into court, having first personally examined the leader's coat and found that the silken thread was indeed

[Page 61]

sewn through the collar, thus establishing his identity without possibility of doubt or injustice. The court attendants were then ordered to bring out the instruments of torture in order that the robbers might be persuaded to make confession.

They were bent backwards over a frame and their hands and feet were drawn together with ropes; they were pressed with weights; they were suspended by their thumbs; they were beaten with heavy bamboos. Their sufferings were intense, but yet so hardened were they, and so stubborn, that no confession could be extorted from them.

The Governor then produced the coat with the incriminating thread in the collar.

"How came this thread upon your coat?" he asked the leader. But the man, knowing nothing of the matter, answered foolishly and at random.

"This," said the Governor with a smile, "is a new way of catching thieves, invented by a child. Is it not true that Heaven at last repays a crime? Do you not recall the night of the Feast of Lanterns, and the child who called out for help when you passed the Palace chairs? It was thus that the proof of your identity was set upon your coat! Of what avail is your continued denial?"

The thief then saw that his undoing had been wrought by the child whom he had tried to steal, and, pursing up his lips, he spoke no more lies but made a full confession of his misdeeds. He told how for many years he had made it a practice to take advantage of festivals

[Page 62]

and other occasions of popular rejoicing to go forth and reap a harvest from robbery and kidnapping; and how also he would make away with little girls and boys, sometimes selling them and sometimes killing them if no ransom were paid. His crimes were laid bare, fold upon fold, like ranges of mountains. And never had he been arrested before.

Thus, after his crime on the night of the Feast of Lanterns, "The Hawk" was laid by the heels at last as the result of the scheming of a little child, so clever as to cause surprise even to the Emperor; for it was clearly the decree of Heaven that so vile a criminal should not escape the penalty of death.

The Governor interrogated the rest of the band, and full notes were taken of all they said for his report on the case. Then he bethought himself of the abduction of Miss Chen Chu, which had happened on the night of the Feast of Lanterns of the previous year, a case in which no arrest had yet been made.

And if you desire to hear of this matter I must leave awhile the present tale that you may listen to my recital of the other.

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*(Note. ---Here is interpolated in the original an extraneous story of the abduction of a certain beautiful girl, Chen Chu by name, the daughter of an Imperial Clansman. This girl, on the night of the Lantern Festival of the previous year, had been kidnapped by a nun who belonged to the same band of robbers and had insinuated herself into the "curtain" surrounding the clansman's women folk in the street. She set the "curtain" on fire and made away with the girl under pretext of leading her into safety.*

*Miss Chen Chu, after brutal treatment at the hands of the robbers, had been sold into a brothel but had eventually been restored to her parents. The identity of her captors had, however, not come to light, nor was her father anxious that the gang should be arrested, for the scandal which would have been caused by the publication of the facts of the case would have been such that his daughter would thereby have been unable to make a good marriage.*

*The story is long and somewhat tedious, and is moreover so harrowing in its details that it is omitted here. ---Trans.)*

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[Page 63]

## V

While the robbers were being examined under torture, some of them, being in a half-conscious condition from their sufferings, spoke about the abduction of a girl and told how the nun that had secured her also belonged to their band and shared their plunder. They spoke of the setting on fire of the "curtain" and of the girl being taken away in a chair which they had borne away to their hiding place. All this was revealed, and the Governor then knew that this was the same gang that had abducted Miss Chen Chu.

When he found out this fact, he ground his teeth, and, striking the table of justice with his fist in his anger, he cursed the robbers, declaring that not even by death could they expiate so great a record of crime. He sent at once to effect the arrest of the nun and of the woman to whom Miss Chen Chu had been sold; and when these two depraved wretches had been brought before him he gave them each sixty strokes with the heavy bamboo and then put them into the condemned cell.

The same day he memorialized the Throne in the following terms for confirmation of his sentence of death:

[Page 64]

"On the night of the Feast of Lanterns this year, the acts of these robbers were confined to thieving,

"But their crimes on previous occasions have outraged all the proprieties.

"Such people are the most obscene of creatures, rivalling the Hsiao and the Ching [1] which devour their own parents.

"How can they be permitted to pollute the air in the vicinity of the Throne?"

"They should without doubt be executed that peace may prevail in the Imperial City!"

This memorial was read by the Emperor Shen Tsung, and when he saw that the whole gang had been arrested he smiled and his Dragon Face was suffused with joy. "But it was all due to the forethought of this child," he said, and he ordered the Board of Punishments to see that the execution of the entire band was forthwith carried out and instructed the Governor to submit to him the full account of the proceedings in court.

The order was duly carried out, and when all the malefactors had been cut off the Governor reported the fact to the Emperor and submitted a complete record of the case. The Emperor received the memorial, and, placing it in his sleeve, he retired with a smile of satisfaction into his private apartments.

[Page 65]

## VI

Now let us speak of the Empress Ch'ing Sheng. Having received the Imperial commands that the child from outside should be entrusted to her as a good omen for the birth of an heir to the throne, she expressed her thanks for the favour shown to her and led the child into her own place. Here she made inquiry into the happenings which caused his coming to the palace, and Nan Kai answered with a readiness equal to the flowing of water. He had already had audience with the Emperor and it was clearly seen that he was not shy in the presence of illustrious strangers; indeed he seemed quite at his ease, laughing and playing just as if he were in his own home. So the Empress Ch'ing Shen opened out her heart to him, and, taking him upon her lap, she ordered the attendants to bring out her dressing-case. She braided his hair anew and placed a spot of vermilion upon his forehead, making him appear exceedingly beautiful.

All the concubines of the Palace, hearing that the Empress had received a child as a gift from the Emperor, came to visit him and to express their good wishes to the Empress for the birth of an heir. No male child had been yet seen in the Palace, so he was looked upon as a curiosity, and when they saw how glossy were his eyebrows, how bright his eyes, how red his lips, how white his teeth, and how readily and cleverly he spoke upon any subject, they all prized and loved him.

[Page 66]

And though they loved him for himself, they took the more care of him in their desire to please the Empress, and all brought out their valuables, gold and pearls, bracelets and earrings, and gave of these to Nan Kai as "first sight" gifts, each vying with each in filling his sleeves to overflowing with presents.

The Empress told an aged eunuch to put away these presents for him, and she gave the child leave to go where he might wish within the Palace, so he wandered hither and thither at will, giving joy to all whom he encountered, for each one was glad to see so novel a sight.

So ten days sped, and one evening the Emperor came to visit the Empress and ordered the child to be brought before him. The Empress herself went to fetch him, and when she had done so the Emperor asked whether the child had not been frightened.

"I pray Your Majesty," she replied, "to allow me to keep this child a little longer, for he is cleverer than any other, and although he is living in the Palace, he takes everything as naturally as if he had been here all his life. That there is one child so clever as he in the Empire will certainly be a most fortunate matter for Your Majesty."

"But you should know what he did," the Emperor replied. "A large gang of robbers have all been captured by the Governor solely owing to this child, who sewed a silken thread to the collar of the leader who stole him. Not one robber escaped, and all were executed. The child indeed is one of great resource; but it is to be feared

[Page 67]

that his parents do not know that he is here and will be very disturbed by reason of his absence. We must send him back."

Nan Kai, hearing these words, kotowed his thanks to the Emperor, and orders were given that the eunuch who brought him to the Palace should restore him to his home. The Emperor then gave the child a wine cup of carved rhinoceros-horn in a casket, to dispel his fears upon the way, and Nan kai took his leave of the Imperial pair.

The Empress was most unwilling that he should go, and gave him again many presents, which, together with those which he had already received, were packed away into boxes and entrusted to the eunuch to deliver to his parents.

A cart was prepared to carry the child and his escort, and Nan Kai sat within it upon the eunuch's knee. Thus they came to the Wang household.

## VII

Meanwhile in Hsiang Min Kung's house, since the night of the loss of the child, there was not one,

great or small, who did not regret his loss in tears and lamentations, nor scheme to recover him. Only Hsiang Min Kung himself was not affected nor disturbed, and did not even order that search should be made. Yet the women of the house and the head steward sent out the servants in every direction to make enquiry. But no

[Page 68]

trace of him could be found and no further step seemed to be possible.

A few days later came a runner with a message from the Palace; a eunuch was on his way from the Palace bearing a command in writing from the Emperor, to be opened and read to Wang Chao.

Hsiang Min Kung could not guess what this should mean, but ordered that the best guest-chamber should be prepared and a table of incense set out for the reception of the Emperor's message. He himself donned his official hat and his robes of ceremony, and, tablet in hand, approached and prostrated himself, when the cart had arrived at the door, to hear the Imperial order.

Then he saw the eunuch alight with Nan Kai in his arms, and when the servants, who had clustered round, saw that it was indeed the young master who had returned, they waved their arms and stamped their feet in the joy which they were unable to restrain.

"Hearken, all of you," the eunuch cried out, "to the Imperial orders. Thus commands the Emperor:

"Wang Chao, you my Minister, upon the night of the Feast of Lanterns, lost a child. We, the Emperor, found this child and this day We restore him to you. With him We send boxes containing many things given to him to dispel fear. These things are now presented to him and to you in recognition of his wondrous intelligence.

"A respectful attention should be given to Our commands."

[Page 69]

"You, sir," went on the eunuch, addressing Hsiang Min Kung, "are possessed of a most remarkable son!"

"For what reason do you think this?" asked the father.

In answer the eunuch felt in his sleeve and pulled out there from a thick scroll of writing.

"Should you desire to know in what manner your son was lost and was found again," he said, "you will be enlightened by casting a glance over this report."

Hsiang Min Kung took the scroll, and on looking at it saw that it was a report from the Governor upon the trial of a kidnapper. He read further that the man had been arrested upon the Emperor's secret orders.

"If my son, at an age when he smells still of his mother's milk," said Hsiang Min Kung, "attracts the attention of the Son of Heaven and causes the Holy One to be concerned about him so that the thief was arrested, I could not repay one ten-thousandth part of the Holy favour shown even were I to have my body pounded to pieces and my bones ground to powder!"

"The robbers were taken by the doings of the child himself," replied the eunuch with a smile. "The Emperor was not concerned for him, and therein lies the savour of the story."

At this point Nan Kai himself took up his tale and related in detail his adventures on the night of the Feast of Lanterns, how he had seen the Emperor and prostrated himself before the Empress; all was told as continuously as the flowing of water.

When the servants had been listening to the reading

[Page 70]

of the Emperor's command, they had all been gathered round the inner door of the courtyard, and they saw with joy the appearance of Nan Kai; but they knew nothing of his adventures, which they now heard for the first time. And they were bewildered at the strange tale and all praised his cleverness. Then, too, did they understand that what their master had said when the child was lost, was justified to the full, for no search was needed for so resourceful a child.

Then Hsiang Min Kung ordered wine to be brought and a meal to be served to the eunuch, and that one brought out the cup that the Emperor had presented to dispel fear, together with all the other presents bestowed within the Palace. These were all set out in a row, enough to fill a room. The sparkling of the jewels dazzled the eye and their value was not less than many tens of thousands of taels.

"Here, my little brother," said the eunuch, putting his hand upon the child's head, "is enough to keep you with sweetmeats for evermore." And Hsiang Min Kung kotowed his thanks in the direction of the Palace.

His writer was then ordered to indite a memorial of thanks to the Emperor, and this was given to the eunuch to deliver to the Son of Heaven. Hsiang Min Kung also asked that he should be received in Audience with his son on the following morning so that he could express his thanks in person.

"It was by me," said the eunuch, "that your son was encountered and taken to meet the Emperor. I, too,

[Page 71]

would give him a slight present as a remembrance." And he took out two ingots of silver, four lengths of satin and four lengths of thinner silk. These Hsiang Min Kung would fain have refused, but the eunuch would not take back his gifts, so Hsiang Min Kung retained them and gave in return a handsome present. The eunuch then returned to the palace, and when he had been sped upon his way, Hsiang Min Kung and all his household gave themselves up to rejoicing.

"Did I not tell you all not to be so perturbed concerning my son Thirteen, for that he would without doubt return unaided?" asked Hsiang Min Kung. "Not only has he done this but he has brought back with him many presents bestowed by Imperial favour, and he has been the sole cause of the capture of a gang of robbers! Now can you all understand why I was not fearful on his account?"

And all agreed that these words were just.

In after years Nan Kai was known as Wang Ts'ai, and in the period known as Cheng Ho [\[1\]](#) he was already widely reputed as a scholar. He rose to great power as an official, and thus fulfilled the promise of his early youth.

## THE LUCK OF JO-SHU

### I

DAILY with wine let my flagon be full,  
With blossoms of every hue let my garden be gay.  
I sing and I dance, and my heart thrills with joy;  
Free from all care let me live!

The deeds of men pass away like a dream in the spring;  
In the dust and the turmoil of life, many sages have toiled.

But your deep-laid plans and your schemes are of little avail  
When chance decides all.

This poem, written during Sung times, [\[1\]](#) and composed in the measure known as "Moonlight on the West River," implies that the possession of money and rank is solely the result of the destiny of Heaven, and that it is better to live free from care than continually to be striving after honours.

In the historical records of the seventeen dynasties which preceded the days of the Sung, of how many heroes and statesmen are the deeds set forth? And which of these men obtained honours and good fortune in accordance with his deserts?

Scholars so able that, like Yuan Hung, [\[1\]](#) they can write off a dispatch in a moment, using the flank of a horse as a desk, are of little account after all. And their productions are not numerous enough to cover the tops of pickle-jars.

Your military heroes, again, even though possessed of such skill that, like Yang Yu-chi, [\[2\]](#) they can without fail send an arrow through a poplar leaf at a hundred paces, of what real use are they? Their arrows are not numerous enough to be used as fuel under the rice-pot!

A mere fool, if he has good luck, need have no great amount of learning to enable him to pass his examinations with distinction. Let his civil or military learning be never so poor, yet he can rise to the attainment of riches and the highest rank. For the only things that matter are Opportunity, Good Fortune, and Destiny.

The proverb well says:

"If your fate is to be poor, the gold that you dig up from the ground will turn to dross;  
If your fate is to be rich, the paper that you pick up from the floor will turn to cloth."

In a word, everything depends upon the whim of the God of Chance, as Wu Yen-kao indicated in his poem:

The little God of Good Luck [3] sways here and there,  
This way and that way he bows down his head;  
He falls down prone and he stands up in the air,  
And that is all that can be said!

[Page 79]

The Buddhist priest, Hui An, [1] also made a verse upon the subject:

Who does not long for a house of gold?  
By which one are honours and rank not sought?  
But if your fate such things does not hold,  
Your plans and ambitions will come to nought,  
And each one of your sons and your grandsons must  
find his own way as he ought!

So also wrote the famous Su Tung-p'o: [2]

Like the kingdom perched upon a snail's horn, [3]  
Like the profit balanced on a fly's head,  
Such is your reward!  
Why so busy in making your plans?  
Since everything is decided by Fate, [4]  
Who shall be weak, and who shall be strong.

Hearken now to the tale of Chin Wei-hou, who lived at Pien Ching, the capital of the Sung Emperors.

He was a merchant who never failed to rise early each morning and go to bed late each night and who, waking or sleeping, was always full of schemes and plans, never embarking upon any enterprise unless he was sure of a profit. After some years he became tolerably wealthy and then tried a plan which he hoped would make him rich for ever.

The silver which he used in his purchasings was the

[Page 80]

small pieces [1] which came into his possession, for he hoarded the large pieces, never parting with

them. Thus at last he accumulated about 100 taels of silver, which he melted down into a single ingot. This he tied up with a red cord and hid in his bed by his pillow, and every night before he slept he was wont to fondle this ingot. After a further period of years he had accumulated eight such ingots from his savings, and having achieved so much he was satisfied and used to spend all his profit, saving nothing at all.

Now this Chin Wei-hou had four sons, and these, on his seventieth birthday, laid before him an offering of wine. The old man, seeing his offspring all kotowing before him, rejoiced greatly and addressed them as follows:

"My sons, I have ever, during my life, relied upon the protection of Heaven, but I have also worked hard at the same time, making enough money to enable the daily expenses to be met with ease, and I have saved a trifle each day as well. Thus I have acquired eight large ingots of silver, which I have hoarded, and these lie by my pillow, each one tied up with a red cord. I am now about to select an auspicious day for the division of this silver amongst you, each one obtaining two ingots. Thus will each of you have a precious possession sufficient for his protection from poverty."

The four sons were pleased at these words and thanked their father; then, wishing each other well, they dispersed.

That night Chin Wei-hou was somewhat drunk when

[Page 81]

he retired to bed. He lit his lamp and lay down, and, looking again with his bemused eyes upon the silver by his pillow, he stroked it as was his wont and laughed aloud in his joy. Then he composed himself to rest, but had not quite fallen asleep when he heard footsteps near his bed. Thinking that a thief had entered, he listened again, and it seemed to him that the other was also listening. The lamp was still burning dimly, so he parted his bed-curtain and looked out. There he saw eight big men, each dressed in white with a red belt round his waist, and they were all moving slowly towards the door, their bodies bent. They halted, however, when he saw them, and one of them addressed him.

"It was the decree of Heaven," the man said, "that we should attend upon you, sir, and obey your commands. You have been kind to us and have enabled us to grow to our present size, nor have you employed us in business of any kind but have looked after us for many years. Our destiny with you, however, is well-nigh fulfilled, and upon your return to Heaven after your death we would have found another home. But it appears you propose to give us away to your sons. We have no affinity with your sons and so we are leaving you and are going to live with a certain Mr Wang, whose personal name is thus and thus and who lives in such and such a village. Our future destiny remains to be seen, but we shall meet you again on one more occasion."

This speech concluded, the eight men continued their procession and disappeared.

Mr Chin, being much bewildered at what he had seen

and heard, rolled over and rose from his bed. Not stopping to put on his shoes, he went out of the room with his feet bare and saw the eight men going out at the front door. He gave chase hurriedly but tripped over the door-sill and fell headlong, when he woke to find that he had been dreaming.

He picked himself up and made his way back to his room, where, pricking up the wick of his lamp, he held the light to his pillow and found that the eight ingots of silver had vanished. Then he remembered what had been said in his dream, and he sobbed and he sighed to find that it had all come true.

"I should not have believed," he said to himself, "that after a lifetime of care and toil I should have nothing to give to my sons, and that all my savings would go to another. But they said where they were going and I can search till I find the place."

For the rest of the night he slept no more, and, rising at dawn, he woke his sons and told them what had happened.

They received his story with astonishment and doubt, saying one to another, "This silver was clearly not destined for us, but that it should have been seen walking away is very strange. Can it be that our father repents of having promised to divide it amongst us, and, not being able to part with it after all, has invented this story to avoid having to do so?"

Now when Chin Wei-hou saw that his sons doubted him, he desired all the more to know the whole truth, so he inquired where the village lay which had been

named to him in his dream and journeyed thither. On reaching it he learned that there was in truth a man living there whose name was that which he had heard in his dream, so he found the house, and, knocking at the door, entered. Inside he saw that the guest chamber was all lighted up with lamps and that the three sacrifices of fish, flesh, and fowl were set forth.

He asked the reason for this celebration, and in reply the attendants went within and brought out Mr Wang, the master of the house, who greeted Mr Chin, and, bidding him be seated, inquired the reason for his visit.

"This old individual has a matter which is a cause of doubt," replied Chin Wei-hou. "I have therefore come specially to inquire, but in your honourable abode I see preparations being made for a sacrifice of thanksgiving. I venture to beg that you will enlighten me as to the cause."

"The poor thorn [\[1\]](#) of this ancient and foolish person," replied Mr. Wang, "was suddenly afflicted with disease and consulted a soothsayer, who declared that she would recover if her bed were moved from its place. Yesterday the malady became worse and she had a vision, in which she saw eight tall men dressed in white and girt with red, who said to her that they had lived hitherto in the house of a Mr. Chin, but that, their connection with him having ceased, they had come to live here instead. They

then crawled under her bed, and my wife broke out into a cold sweat and from that moment began to mend.

"When the bed was moved, there in the dust below

[Page 84]

it we found eight large ingots of silver, each tied with a red cord. Where they came from we do not know, but we regard them as a gift from Heaven, and for this reason we offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving. That you, worthy sir, have to-day come to inquire indicates that you may know something of this matter."

"The silver of which you speak, sir," replied Chin Wei-hou, agitating his two feet in his extreme vexation, "is the accumulated savings of my whole life. A few days ago, I had a dream, and in my dream I lost my silver and learned the name of you, venerable sir, and of your dwelling-place. It is for this cause that I have come to make inquiry. But how sure are the decrees of Heaven! I have, believe me, no resentment against you, and would only beg that you bring out the said ingots and let me see them that this old person's heart may be at rest."

"That is easy," said Mr Wang, and with a laugh he went inside and returned soon after with four serving boys, each carrying two ingots on a tray, each ingot being tied up with red cord. Chin Wei-hou recognised them at once but made no protestation and dissolved into tears which dripped down audibly upon his person.

"This old individual's luck is extremely bad," he said, feeling the ingots as he had so often done before, "and it is evident that I am not fit to possess so much wealth."

Mr Wang then told the lads to take the silver back again, but seeing Mr Chin in so sad a humour he became himself exceedingly ill at ease and took out three taels of silver in small pieces. These he wrapped up in paper

[Page 85]

and gave to Mr Chin as a parting gift. But Chin Wei-hou was unwilling to receive this.

"My own silver was not blessed for me," he said, "How can I receive yours?"

Mr Wang, however, by force placed the packet in the other's sleeve, and Chin Wei-hou felt within his sleeve for the silver to return it, but though his face became red with his fumbling he could not find the packet. Mr Wang further besought him to accept the gift, so he eventually gave way, and, after saluting his host, took his departure.

When he reached his house he told the whole story to his sons, much to their sorrow. And when he spoke of Mr Wang's present to him he felt again in his sleeve for the packet of silver, but in vain. It had disappeared and he supposed that he must have dropped it on his way home.

But in fact, when Mr Wang was attempting to force the packet upon him and thrust it into his sleeve, he actually placed it in the sleeve of Mr Chin's outermost garment, in which a hole had been worn at the elbow. And even as Chin Wei-hou felt for it, it had already fallen out and lay hidden beneath the door-sill, where it was found when the floor was next swept, thus remaining Mr Wang's property after all.

So you may see that everything that happens, even each mouthful of food that we take, is predestined. It was fated that Chin Wei-hou was not to be the owner of the 800 taels which he had saved, nor even of the three taels which he received as a gift; he could not

[Page 86]

therefore have the power to dispose of even the smaller amount, not to mention the larger.

## II

And now I wish to tell you the story of one who, while walking upon firm ground, yet slipped at every step he took and remained in the depths of poverty. Yet in a wonderful place such as is not even seen in dreams he obtained a treasure of so great a value that its extent could not have been imagined beforehand. And I will relate how he thus became possessed of wealth as was seldom known even among those of ancient days, a tale that remains unsurpassed until now.

## III

In the days of the Emperor Ch'eng Hua [1] of the present Dynasty, there lived outside the Great West Gate at Soochow a man called Wen Shih, whose other name was Jo-hsu. [2] From the time of his infancy he gave evidence of unusual ability; he only needed to do a thing once to be able to do it again successfully, and what he had once learned he never forgot. He was an amateur of chess, painting, and posture-singing, and he played upon the lute, the guitar and the flute tolerably well. When he was a child, a fortune-teller predicted that he

[Page 87]

was destined to acquire an immense fortune. So with this in mind, he always retained a great opinion of himself and made no definite plans to earn a livelihood, but remained at his ease at home eating hollow the mountain of his patrimony.

But after some years, he became aware that he was coming to the end of his resources, and, seeing that others were able to succeed in business and often to make large profits, he began to think that he too might try his hand at trading. He therefore made various attempts, but, try how he might, he never

succeeded in making any money at all.

One day he heard someone say that fans could be sold well in Peking, so he hired an assistant and began laying in a stock of these articles. He bought some fans of the best kind, covered with gold paper and delicately fashioned, and these he sent with presents to eminent scholars of the time, requesting each to be kind enough to inscribe a poem of his own composition on the surface of a fan. Some of these gentlemen obligingly dashed off a few lines, and, having inscribed them as requested on the fans, the value of which was much enhanced thereby, they returned the fans to Jo-hsu.

The fans of the second quality he dealt with himself, hiring a clever penman to imitate thereon the handwriting of the aforementioned scholars, with intent to pass off these inscriptions as genuine upon unsuspecting purchasers. And indeed Jo-hsu made several very creditable imitations with his own hand.

The poorer quality of fans, with plain paper and no

[Page 88]

ornamentation, cost only a few cash each; but even these he calculated to sell at double their original price without any difficulty.

When his preparations were completed, he chose an auspicious day, and, after packing the fans up in a box, set off for Peking.

It was a most unfortunate circumstance that that summer happened to be an unusual one in the capital. The rain poured down every day, and there was no hot weather at all. There was consequently no market whatever for fans until very late in the season, and, to make things worse, the cool weather of autumn set in unusually early. Then, by good luck, the sun shone out brightly for days together, and, as there are always a number of young men in the capital who like to carry a handsome fan from Soochow in their sleeves when they show themselves in the streets, there was at last a certain limited demand for his wares.

But when he came to open his box, he could have wept with vexation at the sight that met his eyes.

Now the trying time in Peking is during the seventh and eighth moons when the weather is very humid and hot, and during the last few days of this season it had been even warmer and damper than usual. And Jo-hsu found that the ink and the glue on his fans had all run together and each fan had become practically solid and impossible to open. If force were used to pull them apart, the surface of one side of a fold was found to be adhering to the opposite side, and the fans were in so terrible a state that those ornamented with inscriptions

[Page 89]

and painting were of not the slightest value, and there was nothing saleable except the cheapest kind which had no ornamentation at all. These, which were not spoiled, he was able to sell, and thus he

acquired enough money to pay for his travelling expenses home again; but of course all his capital was lost.

All Jo-hsu's ventures ended in a similar way, and not only did he lose money himself, but he managed to involve in his losses those who did business with him, not even excepting his assistants. So his friends nicknamed him "Unlucky Wen."

In a few years his capital was all spent and there was not a cash left; he had not, indeed, even succeeded in getting a wife.

He eked out a beggarly existence by obtaining a few casual commissions of writing or painting, now and then, but he had no regular employment. Nevertheless he remained a witty fellow, full of quips and ready with his tongue, and his friends all found him as entertaining as ever so that no party was complete without him.

Thus he was just able to exist from day to day, and keep body and soul together without making any money. But he still retained his old swagger and his affectation of superiority, and did not consort much with the needy young idlers of the town. Those who were sorry for him frequently recommended him to fill the post of private tutor, but most respectable families rather looked askance at him as a ne'er-do-weel. No household of eminence would employ him, and he refused as beneath him any employment in a humble family, so on this

[Page 90]

account men of leisure and scholars used, for the most part, to distort their countenances at one another when they met him and say: "There goes Unlucky Wen!"

## IV

One day he heard that some neighbours of his who were engaged in the sale of merchandise overseas were about to start upon one of their expeditions. There were about forty of them in all, and chief among them were, of course, Chang Ta, Li Ehr, Chao Chia, and Ch'ien I. [1] And it occurred to Jo-hsu that as he had lost all he possessed and was at his wits' end for employment it might be a good thing for him to accompany them.

"I shall see the customs of those who live in foreign countries," he thought, "and shall gain new experience. They surely will not refuse to accept me as their companion and I shall be free from care in the matter of the provision of firewood and rice in my house. And furthermore there may well be enjoyment to be obtained."

Just as he was engaged in these reflections, who should come strolling by but Chang Ta himself. Now this man's other name was Chang Ch'eng-yun, [2] and he had all his life engaged in foreign trade and dealt especially in rare jewels and precious stones. He was a most open-handed person and was

always ready with help in a worthy cause. He was known to his intimates as "The Sage."

[Page 91]

When Jo-hsu saw him, he went up and put his proposition. "Most assuredly, my friend," replied Chang Ta. "When we are upon a ship at sea, we find that the time hangs very heavily upon our hands and if you were to come with us, brother Wen, with your merry tongue, the time would pass quickly enough. I feel sure that all of us will be overjoyed at the prospect of your company! There is just one thing: we are all taking merchandise for sale, and if you take nothing you will not have anything to show for your trouble upon your return home. That would be a pity. I will see if we cannot, between us, raise some small sum for your benefit to enable you to buy some goods to take with you."

"I am indeed very much obliged to you for your kindness," returned Jo-hsu, "but, as regards your proposal to help me, I hardly expect that the rest will share your benevolent intentions!"

"As to that," said Chang Ta, as he turned to go, "we shall see what can be done."

When Jo-hsu was again by himself there happened along a blind fortune-teller, sounding his gong as he picked his way. Our hero felt in his pouch and there he found a single cash that he had overlooked, so he stopped the blind man, and, giving him the copper piece, asked him to make a pronouncement as regards his luck in money matters.

"Yours," said the fortune-teller, "is no ordinary case: I foretell that you will acquire very great riches!" and he passed on, sounding his gong.

"I am but going across the seas on a pleasure trip,"

[Page 92]

thought Jo-hsu to himself, "merely to pass the time. How shall I be able to do any trading? If they do assist me, their help is not likely to amount to any considerable sum. I cannot possibly become rich so quickly; that fortune-teller must be an imposter." And just then Chang Ta came back in a rage.

"One cannot talk about money," he exclaimed, "to a person who professes to be one's friend. Those people are indeed mean! They were all pleased enough to hear that you are going with us, but when I inquired as to which of them would be willing to help you in the matter of money, not one of them came forward. All refused except a couple of old friends of mine, who, with me, have subscribed the sum of one tael of silver for you. Here it is; but I fear that you will not be able to buy any merchandise with so small a sum. You had better purchase some little extra in the way of provisions. Your rice rations on board will, of course, be our affair."

Jo-hsu was very grateful and thanked his friend as he handed over the money. "But be quick," the latter said, "and get your things together, for the junk weighs anchor almost immediately."

"I have so little to get together," answered Jo-hsu ruefully, "that I shall be with you immediately." And so saying he departed, looking at the money as he went and thinking that he could hardly buy very much with it. As he returned he passed by a number of baskets of newly gathered oranges displayed for sale in the street.

[Page 93]

Red as the flame which spurts afar,  
Big as a newly risen star,  
Their skins still smooth and their juice not yet sweet,  
Before the frost comes not many you'd meet.  
Better than any of Farmer Li's,  
Su had nothing so fine on his trees.  
Just as good as those of Swatow,  
And better than those of Foochow.

Now on the two islands in the Great Lake on which stand the East and West Tung-t'ing hills, the sun is warm and the soil fertile, very much like the conditions in those districts where grow the oranges of Foochow and Swatow, whose fame is universal. And the Tung-t'ing oranges resemble these very closely, both in colour and fragrance. When they are first picked, they are slightly acid in flavour, but when they become ripe they are both sweet and luscious and they cost but one-tenth of the price of the southern variety. They are called "Tung-t'ing Reds," and when Jo-hsu saw them he thought to himself: "Now for one tael I can buy more than a hundred catties of these fruits. They will do capitally for slaking one's thirst on board the junk, and perhaps I can give away some to those who have been kind enough to help me!" So he made his purchase, had the fruit packed in two bamboo baskets, and prevailed upon the seller to carry them on board for him together with his luggage.

And when the party on board the junk saw him coming on board with his baskets of oranges, they all burst out

[Page 94]

laughing, and clapping their hands with merriment exclaimed: "Just look at Mr Wen! He has brought with him some valuable merchandise after all!"

Jo-hsu was much abashed at this ironical reception, but he swallowed his resentment and boarded the junk, though he did not venture to speak about his purchase.

And thus the voyage began, and they gradually reached the great sea. For days they saw only the silvery waves rolling over and over with foam and snow-white spray which turned again to silvery foam. And the seas whirled and turned as the sunbeams by day and the moonbeams by night danced upon the surface, the water sparkling as though the Milky Way had fallen and were floating on the ocean.

## V

On they sped for many days before a favourable wind, and no one knew how many miles they had come. But suddenly one day land was sighted, and from the junk they could soon see a large and populous city with houses piled up together like a range of mountains, and they knew that they had reached the capital of some country. They moored the junk in a small harbour where they would be secure from waves and winds, and letting go the anchor they tied up to a large stake which they drove into the bottom.

The passengers all went ashore to see the sights, for it was a place which they had visited before and was

[Page 95]

called the country of Chi Ling. Chinese wares could always be sold there for several times their original cost, and the produce of the country could always, when taken back to China, be disposed of equally well, so that the total profit on a journey there and back sometimes amounted to eight or nine fold the original capital, and men would risk their lives to go there. The party had all done business there before, and each one had his regular agents and knew where to find shelter and to obtain brokers and interpreters, so they all went on shore to seek for what they required except Wen Jo-hsu, who stayed on board to look after the junk, for he did not know his way about and had nowhere to go on shore.

So he sat idly on the deck, and as he mused he bethought himself of his oranges, which he had not set eyes upon since he came on board. He imagined that they must all have spoiled from having been shut up so long in so confined a space as the hold, but he thought that he would like to take advantage of the absence of the rest of the party to look at them; so he told the sailors to hoist them up from down below.

When they appeared, he opened the baskets and found all the fruit in good condition, to his great surprise. But not content with this, Jo-hsu must needs unpack the oranges and spread them all over the deck, thus taking the first step towards his good fortune, for the time was at hand when his ill-luck was to change. The ship blushed a beautiful colour as the result of his fruit being all spread out, and from a little distance it looked as though covered

[Page 96]

with gleaming points of fire, like the sky on a starry night.

The natives on the shore were attracted by the sight, and a crowd came down to the water's edge near the junk and asked what those beautiful things were. Jo-hsu did not understand, and made no reply to their questions, but, seeing that among the oranges was one which was beginning to show signs of spoiling, he picked it out and peeled and ate it. On seeing this the crowd on shore became greater than

ever. "Why! they are good to eat!" they said; and one, bolder than the rest, asked Jo-hsu whether they were for sale and what the price of each was.

Our hero did not understand what was said, but one of the sailors who understood a little of the language, thinking to play a joke upon the inquirer, held out one finger in reply, as who should say "one silver piece for each orange!"

The inquirer then opened his coat, revealing a sumptuous belt of red silk, and, feeling in the wallet attached to it, pulled out a silver piece, saying, in his own language, "I will buy one of them to try!"

Jo-hsu took the coin and, trying it in his hand, estimated its weight as about a tael. "I wonder how many he expects to get for this," he thought to himself. "I did not see him weigh it!" [\[11\]](#) So, by way of an experiment, he took one orange, the biggest and most beautiful one within his reach, and gave it to the man. The latter took it, felt its weight, and, saying that it

[Page 97]

looked very good, he tore it open at once. The scent of the fruit reached his nose, and indeed was apparent to all those standing near him and they loudly expressed their approval.

The purchaser did not, of course, know good from bad in the matter of oranges, but, having seen Jo-hsu eating the fruit on the deck, did as he had seen him do. He did not, however, divide the orange, but stuffed it all into his mouth, so that the juice ran down upon his person; nor did he even spit out the pips but swallowed the fruit whole.

"Ah! that is excellent indeed!" he cried aloud in pleasure, and feeling again in his wallet he pulled out ten more silver coins, saying that he would buy ten more to take as a present to the Court. Jo-hsu was delighted with his unexpected good fortune, and, choosing ten of the oranges, handed them over to the other. Then more of the crowd came forward to buy. Some wanted one, others two or three, and all paid him the same price; and they seemed delighted out of all bounds with their purchase.

Now in this country silver was used as coins, and the coins were covered with inscriptions and patterns; those with dragons and phoenixes on them were the most valuable, and there were others of less value, some with human figures stamped on them, some with birds and animals, some with trees, while those of least value had rushes figured on them. But all were of pure silver and of the same weight. The coins that Jo-hsu had received in payment for his oranges were all of the kind with

[Page 98]

rushes on them, and the buyers were overjoyed at having been able to purchase such excellent goods at so reasonable a price, for they were just as fond of making a good bargain as the Chinese.

In a few moments two-thirds of his stock was sold out. But among the crowd were some who had brought no money, and these were very much disgusted and hurried off to get some coins. Jo-hsu soon had hardly any fruit left and thought that he would put up the price of the few that remained, so he

signed that he was thinking of keeping the rest for his own use and that they were not for sale. The crowd then expressed their willingness to buy for a higher price, taking two oranges for four pieces of silver, and they grumbled at their ill luck at coming so late into the market. The others saw them buying at an increased price, and they also complained and said that they wanted more and that Jo-hsu had no right to put the price up. The newcomers, however, who wished to buy said: "Do not listen to these men; you need not sell any more to them!" And while everyone was talking and disputing about the price, the man who had been the first to purchase returned at a great pace on horseback and pulled up at the junk's side. jumping off his horse, he forced his way through the crowd and cried out in a loud voice:

"Do not sell any more in separate lots! I will take all that are left, for I want them for the Khan!" And when the crowd heard his words they all stood back and watched.

Now Jo-hsu was a cunning fellow, and when he saw

[Page 99]

that the man with whom he had to deal was a person of authority he turned out all the oranges that he had left in his basket and found that there were only some fifty remaining. He counted them up and began to bargain, explaining by signs that he wanted to keep them all for his own use and that they were not for sale, but that if the other were willing to give a little more he might be persuaded to sell a few, and that he had been selling the last at the rate of two silver pieces for one orange. The man then felt in the bag attached to his saddle and pulled out some money. Then showing a piece with trees stamped on it he said: "Well, what about this?" But Jo-hsu signed that he would not accept that sort of money but wanted the kind he had before. The man smiled and then showed him a coin with phoenixes on it. "What say you to one of these?" he asked.

Jo-hsu again signified that he would not accept that kind either and would only take the sort of coin that he had had at first.

The man then laughed and said: "One of these coins is worth a hundred of the kind I gave you at first. I would not really have paid you in these coins; I was only joking. And if you refuse this coin and are only willing to accept the other sort you must indeed be a simpleton! If, however, you are willing to sell me all those things of yours and want an extra small coin for each one, that is no great matter!"

Jo-hsu counted up all his oranges and found that he had fifty-two left. He thereupon indicated that he

[Page 100]

wanted 156 of the coins with rushes on them for the whole number- And the man took them all immediately at that price, and a bamboo basket as well, for which he paid one more silver piece.

He put the basket on his horse and with a friendly laugh and a crack of his whip he rode off, and the rest of the crowd, seeing that there was nothing more left to buy, soon dispersed.

Jo-hsu then went down into the hold with a balance and weighed one of the coins that he had received. He found that it scaled nearly nine-tenths of a tael. He weighed others and found that they were all much the same. Then he counted all the coins that he had received and found that he had just about a thousand. Two he gave to the sailors as a present and the rest he stowed away in his baggage. Then with a laugh he said to himself: "That blind man was right after all in his soothsaying." And he was overcome with joy as he thought what a good joke it would be to tell to his companions on their return . . . . [1]

## VI

The others at last returned to the junk with the brokers to complete the sale of their goods, and Wen Jo-hsu told them the tale of his deal. "What luck! What luck!" they said, in astonishment and pleasure. "When we started you had no capital, and now you have a fine sum!"

[Page 101]

And Chang Ta clapped his hands with pleasure. "Everyone called him 'Unlucky Wen,' " he cried, "and now his luck has evidently turned." And then speaking to our hero, he went on: "This money that you have got will not buy very much in these parts. You had better conclude a bargain with some of our friends here, and buy from them a few hundred taels worth of the Chinese goods that they have brought with them. These you could exchange for native produce on shore, some rare and strange jewels perhaps, and, taking them home with you, you could then sell them at a great profit. That would surely be better than carrying the money back merely!"

"I am usually a man of extremely bad luck," answered Jo-hsu, "and when I have tried on former occasions to make money with my capital, I have invariably lost all that I ventured. I am very much obliged to you all for having brought me here, where I have been able to achieve success in a commercial enterprise without capital; thus suddenly to have a stroke of good fortune is beyond my expectation. So why should I seek more profit? Ten chances to one, if I were to make another venture I should come to grief. Such another attempt to make money in "Tung-t'ing Reds," for instance, would almost certainly prove a failure!"

"But silver," urged the other, "is a commodity that we all need. Since we have the merchandise and are ready to sell to you, why should we not accommodate each other mutually to the profit of all?"

"When a man is bitten by a snake," replied Jo-hsu

[Page 102]

gravely, "he starts with fright at the sight of a grass rope for the next three years! The very sound of the word 'merchandise' makes me apprehensive. No, thank you! I will take my silver home with me, if you please!" And all clapped their hands in amusement at this speech, but said that it was a pity that Jo-hsu refused to make a larger profit when he had the chance.

And soon they went ashore again to complete their purchases at the warehouses, bartering their wares for native produce. In about fifteen days all was finished and Jo-hsu, who knew when he was well off, was perfectly satisfied and had no regrets. As for the others, their business settled, they went finally on board, and, I having burned incense to the tutelary deity of sailors, and drunk, in a cup of wine, success to the next stage of their journey, they cast off and set forth again

## VII

They were not many days out from shore when, one morning, a great change came over the heavens.

Murky clouds the sun obscured,  
Milky waves to heaven roared,  
Fearful snakes and dragons rent the air with shriek and hiss,  
All the fishes and the turtles scuttled down to the abyss.  
junks, great and small, careered before the wind,  
Like crows which in a tempest no roosting place can find.

[Page 103]

Islands rose and fell, As buckets in a well,  
(Deep and black as ink)  
Shake before they sink. [\[1\]](#)  
Inside the junk they were tumbled tip and down again  
As, after harvest, in a sieve is tossed the winnowed grain.  
Outside the junk, all was mist and flying spray,  
Like the steam that billows up from rice that boils and boils away.  
And pale grew the sailors when the tempest lashed the sea,  
For the Wind-god an angry god was he.

And the captain, when he saw the wind rise, shortened sail and did not trouble himself about east or west, south or north, but let the junk drive before the storm.

By and by, an island was sighted through the mist, and, approaching it with sails close-reefed, they stood in for the land, and soon they saw that the island was apparently uninhabited.

Trees that cleave the upper air,  
Grassy carpet on the ground,  
Jungle rank and mountain bare,  
With the track of fox and hare  
All around.  
But of dragons in their fens or of tigers in their dens  
Not a sound.  
Who would claim so desolate a shore,  
Never pressed by mortal foot before?

When they got round to the lee of the island, the sailors threw out an anchor from the stern of the junk and made the bows fast to a stake and to a mud anchor on shore. The captain then told his passengers that he intended to remain where he was until he could see what the wind would do. And Jo-hsu was exceedingly anxious about his money and wished that he had the wings of a bird to fly home at once, or, at least, that he could finish his journey by road, for he could not reconcile himself to sitting idle merely on account of a storm. So, feeling very indignant and determined to do something, he informed his friends that he intended to go ashore and inspect the island.

They replied that they did not think that the island could provide anything worth looking at, but Jo-hsu could not endure the thought of doing nothing on board, and asked if no one would go with him. The others, however, said that they had been very uncomfortable during the storm, and that they were all very tired and yawning from lack of sleep and wanted to be left alone. So our hero summoned up all his strength and resolution, and jumped on shore, where he had a strange adventure, as you shall hear.

Jo-hsu, finding that no one was willing to companion him, was all the more determined to go, and would have done so even if he had been compelled to haul himself up the hill by the creepers which grew upon it, and thus arrive at the highest point.

But the summit of the island was not very high and there was no need for any arduous climbing. So, though

our friend found some difficulty in making his way through the undergrowth (for there was, of course, no path) he managed to reach the top of the hill without mishap.

There he sat down and gazed at the sea, which lay all around him. At the spectacle he felt no bigger than a leaf, and so remote and desolate that he shed tears at his loneliness.

He thought to himself "Here am I, a man of great natural ability, but crippled by bad luck. I have no home, and now that I have come over the sea, although I have met with a stroke of good fortune and have a few pieces of silver in my wallet, yet who can say whether I shall obtain any benefit from them or not? Now I am alone on this island and have not yet reached the mainland; thus my life is still within the clutches of the dragon-god of the sea. I feel by no means easy in my mind as to my future." And as he was musing thus his eye fell suddenly upon a large domed object looming up above the grass; he went up to look at it and found to his astonishment that it was an empty tortoise shell as big as a bed.

"I never thought," he exclaimed, "that the world contained so large a tortoise as that! I do not believe that anyone has ever seen such a thing before; no one, I know, would believe me if I said that I had. I have journeyed thus far over the sea but have not yet laid hands upon any foreign object to take back with me is a memento of my travel. I will therefore take back this shell with me, for it is a rare

curiosity and when people

[Page 106]

see it it will prevent them from saying that all Soochow men are liars! [1] And what is more, if I have it sawn in two and legs fitted to the two halves, it will make two excellent beds: that will be a strange thing indeed."

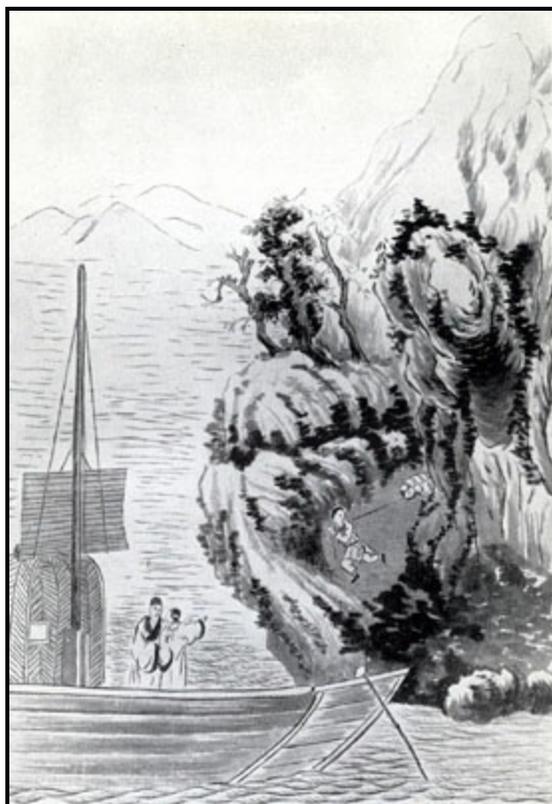
So he took off the long leggings of cloth [2] that he wore and tied them together to form a rope, which he knotted round the shell, and then proceeded to pull it down hill after him. His friends on the junk saw him coming, and at last he arrived within hail. "Here comes Jo-hsu back again," they cried in amusement, "but what can that large object be that he is pulling after him?"

"I will tell you all about it," shouted Jo-hsu in reply. "This is a memento of my journey overseas that I am going to take home with me."

They all looked attentively at it and saw that it resembled a great bed without legs and with a shelf underneath it; and they were astonished indeed when they found that it was actually the shell of a huge tortoise, and they asked him what he thought he could do with it.

"Well, it is merely a curious thing," replied Jo-hsu "that I wish to take home with me." At which they all smiled. "You refused to buy anything proper to take home," they said; "what use can such a thing be?"

"One use it may have," said one. "If he is in any great perplexity about anything he can always use it for purposes of divination," [3] and someone else suggested that the druggist shops might make medicine out of it for it was far bigger than many hundreds of ordinary tortoise shells put together.



[Page 107]

"It does not matter to me," said Jo-hsu at length, "whether it has any use or not. It is a rare curiosity; it has cost me nothing, and I am going to take it home with me." And calling some of the sailors he had it hoisted on board and stowed away down in the hold. When he first saw it on the hill-top it did not appear to be so very big, but it seemed to be of vast size when it was on board, and had it not been a large junk they could never have got so clumsy and awkward an object down below. The others were all much amused at the incident. "When we get home," said one, "we must say, if anyone asks us, that it is a big deal in tortoise-shell that Mr Wen has negotiated."

"Pray do not laugh at me," said our hero. "Good or bad, it is of use and it is not a worthless thing I and they all smiled as they watched Jo-hsu get some water and wash the great shell inside and out and, when he had dried it carefully, pack his money and clothes in it. After that he tied it up neatly with rope and it served very admirably as a trunk. "There, you see!" said he, "I told you that it was not without a use!" and the others said that they had always known that Mr Wen was an ingenious person.

## VIII

Next day the wind flew favorably, and they cast off once more, and after not many days they arrived at a port which was within the territory of the province of

[Page 108]

Fukien. They brought the ship to anchor and found a crowd of people waiting to do business with the overseas merchants. Brokers and middlemen came on board and at once all tried to secure custom.

"Come to Mr Chang! Try Mr Li!" they cried, and there ensued a mighty pulling and pushing and a great hubbub and to-do. Some of the traders on board chose people with whom they had done business before, and the rest of the crowd departed. Most of the traders then repaired to the house of a certain Persian merchant in the town, and there they sat and waited. The proprietor, when he saw them come, warned his servants and gave them money to buy supplies, and calling his cook he gave him orders that a banquet should be prepared for all. When he had finished giving his instructions he came into the guest chamber to receive his visitors.

Now this Persian was named Ma Pao-ha and he did a great business in precious stones with foreign traders and had an immense capital, no one knew how much. All those on the junk had done business with him in past years, except Wen Jo-hsu, of course, upon whom he set eyes for the first time. The Persian had lived many years in China and had adopted Chinese costume, and indeed looked very much like a Chinese except that he shaved his eyebrows and clipped his beard and moustache. Moreover he had deep-set eyes and a high bridge to his nose, which, of course, made him look very

strange.

When he had come out and greeted our friends, he sat and talked with them politely and drank a few cups of tea with them; then he stood up and asked them all into

[Page 109]

the big banqueting hall, where they saw wine and meats set forth in a splendid array.

According to the custom of this Persian, when a trading junk arrived from abroad, he first of all expended a considerable sum in a feast for those with whom he did business and then entered into negotiations with them. On this occasion he appeared holding in his hands a large tray decorated with a pattern of chrysanthemums in foreign enamel. Then with a bow he said: "Now, gentlemen, may I ask you to be kind enough to let me see the invoices of the goods which you have brought with you for sale? Then I can arrange your seats at table."

For this Persian regarded money as the most important of all things, and his custom was to look over the invoices of those with whom he did business and see whether there were any rare or curious gems amongst their wares; and the owner of any particularly valuable article he would place in the seat of honour. The rest he would seat in order of the apparent value of their goods, quite regardless of their respective ages. This was the curious custom of the man, and thus the nature and value of every man's merchandise was well known to all concerned and each took his seat accordingly.

At last each man was seated except Wen Jo-hsu only, and he still stood erect, feeling rather embarrassed until the host said: "This gentleman I do not think I have met before! It is doubtless the first time that he has come to trade in these parts and the merchandise that he has brought with him is possibly not of great value?"

[Page 110]

"This," replied the others, "is a very good friend of ours who had a fancy to make this trip with us. He has money with him, but he is not dealing in goods on this occasion, so he must, of course, sit at the lower end of the table."

Jo-hsu blushed with shame and took the seat indicated; the Persian seated himself in the seat proper for the host, and the feast began. And they all talked of their wares: "I have so and so many cat's eyes," said one; "and I so and so many emeralds," said another, boasting and bragging of their value. But Jo-hsu sat mumchance and regretted much that he had not cut a better figure. "I wish that I had taken their advice," he thought, "and bought a little merchandise at that place to bring here. I have, it is true, a little money in my wallet, but I have nothing at all to talk about." He consoled himself nevertheless with the reflection that, having formerly been a man without any capital at all, he had indeed met with a great stroke of luck and that this, at least, was something to be thankful for. But just then he had no great zest in the feast, and he watched the others playing at "guess-fingers" [\[1\]](#) and other games of forfeits till the banquet drew to its conclusion.

Now their host was a man of long experience, and when he observed Jo-hsu sitting sadly in silence and not uttering a word, he did not like to ask him the cause, but invited him to drink a cup or two of wine. The others, however, soon rose from the table and said that they had had enough wine and must return to the junk as the

[Page 111]

evening was drawing on, but that they would display their goods next day, so they took leave of their host and departed. The host had the broken meats cleared away and then went off to bed.

## IX

Next day the Persian rose early and walked down to where the junk was moored and greeted the traders, going on board the vessel to see what they had. He went down into the hold and there he saw the large bulky thing that Mr Wen had brought from the island. And when the Persian saw it he started with astonishment. "To which of you gentlemen does this precious article belong?" he asked at length. "Yesterday at dinner I do not think that it was mentioned. That was doubtless because it was not for sale!" The others all laughed and said that it was the property of Jo-hsu, and one added that he feared that no one would wish to buy such a thing.

The Persian then went up to our friend and looked him in the face, his own countenance suffused with an angry flush. Then, turning to the others, he said: "I have known you all for many years! How can you thus fool me and cause me to offend a new client by seating him in the lowest place at my table! By what right do you do this, I ask?" Then taking Jo-hsu kindly by the arm he said again to the rest: "The remainder of our business can wait. I must now, with

[Page 112]

your leave, go again on shore with this gentleman and make amends for my conduct of yesterday."

The others were at a loss to account for this change of attitude, but about a dozen of them, either those who know Jo-hsu better than the rest, or those who were more curious by nature, guessing that there was something unusual toward, went ashore after them and followed them to the house of the Persian. There they saw the latter bring forward his best seat and place it in position, and then, taking no notice of any of the rest, he put Jo-hsu in the place of honour. "I have lately offended deeply against you!" he said. "Please, now, seat yourself."

Mr Wen was, however, both perplexed and uneasy. "It surely cannot be," he thought, "that the old tortoiseshell is really valuable! That would be far too good to be true!" Meanwhile the Persian had gone into the inner room, where he remained a few moments before coming back. He then bowed to everyone present and invited them into the room where they had dined the day before. There they found tables again spread for drinking wine, and the chief table was far more elegant than before. The host then poured out wine, and, bowing before Jo-hsu, he said to the others: "This gentleman must to-day, it is but his right, sit in the chief place, for it is true that all your junk-load of goods put together

is not equal in value to what he has, and I feel very apologetic for my former lack of courtesy towards him!"

The others looked at one another and some thought

[Page 113]

that the whole thing was a joke, while others stared in astonishment. However, they all sat down, not knowing what to believe. When they had filled and emptied their glasses three times, the host rose and said: "I would now like to ask, if I may, whether that valuable article of yours, sir, is for sale or not?" and Wen Jo-hsu, being a cunning fellow, smiled and said at once: "That depends, sir, on whether I could get a good price for it. If so, I might be willing to sell."

And the host, on hearing these words was overjoyed and his face flushed with pleasure. "You really are willing to sell it?" he said, rising again. "Then what are your instructions regarding the price? For I would not venture to make any niggardly disputation in so important a matter."

Now Wen Jo-hsu had of course no idea what the value of the shell might be, and thought that if he named a price which was too small, he would appear to be ignorant, while if he named too large a price he feared that he would be laughed at. And, after sitting a while in thought and silence, his face flushed and his ears hot, he was still unable to think of anything to say. But Chang Ta looked over at him and closed one eye in a significant manner, holding out his hand, behind his chair so that the host could not see, with three fingers extended and then writing in the air the character for 10,000, as if to say "You had better ask 30,000 taels."

Wen Jo-hsu, however, shook his head and put out one finger, as who would say "I would not dare to ask more than ten thousand! This, however, was observed

[Page 114]

by his host, who asked him again what sum he desired to name as a price. Whereupon Chang Ta, just by way of an experiment, said: "Judging, sir, by the sign that my friend made to me just now with his finger, I imagine that he is thinking of asking ten thousand taels."

At this the host burst out laughing. "That is as much as saying that he is not selling at all," he observed, "and that he is merely joking with me. For who could think of mentioning so paltry a price in connection with so valuable an article?" And everyone was struck dumb with astonishment at these words and rose, staring in bewilderment. Some of them pulled Wen Jo-hsu across the room and consulted with him in whispers. "What wonderful luck!" they said. "It is indeed probably worth far more than that. We really had no idea of fixing such a price! Now you must quote a really big price to him, and then if he bargains you can come down a little." But Jo-hsu still felt extremely diffident about quoting any price and began to speak and then hesitated. "Go on, go on," the rest prompted him, and the host also begged him to speak out without fear and say how much he would really take; so at last he managed to stammer forth that he would be willing to take 50,000 taels. But the host still shook his head; "I beg your pardon," he said. "You cannot be in earnest!" And he pulled Chang Ta aside and

said to him: "You, at least, sir, are an overseas merchant who has been dealing with me for many years. Everyone calls you 'The Sage,' and you will not, I feel sure, tell me that you are ignorant of the origin and value of this shell. What

[Page 115]

you really mean is that your friend is unwilling to sell. You are all merely joking with me!"

"Indeed it is not so," replied the other. "This is a good friend of ours who accompanied us in our journey simply for his own amusement. He has never done any business with us before, and this article came into his possession entirely by accident; he did not acquire it in the way of business, And on this account he really does not know its value. So if you are indeed willing to pay him 50,000 taels for it, it will set him tip for the rest of his life and he will be perfectly satisfied."

"If that truly is the position," rejoined the Persian, you will have to be his guarantor in the matter and I shall be very much indebted to you. But there must on no account be any subsequent withdrawal from the bargain!" And so saying he ordered one of his assistants to bring him the "scholar's four jewels," [1] and then, taking a sheet of red paper ornamented with gold, he folded it so as to make lines to write upon, and handed it, together with a pen, to Chang Ta saying: "Now I will ask you to be kind enough to preside and to write out an agreement so that we can bring this business to a successful conclusion."

"This gentleman," said Chang Ta, indicating one of his friends, "is a most excellent pen-man; allow me to entrust this matter to Mr Ch'u Chung-yin." So Mr Ch'u moistened the ink and rubbed it on the ink-slab and spread open the paper. Then, taking the pen he wrote as follows:

[Page 116]

#### Memorandum of Agreement with Chang Ch'eng-yun and party.



"Whereas the Soochow Merchant, Wen Shih, has brought with him from abroad one large Tortoise Shell, and Whereas the Persian Merchant Ma Pao-ha is willing to purchase this said shell for fifty thousand taels, this present agreement is to witness that the one party shall hand over the goods and the other party shall hand over the money, and that neither the one nor the other shall attempt to withdraw from the bargain. And if any reluctance is shown on either side, a similar sum shall be paid as a fine."

This was written out in duplicate and dated on the back, while below were written the names of all present, Chang Ch'eng-yun's name being written first and the rest beneath. The name of Ch'u Chung-yin, who had made out the document, was written last of all. The two copies were then placed together and the date was written again over the junction of the two sheets, so that half the date appeared on each. The two principals, Wen Shih and Ma Pao-ha, then affixed their private marks, as did all the rest, each opposite his name, Chang Ch'eng-yun tn remarking that their middleman's fee [1] should amount to a considerable sum, to which the Persian

assented with a smile. When the signing was completed, the Persian went into the inner room and reappeared with a box of silver.

"First I intend to pay out the middleman's fee," he remarked, "and then I shall have something further to say." They all gathered round him and watched him open the box, which was full of packets each containing fifty taels of silver; there were twenty packets, or 1000 taels in all. This he presented to Chang Ta with both hands, saying that the money was for distribution among all concerned.

While the matter was under discussion as they sat at wine, and also while the agreement was being drawn up, the traders all spoke at once and without order, for they were as confused as a flock of birds flying at random and did not really credit the genuineness of the affair. But now, when they saw their host bring out all that gleaming silver as bargain money, they realized that he was in earnest. And Jo-hsu looked like a man who was drunk or dreaming and could not say a word, but watched the proceedings vacantly staring.

Chang Ta took him by the sleeve and pulled it as though to rouse him to consciousness. "How are you going to divide this money?" he asked. "That is for you to decide!" But Jo-hsu replied that he would sooner get the principal matter settled first.

"With regard to the payment of the price," said the Persian, "I have a proposal to make. The silver is all ready within; it has recently been weighed and not the value of a hair is lacking. I would ask you, together

with one or two of your friends, to accompany me and look it over, weighing a bundle or two; the rest of the silver can then be taken as correct. But this silver is indeed a large amount. To carry it away would take a considerable time; to transport it all overseas on your junk would be attended by a certain risk and danger. [1] Moreover you, Mr Wen, are alone; how will you be able to carry it down to your junk? There are many difficulties in this matter to be considered."

"What you say," replied Jo-hsu after some thought, "is true enough, but what do you suggest as an alternative?"

"My views," replied the Persian, addressing his guests, "are these. I see no reason son why Mr Wen should now return home at all. I am the owner in this place of a silk store representing a capital of three thousand taels invested in stock; it contains altogether 100 'chien,' [2] for it is a large establishment. The value of the premises is two thousand taels, and the place is but 300 paces away from here. I suggest that we should take the whole store as it stands as representing a value of 5,000 taels and hand it all over to Mr Wen and let him stay here for a while and carry on this business. The rest of the money can then be transported to him by degrees and no one need know about it. Then afterwards, should he desire to return home, he will have reliable assistants to carry on his business

in his absence, and he will be able to go in peace. Should this plan not commend itself to you, it will be easy enough for me to hand the money

[Page 119]

over to Mr Wen, but difficult for him to deal with it. That is what I think about the matter!"

At the conclusion of his speech both Chang Ta and Wen Jo-hsu stamped on the ground with pleasure. "This is really a most excellent scheme," said the former, "and in every way to be recommended!" Mr Wen turned the matter over in his mind.

"I have no wife or family at home," he thought; "I have moreover no property of any kind. If I were to take all that silver home with me, I should have no place to keep it in. What is there to prevent me from acting upon this gentleman's suggestion and setting up an establishment in this place? Such a wonderful stroke of luck is surely predestined and the result of the decrees of Heaven. I had indeed better take advantage of this opportunity. And as regards this property and these goods, even if their value does not amount to 5,000 taels, as he states, I shall in any case have obtained them for nothing." So he turned and said to the Persian: "Your suggestion is in very truth an excellent one, and I shall most certainly act upon it."

The host then requested him to come upstairs to inspect the silver, and asked Mr Chang and Mr Ch'u to accompany them, saying that the rest had no need to come but could remain there seated till their return. The four men accordingly withdrew and the rest remained behind. As soon as the latter were alone they all began talking at once, craning and retracting their necks in eagerness and astonishment.

"What a strange thing!" they said. "What won-

[Page 120]

derful luck! If only we had known about it before! What a pity we did not go ashore, too, on the island! If only we had all got off the junk for a walk! Who knows but what there are other treasures there still? This is luck as vast as heaven itself, and is surely out of human control!" And they showed that they were both pleased and envious at the same time.

Soon Jo-hsu returned with his two friends, and the rest inquired what it was like inside.

"Why, there is a large and lofty room there," they replied, "fitted up as a treasury. All round are wooden tubs; we saw ten in all, and in each tub there is a sum of 4,000 taels of silver. And there are also five small chests each holding a thousand taels, or in all 45,000 taels. And these are all now scaled up with paper bearing Mr Wen's private seal. Now we must go and hand over the tortoise-shell, whereafter the whole of the silver will belong to Mr Wen!"

The Persian then entered the room. "The deeds of your property," he said, addressing Wen Jo-hsu, "and the inventory and accounts relating to the silks are all here, and, as you will see, show the value to be just 5,000 taels. And now let us go on board the junk for the tortoise-shell." So they went

together to the junk, and on the way down Mr Wen said to his companions:

"There are a good many of our friends on the junk; would perhaps be as well not to tell any of them about this business, and I will pay you handsomely." And indeed the others were most unwilling to tell the rest lest the latter should wish to share the bargain money

[Page 121]

too. So each kept his own counsel and thus they came to the junk. Mr Wen first removed his clothes from inside the shell and then he stroked it with his hand and whispered: "Ah! My luck! My luck!"

The Persian called two of his assistants who had accompanied him and told them to carry off the shell, enjoining them to handle it carefully and carry it straight into his premises without putting it down outside at all. And when the others on the junk saw the shell being carried off they said: "Well, so that big clumsy thing has a value, after all. I wonder what sum it has fetched!" Wen Jo-hsu did not say a word, but, with his bundle of clothes in his arms, went on shore once more. Those of his friends who had accompanied him before also went ashore again with him and inspected the shell very carefully from end to end, peering and feeling inside it, staring at each other and asking wherein its worth could lie. But the Persian said no word till they were again within his house, when he proposed that they should go round to inspect Mr Wen's new property.

So they all went along together and found the shop to be in the middle of the business quarter of the town, and a fine large building it was. In front was the shop itself, and at the side was a small alley giving entrance to the premises behind through a large double door of stone. Within this door was a spacious courtyard with a tall building opposite, and on the building was a signboard on which was painted the legend, "The Hall of the Advent of jewels." At each side were subsidiary buildings all fitted inside with presses and shelves, which

[Page 122]

were found to be full of satins and brocades and silks of every kind, and a number of rooms lay behind.

"If I am to be the maker of this establishment," thought Jo-hsu to himself, "I shall have such a house as is, only owned by princes! Moreover with this silk business there will be plenty of opportunity for splendid profits. I will soon settle down here as the proprietor; why, indeed, should I desire to return home?" So, turning to the Persian, he said: "All this is very well, but I am, as you know, quite alone. I shall have to find a good many servants and assistants before I shall be able to take over possession."

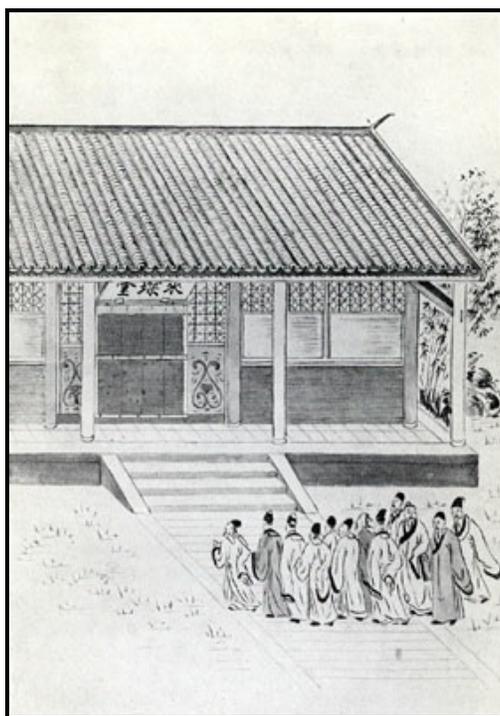
"There will be no difficulty," replied the other. "I shall be very pleased to find you what employees may be necessary." So Mr Wen's cup of happiness was full, and, free from all anxiety, he returned with the others to the house of the Persian, where tea was again served.

"Mr Wen," their host said, "there is no need for you to return to the junk this night. You had better stay in your own establishment, where there are already enough servants to look after you, and you can get

others by degrees."

"The purchase is now indeed complete," remarked one of the traders to the Persian, "and need not be further discussed, but there is a matter about which we are all very curious, and that is concerning that shell. Exactly what use is it that it has so vast a value? Please, sir, tell us all about it"; and Mr Wen added a similar request.

"You gentlemen," replied the Persian, smiling, "have



The Hall of the Advent of Jewels

[Page 123]

been trading overseas for all these years, and yet you do not know about this? Then you probably are also unaware of the following facts. A dragon has nine kinds of offspring; of these there is one kind known as a T'o-lung, the skin of which is used to cover drums, and the sound of such a drum (which is called a T'o Drum) can be heard for a hundred *li*. The term of the life of a T'o-lung is ten thousand years, and when that term is accomplished the creature casts its shell and becomes a full-grown dragon. Now within such a shell are twenty-four ribs corresponding to the twenty-four divisions of the four seasons, and in the joint of each rib is a huge pearl. If these ribs are not properly and completely formed, the creature cannot become a dragon and cannot cast its shell, so, if it is caught at this stage, the only use to which it can be put is to make its skin into drum covers, and within its ribs is nothing of value. But if its twenty-four ribs are all fully formed there is a pearl within each one, and when the creature flies off as a perfect dragon it leaves the shell intact behind it. But the pearls are only present if the shell is cast naturally, its term accomplished and the ribs full grown. It is by no means the same thing if the creature be caught during its period of development. And although we knew that such a thing, as big as this, existed, no one knew when it should be cast or indeed where to look for it. The shell itself is valueless, but the pearls are all phosphorescent and are without price.

To meet with this shell as you have done is a matter of heaven-sent luck which no one could possibly anticipate!

[Page 124]

All listened intently to the Persian's explanation, but no one knew whether to believe it or not. However, all doubt was soon set at rest when the man disappeared into the inner room where the shell lay and reappeared soon afterwards with a shout of triumph, bearing in his hand a little twist of western cloth. "All look at this!" he exclaimed, and there in the twist of the cloth they saw an enormous phosphorescent pearl, an inch and more in diameter, and so bright that it dazzled their eyes. Then, taking a black lacquer tray, the Persian put the pearl on it and showed it to them in a dark corner of the room and rolled the pearl about, when its movements could easily be followed by the light that it emitted in rays a foot long. And the traders were all thunder-struck at what they saw and gazed on the pearl with eyes and mouth wide open, their tongues protruding with amazement.

The Persian then made a bow of thanks. "I am indeed," he said, "very much indebted to you all. This one pearl which you have brought hither with you is worth, as far as I can estimate its value, the whole price which I have paid for the shell! So that, for the other pearls, I am entirely beholden to your generosity."

This made them all more amazed than ever, but on account of the agreement which they had all signed no one could, of course, raise any objection to the sale. The Persian noticed that their countenances had changed, so he hastily put away the pearl, and, going inside, had a box of satin fabrics brought out, and gave to everyone except Mr Wen two rolls of satin each, saying as he did

[Page 125]

so: "I cannot sufficiently express, sirs, my gratitude to you. Here is some stuff to make coats for you to wear, as a slight token of my indebtedness." And in addition to this he produced from his sleeve ten strings of small pearls and gave a string to each, telling them that that was a further token of his gratitude which might thereafter be sold and the price expended upon light refreshment upon their return.

And to Wen Jo-hsu he gave four strings of larger pearls, and eight pieces of satin to provide him with outer garments. They all then expressed their thanks, and said that it was time to depart, but first the whole company escorted Mr Wen to his new premises, and there the Persian introduced him to all the assistants and servants as the new proprietor from that time onwards. The host then took his leave and returned to his own house.

Shortly afterwards Jo-hsu's servants were seen, in number ten or more, coming back with the loads of silver, ten tubs and five boxes in all. Mr Wen put all this away in a small back room hidden away among the other rooms upstairs, after which he came down and rejoined his friends.

"I am more grateful to you all than I can express for bringing me with you," he said to them, "thereby enabling me to meet with this extraordinary piece of good fortune." And he went and fetched the

money that he had obtained for the sale of the Tung-t'ing oranges and gave ten of the silver coins to each of his friends. But to Chang Ta and the other two or three who had helped

[Page 126]

him with money at the outset of the journey he gave an extra ten coins each to show his gratitude to them, for he felt that in his present state of affluence this money was of very small account. And all were very pleased and thanked him repeatedly. Mr Wen also took some more silver coins and handed them over to Chang Ta for his other fellow-passengers on the junk, one coin each, as a small present.

"I have now been enabled to start life afresh in this locality," he said, "but I shall one day return home. I cannot, however, travel with you on this occasion, so we will now part."

"But as touching the matter of the thousand taels bargain money," said Chang Ta, "which you promised to divide up; that still remains to be done!"

"I had completely forgotten that matter," said Jo-hsu, and after he had consulted with the others as to how it should be done, it was thus arranged: he first set apart one hundred taels for those on board the junk; to the remaining nine hundred taels he added two hundred of his own money, and divided the eleven hundred taels into equal shares, one share for each man, with two shares each for Chang Ta and Ch'u Chung-yin, the latter having written out the agreement. And at this they were all delighted and no one raised the least objection. One of them, however, spoke as follows: "But this Persian obtained after all a wonderfully good bargain. I think that Mr Wen ought now to raise objections and try to get him to increase the amount of the purchase money!"

"I have not the slightest intention of doing so," re-

[Page 127]

sponded Jo-hsu. "Here I am, a man naturally unlucky, one who has hitherto lost all his capital in every venture that he undertook. And I suddenly strike this unexpected piece of good fortune and great wealth comes to me as a thunderbolt from the unclouded sky. It was clearly foreordained by heaven and was not the result of any effort of mine. If our friend the Persian had not recognized the true worth of the shell, we should have continued to regard it as of no value ourselves. It is all owing to the fact that he told us about it, and it would be highly unbecoming for me to wrangle about the price."

And they agreed that, after all, he was right and that his views did him credit and entitled him to be a rich man. Then all his friends, with a last expression of thanks and farewell, gathered up their recently acquired silver and departed for the junk.

And from this time on Wen Jo-hsu began his career as a rich Fukien merchant. He married soon afterwards and in a few years had acquired great additional wealth and affluence. He then returned to Soochow on a visit and met all his old friends and revisited his old haunts. Many sons and grandsons were born to him and his family became well established as one of influence in the neighbourhood.

[Page 128]

## NOTES

*Note 13.* ---The Sung Dynasty, A.D. 960-1278. For a brief note on the dynasty see Note 5.

*Note 14.* ---Yuan Hung, A.D. 328-376. A scholar and official under Chin Dynasty, who, having been left an orphan in straitened circumstances, rose by means of his own abilities to become Vice-President of the Board of Rites and Governor of Tung Yang in the Chekiang province. He was regarded as one of the foremost men of letters of his day, and was also distinguished as a general. The allusion here is to his feat of scholarship in having written a long official dispatch on his way to the battlefield, using his horse's flank as a desk. In former days no literary ability, of even the simplest order, was expected of military officials-hence the noteworthiness of this performance.

*Note 15.* ---Yang Yu-chi. A minister of the Ch'u State during the Chou Dynasty (1122-255 B.C.). It was said of this worthy that he was once ordered by the Prince of the Ch'u State to shoot a great wild ape which was terrifying the people. So great was Yang's reputation as an archer that no sooner had he bent his bow than the ape clung to a tree howling.

*Note 16.* --- "The Little God of Good Luck." This verse alludes possibly to the toy known from time immemorial to Far Eastern children and consisting of a short squatting human figure of wood or other light material so weighted below that when tipped over it will oscillate until it comes to rest on its base. These toys are called in Chinese, "Tsao Hua Hsiao Erh" ("the little fellow, Chance") or "Pu Tao Weng" ("the not-falling-down old man"), but are now far more common in Japan than in China. In Japan a similar name exists for them, but they are more often called "Daruma," after the patriarch missionary Bhodidharma, who came to China from India to teach Buddhism in the sixth century A.D. During his sojourn in China, where he died, Bhodidharma is said to have spent nine years in uninterrupted meditation with his face to a wall, during which time he remained motionless and with his legs doubled up under him and concealed by his robes. It is natural, therefore, to have connected his name with the toy above-mentioned.

*Note 17.* ---Hui An. This was one of the names of the famous commentator Chu Hsi (A.D. 1130-1200). That he actually became a Buddhist priest is uncertain, though his inclination towards Buddhism was undoubted. He was a voluminous writer and is chiefly famous for his commentary on the Confucian Canon, in which his interpretation differed greatly from that which had, up to his time, been accepted as authentic. He is also celebrated for his revision of the famous History of China by Ssu-ma Kuang, who died in 1086.

[Page 129]

*Note 18.* ---Su Tung-p'o (A.D. 1036-1101). An official and scholar of the Sung Dynasty. His personal name was Shih, but he called himself Tung-p'o, or "Eastern Slope" since, after he was dismissed from office owing to the machinations of his rivals, he retired to Huang Chou, where he lived in a hut built on the eastern slope of a hill. As a poet and essayist he stands in the first rank.

*Note 19.* ---"The Kingdom on a snail's horn." See Professor Giles' "Chuang-tzu, Mystic, Moralist and Social Reformer" for the origin of the allegory (based on the mere relativity of the great and the small) here indicated.

"A fly's-head profit" is a common phrase used by merchants to express dissatisfaction with the small amount of their takings.

*Note 20.* ---"Everything is decided by Fate." The doctrine here enunciated is a general one in China, but in this matter, as is the case with most other things, there is a vast difference between theory and practice. No people in the world take more infinite pains to make money than the Chinese, who, while subscribing theoretically to the fatalistic idea, are in practice very little inclined to leave things to chance. I think, however, that their phenomenal resignation under unfavourable conditions which they consider to be beyond their power to improve---such as famine, floods, oppression, etc.---may be attributed in some measure to this doctrine.

*Note 21.* ---Silver ingots. See below, Note 26.

*Note 22.* ---"Poor Thorn" or "Stupid Thorn" "my wife." The term "thorn" is not derogatory, but refers to the thrift of a virtuous woman, who will use a thorn as a hairpin rather than one of precious metal. This expression is not often used except in writing, the ordinary expression in colloquial Chinese to denote one's wife being "The Person Within."  
1465-1488.

*Note 23.* ---"Shih" means "sound" or "full"; "Jo" means "as though"; "Hsu" means "unsound" or "empty." His two personal names, taken together, therefore mean "Full, but appearing empty," or "Not such a fool as he looks."

*Note 24.* ---Chang, Li, Chao and Ch'ien are all common names. The equivalents in an English story would be "Brown, Jones, Smith and Robinson."

*Note 25.* ---"Ch'eng Yun" means "one who takes advantage of an opportunity."

*Note 26.* ---Coins. There are no coinage laws in China, and the adoption of a system of token coinage, even in these days, would be impossible. No coin is therefore worth more than its weight in metal. It is only from a comparatively recent date that there have been any coins at all in China, except copper coins ("cash"). Before the minting of Chinese silver dollars and subsidiary coins, begun

[Page 130]

some thirty years ago, the only silver coins in use were foreign dollars imported from Mexico, etc. Silver, therefore, when used, was handled in shaped lumps called "shoes" or "sycee" by foreigners and these were weighed and cut with each transaction. A tael is a weight (1 1/3 oz.) and not a coin.

*Note 27.* ---Here is inserted in the original text an imaginary colloquy between the narrator and the reader regarding the value of the coins for which Wen Jo-hsu sold his oranges, the reader arguing that

the other traders would have done well to have contented themselves with selling their merchandise outright for silver coins, and the narrator explaining that their gain was far more by bartering their wares for local produce and then selling the latter on their return to China. As the argument is long and rather difficult for a western reader to follow, the passage is omitted.

*Note 28.* ---Buckets used to draw water in China are merely half-baskets made of closely woven withes. As they are thus very light, it is necessary, when they reach the surface of the water, to agitate them violently to make them fill.

*Note 29.* ---A proverb gives to men from Soochow this unenviable distinction. It is quite undeserved.

*Note 30.* ---Puttees are as generally worn in China, particularly in mountainous districts, as they are in India.

*Note 31.* ---The tortoise is one of the four supernatural creatures (the other three being the Drag on, the Phoenix, and the Unicorn), and a halo of superstition surrounds it. Chinese writing is said to have originated from the markings on its back, and the shell was formerly much used in divination, slivers of it being heated and the future foretold from the shapes assumed. The shell of the tortoise is still widely used as a drug in China; it is powdered, mixed into a paste with water, and administered to anemic women.

The tortoise here indicated must be distinguished from the soft-shelled river tortoise (*Trionix*) which is a common article of food in China, just as the terrapin is in America. The river tortoise is supposed to be incapable of mating with its own kind but to be compelled to couple with a snake. Thus to call a man "the son of a tortoise" (or, as it is euphemistically put, a "wang pa tan," *i.e.*, a "forget-eight-egg" or "the spawn of the creature that forgets the eight principles of propriety") is to call him a bastard.

*Note 32.* ---Guess-fingers: a forfeit game almost invariably played at Chinese dinner parties, the loser having to drink a cup of wine as a forfeit. The game resembles the Italian "Morra."

*Note 33.* ---The "Four jewels of the Scholar" are his pen, his paper, his ink-slab, and his cake of ink.

*Note 34.* ---A middleman is employed in most important business transactions in China. The advantage is that each principal can put his case as strongly as he likes without offending the other. The middleman generally gets a commission from both sides.

[Page 131]

*Note 35.* ---Lack of mutual trust is widespread in China and is at the root of the coinage difficulty alluded to above (Note 26). 50,000 taels would be the equivalent of over two tons, and even if so much silver were successfully transported to the junk, there remained the danger of pirates on the high seas-and in this matter it may be of interest to record that a superstition credits Chinese pirates with the power of seeing by the wash made by a junk (just as land robbers are supposed to be able to tell by the dust raised by the wheels of a cart) whether or not a large quantity of valuables is being transported.

But apart from such dangers of loss, the problem of dealing with so large an amount of money all at

once was no small one. There were no banks, in our sense of the term; and capitalists in China usually invested their money, as they do still, in land or in business ventures. The offer of the Persian, therefore, which may seem strange to a western reader, would have been most welcome to anyone in Wen Jo-hsu's position.

*Note 36.* ---Houses in China are built in "Chien" or sections, and have not evolved greatly from the original tent form which preceded them, the roof being supported on upright posts and not resting on the walls. A "chien" therefore is the lateral space between two pairs of pillars. An ordinary room would consist of, say, three "chien," a large room being the equivalent of say, eight or ten "chien." A house of 100 "chien" would probably contain twenty-odd rooms, large and small.

## THE COURTESAN [1]

### I

The cruel Tartar hordes are swept aside,  
The Imperial Court is founded now secure.  
The Dragon soars, the Phoenix flies aloft,  
His power established like a rocky height,  
To eastward, ocean forms a barrier safe  
Stretching to where the waters join the sky.  
Towards the west, the mountains, range on range,  
Rear up their ramparts. From the frontier forts  
Lances and spears are carried boldly forth  
Beyond the Wall and every part pervade.  
Now from the nations all in distant parts  
Envoys in robes of state their tribute bring  
And recognise the Emperor as their lord.  
A great peace broods upon the happy land,  
And this great dynasty, now founded sure,  
Will never die till dies the mighty sun.

This poem was written to celebrate the establishment of our Court at the capital of Yen, [2] of which the situation is thus. On the north it is protected by a mighty barrier of mountains; on the south it looks down upon the full expanse of the whole land. It is indeed an invincible city, as puissant as heaven itself, and its power will never be overthrown in ten thousand years.

As is well known, the Emperor Hung Wu, having put to flight and obliterated the Tartars, founded the City of the Buried Gold, afterwards called Nanking or the Southern Capital. Then the Prince of Yen, Yung Lo, came down from the north, and, after finally bringing tranquility to the land, moved the Court to his own chief city, which he called Peking or the Northern Capital. By reason of this change a cold and bitter city was transformed into a centre of refinement and luxury.

Following upon Yung Lo, who himself succeeded his nephew, there were nine emperors before the reign of Wan Li, [1] who was thus the eleventh of the present dynasty. The Emperor Wan Li was a miracle of skill and intelligence, and his virtue and good fortune knew no flaw. He succeeded to the throne at the age of ten, and occupied it for forty-eight years. During his reign he put down three revolutionary risings, one in the west over Po Ch'eng-en, one over the Japanese leader, P'ing Hsiu-chih, [2] and the third at Po Chou over Yang Ying-lung.

This P'ing Hsiu-chih invaded Korea, while the other two rebels were leaders of barbarian tribesmen

who plotted revolt. All were brought successively into subjection, and of the outer barbarians there was not one tribe but feared and submitted, hastening to come with their tribute to the Court.

But of all this I wish to speak only of the invasion of Korea by the Japanese leader. In the twentieth year of Wan Li, the King of Korea petitioned the Throne to

[Page 137]

make known the urgency of his need, so the Son of Heaven sent troops over the sea to save him. The Board of Treasury, however, represented that the granaries, and the stocks of silver for paying the troops, were insufficient for so great a military enterprise and proposed that a special tax be collected in return for permission to enter the Imperial Seminary. To this the Emperor assented.

Now this system had many advantages. It encouraged study, it enabled students to enter direct for the Chu-jen examination, it facilitated the intercourse of the learned, and it enabled a certain number of minor official posts to be given to those who were unsuccessful in obtaining their degree. So that the sons of officials and rich men, who were unwilling to compete for the Bachelor degree, were very ready to become "Chien Sheng." Thus was this system established, and, especially in Peking and Nanking, thousands of young men took advantage of this opportunity. [\[1\]](#)

Amongst them was a youth named Li Kan-hsien, whose family home was at Shao Hsing in the Che-kiang province. His father was Provincial Treasurer and had three sons, of whom Kan-hsien was the eldest. Kan-hsien had studied since his childhood and had attained his bachelor degree but had not yet passed as Chu-jen, so he took advantage of the new system and became a Chien Sheng, together with a fellow-townsmen named Liu Yu-ch'un.

And together they wandered one day to the gay side

[Page 138]

of the city of Peking, and there they met a singing girl called Tu Wei, who, as she was the tenth arrival in the quarter, was also called Decima.

From head to foot, how beautiful is she!  
Fragrant and peerless, fair as fair can be.  
Her brows are arched like lines of distant hills,  
Bright gleam her eyes like sun on autumn rills.  
Fresh as the lotus petal is her hue,  
Lips like a rosy peach all bright with dew.  
Vainly among the maids of ancient time  
You'd seek a nymph of beauty so sublime.  
Alas that such a gem should sullied be  
By dust and wind, by man's iniquity!

This Decima had become a courtesan at the age of thirteen, She was now nineteen, and many were the

sons of the rich and noble who had met her, each one in turn being bewitched by her beauty to such an extent that he would have risked the overthrow of his family and the loss of his fortune to gain her favour. And among the other courtesans it used to be said:

When Miss Decima is with us, one who drinks one cup of wine  
Then can quaff a thousand goblets, so bewitched is he.  
And the best of us beside her, even with such looks as mine,  
Like a hag or a she-devil seems to be!

[Page 139]

## II

Now, although Mr Li had taken to ways of pleasure and amusement at an early age, he had never set eyes upon one whom he considered to be a really beautiful girl, so when he met Decima his joy knew no bounds and his whole existence seemed to be concentrated upon her alone. The young gentleman was naturally handsome and amiable, and he was also very generous and good-natured. He and Decima took to each other at once and became each day more devoted. The brothel mistress was a most avaricious and virtueless woman, and Miss Decima had long had a wish to turn from the ways of vice and follow the paths of virtue. So when she saw that Mr Li was generous and kind, she became very anxious to throw in her lot with him for ever. Mr Li was in great awe of his father and hardly dared to take her home, but in spite of this the two loved each other ever more dearly, and day after day, early and late, they remained in each other's company, living like husband and wife. And they swore a great oath that neither would love anyone else.

The brothel mistress observed that Miss Decima had been completely taken up by Mr Li, never even being seen by any other young spendthrift; and at first, when he spent his money freely she laughed to herself, shrugging tier shoulders with joy, and did all she could to flatter and encourage him. But days and months passed till a year or more had sped, and Mr Li's resources

[Page 140]

began to become depleted and his hand could no longer act as his heart directed. The old woman then began to discourage him. His father, the Provincial Treasurer, heard that his son was frequenting brothels, and sent letter after letter telling him to return home. But the son was entirely infatuated with Decima's beauty and kept putting off his departure from day to day. And when he heard that his father had become extremely angry with him, he was all the less inclined to obey the summons to return home.

The proverb says that a friendship which is based on money will be dissolved when the money runs low. But Decline was really in love with Mr Li, and when she knew that his funds had become exhausted she became even more fond of him than ever. The old woman, her mistress, did not cease to tell her to send Mr Li about his business, and, seeing that the girl was not likely to do so, she herself began to insult Mr Li to his face so as to anger him and cause him to leave in indignation. But she

found that her insults had no effect upon Mr Li (for he was naturally of a placid disposition) and turned her attention again to Decima.

"We of the trade," she said, "depend solely upon our clients for the clothes which we wear and the food which we eat. When we speed the parting guest from the front entrance, a second should be coming in by the back door. The more clients we get, the greater are our earnings. Now that young fellow Li Kan-hsien has been coming here continually for more than a year, and not only are we getting no new clients, but we have lost all our old

[Page 141]

ones. It is as though you had been entertaining Chung K'uei Lao, [1] and no young devils, not even unimportant ones, will come to our door. Owing to this young Li, I see human breath in the air, but no smoke upon the hearth. What do you propose to do to remedy this matter?"

"You speak as though Mr Li had come here with empty hands," the girl replied, for she was not one to submit lightly to abuse. He has spent large sums here."

"That was a long time since," answered the woman; "but how much does he give now? Let me see what you can get out of him to-day to hand over to me for the purchase of rice and fuel for you both. To other establishments, their girls are a money tree which needs only to be shaken when funds are needed. But I have had, it seems, the ill-fortune to have brought up a white tiger [3] that keeps the money from my doors. The seven necessities [4] for our daily use are now provided by me, and all because you, vile little creature that you are, insist on keeping this miserable pauper here! Where do you think that all our food and clothes are coming from? just you tell him that if there is any good in him at all he must earn some money for me, and then you can, go off with him altogether if you want to, and I will buy another girl and try to get along on her earnings. Then each one of us will be suited."

"Do you really mean what you say?" asked Decima.

"I mean every word of it," answered the old woman,

[Page 142]

who, knowing that Mr Li had not a cash and had already pawned all his clothes, did not think that it would be possible for him to raise any more money. "And I will abide by my words."

"How much money do you want for me then?" asked the girl.

If it were anyone else, I would ask a thousand taels," was the reply. "But I will take pity on a poor wretch like that, and will only ask him three hundred. I could get some proper girl for that sum to take your place. But there is one thing: I must have the money within three days, and if he comes then with it, I will hand you over on the spot. If he does not come with the money in that time, I will turn him out! Out of the house he goes, the rascal, and no one could blame me!"

"But he is not of this province and has no money of his own," urged Decima. "He may be able to raise three hundred taels, but three days is a very short time; please let him have ten days to find the money!" [5]

"The young fool has nothing but his bare hands, " thought the old woman, "and could not get the money if I gave him a hundred days. If he cannot get it, he cannot well come back, be the skin of his face never so thick! And when I am finally quit of him, I can set up my establishment again, and the girl will not have a word to say."

"Well, to humour you, " she said aloud, "I will give him ten days. But if he does not come with the money

[Page 143]

on the tenth day, I will really put a stop to this nonsense."

"If he does not get it in ten days," said Decima, "I think that he will not dare to come any more. The only thing that I fear is that if he does get the money, you will go back on your bargain!"

"I am an old woman of fifty-one years," was the answer, "for I have always prayed to the Great Bear in fasting. [1] How then could I dare to be false to my word? If you doubt me, I will swear it to you, palm [2] against palm, and if I prove false to my word, may I be reborn again as a dog or a sow!"

### III

That evening Decima took counsel with her lover and told him of her plan for obtaining her freedom and throwing in her lot with his.

"That indeed would be to fulfill my most ardent wish," said Mr Li. "But to redeem a courtesan is a most costly undertaking, requiring at least a thousand taels. My purse is as empty as though it had been washed clean. How, then, can it be managed?"

"I have already struck the bargain with my mistress," answered Decima. "She wants but three hundred taels for me, and this sum must be produced within ten days. It is true that you have come to the end of your allowances, but you have friends here from whom you could

[Page 144]

borrow that sum, and if you can obtain the money thus I shall be yours for ever and shall be free, once and for all, from that old woman and her cruelties."

"Of my friends here, there is no longer one who will have any more to do with me by reason of my so long remaining in this place," answered Mr Li. "But tomorrow I will pack up everything that I have, as though for my journey back to my home, and will go round to the house of each of my

acquaintances, and from each I will ask for a loan to meet my expenses on the way. And the sums that I shall be able to raise will, may be, amount to the required sum." So next day he rose, and, after making a careful toilet, took his leave of Decima and went out.

"I shall be waiting here anxiously for your return with good news," she said, "so be as quick as you can."

There was no need to tell Mr Li that, and he went out at once and called at the house of each one of his friends, pretending that he had come to say good-bye before going back to his home. That he was returning home they were all glad enough to hear, but when he went on to say that he had no money to pay his way and desired to borrow a small sum for the journey, they all looked askance.

The proverb says, "To speak of a loan is to put an end to friendship," and no one was found willing to lend. They all, very rightly, considered Mr Li as a dissolute young fellow, who was infatuated by a courtesan; they knew that he had been away from home for a whole year and that his father was sick with anger at his ways,

[Page 145]

and they doubted very much his professions of anxiety to leave. "If he gets hold of this money which he says he needs to take him home," they thought, "it is more than likely that it will be spent, not on travelling, but on face powder and cosmetics. And when his father hears of it he will find fault with us and will say that our intentions, which are really benevolent, were in effect evil. It will be better, therefore, to refuse altogether."

"To-day I happen not to have any money in the house," was the reply that he received from each in turn, "and I fear that I cannot therefore help you. How great is my shame at my inability to assist!"

All spoke in the same way, there being found not one generous person ready to lend even ten or twenty taels, so that Mr Li, after spending three days in making his calls, had not succeeded in raising a single cash. He did not dare to go back to Decima and put her off with any evasive statement, and when the fourth day had produced no good result he forebore to return for very shame. But he had no other dwelling-place, and, having nowhere else to spend the night, he went back to his friend Liu and begged a bed of him.

The latter saw that Mr Li was in a very despondent mood so he asked the reason, whereupon Mr Li related the true story of Decima and how she was ready to throw in her lot with him. Mr Liu, however, shook his head. "I do not place much reliance on such professions," he said. "That girl, Decima, is the most famous courtesan in all the quarter, and to redeem her to virtue would cost ten caskets of pearls and a thousand taels of silver. The

[Page 146]

old woman would never really let her go for so small a sum as three hundred taels, and she only says that because she thinks that you have no money at all. This talk of going away with you and of the ten

days' limit is all a plan for deceiving you, for they know that, if you cannot raise the money within that time, you will not have the face to go back without it, while, if you do raise the money they will take it from you and then laugh at you. You will then lose so much face that you will not be able to return anyhow. That is the kind of trick that such people always play. I beg of you to be guided by me and do not let yourself be deceived by them. You had much better leave this girl at once and make up your mind to have nothing more to do with her."

On hearing this, Mr Li sat silently thinking and spoke no word.

"I do not wish you to mistake my true meaning," went on Mr Liu, "and, if you really wish to return home and really have no money, I might manage to raise some for you. But, if you insist on having three hundred taels, you will not get it in ten months, much less ten days, for now-a-days people do not take very much interest in the troubles of others. But you may depend upon it that the girl knows well enough that you will never be able to raise the money, and is party to the trick for getting rid of you."

"Yes, I suppose that you are right after all, my good brother," said Mr Li at length. But yet he was by no means satisfied in his own mind, and he went out

[Page 147]

again to try to borrow money. At nightfall he again did not return to the brothel, but went once more to Mr Liu's house, and there he lived for two more days until six days of his time limit had sped by.

Meantime Decima had become very anxious, and sent out the little slave boy who attended her into the streets to look for her lover. The lad looked up and down the main streets, and at length by good fortune encountered Mr Li.

"Mr Li, Mr Li," he cried. "My mistress is waiting for you at home. Come back at once!"

Mr Li felt that he would lose face by going without the money, so he said that he had no time to go that day but would do so the next. The lad, however, had received Decima's order, and hung on to him as though he would die rather than let him go. "She told me to bring you back with me," he said, "and you must come back with me, if only for a moment."

So the young man, who was of course always longing to see his lady again, had perforce to follow the slave back. But when he encountered Decima, he sat down without saying a word.

She asked him what he had accomplished, but his eyes filled with tears and he did not reply.

"Men's hearts are hard and cruel," said she. "Could you not even raise three hundred taels?"

"I do not know how easily one could catch a tiger among the mountains," he replied, quoting the proverb, "but I do know that it is hard to borrow money of a friend. Six days have passed," he went on through his

tears, "and I have raised no money at all. I was ashamed to come back to you with empty hands, so I did not dare to come back at all. But I got your order to-day and thus I am here, overcome by shame as I am. I have tried my best to get the money, but people have been too hard."

"Well, do not let the old woman know," said Decima, "but stay here till to-morrow, for I have something else to tell you."

And so saying, she placed food and wine before him. After eating he went to bed and slept till midnight, when Decima woke him.

"If you, sir, cannot get this money, what is to become of me?" she asked. But Mr Li could only weep and had no word to say. Then, later, as the dawn appeared, Decima woke him again.

"Inside the coverlet of my bed," she whispered to him, "there is hidden a sum of 150 taels in silver. [3](#) This sum I have accumulated and concealed little by little. If you take it, you have already one half of the total sum. The other half you must get somehow in the four days that still remain. So take the coverlet now and do not delay further."

So saying, she rose and handed over the coverlet. Mr Li told the slave boy to roll it up and to follow him out with it; then they went together to the house of Mr Liu, to whom Mr Li related this last experience. The two opened the coverlet and in the cotton which it contained they found concealed countless small pieces

of silver all sewn in. These they put together and weighed, and the whole amounted to just 150 taels.

"This girl of yours must really be in earnest after all," said Mr Liu in amazement. "She must indeed be in love with you. You cannot therefore refuse her, and I will now help you out of your difficulty."

"If I can indeed obtain your assistance, sir," said Mr Li, "I will be your debtor for evermore."

## IV

So Mr Liu kept his friend in his house and went round himself to all his acquaintances. In two days he had succeeded in borrowing 150 taels, which he handed over to Mr Li.

"I have got together this money for you," he said, "not so much on your behalf as because I am moved at Miss Decima's devotion to you."

So Mr Li took the 300 taels as a heaven-sent gift and went off to see his lady, his face suffused with

smiles, for it was the ninth day and his limit of time was not yet overpast.

"Hitherto you have not succeeded in raising a single cash," said Decima when she saw the money. "How have you now managed to get 150 taels in so short a time?" And when Mr Li explained to her what his friend had said, she placed her hands together and pressed them to her forehead in thankfulness to heaven.

"That we have received this favour in accordance

[Page 150]

with the desire of both of us," she said, "is due solely to Mr Liu's efforts, and our joy is greater than heaven and earth."

Next morning Decima rose early, and proposed to Mr Li that they should pay the money over at once.

"I can then go away with you immediately," she added. "But there is the matter of our travelling expenses to be considered. Yesterday I went to see some of my sisters and from them I borrowed twenty taels. This please take, for it will help us on our way." Mr Li gladly did so, for he had thought on the subject with alarm. And while they were talking, the old woman came and knocked on the door.

"Now, then, miss," she cried, "to-day is the tenth day!"; and Mr Li opened the door and asked her to come in.

"I am beholden to you for your kindness, madam," he said. "I was in fact just about to call you." And, so saying, he laid the 300 taels down on the table before her.

She had never thought for a moment that Mr Li would ever be able to find the money, and she changed countenance at the sight of it and said never a word.

Seeing that she appeared to be regretting her bargain, Decima then addressed her. "I have been many years under your roof," she said, "and the money that I must have made for you amounts, without doubt, to many thousands of taels. That I am reforming to-day is the result of your kind promises to me. Here is the 300 taels paid up in full and the time limit has not yet passed.

[Page 151]

If you now fail in your promise and do not allow me to go, Mr Li will take all this money away again and I shall commit suicide. Thus you will lose not only the money but myself also, and you will be sorry!"

To this the old woman did not at first reply, but after long thought she rose and fetched a balance.

"Well, well," she said at last when she had weighed the silver and found it correct, "I suppose I must

not keep you. But, if you want to go, go at once; and mind that you take not one single garment with you except the clothes which you wear." And so saying she thrust Mr Li and the girl out of the room and came out with them, locking the door after them.

It was then already autumn. Miss Decima had just risen from her bed and had not yet performed her toilet. She was clad only in old garments.

She kotowed twice to the mistress, and after Mr Li also had made a parting salutation, he and his lady at length left the old woman's door.

The fish ejects the cruel hook and swims away,  
With a shake of the head and a flirt of the tail, nevermore to return

## V

Mr Li proposed that Decima should go at once in a sedan chair to Mr Liu's house and there think over their plans, but to this she demurred.

[Page 152]

"I was on the best of terms with all my sisters," she said, "and I must first of all go and say good-bye to them. Moreover they were kind enough to lend us that sum of twenty taels, and I must go and thank them for that." So she went round with Mr Li to all the houses to express her thanks, especially to two girls called Moonlight and Simplicity, who lived near by and were her chief friends. She went first to the house where Moonlight lived, and when the latter saw her dressed so plainly and with no hair ornaments she asked what was the matter. Decima told her what had happened and introduced Mr Li, to whom she said; "The sum which I borrowed the other day for our assistance was handed to me by this lady, to whom, sir, your thanks are in consequence now due."

Mr Li made a profound salutation, and Moonlight, after telling Decima to make her toilet in her room, went to interview Simplicity; and before Decima had finished the two others brought over some jade hair ornaments and gold pins, carved combs and jewelled earrings, embroidered sleeve-pieces, a decorated petticoat, a wondrous belt embroidered with emblematic birds, and a pair of brocade shoes. These were freely given, and soon Decima was arrayed in finery from head to foot.

Food and wine were then set out for a congratulatory feast, and Moonlight gave up her room to her guests for the night.

Next day a further feast was prepared; all the courtesans were asked, no friend of Decima's being absent, and all drank to the health of the happy pair.

[Page 153]

Thereafter there were music and singing and dancing, each performer doing her best to give the guests pleasure. They sat together until midnight and Decima thanked each in turn, but they said that as she

was chief of them all and was about to leave the capital for ever with her lover, they would all come to see her start the next day.

"Decima is going on a very long journey with her master," said Moonlight to the rest, "and her resources are very limited, whereby inconvenience may result. This must be our affair, so let us take counsel together, for we must not allow her to suffer from want upon the way."

This speech was applauded by all the girls, and the party then broke up, Mr Li and Decima retiring to pass the rest of the night in Moonlight's room.

As daylight broke, Decima asked Mr Li if he had made any plan as to their departure.

"My father," answered Mr Li, "is already very angry with me, and when he hears that I am returning with a concubine from this quarter of the city, I fear that he might take some step which would cause you to lose face. For this I alone would be responsible; I have not yet thought what it would be best to do."

"That a father should be on bad terms with his son and should refuse to see him," said Decima, "is by no means in accordance with what is right. It is no use for you to go straight home with me and to explain matters to him; let us rather go to Hangchow or Soochow and stay there for a while. You can then go on alone and can beg your relations and friends to intercede for you

[Page 154]

with your father. Having made your peace with him you can then come and fetch me, and all will be well."

Mr Li agreed that her plan was a good one, and next day they left together. After taking leave of Moonlight they repaired to Mr Liu's house to get ready their baggage, and when Decima saw Mr Liu she kotowed before him and expressed her thanks for his assistance, saying that a day would surely come when she and her master would be able to repay their debt.

"You are very devoted to him, are you not? asked Mr Liu when he had returned her salutation. For it is obvious that you did not cease to care for him when he had lost all his money. This proves you to be a heroine among women. As for me, I merely blew upon the fire to keep it alight, there is no need to speak of so small a service."

That evening the three dined together, and next morning an auspicious day was fixed for their departure and chairs and beasts were ordered. Decima also sent her slave boy with a letter of farewell to Moonlight.

When the day fixed for their departure arrived, a procession of sedan chairs was seen approaching just as they were about to set forth, for Moonlight and Simplicity had come as they promised with the rest to see them start.

"You, Decima," said Moonlight when the girls had all alighted, "are going off with your master for a journey of a thousand *li* and more, despite the fact that your resources are but slender. We, therefore, being unable to forget our love for you, have to-day prepared

[Page 155]

a small gift which we unite in giving to you. Please cast your eyes upon it and accept it. if you are without other resources by the way, it may afford you some slight assistance."

So saying, she motioned to a porter who had come with her, and he showed a square box such as is used to carry writing materials. It was decorated with gilded carvings and appeared to be of great weight. It was, however, locked, and Decima did not open it to see what was within but accepted it graciously and thanked her friends for their kindness. Shortly afterwards the chairs and beasts which they had ordered arrived and the attendants exhorted the pair to start. Mr Li drank three cups of wine in farewell and the two then set forth, the girls accompanying them to the Hata Gate of the city, where with many tears a last farewell was said.

## VI

In due course Mr Li arrived with Decima at Tungchow, [\[1\]](#) where they left the road and took to the river. Luckily they happened to fall in with a grain-junk from the Yang-tze which was just returning with passengers, and, after fixing the amount of their fare, Mr Li had their luggage put into the hold. But as he stepped on board, he found that he had not a cash left in his purse, for although Decima had given him twenty taels he had not been able to help going to the pawnshops and redeeming

[Page 156]

some of the garments which he had pledged in the past, for those that he had left were all torn and old. He also bought some bedding, so that what he had left had only sufficed for the hire of the chairs and the beasts for the journey to Tungchow.

"Do not be sad," said Decima when she saw his perplexity. "The gift that my friends made will probably help us." And she took the key and opened the box, while Mr Li stood shamefacedly at one side not daring to look into the box to see what it contained. Decima brought out a bag of red silk, and, placing it on the deck, told him to open it and look.

The bag seemed very heavy as he raised it, and when he looked inside he found it full of pieces of silver, weighing, as he thought, about fifty taels. Decima, who had meanwhile locked up the box again, did not say what else was inside.

"How generous it was of the others to give us this," she said. "Not only have we here quite enough for the journey, but enough to keep us for a while at Soochow or Hangchow, where we shall be able to make a few expeditions to see the famous places of beauty in the neighbourhood."

Mr Li was both surprised and pleased. "If I had not met you," he said, "I should have died in poverty in Peking and would never have had even a decent burial. Such virtue and kindness I shall never forget until my dying day."

And from that time forth, whenever they conversed of the past, Mr Li was so conscious of Decima's good-

[Page 157]

ness that his tears fell incessantly, but she always comforted him.

Thus they travelled, and, meeting with no incident on the way, they reached at length the Great River and moored at the mouth of the Canal, where Mr Li obtained a passage on a trading Junk. He carried over their baggage and it was arranged to cross the river on the following day. It was then the middle of the tenth moon month of the year, and the full moon shed her silver beams upon them.

"Since we left Peking," said Mr Li to Decima, as they sat together in the bows of the junk, "we have been shut up together in the common cabin surrounded by other passengers and have had no opportunity to talk privately together. Now that we are alone on a junk to ourselves we need have no fear; moreover we have left the north and are approaching Kiangnan. Let us therefore drink together in celebration of our arrival and thus dispel the sadness that has settled upon us."

"I have been a stranger to laughter for a long time," she replied, "and I am fully of your mind." So Mr Li got out all the utensils, the wine and the food, and, setting them in order in the bow, he placed a mat on the deck for Decima and himself. Then, seating themselves, they filled one another's wine-cups and drank until both were under the spell of the wine, when Mr Li raised his cup to his lady.

"You, my dear one," he said, "have a wonderful voice, and were ever the best singer of the quarter. The first time that I saw you I heard you sing in the most

[Page 158]

delicious manner so that I was bereft of my reason. Afterwards when difficulties beset us and I was overtaken by despair, you sang like a chorus of celestial birds; but I have not heard you sing for many days. To-night the river sparkles in the moonlight. It is midnight and no one is by. I pray you to sing to me now."

Decima was overjoyed to do so, and she opened her throat and sang, keeping time by tapping upon the deck with her fan. The verse which she sang was one composed by Shih Chun-mei of the Yuan dynasty and was taken from the book of plays entitled "The Pavilion whence one Greets the Moon." The verse was called "The Scholar Pours Wine for the Beautiful Damsel," and was sung in the measure known as "The Pink Peach-bloom."

Her song reached Heaven; the clouds stood still, attentive to the sound.

## VII

Now there happened to be moored near by another junk, on which there was a single passenger, a young man named Sun Shan-lai, who came from Hsu An Hsien in the Huichow prefecture. His family was a wealthy one, for his forefathers had been salt merchants in Yangchow for many generations. Mr Sun was also a

[Page 159]

member of the Imperial Academy and was about twenty years of age, a dissolute young man who often visited the brothel quarter in the capital to buy a smile and find delight among the painted faces. He was indeed ever foremost in any youthful company to sport with the wind and play with the moon.

And while Mr Li and his lady were anchored at the mouth of the Canal, young Mr Sun sat drinking in solitude upon his junk, and when he heard a woman's voice raised in song the music seemed to him to be more entrancing than that emitted by any celestial bird. So he stood up on the prow of his junk and listened until he had identified the boat from which the sounds came. He was just about to make inquiry of his crew when the song ceased and he heard no more, so he sent out a servant to investigate, and in due course word was brought back to him that the boat in question had been hired by a Mr Li but that the name of the singer was unknown.

"She must, in any case, be a girl of common origin," [1] said Mr Sun to himself. "How can I manage to get to know her?" And so great was his anxiety that he slept not at all that night.

At about the fifth watch a great wind arose and at dawn inky clouds filled the sky. Soon a snow storm was raging, the like of which he had never seen before.

[Page 160]

The crows no longer round the hill-tops float,  
All human tracks are blotted out below;  
But one old man within his tiny boat,  
In bamboo hat and quickly whitening coat,  
All huddled up, still fishes through the snow. [2]

The storm prevented any junk from crossing the river, and all remained at anchor except that of Mr Sun, for he told his junkmen to get up anchor and to moor alongside Mr Li's boat. When this had been done, Mr Sun put on his sable-skin hat and his best fur coat and gazed out of the window of his boat, pretending to be watching the falling snow. Thus he succeeded in catching a glimpse of Decima, for, just after she had completed her toilet, she raised the blind of her window for a moment with one jade-like hand while she emptied the water from her basin into the river.

Mr Sun observed at once her peerless beauty, saw what a lovely creature she was, that her charms were such as would ruin a state, that her fragrance was of a more than earthly description. His head swam and his senses were reft from him at the sight, while his eyes remained staring at the window where he had seen her. He waited long in the hope of seeing her once more, but she did not show herself again. He thought of her all day, and at last, opening his own window, he raised his voice and sang the first two lines of the song called "The Plum Blossom," by Kao the Hanlin scholar [3]:

[Page 161]

"The Hermit of the Hill sleeps on; the snowflakes fall;  
The Maiden wanders through the moonlit trees....."

Mr Li, hearing the song, opened the door of his cabin and looked out to see whence the sound came, thus doing just what Mr Sun desired, for it was his wish to attract the attention of the unknown damsel's escort and draw him into conversation. As soon therefore as he saw Mr Li, he very politely inquired as to his name and antecedents. Mr Li replied suitably and asked similar questions of the other. The two then exchanged views about the Imperial Academy and by degrees became quite friendly.

It would appear that this storm which has stopped our junks," said Mr Sun after they had conversed for some time, "has been specially decreed by Heaven in order that we should meet, sir. That is indeed good fortune for me. But it is tedious upon these junks. Let us rather go on shore and find a wine shop where we may drink together, thus passing the time while I am able to benefit by the advantage of your conversation. I beg of you not to refuse this."

"As we have met as fortuitously as two fragments of duck-weed that come together upon a flowing stream," replied Mr Li, "I feel that I can hardly venture to accept your proffered kindness."

"But there," said the other, "you are evidently not speaking with your accustomed wisdom, for is it not so that all within the four seas are brothers?" And so

[Page 162]

saying he ordered his men to place the gang-plank in position and told a lad to go across to the other junk with an umbrella and escort Mr Li across. At the bow he met the latter with a salute and ushered him on board his own boat with every mark of politeness. Thus they went on shore together.

They walked in company for a short distance, and then, encountering a wine shop, they entered and went upstairs. They chose a clean table near the window, where they sat down and the host placed wine and food before them, Mr Sun pledged his guest and the two sat drinking and looking out over the snow. First they spoke of literary matters and exchanged polite inquiries, but at length Mr Sun brought the conversation round to the subject of the gay quarter of the capital, a matter in which both were experienced. They exchanged views and became very confidential one to another. Mr Sun then told his retainers, who had accompanied him from the boat, to remove themselves beyond earshot.

"Please tell me," he whispered to Mr Li when they were alone, "who it was that was singing yesterday upon your junk?"

"That was Decima, the famous courtesan from Peking," replied Mr Li proudly, for he was only too ready to boast of his conquest.

"But she is the most renowned of all the singing girls of the capital," said the other. "How comes it that she is now with you here?"

Mr Li then related his story, telling how he had met Decima, how they had fallen in love with one another,

[Page 163]

and finally how he had managed to raise the money to redeem her and had carried her off.

"A wonderful tale indeed," said Mr Sun when he had heard Mr Li to the end. "You are thus taking back to your home a very famous beauty, and you must indeed be proud of her. But what about your honoured family? Will they receive her fittingly, do you think?"

"About my wife, it does not matter," replied Mr Li. "But I am certainly alarmed as to what my old father will do. For he is a hot-tempered man and I fear that I may have some trouble with him."

This was just what Mr Sun was waiting for.

"If you think that your father will not receive her," he said, "where will you put her? Have you thought out any definite plan with her?"

"We have, of course, discussed the matter," replied Mr Li, screwing up his brows in perplexity.

"And she, no doubt, had an excellent plan all ready?" prompted Mr Sun in glee.

"To tell you the truth, sir," answered Mr Li, "she proposed that we might go and stay somewhere for a time in Soochow or Hangchow, and spend some time in making expeditions to divert ourselves with the scenery. Then, I thought, I might go home alone and make my peace with my father through the intermediary of my friends, and, after he has forgotten his anger and is placated, she thought that she might come and join me. Do you not think that such a plan would serve?"

Mr Sun sat for some moments silent, pretending to be very concerned.

[Page 164]

"This is the first time that I have met you," he said length, "and it is ever difficult to talk confidentially with a new acquaintance. I fear that if I say what is in my mind you may be offended."

"Nevertheless, I beg of you to speak quite frankly, sir" replied Mr Li, "and to put away all reticence."

"In that case, sir," said Mr Sun, "I would remind you that your father is a very high official, and will therefore by no means countenance anything which might be criticized as unfitting in this matter. You tell me that he took great offence when he heard that you were frequenting resorts that might be considered unseemly. Will he, then, easily forgive you when he learns that you have returned home with one who in the past has been lacking in chastity? Moreover, all your honoured friends and relations will, without exception, take your exalted father's view of this matter. It will be in vain for you to supplicate them, for they will have no sympathy for you, and even if there be found one who should be ignorant of your father's attitude and should go in to speak with him on your behalf, he would, when he saw that your father was not inclined to agree, be forced to change his tone and to side with your father. You will never be able to go back in peace, and you will be equally unable to face your lady again. You can, of course, as you suggest, spend some time in diverting yourselves with scenery, but that cannot go on for ever and you will soon come to an end of your money, and then you will find yourself in greater difficulties than ever."

[Page 165]

Mr Li knew that he had only had fifty taels altogether, of which more than half was already expended, so on hearing this last argument he was forced to nod his head in agreement.

"Now, I have a suggestion to make," went on Mr Sun, "but I feel very diffident about expressing it, and I do not for a moment suppose that you will approve of what I propose."

"Please say on, sir," replied Mr Li, "and accept in advance my gratitude for your help."

"I am, of course, the merest acquaintance, and I am very far from wishing to say anything to estrange you from one who is dear to you," said Mr Sun. "So perhaps, after all, I had better not say what I had intended to say!"

"In any case, let me hear it," urged Mr Li.

"Well," said Mr Sun after further hesitation, "the old proverb says 'A woman is ever unstable as water.' Furthermore, these 'Flowers of the Mist' are nearly always false-hearted. Your lady was the most celebrated of all the courtesans of the quarter and is, without doubt, well known to a large number of young men. Here in the south there are certain to be many of her former lovers, and I strongly suspect that she has come here, by means of your efforts, in order to resume relations with some of them and intends to leave you."

"But that," exclaimed Mr Li emphatically, "is most certainly not the case!"

"Well, you may of course be right," replied Mr Sun. "But the young men of Chiang Nan are notoriously lax

[Page 166]

in their morals, and when you leave so beautiful a girl alone in the house, it will be difficult to guarantee that no adjoining walls will be broken through. If, on the other hand, you take her with you, your father will be all the more incensed against you.

"Now, although I do not think that my proposal is a completely satisfactory one, I will tell it to you. The most important consideration is that you should establish good relations with your father. If you fall out with him over a concubine, or cleave to a courtesan rather than to your own wife and kin, you will be considered by all as a wastrel and a virtueless person. Your wife will not regard you as one worthy to be her husband, your younger brothers will not look up to you as their elder, your friends will have nothing to do with you, and you will be cut off finally from everything. To all this you must pay good heed."

When Mr Li heard these words it was as though he had suddenly awakened to the falsity of his position.

"And, in your exalted opinion," he said, moving his seat nearer to that of his adviser, "what, then, should I do?"

"My proposal is one which will be of the greatest help to you," was the reply. "But I fear that you are so overwhelmed with affection that you will not listen to me, and that my words will be wasted."

"If indeed you have some advice for me which will enable me to return home in peace and in joy," said Mr Li, "I shall regard you as my benefactor to the end of my days. So speak on without fear."

[Page 167]

"You, sir, have been absent from home for more than a year," said the crafty Sun, "much to the anger of your father. Your wife is also, without doubt, much perturbed in her mind about you. If I were in your place, I would certainly not be able to eat or to sleep for anxiety. Your father is evidently very angry with you, not only for being infatuated with a courtesan but also for regarding his money as of no more value than so much dirt, so he doubtless thinks that you will never be fit to inherit and look after his property. You now propose to return without a cash, and when he sees you thus his rage will burst forth. But if you can bring yourself to part with this girl and to make the best of a bad business, I will give you a thousand taels for her. You can then go back to your father with this large sum and can say that you have been acting as tutor all this time in the capital and have never recklessly expended any of his money. It is quite likely that you will be able to make him believe you, and your re-entry into your family will be made easy. Thus in a short time your misfortunes will be turned to happiness. Think over my offer, sir. I am not animated by any spirit of covetousness with regard to the girl, but solely by sympathy with the hardness of your lot!"

Mr Li, who was, as will have been seen, a man of very little strength of character, was so terrified of his father that Mr Sun's advice made a great impression upon him. So he rose and made a salutation to his friend.

"When I hear your words, sir," he said, "it is as

[Page 168]

though a mass of obstructing reeds had suddenly been cleared away from the clear waters of my mind. But the young lady has now accompanied me for a thousand *li*, and it would hardly be in accordance with the dictates of correct behaviour to dispose of her with so little ceremony. Allow me, I beg of you, to go back and consult with her. If I obtain her consent to your proposal, I will come back again and speak further."

"Pray do so," answered Mr Sun. "But when you mention the matter to her, you must approach it by oblique methods. She is, however, no doubt so attached to you that she will not willingly cause a permanent disagreement between your father and yourself, and it is very likely that she will help to enable you to return creditably to your family."

The two then sat on together and drank further, when the storm abated as the dusk came down. Mr Sun told his servants to settle his reckoning, and the two returned hand in hand to the landing-place.

"To pour out your heart to a stranger is a foolish proceeding at best;  
If you must say a word, tell him only one-third, and keep to yourself all the rest!"

## VIII

Meanwhile Decima had early prepared a meal of fruit and wine on the junk for her lover's delectation, but he

[Page 169]

did not come back all day. She lit the lamps as dusk came on, and sat waiting for him until at length he came on board.

When she went outside to welcome him, she saw that he was very flustered and ill at ease, as though he had something unpleasant upon his mind, so she poured out some hot wine for him and urged him to drink. He shook his head, however, and, speaking never a word, went straight to bed. Decima was very disturbed by this behaviour, but cleared the table and helped him to his couch.

"What has happened?" she asked him at length. "Why are you so agitated?" But the only answer she received was a deep sigh. Again and again she questioned him, but Mr Li dropped off to sleep without giving her any answer, and she remained sitting at the head of the bed and watched over him, not being able to sleep herself.

About midnight she heard him wake up and sigh again heavily.

"What have you on your mind which makes you sigh so much, and of which you cannot speak?" she asked.

And at last Mr Li sat up in bed, drawing the coverlet round him. He tried to speak several times, but failed, his tears falling fast, so Decima put her arms around him and pressed him to her heart, trying to comfort him.

"We have loved each other dearly for nearly two years," she said, "and have lived together through a thousand hardships and difficulties. We have overcome endless obstacles in our journey hither, and you have

[Page 170]

expressed no regret. To-day, when we are about to cross the river and settle down together for a long life of united bliss, how is it that you are suddenly overcome with bitter sadness? What can be the reason? Let us make up our minds to live together or to die together as husband and wife. If there is any fresh difficulty, let us talk it over together, for the worst course is to keep a grief to oneself."

Thus she spoke until he perforce restrained his weeping.

"I was a pauper in a far place," he said at last, "and you did not turn your back upon me but, on the contrary, you devised a way for our escape. You have behaved towards me with the utmost virtue and honour; that is understood. But I have to-day been turning the whole matter over in my mind, and this is what I think. My father is a high official of very great austerity, who may be relied upon to obey to the letter the dictates of propriety. Strict and stern is he by nature and I would fear to do anything which would add to his anger. I dread most of all that he should drive us out in disgrace and cause us to become wanderers until the end of our days. It would then be difficult to count upon any measure of conjugal happiness for us, and in addition the relations between father and son would be completely severed. Yesterday I made friends with the man on yonder junk. He is a Mr Sun from Hsu An. He asked me to drink with him and we talked this matter over together---and it was as though he had plunged a knife into my heart!"

[Page 171]

"What, then, did you decide, sir?" asked Decima in alarm.

"I, who am the one chiefly concerned in this matter, have not been able to see so clearly as one who is not himself involved," replied Mr Li. "My friend, Mr Sun, has devised a plan which is very satisfactory for me; but I fear, dear one, that it will not be agreeable to you."

"Who is this one that you call your friend?" she asked. "As to his plan, I would agree to anything that would solve our difficulties."

"His name is Sun Shan-lai," was the reply, "and he is a salt merchant from Hsu An, and also a brilliant young scholar. He heard you singing last night and he asked me who you were. I related to

him all about our affairs and told him about the difficulty I had in going home. He then expressed his willingness to take you for himself and said that he would pay me a thousand taels for you, pointing out that if I returned home with so large a sum of money and said that I had obtained it by industry in the capital, I could easily obtain my father's approbation thereby. You also would be well provided for. But I could not bear the thought of letting you go, and therefore I was weeping."

He ceased speaking with another flood of tears, and Decima, when she had heard him out, released him from her embrace. it

"He who thought out such a plan for you," she cried scornfully, "must be a noble gentleman indeed! You, sir, will be repaid for your former outlay and need not be longer troubled with me on your journey, and I shall

[Page 172]

become the property of another! What an unselfish man he must be, and how high principled! Moreover, both of us will benefit so thoroughly from his kindness. And has he already handed over to you the thousand taels? Have you got the money safe?"

"You, my dear one, had not approved of this proposal," replied Mr Li, who had stopped weeping. "He therefore did not give me the silver, but has it still."

"When morning comes go quickly and strike this bargain, then," she cried. "Do not let slip so good an opportunity! But a thousand taels is no trifling sum. See that the silver is properly weighed out and handed over to you before I go over to his junk. See to it that he tries no huckster's trick upon you!"

And so saying, she lit the lamp and began at once to make her toilet, it being then the fourth watch of the night. "I must make myself look more than usually attractive this day," she said, "for I must usher out the parting guest and welcome in the new one!"

Thus she began applying the rouge and the powder and the scented oil, embellishing herself with the greatest care. She put in her prettiest hair-combs and donned a beautiful embroidered coat, arraying herself in her most becoming style. And as she moved she emitted waves of fragrance---indeed a veritable lure for men.

Then, when her toilet was at last complete, and as dawn was just beginning to break, Mr Sun sent across a servant to ask if Mr Li had made up his mind. Decima shot one earnest glance at her lover, and, seeing on his face a look of pleasure and satisfaction, told him to hurry

[Page 173]

off and give his answer, weighing the money well. So Mr Li went over to the other boat and gave his formal consent.

"To hand over the money will be easy enough," said Mr Sun to him, "but before I do so I must have a

pledge, say the lady's toilet case, that you are in earnest."

Mr Li went back to Decima, who pointed at the decorated box which had been given to her when she left the capital, saying briefly that he could take that.

Sun, on receiving the box, was overjoyed and promptly sent the thousand taels over to the other boat. Decima looked the silver over and made certain that it sufficed both in weight and in fineness, not the value of a hair being deficient. Then she put her hand through the window of the junk and beckoned to Mr Sun, who felt as though bereft of his senses as she opened her red lips and displayed her pearly teeth, saying to him: "Please return that box to me for a moment. Within it I have placed Mr Li's permit to travel, and I would give it back to him."

Mr Sun already looked upon Decima as a captive tortoise in an earthen jar, so he sent his servant at once to carry back the box to her.

She came up on deck to meet the man, and, taking the box from him, she unlocked and opened the lid, revealing a number of drawers within. She bade Mr Li pull out and give her the top drawer, and it was seen to be full of jade ornaments of all kinds, earrings and tassels and hair-combs, in value several hundreds of taels.

These, in the astonished sight of Mr Li, Mr Sun, and

[Page 174]

all the boatmen, she cast into the river. Then she bade Mr Li pull out the second drawer, and again the third and the fourth. One was filled with flutes of jade and gold, another with gold buttons, another with trinkets, and all, to the value of several thousand taels, she cast into the river.

By this time spectators of her actions stood round like a wall, upon the bank of the river and upon all the junks near by. And everyone was aghast at her doings, and cried out in wonderment and in pity of such waste.

At the last Decima came to a drawer in which there was a small casket. This she opened, and it was seen to contain about a handful of lustrous pearls of wondrous size, emeralds, cat's-eyes and other jewels, the like of which had never before been seen, and of a value which none could estimate. A sigh of admiration and murmurs of astonishment, like distant thunder, went up from the spectators.

Decima appeared to be about to cast the casket into the river after the rest, when Mr Li, stricken with remorse, attempted to throw his arms round her. Mr Sun also exhorted her to abstain from throwing any more of her treasure into the flood. But she disregarded them both, and, pushing Mr Li to one side, addressed Mr Sun.

"Mr Li and I have successfully overcome an infinity of difficulties," she cried. "By no ordinary efforts did we come to this place. But you, with your vile words, have covered me with shame and have sundered a happy union of true affection. It is you that are my enemy! I

will be mindful of you even after my death, for in the nether world I will proclaim your crime aloud. And you were he who dared to think of a life of pleasure with me!

"As for you," she went on, turning to Mr Li, "hear this. I was the sport of the world for many years, and little by little I saved up a hoard of precious trifles which I thought would support me in my old age. Then, when I met you, we swore together an oath of fidelity, vowing never to change unto our lives' end. When we left Peking, I prevailed upon my friends to pretend to present to me this chest, my own property. The treasures that it contained were in value no less than ten thousand taels, and it was my intention to enable you thereby to return home in splendid fashion so that you might impress your parents and kin, who would thus have felt well disposed towards me and taken pity upon my resolve to leave for ever the paths of vice. They would have permitted me to have remained as one of the household, to belong to you for ever. Then in life and in death I should have had no regret. But, alas, you have proved shallow; you have been easily deceived by crafty and lying speeches. You were ready to cast me off midway upon your journey, thus setting at naught my faithful loyalty to you.

"This day, then, I have opened this chest in the sight of all. Its contents I have cast away, that you might see how paltry in comparison was the sum which you have preferred to me and on which you set your heart. Just as this chest hid the treasure, so my breast hid

my resolution; and in that you, with pupils in your eyes, did not see me as I really was, I despise you!

"Alas, my fate is indeed an evil one! In early life I suffered an abyss of woe, and when at last I escape from bondage, I have to face this final shame!"

"And you that have ears and eyes," she went on, turning to the spectators, "be witness of my words and deeds this day! It is not that I am ungrateful to this one; it is he that has cast me off!"

As she finished speaking, all who heard were deeply affected. They reviled and spat upon Mr Li for an ungrateful and mean-spirited person; and he, overcome with shame, wept bitter tears of remorse. He attempted to beg Decima to forgive him. But the girl brushed him aside, and, clasping the casket in her arms, leaped with it into the bosom of the river.

All dashed forward to try and save her, but the fog rolled down and hid her from their sight and no trace of her was ever seen again.

Alas, that a girl so lovely and so peerless should thus find a grave in the maw of the river fish!

Then the spectators gnashed their teeth in rage against the two students, and were for making a sudden onslaught against them. So to save themselves the two had their junks cast off, and each sped away in his own direction.

As Mr Li made his escape, his eyes fell upon the thousand taels of silver lying on the deck, the price that he had received for Decima, and all day long he sat brooding in shame and self-reproach till at length his

[Page 177]

mind gave way and his whole frame was stricken with a mortal sickness.

Mr Sun from the fright that he had sustained contracted also a grievous malady and took to his bed, where he lingered for a month. But the figure of Decima was ever present by his bedside, cursing him without cease until he died. And all men said that it was a just retribution for his crime upon the river.

## IX

Meanwhile Mr Liu Yu-ch'un in the capital soon came to the end of his period of study in the Imperial Academy, and returned home with all that was his.

On his journey he anchored in the Great River, as the luckless pair had done; and as his junk lay there, he happened to drop into the water the copper basin in which he was washing his face at the junk's side. He hailed a passing fisherman and caused him to cast his net in to regain the basin. At last the man brought up something which was not the basin but a small casket. This Mr Liu opened and he found it to contain a mass of wondrous jewels of great value. He liberally rewarded the fisherman and took the casket to his cabin to examine it at leisure, laying it at the head of his bed. That night he dreamed, and in his dream he saw a lovely damsel coming towards him over the water. He looked at her and recognized Decima. She came closer and

[Page 178]

saluted him and then related how she had been betrayed by Mr Li.

"In former days I was much indebted to you, sir," she said, "for your kindness and generosity in giving to me 150 taels. I ever kept in mind my debt and it was my intention, after arriving at my journey's end, to repay you, but I was unfortunate in being prevented from doing so. To-day therefore I have conveyed to you, by means of a fisherman, a casket of jewels, and in this manner have discharged my indebtedness to you. Hereafter we shall not meet again."

Mr Liu's dream then ended and he awoke. He had not heard of Decima's sad end, and he grieved and sighed for her during many days.

Thus it was handed down that Sun Shan-lai, a worthless person, made a vile plot to entrap a damsel and vainly flung away a thousand taels; that Li Kan-hsien was a student devoid of virtue and lacking in understanding, who failed to recognise the worth of his lady.

On this we need not dwell. But let us grieve together for Decima and applaud her heroism, which transcended that of other women. Let us sorrow that she never found a worthy mate who would have accompanied her to the realms of the immortals, but was mistaken in her estimate of Mr Li and entrusted her precious self to a fool. Alas! that their affection should have been changed to enmity and their love poured out like so much water. It was sad indeed!

[Page 179]

Ye who know not the life by men called "gay,"  
Cease once for all your random talk, and learn  
That true affection here can also be---  
Yea, that true love passing the wit of man.  
And he that knows that love, knows, too, full well  
That in this "gaiety" need be no shame.



## NOTES

*Note 37.* ---If an apology be needed for the setting of this story, it may be stated that there are practical difficulties which render nearly impossible a Chinese love-story after the western manner. For it hardly ever happens that one of the well-to-do classes sees his wife before marriage, and if a young man meets one of the opposite sex who is not a member of his own home circle, she is generally of the unfortunate class.

It may seem strange that, in a country where early marriage and concubinage are universal, there should be room for the profession round which this story is centered, but that this is so is a fact of which there is ample evidence in any large Chinese city. Recruits are made solely by purchase of female children from parents who, owing to famine or other cause, are unable to provide for a too numerous offspring.

To take a concubine from the unfortunate class is a step which is generally regarded with disfavour, but should this step be taken, or should a courtesan acquire enough money to purchase her own freedom, a kindly custom renders it impossible for a mistress to refuse to allow the redemption of any inmate of her establishment.

A concubine is acquired as a rule by purchase and is regarded as the property of the purchaser, who is called her "master." Her position in the household is practically that of a slave, but the Chinese are a tolerant race and harmony with the wife is the rule rather than the exception.

*Note 38.* ---Yen Ching ("the Capital of Yen") is a name by which Peking is still known in literary style. Yen was the name of an ancient state in north China which lost its independence many centuries before the Ming dynasty, but at the time of this story the name still remained with territorial significance. Chu Yuan-chang,

[Page 180]

the founder of the Ming dynasty, after having established himself as Emperor (reigning as Hung Wu,

1368-1399) set up a civil government on the model of that of the T'ang emperors, including a system of territorial grants in outlying portions of the empire. His sons were among those who benefited in this way, and the most capable of them, the fourth, was made Prince of Yen.

At Hung Wu's death the throne descended, as the result of intrigue, not to any of his sons, but to his grandson, who at once attempted to deprive his uncles of their power and even of their lives. The Prince of Yen then revolted, and after four years of conflict succeeded in overcoming his nephew and establishing himself as the third Ming emperor (Yung Lo, 1403-1425). His accession was marked by fearful atrocities in the capital (Nanking) and elsewhere amongst those who had supported his nephew---deeds which are here euphemistically alluded to as "bringing tranquillity to the land" -- - and, as recorded in this story, he moved the capital of the empire to Peking, where it has remained ever since.

The old name (still often used) for Nanking was Chin Ling, which is generally translated "Golden Tomb." The meaning is rather "Buried Gold," and legend has it that King Wei of the Ch'u State (sixth century B.C.), finding that there was in that district an emanation conducive to the birth of kings, buried some gold there in order to stimulate that influence.

*Note 39.* ---Wan Li was the thirteenth emperor (last but three) of the Ming dynasty and reigned from 1573 to 1620; not, as here stated, the eleventh emperor.

There is little to excuse the extravagant terms of praise with which the author of this story mentions this reign, except considerations for his own safety should his identity become known, for the story must have been written during the reign of the son, grandson or grand-nephew of the emperor in question.

The reign of Wan Li was a long record of the most unprincipled misgovernment and oppression and ushered in the final downfall of the dynasty. Some restraint was exercised by the prime minister for the first few years of Wan Li's reign, but thereafter the empire was virtually controlled by eunuchs, and taxation in consequence reached a maximum.

This reign is, however, interest to Europeans, in that it was about this time that trade with the west became constant. It was at this time that the Spaniards settled in the Philippine Islands, which they held until 1898. The Dutch and the Portuguese also established trading centres before and during the reign of Wan Li, and it was the same emperor who received and entertained the famous missionary, Matteo Ricci, who made his way to Peking and through his knowledge of astronomy and mathematics gained considerable influence at court.

*Note 40.* ---P'ing Hsiu-chih was the Chinese name of the famous Japanese general, Taira Hideyoshi, afterwards Tycoon of Japan, who in 1592, seeing that affairs, in Korea were in confusion owing to the misrule of the king, landed at Fusan with a large army and

[Page 181]

marched to Seoul, the capital, which he took and plundered. The King of Korea fled to the Yalu river in the north and implored the protection of the Chinese. An army was sent in response to this appeal, but it was defeated by the Japanese, who proceeded to invade Chinese territory. The Chinese eventually got the upper hand by destroying Hideyoshi's supplies, and the invaders retired temporarily to Fusan.

*Note 41.* ---The former system of examination for the civil service of China was a matter of supreme importance, for the examinations were the sole avenue to office, and therefore to riches, power, and honour. Competitors were examined almost entirely in their knowledge of the classics, and a wise rule existed that no one, on appointment as an official, could serve in his own province. The examinations were open to all except those of a status held to be disreputable, such as actors, barbers, and executioners; and, in theory, no favour was shown.

Though complicated in detail, the system in outline was simple. The three chief literary degrees were those of Hsiu Ts'ai ("Refined Talent"), Chu Jen ("The Man Raised Up"), and Chin Shih ("Advanced Scholar"), and in earlier times only Chin Shih could hold office; later, however, Chu Jen were admitted. The examination for the Hsiu Ts'ai degree was held yearly in each provincial capital; that for Chu Jen was held triennially, in the provincial capital, where only Hsiu Ts'ai were allowed to compete, and in Peking; while Chin Shih were selected from Chu Jen by triennial examination in Peking alone.

Those who had obtained the degree of Hsiu Ts'ai had, pending the examination for the Chu Jen degree, to pass a yearly intermediate examination to show that they were keeping up their studies, and if events necessitated a change of residence of a Hsiu Ts'ai, he had to obtain written permission to study elsewhere than at home. Failure in either of these two respects was apt to entail cancellation of his degree.

The most difficult examination to pass was that for the Chu Jen degree. Into this test, possibly owing to the large number of competitors, luck entered largely, and those of outstanding ability often failed several times before success ultimately rewarded their efforts.

The Imperial Seminary mentioned has an interesting history. It was the development of an educational establishment which existed from the earliest times and bore various names through succeeding dynasties, being first called the Kuo Tzu Chien or "National Seminary" in A.D. 607. Its object was originally the instruction of scions of the imperial house. Later, sons of high officials were also admitted, but no modification of its original character as a purely educational establishment was made until the Ming dynasty, when it was used as a means of raising money ostensibly to meet national emergencies. This was easily possible from the fact that those admitted bore the honorary title of Chien Sheng ("Students of the Seminary") and were exempt from various state services and also obtained easy access to the

[Page 182]

higher literary degrees and consequently to official appointment. This principle, which was strongly condemned by contemporary censors, was introduced during the reign of the Emperor Ching T'ai (1450), payment being made first in kind---grain, fodder, or horses for military use---and subsequently in silver, until in later Ch'ing times the degree of Chien Sheng was purchaseable for the paltry sum of twenty taels.

In the present story, it is pointed out that the seminary was specially intended to enable those who had not obtained the Hsiu Ts'ai degree to compete in the Chu Jen examination, but even for passed Hsiu

Ts'ai, like Li Kan-hsien, the seminary afforded a special advantage in that the number of competitors who were passed as Chu Jen in the capital was proportionately greater than in the provincial tests, while the standard was lower. The competition for Chien Sheng was therefore much less severe.

It is more than likely that the author of this story in his remarks upon the Kuo Tzu Chien, as in his eulogy of the Emperor Wan Li, was writing sarcastically.

The former civil service examination system which was uniform throughout China, has now entirely disappeared and so far no uniform system has replaced it, a fact which militates against the possibility of satisfactory government.

*Note 42.* ---Chung K'uei Lao. An imaginary being, supposed to be able to avert evil spirits from a house. Pictures of him are pasted at the entrance to houses at the New Year. He corresponds to the Japanese Shokei, who figures frequently in the art of that country. Here, "devil" is used in a double sense.

*Note 43.* ---White Tiger is the name of a star which brings ill-luck. Corresponding to this star, according to the "science" of Feng Shui or geomancy, are the subterranean currents which must be avoided in the selection of a site---*e.g.*, for a house.

*Note 44.* ---The "seven necessities" of daily life are: Rice, Fuel, Oil, Salt, Soy, Vinegar, and Tea.

*Note 45.* ---Borrowing money. This is a universal custom in China. Often enough among friends no interest is charged, and, though repayment is usually made, genuine inability to pay excuses liability. In business, however, high rates of interest are charged, 2 per cent. a month being the common rate.

*Note 46.* ---Praying to the Great Bear ensures longevity. An elderly person, being nearer to the account which must be rendered death, is theoretically less likely to tell lies than a younger one.

*Note 47.* ---Palm to palm. Formerly a common gesture on making verbal agreement, one party placing the palm of his right hand against the palm of the other's left. Possibly evidence of no concealed weapon and therefore of good faith.

[Page 183]

*Note 48.* ---150 taels would weigh about 12 lbs. avoirdupois. The kind of coverlet indicated here is a thick double quilt of heavy cotton cloth stuffed with cotton. It is quite conceivable that small pieces of silver aggregating 12 lbs. could be sewn in such a quilt without necessarily exciting suspicion.

*Note 49.* ---In former days the normal route, except in the depth of winter, from Peking to the south was eastwards to Tungchow by road, then by river (the Pei Ho) to Tientsin and then by the Grand Canal across the Yellow River and the Yangtze to Chin-kiang Soochow and Hangchow. Lord Macartney's mission to China in 1795 followed this route and prolonged it up the Ch'ien T'ang River at Hangchow, over the divide into Kiangse province and thence via the Poyang Lake and two other rivers to Canton, a total journey by water of about 1,600 miles.

*Note 50.* ---A girl of common origin. In the Far East, singing and dancing are almost exclusively professional arts.

*Note 51.* ---This verse is by a poet and calligraphist of the T'ang dynasty named Liu Tsung-yuan (773-819). A pronounced Buddhist, he wrote an essay in defence of that religion, in which he said (Giles' translation): "Buddhism admits of no envious rivalry for place or power. The majority of its adherents love only to lead a simple life of contemplation amid the charms of hill and stream. And when I turn my gaze towards the turmoil of the age in its daily race for the seals and tassels of office, I ask myself if I am to reject those in order to take my place among the ranks of these."

The first line of the verse here introduced is quoted wrongly, without apparent reason, in the Chinese text; I have altered it in translation. The artist who was good enough to paint for me the original of the frontispiece to this volume has written on his picture a third version.

*Note 52.* ---Possibly Kao Ch'an of the T'ang dynasty. On failing at the first attempt to take his Chin Shih degree, he consoled himself by writing some verses, in which he pointed out that the beautiful hibiscus blooms late, when the peach and the almond blossoms are over. He passed successfully on a later attempt.

## LUCKLESS GRADUATE

### I

IN a certain period of the T'ang Dynasty, there lived a Minister named Wang Ai, an official of the highest rank. He held dominion over all other officials; in his household there were a thousand slaves, and the cost of the food consumed each day within his gates was ten thousand cash, for his wealth and affluence were beyond the power of words to express.

Now the kitchens in his palace were adjacent to a certain Buddhist temple, and the water used for washing his bowls and dishes was each day cast into a drain which flowed down through the temple courtyard.

One morning the abbot of the temple was walking in this yard, when his eye caught sight of a mass of white objects which floated in the water running down the drain. As a whole they resembled a snow-storm in the distance, but each speck was as white and shining as a flake of the purest jade. So he drew near and looked, and behold, it was a quantity of the best white rice cast away from the bowls and dishes washed in the kitchens of Wang Ai. And the priest folded his hands together in the attitude of prayer and murmured: "Ah! Lord Buddha! Here is a transgression!" He then composed and spoke aloud the following verse:

"In spring we plough and scatter grain, in summer till the field,  
Each little seed by which we feed, of sweat and toil the yield.  
The husk is pounded from the core and falls in jadelike flakes,  
The fragrant rice is boiled and stands in shining silvery cakes.  
Oh! free from care are they who share such food three times a day;  
A mouthful can, in a hungry man, such fearful pangs allay.  
And when all round are they who starve and die in misery,  
What bitter pain within this drain such wicked waste to see!"

His verse finished, he called the temple cook and bade him use his bamboo strainer day by day and catch the rice as it floated by, to take it down to the river side and wash it, and then to spread it in a bamboo basket and dry it in the sun; that done, to store it in an earthen tub until the tub was filled.

The cook did as he was bidden. In three or four months the tub was full, and in two years more than six tubs had been filled in this manner.

Now Minister Wang Ai imagined within his heart that his prosperity would last for ten thousand generations, but his access of joy gave way to bitter sorrow when suddenly one day he was so unfortunate as to offend the Son of Heaven, and he and his whole household were arrested and confined in his own palace, a seal being set upon the door. There they were held for punishment, not knowing whether life or death was to be their portion. The guests had all left, the slaves had all run away, and the storehouse had all been emptied by the minister's enemies.

His family consisted of three and twenty person, and all, being without food, starving and destitute, set up so piteous a wailing that the priests in the temple next door marvelled at the noise, and when the sound penetrated to the ears of the abbot his heart was moved with compassion. There was only a wall between them, and it was but necessary to remove a few bricks to establish communication.

So the abbot had the dried rice taken out from the tubs, softened in water, and sent in to relieve Minister Wang and his household. They all ate and so much wondered at the excellence of the rice that the minister sent a messenger in to the abbot to inquire how it was that one who had renounced the world could afford such dainty food.

"This is not the daily ration of poor priests," said

[Page 190]

the abbot in reply, "but is the rice washed out from your own bowls and dishes and cast by you into the drain that flows through my courtyard. I, in my poverty, was moved at the sight of so much waste, so I had the rice caught, cleaned, dried and stored, to relieve the needy in times of scarcity. How fortunate it is that to-day it has served to alleviate the distress of your honourable household; and how true it is that every mouthful which we eat is numbered and apportioned by God!"

Wang Ai heard these words and sighed heavily. "It is, alas, true that in former years I was recklessly wasteful of God's good gifts," he said, "and it is but just that to-day I have cause for grief. My present ill-luck is well deserved, and to-night I take poison and die!"

It was indeed sad that one of such affluence in the past should come to so piteous a condition. When one is poor one constantly hopes for riches, and when one is prosperous it is one's duty to walk warily, for if good fortune passes and calamity arises, one's own deeds are often the sole cause.

Of you, my readers, those that be poor, who knows when he will be rich; of those that be rich, who believes a moment in the possibility of poverty?

I shall now relate an old story which at the outset is sad but which ends most happily. And if there be of you those who can hardly endure oppression without resentment, listen to my tale and then return to your homes with heads erect and with the muscles of your necks stiffened. Wait till your good luck comes, and do not lose your resolution!

The grass is withered when the wintry winds do blow,  
But will come up again in the spring.  
The caterpillar buried in the mud down below  
Will one day spread a glorious wing.  
And if my tiger-picture looks at first like a dog,  
I beg you not to laugh at me until  
I have added all the fangs and the whiskers and the claws,  
And perhaps you will be frightened at it still.

### III

It was during the reign of the Emperor T'ien Shun [1] of the present dynasty that there lived in the city of Chiang Lo in the Yen P'ing prefecture of the province of Fukien, an official named Ma Wan-ch'an, a Senior Censor, who was in charge of the Board of Civil Office. And because he impeached the famous eunuch, Wang Chen, for usurping the Emperor's authority and injuring the State, he was dismissed from his office and reduced to the rank of a common citizen.

His wife had died early, leaving only one son, whose name was Ma Te-ch'eng. This boy had attained his degree of *Hsiu-ts'ai* [2] at the age of twelve, for he had great natural talent and was replete with learning. His talent was equal to that of Yen Tzu-yuan, the disciple of the Master [3], who on hearing one character would unerringly deduce ten, and his erudition was like to that

of Yu Shih-nan, [1] whose heart concealed more knowledge than could have been contained in five cart-loads of books. The essays of Ma Te-ch'eng were superior to those of any of his contemporaries, and his reputation was known far and wide. It need hardly be said therefore that his father, the Censor, prized his son above pure gold or fine jade.

And the sons of the rich and learned who dwelt near by all held him in great esteem by reason of the fact that he was both of a rich house and a most successful scholar, and they prophesied for him the highest literary honour and rapid promotion to supreme official rank. There was not one who did not make much of him and flatter him.

Among these there were two youths whose flattery exceeded that of all others. One was called Huang Sheng, and the other Ku Hsiang. These two came of official and well-to-do families, but neither was able to recognise a single written character, though both were in due course given names as if they had been students.

These two youths treated Ma Te-ch'eng as a Buddha, for they hoped that they might be able to presume upon his friendship when he should become a famous official. And Ma Te-ch'eng, being honest and correct in his dealings with his neighbours, repaid their adulation with a complete cordiality and

accepted their friendship so lavishly proffered. Huang Sheng indeed proposed that Ma Te-ch'eng should espouse his younger sister, Lin Ying, and Te-ch'eng, after making inquiries and finding

[Page 193]

that the young lady's education and appearance left nothing to be desired, acceded to this proposition with alacrity and the two were duly affianced. But in his early youth he had sworn an oath, saying:

"I vow that I never will take a wife except as a reward  
When I see my name as a 'Scholar Advanced' [\[1\]](#) writ upon the Yellow Board."

And his father, applauding this resolution, made no attempt to compel him to marry, so that when he had passed the ripe age of twenty he was still unwed.

Now the year in which our story begins happened to be that in which the triennial examinations were held, and on a certain day Huang Sheng and Ku Hsiang invited Te-ch'eng to go with them to a bookshop to make some purchases. Next door to this shop a fortuneteller had set up his stall, and on his board was written

"If you wish to know your fortune true,  
Mr Candid Chang is the man for you."

"That man Chang calls himself 'candid,' " said Te-ch'eng, "so it should be that he will speak without any hesitation." And when they had made their purchases next door they went on to the stall, and Te-ch'eng saluted Mr Chang and called upon him to tell his fortune.

The man inquired what were the eight characters

[Page 194]

indicating the precise hour of his client's birth, [\[1\]](#) and then, after reckoning the combined effects of the Five Elemental Influences and the tendency of the Five Corresponding Constellations in his case, spoke as follows:

"With your kind indulgence, sir, I intend to speak without any reserve!"

"You say this, sir," replied Te-ch'eng, "because you doubtless foresee disaster in my fortune. But say your say without any hesitation nevertheless."

Huang Sheng and Ku Hsiang, however, who stood looking on, were afraid lest the soothsayer might say something unpleasant calculated to offend their patron.

"Be most careful in your calculations before you speak," Huang Sheng warned him. "And by no means commit yourself without due reflection!"

"This gentleman," added Ku Hsiang, "is the most famous scholar in these parts, and you need only say whether his name will appear as the first or as the second in the list of the successful at the forthcoming public examination."

"I can only speak the truth according to what is written," said the fortune-teller. "And I presume that I have your permission to do so. I see here talent and official position very prominently displayed. Your honourable father, sir, is already an official of high renown, and it was foreordained that you should be born into illustrious official family."

At this pronouncement the two onlookers clapped their

[Page 195]

hands with pleasure. "True, indeed," they both exclaimed.

"As to the Five Constellations," the man went on, "the stars K'uei and Pi are intimately connected with your fate, which indicates that your literary essays will be of world-wide superiority."

"Good, sir; good!" exclaimed the two friends again. "You have said aright!"

"But," continued the fortune-teller, "beware of the twenty-second year of your life! That will be a most difficult time for you, and I see indications of great misfortune. Not only is it indicated that your home may be broken up, but your life itself may be endangered. If, however, you can manage to survive until you are thirty-one years of age, you will enjoy a full fifty years of continued prosperity and the envious respect of all. But I fear that wide gulf! If you are not able to leap over it, it will be terrible for you."

This was not at all to the liking of Ku and Huang, who at once began to revile the man.

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Huang Sheng. "You are a babbler of random words!"

"Have at him!" cried Ku H-siang, shaking his fist at the fortune-teller. "Let us knock the 'candour' out of this reptile!" But Ma Te-ch'eng kept them back with outstretched arms.

"To cast a horoscope is a difficult and delicate operation," he said. "To say that he has done it ill is sufficient. Why should you wish to brawl with him?" But Huang and Ku were vulgar-minded young men and

[Page 196]

Ma Te-ch'eng had to use all his powers of persuasion to keep them off. And the soothsayer was only too glad to escape so lightly and omitted to ask any fee for his services.

Now at that time everybody, including Ma Te-ch'eng, imagined that he would succeed at the

forthcoming examination as easily as he could spit upon his hand, and he neither felt any resentment at the fortune-teller, nor did he indeed pay much attention to his pronouncement. He duly entered for the examination and was quite satisfied at his own performances through all its stages. His astonishment was therefore great when he found that on the publication of the list his name was not among those of the successful.

The first time that he had entered for this examination, he was but fifteen years old. He was now twenty-one and had failed three times. [1] As far as age was concerned, he was of course still quite young, but since he had competed so often without success, he felt very despondent and imagined himself the victim of ill fortune.

Another year passed and he was twenty-two years old. At this time a certain official who happened to be a friend and a follower of Censor Ma also impeached the eunuch Wang Chen. The latter imagined that this act was due the Censor's influence, and had been prompted by revenge, so he secretly ordered the Court officials to examine the records of all the cases in which Censor Ma had acted while he held office, in order that some excuse

[Page 197]

might be found for a charge against him to the effect that he had extorted a bribe of ten thousand taels. This charge was duly made and the chief judge of the province of Fukien was instructed to inflict a fine of a like amount on Censor Ma and to have the money sent to the Capital.

Now Ma Wan-ch'un had been a clean-handed official, and when the news of this plot reached him, he became so angry that he fell into a fever and died in a few days. His son Ma Te-ch'eng observed all the mourning ceremonial with the greatest strictness, but nevertheless the local officials, being extremely fearful of their superiors, insisted on the fine of 10,000 taels being handed over. So that the whole household had to be sold to raise the money, and all the lands which Ma Te-ch'eng had inherited, and of which title-deeds existed and could be traced, were confiscated at the officials' own valuation, and at the last there was only one small farm remaining for which no deed had yet been taken out and of which the officials had, accordingly, no knowledge.

Ma Te-ch'eng, relying upon his former good relations with Ku Hsiang, gave out that this farm was the property of his friend, and asked him to recognise it temporarily as such. He also put together several boxes of curiosities, valuables and books, worth in all several hundred taels, and sent them to the house of his other former friend, Huang Sheng.

Censor Ma's house, farms, fields, and other property were then all sold, but, although the officials examined the estate as carefully as one who blows apart the hairs

[Page 198]

upon a fur to discover any defect, the price which all fetched did not amount to the full sum required.

After his father's funeral had taken place, Ma Te-ch'eng was living in a temporary shelter constructed

in the family burial ground, when Ku Hsiang sent a messenger to him to say that the officials had received information concerning the farm which still remained. Aid that he could no longer deceive them. Te-ch'eng had therefore to submit, and the last piece of his patrimony thus disappeared; he did not learn, however, until afterwards, that Ku Hsiang had turned informer and had betrayed his friend deliberately, partly to avoid subsequent difficulties and partly to ingratiate himself with the authorities. Te-ch'eng then knew how treacherous was the nature of Ku Hsiang, who related the incident among his acquaintances as a joke.

Another year passed, and Te-ch'eng went one day to the house of Huang Sheng to obtain the property which he had left for safe keeping. He was not received, so he called again and again until at length he was given a letter, which, when he opened it, proved to contain nothing but a long list of dates and items showing imaginary debts accrued during their expeditions together in the past, and at the end was a brief statement to say that the books and curiosities were only of such a value, that they were all held against the total amount owing, and that not one would be returned.

Te-ch'eng became very angry as he scanned this document, and then tore it up in front of the messenger.

"Dog and swine!" he cried. "May I never set eyes

[Page 199]

upon him again!" And, needless to say, there was no further talk of his marriage with Huang Sheng's sister on his part, and as for Huang Sheng, he was only too glad to sever connection with the Ma family, so that this suited him exceedingly well.

Now Ma Te-ch'eng continued to live in the burial place of his fathers, and the clothes that he wore were ragged and torn, and the food that he ate was coarse and scanty. While his father was yet alive he had always helped others, but to-day when he himself was in difficulties no one lifted a finger to help him. Old Wang, the caretaker in the burial ground, exhorted him to cut down the trees around the graves and sell the timber, but this he would not do. However, he consented to have felled a few of the old cypresses lining the approach to the graves, for the caretaker pointed out that these were apart and would hardly be missed. But when the first was cut down, the middle was found to be so hollow and eaten away by insects as to be worth nothing, and the next one that was felled proved to be in the same condition.

"This is fate," said Te-ch'eng with a sigh, and he gave orders that no more trees were to be cut down, and that the two already felled should be sold as firewood. But the amount fetched was a paltry sum and was very soon exhausted in food.

He had still one slave boy left, a small lad of twelve years of age, so he told old Wang to take him away and sell him. But the boy only fetched five taels, and, after he had taken up his abode in the home of his new

[Page 200]

master, he developed a habit of breathing offensively, so that his new master refused to keep him upon the terms agreed on and sent him back to old Wang with a demand for the refund of the money. This placed Te-ch'eng in an awkward position, but eventually a compromise was arrived at and he agreed to refund two taels of the price, the slave to return to his new owner. Strange to say, however, the offensive habit immediately disappeared, and it seemed as though the peculiarity had been contracted solely in order that Te-ch'eng should lose two taels.

Time passed until the full period of mourning [1] had been completed, and Te-ch'eng became desperately poor with no prospect of raising any money. But he had a certain uncle who was a prefect in Hangchow, while not far from that city there was a magistrate who had been a protege of Censor Ma in the past. Te-ch'eng thought that he might go and find these two officials and throw himself on their compassion, so he got together all the articles of furniture that he had remaining and told old Wang to go and sell them, thus obtaining some money for the journey. He then washed his few tattered garments, tied them up in a bundle and set forth. He caught a passenger boat going direct to Hangchow, where he sought his uncle, but found to his disappointment that the latter had died ten days before. He then went to seek out the other friend, but when he arrived at the magistracy he was told that the official had lately had some trouble with his superiors over his accounts, and

[Page 201]

that, being highly affronted thereby, he had declared that he was afflicted by sickness and had shut the doors of his yamen, refusing to see anyone.

Thus Te-ch'eng was unsuccessful in finding either of the two officials whom he sought. But it occurred to him that in the many yamens in Nanking there must surely be some official who had been a friend of his father, so he embarked again in a passenger boat and arrived at last at the mouth of the Grand Canal in the Great River. But when he wished to proceed up to Nanking, a great storm of wind and rain arose from the west and blew so strongly that the boat was unable to move one inch. So he landed and proceeded on foot by way of Chu Yung and thence to Nanking. Now let me enumerate the gates in that city:

The Stratagem Gate, the Phoenix Gate, the Gate of the Golden Rill,  
The Stranger's Joy, the Bright and Cool, the Gate of the Stony Hill,  
The Three Peaks Gate, the Water Gate, the Gate where the Jewels lie,  
The Emperor's Gate, the Sunrise Gate, and the Gate of Harmony. [1]

Te-ch'eng entered by the Water Gate and spent the night in an inn. Next day he began his round of visits to all the Boards, public offices, and yamens, to inquire whether there were still any contemporaries of his father

[Page 202]

in office. But there was not one. Some had been promoted, some transferred, some had died or been cashiered, and not one was left. He had had great hopes when he had arrived, but being unsuccessful he had no means to return home again. So he lived as best he could where he was and half a year

elapsed. He had no money for traveling and could not imitate the example of Wu Yun, [1] who begged food at the city gate. He had therefore to follow that of Lu Meng-cheng [2] and obtain food from benevolent priests.

One day he went in his rounds to the famous Pao En temple [3] of Nanking, and there he met one whom he remembered as an acquaintance in his home in Fukien. Him Te-ch'eng asked for news, and the man told him that the late judge of Fukien had been to his home town to conduct the yearly intermediate examination of passed graduates. Now when Te-ch'eng's mourning had been completed, he had no present to give to the registrar of the examining body, so the latter had not issued to him the necessary certificate to enable him to compete once more, nor had he issued a license to authorise Te-ch'eng to study away from home, [4] for he had not intended to be away long. He had had no communication whatever with his home, and now heard for the first time that the registrar had put his name down as having forfeited his degree for omitting to provide for his future examination.

On receipt of this disturbing news, Te-ch'eng sat and sighed for many hours. He could not now return home

[Page 203]

without the most disturbing loss of face, so he determined to stay in Nanking and find employment as a private teacher to provide himself with the necessaries of daily life until he could obtain something better. But he discovered that the people of Nanking were a proud and mean folk and knew no discrimination between good and bad. For when they heard that he came from a strange province and was so destitute, they one and all denounced him as a vagrant and said that no matter how wonderful were his talents and learning, even if his heart were like gold brocade and his bowels like fine embroidery, they would not trust him to the extent of engaging him as a tutor.

Next the priests began to look askance upon him and to regard him as an importunate ne'er-do-weel, becoming most impolite to him in every way. But fortunately it is never the will of heaven that a man should be cut off from every chance; and there lived in the city a military official named Chao, a major in charge of the transportation of Tribute rice, who was seeking a literary man to go with him to Peking, to entertain him on the way and act as his private secretary.

This Major Chao happened into the temple one day and mentioned his desire to the Abbot in Te-ch'eng's hearing. The latter thought that if he could only take advantage of this opportunity he could get to Peking free of cost, so he asked the Abbot to recommend him for the post. The Abbot was only too glad to seize an opportunity of ridding himself of so needy and constant a visitor, so he strongly recommended him to Major Chao

[Page 204]

in flattering terms, adding as an additional inducement the fact that Mr Ma would probably go at a very reasonable stipend. The major being a military man and therefore not very particular, [1] was glad of the chance of saving a little money, so he made an appointment to meet Te-ch'eng in the temple, and, after sending in his visiting card, arranged everything with him and fixed a day for their

departure.

So out they set together, and in due course their junks arrived at the Yellow River. Here Te-ch'eng went ashore for a stroll, and when he had walked some little distance from the junks he suddenly heard a roaring sound as though heaven and earth had split asunder. He hurried back and was horrified to see that the river bank had just burst and that Major Chao's grain junks were all scattered by the rush of waters and no one could tell whither they had been carried. There was nothing to be seen save the swirl of the mighty flood which gushed forth, becoming ever greater. Te-ch'eng was thus left without any resource whatever, and, lifting his eyes to heaven, he broke into loud lamentations.

"Thus does heaven decree my end," he sighed at last, "and now I can only die!" And he was just about to cast himself into the flood when he saw an old man walking along the path towards him. The old man stopped and asked him whence he came and why he lamented, and, on hearing Te-ch'eng's sad tale of woe, was most sympathetic.

"You are, sir," said the old man, "still a youth and

[Page 205]

of a most prepossessing appearance. You cannot fail later to realize your share of good fortune. In your journey from here to Peking you need not spend, if you are careful, very much money. This old individual happens to possess three taels of silver. It is of somewhat poor quality, but I shall nevertheless be glad to hand it over to you to help to defray your expenses by the way."

So saying, the old man felt in his sleeve, but found nothing. "That is very strange," he muttered; but when he looked closely he found a hole cut in his sleeve, for most unfortunately he had that very morning fallen in with a cut-purse, who had ripped tip his sleeve and stolen the silver.

"The ancients had a saying," he remarked with a sigh: "'The day on which I have a charitable impulse is a lucky day for others.' Now to-day I was feeling very charitable, doubtless prompted thereto by heaven. That you are fated not to profit thereby is by no means because I have repented of my generous inclination and have become niggardly, but must be entirely attributed to your own ill-fortune. I would now invite you to my house except that I fear that you would think the way too far."

But he prevailed upon Te-ch'eng to go with him to the main street of the village hard by, where they entered the house of one known to the old man, who borrowed from the proprietor half a tael of silver, which he gave to Tech'eng. This was accepted joyfully and Te-ch'eng departed with many expressions of gratitude. But upon

[Page 206]

reflection he realised that so small a sum would not serve him for very long, so he expended it upon pens and paper, thinking to turn his literary accomplishments to profit by the way, for he was an excellent penman. Again, however, his ill-luck prevailed for he fell in with no scholar nor amateur of learning and passed no place except small villages or wayside inns, so all that he sold as a few

inscriptions of good omen to paste upon the doorways of the unlettered. Those who employed him knew not good from bad in the matter of writing, and so gave him but the slightest of recompense. Te-ch'eng often got a meal thereby, however, and, though he often also went without, he came at last to the gates of Peking.

There he entered an inn and borrowed a copy of the list of metropolitan officials, and there he found the names of two contemporaries of his father's. One, named Yu, was a Secretary in the Board of War, and other was a gentleman of the name of Ts'ao, who was acting as Comptroller of the Imperial Banqueting all. Te-ch'eng wrote out at once some visiting cards and went first to call upon Mr Ts'ao. The latter, however, seeing that his caller's garments were very ragged and knowing that his family was one against which the eunuch Wang Chen cherished resentment, was by no means pleased to see him, and, not daring to offer any entertainment to him, dismissed him with a gift of money of negligible amount.

He then went to call upon the Secretary in the Board of War, Mr Yu. This official was also of no particular strength of character, and Te-ch'eng got nothing from

[Page 207]

him except a letter of recommendation addressed to a military officer then serving in a remote camp beyond the Great Wall. The innkeeper, seeing this letter, said that he thought that it would be a good thing to follow it up, and lent his guest five taels of silver for his traveling expenses. But as ill-luck would have it, it was just at this moment that the Tartar chief Yeh Hsien [\[1\]](#) made one of his marauding expeditions, carrying off both human beings and cattle. General Lu, the commander of the imperial forces, dispatched to oppose this chief, was defeated by him and was sent back to the capital in fetters to stand his trial in consequence. His fall involved also Secretary Wu, who was cashiered. So Te-ch'eng spent some three or four months outside the Wall without meeting any advantage, and eventually returned to the inn at Peking. The innkeeper thus lost his five taels and all prospect of either recovering his loan or his charges for Te-ch'eng's board and lodging. But none the less, the charitable man still continued to entertain him, for he could not bring himself to turn him away. However, an idea soon occurred to him. In a neighbouring lane there lived a certain Sergeant Liu, who was looking for an inexpensive tutor for his eight-year-old son, so the innkeeper recommended Te-ch'eng for the position. Sergeant Liu gladly entertained the idea and agreed to pay Te-ch'eng twenty taels a year, and it was settled that the innkeeper should get the first three months' salary to repay his loan. Sergeant Liu was a man who had definite views as to the necessity for treat-

[Page 208]

ing a tutor with propriety, so he first of all sent round a suit of new and becoming garments for Te-ch'eng, and then went over and called for him and brought him back to his house.

So from this time on, Te-ch'eng did not lack food, and moreover, after the daily tasks were done, he could pursue his own studies and resume the writing of essays. Thus all went well for three months, when the young pupil suddenly contracted small-pox. The physician came and administered medicine, but with no good effect, and on the twelfth day the boy died. He was Sergeant Liu's only son and was

the apple of his father's eye; and some neighbour, a mean-minded busybody, told the father that Ma Te-ch'eng had been born under a most evil star and was bound to bring bad luck wherever he went and to anyone with whom he had dealings. He said that Major Chao had engaged him and that soon afterwards he had lost his convoy of grain junks, that Secretary Yu had given him a letter of recommendation and had at once been cashiered, and that, in a word, Te-ch'eng was a person to beware of. Sergeant Liu was thus led to believe that his son's death was not the result of heaven's decree but was solely due to his connection with so unlucky a teacher. The sergeant spoke of this to all he saw, so from this time forth Ma Te-ch'eng was known to all by the nickname of "The Luckless Graduate," and whenever he was seen abroad all doors were shut upon him lest he should cross the threshold. These who met him early in the morning had their luck spoilt for the day; dealers who encountered him lost money on their

[Page 209]

ventures, those who were looking for others were unsuccessful in their search, those engaged in law-suits lost their cases, those who sought to recover debts were sure to encounter difficulties, blows, or abuse in their quest, and pupils on their way to school invariably got beaten by their teachers. Thus he came to be regarded as one bewitched, and if any man met him in a narrow lane where he could not avoid coming near to him, that man would spit upon the ground as he passed and say: "May ill-luck be averted!"

What a pass for Ma Te-ch'eng, the scion of an official family, a scholar and a student, to come to!

Now in the capital at this time there lived a Chekiang man, a student who had not yet graduated, named Wu. This one was of an independent character, and when he heard of the "Luckless Graduate" he refused to subscribe to the popular belief and came one day to call upon Te-ch'eng. He asked him to his house, made polite inquiry as to his scholarship, and evinced the most sympathetic feelings towards him. But before the chairs upon which they sat had become warm, Mr Wu received a message from his family to the effect that his father had suddenly died, so he rose and left in the greatest distress. However, he gave Te-ch'eng a recommendation to a fellow-provincial named Lu, who held the position of registrar for the senior examinations. Mr Lu at once asked Te-ch'eng to his house and prepared a most lavish entertainment for him. Hardly, however, had they taken tip their chopsticks when the kitchen caught fire, and the whole household rushed out of the house in a panic.

[Page 210]

Te-ch'eng who was almost famished, remained on until the last moment, and when he did come out he was arrested by the watch under suspicion of being the one responsible for the fire. He was baled before the court, where he was given no opportunity of defending himself but was at once cast into prison. Luckily, however, Mr Lu was a man of high principle and, by the expenditure of certain moneys, obtained his release and saved him from being cangued [\[1\]](#) and beaten. But from that time on, the Luckless Graduate's reputation became worse than ever and no one at all would have any dealings with him, so he had to rely altogether upon the sale of writings for a living.

The symbol for "Longevity" he wrote repeatedly,

And when New Year came round again, a busy man was he. [2]

At night he sheltered in some temple, and he would sometimes even get a few cash by writing out prayers for Taoist priests.

## V

Now we must speak of Huang Sheng, who, after Te-ch'eng left his home, was very apprehensive of his

[Page 211]

return. But when the wanderer's degree was declared forfeit and it was rumored that he had started off for Peking with Major Chao but that the convoy had been sunk in the Yellow River, Huang Sheng no longer felt any anxiety. Early and late he exhorted his sister, Lin Ying, to give up all thoughts of Te-ch'eng and to consent to become affianced to another, but Lin Ying swore an oath that she would sooner die than do so.

During the last year of the reign of T'ien Shun, Huang Sheng succeeded in obtaining the degree of Chu Jen by heavy bribery and trickery in round-about fashion. All the countryside crowded round his house to offer flattery and congratulation; and, as it was a matter of gossip among all that Lin Ying, his sister, was already adult and had not yet married, the middle-men never left his doors. But the girl was resolute in her determination and Huang Sheng was powerless in the matter.

At the end of the year he packed up and betook himself to Peking to enter for the final literary examination.

And when Te-ch'eng saw that Huang Sheng's name was published among those successful at the Chu Jen examination, he knew that he would come up to the capital, so, feeling all his old enmity revive more strongly than ever, he was most unwilling to meet him, and removed himself out of the city.

Now Huang Sheng's honours sat ill upon him, and even if he had obtained his degree as the result of his own scholarship and had deserved his success, he would have given himself intolerable airs. But as he had obtained his degree by bribery and was naturally a mean

[Page 212]

fellow posing as a distinguished scholar, he was by no means able to restrain his pride, and threw his arms about and shouted in his arrogance in a most ridiculous manner. Also, at a cost of fifty taels, he purchased a special passport to give himself additional distinction on his way to the capital. On arrival there he hired a mansion, but never made any attempt to study and amused himself perpetually in the more disreputable quarters of the city.

It is often said that too much rejoicing breeds calamity, and sure enough he overdid his celebrations and became afflicted with sickness just before the final examination. Summoning the most distinguished physician that he could find, he gave him a hundred taels and ordered him to effect an

immediate cure. The doctor administered mercury and other fierce medicaments to stop the progress of the disease, and in a few days Huang Sheng appeared to be cured, and entered for the examination. But within a month or two the sickness broke forth again with more force than ever; the physicians were all powerless, and, alas, he died.

He had no brother and no son, so a mighty dispute arose amongst his relations as to the division of his property. His wife was a weak-minded woman and relied entirely upon Lin Ying, her sister-in-law, who arranged all the funeral ceremonial, and received all the guests in so tactful a manner that no one complained. She also succeeded in arranging the distribution of the property, which was worth many thousands of taels.

But she never ceased to think of her betrothed and of

[Page 213]

the rumor that she had heard of his death by drowning. Not knowing, therefore, whether the report were true or false, she spent much money in sending messengers far and wide to ascertain if he were still alive.

One of these messengers returned one day from Peking bringing the news that Ma Te-ch'eng was not dead but was living in the capital in great poverty, being known to all as the "Luckless Graduate." So Lin Ying, who was more like a man than a woman, packed up some clothes and money, and taking a retinue of servants, both male and female, hired a boat and set forth for Peking to find him.

On arrival at the capital she was informed that Te-ch'eng was engaged in writing out a certain Buddhist scripture in a monastery near Cheng Ting Fu, five days' journey from the capital, so she dispatched her head retainer, Wang An, to him with a hundred taels of silver, several suits of clothes, and a letter. "Tell him," she ordered, "that I intend to purchase for him the degree of Chien Sheng, and that he must return at once to Peking and prepare to compete in the next examination without the least delay."

So Wang An set forth at once, and on arrival at the monastery sought out the Abbot.

"Is there a Mr Ma here, from Fukien?" he asked.

"There is only one stranger here," was the reply, "and he is called the 'Luckless Graduate'; there is no one of the name of Ma."

"That is the man," said Wang An. "Please let me see him." So the Abbot led him to the room where

[Page 214]

Te-ch'eng was working, and pointed him out as he sat writing at a side table.

Now Wang An had seen Te-ch'eng on several occasions before he left home, and to-day, although he

was in rags, he was easily recognisable. So the retainer threw himself down upon the floor and kotosed to him. Te-ch'eng, who was in the depths of his poverty, was much astonished to see this and at first was unable to believe his eyes. But, recovering himself, he raised Wang An and asked who he was.

"I am the bearer of a message from my mistress, the lady of the Huang family in Chiang Lo Hsien," said the old man, "and have come on purpose to meet you and hand you a letter from her."

"To whom is your mistress married?" asked Te-ch'eng

"My mistress, sir, has remained true to her first vow," was the reply, "and has never forsworn her oath. But her brother, my late master, has recently died and she has come to Peking herself to seek you and to persuade you to renew your official career. Please, sir, come at once."

On hearing this glad news, Te-ch'eng opened the letter and found therein only a verse of four lines, which ran as follows:

[Page 215]

What is it that keeps my love so long that he wanders even now?  
Oh, is it because the official's cap has not yet crowned his brow?  
Spread out your wings and upward fly, for your chance will come some day,  
But now let us in the Phoenix Bower together pipe our lay!"

Te-ch'eng read these lines and smiled sadly, while Wang An brought out and handed to him the clothes and silver which his mistress had sent, and asked him to name a day for his return.

"Of your mistress' great kindness I need no further proof," replied Te-ch'eng. "But I must remind her of the vow which I took, saying that I would not marry before obtaining my degree. Till now I have been fettered by poverty so that success has been delayed. But now I am luckily provided with money to pursue my studies. Tell your mistress that I must wait till I have achieved success at the autumn examination next year before I can meet her face to face."

Wang An did not venture to press him further, but only asked him for an answer to her letter to take back with him. So Te-ch'eng took a strip of the silken fabric on which he had been writing out the Buddhist scripture, and on it inscribed the following answer to her lines:

[Page 216]

"In wind and dust I have traveled far, and wandered a weary way;  
But now the flame of hope springs up as I get your help to-day.  
The lady of the moon has fixed our pact for many a year,  
So bide awhile and pipe alone---nor let another hear!"

Then, sealing up his verse, he gave it to Wang An, who left at once for the capital, and, traveling night and day, arrived in Peking and handed the missive to Lin Ying. And when she opened and read

the message, she was plunged into the deepest despondency.

## VI

That year the Emperor went on a hunting expedition to the north and encountered the disaster at T'u Mu, [1] and the Empress Dowager prevailed upon the Prince of Ch'eng to act as regent. Thus the reign known as Ching T'ai was begun, and the new Emperor's first act was to exterminate the family of the traitor eunuch, Wang Chen, and confiscate all his possessions. All those who had denounced him in the past were promoted and their sons given special honours.

[Page 217]

When Lin Ying, in her dwelling in the capital, heard these tidings, she sent Wang An again to tell Te-ch'eng, in the temple where he had continued to abide. And the young man, although he still had a room in the temple, had surrounded himself with books and was well provided with fine clothes and good food, very different from his former style of living. The priests, too, all recognized him now by his right name and he was respected by them all.

This year he was just thirty-two years old, the age at which he was to meet with his good luck, as was predicted by the fortune-teller, Mr Candid Chang. It is indeed true that:

All human things do follow Heaven's plan,  
Naught can be changed by any act of man.

So when Te-ch'eng, deep in his books in the temple, received Wang An's tidings, he packed up all his possessions, and, after taking his leave of the Abbot, hurried to Peking to seek a habitation there. Miss Huang sent two slaves to wait upon him, and supplied him with all that was necessary for his daily use, frequently sending him presents of money.

Then Te-ch'eng wrote out a memorial to the Throne, pointing out that his father, the former Minister Ma Wanch'un, had met with dire calamity owing to his impeachment of the eunuch, and praying that his father's disgrace might now be wiped out by Imperial Decree.

[Page 218]

He also petitioned that his own degree might be restored to him.

In reply an Imperial Rescript was at once issued, decreeing that not only were his former honours to be restored to the deceased Ma Wan-ch'un, but that he should be raised three grades in official rank, that his son, Ma Te-ch'eng, should be reinstated in his original degree of Hsiu-ts'ai, and that the lands and possessions formerly confiscated were all to be restored to the family by the local officials.

This was all reported to Miss Huang by the two slaves whom she had given to Te-ch'eng, and she sent Wang An to him once more with a present of money, bidding him enter at once the Metropolitan Seminary to avoid having to return home to Fukien for the forthcoming examination. This he did, and

in the autumn he passed successfully, his name being high up on the list. His wedding with Liu Ying was then at last celebrated, and in the following spring he obtained his final degree as Chin Shih among the first ten names, while at the supplementary examination held in the Palace, he passed fourth and was soon afterwards selected as a member of the Hanlin Academy.

He then applied for leave to return home to visit his father's tomb, and, having obtained the Imperial permission, he and his wife went back in triumph to Fukien. There all the officials came to meet him, and the property which had been confiscated was all restored to him freely, a list being handed to him which showed that no item had been withheld.

[Page 219]

His former friends who had refused to help him in his distress all flocked together to do him honour, and in number were as numerous as they who go to market on market days. Only one was missing, and that was Ku Hsiang, who in his shame retired to a remote district and never more returned.

Mr Candid Chang was still plying his calling as a fortune-teller, and when he learned that Ma Te-ch'eng had come into his own, he approached to offer his congratulations and was received and handsomely rewarded.

In due course Te-ch'eng served successively as President of the Boards of Civil Rites, War, and Punishments, and his wife Lin Ying received official rank of the first degree. Two sons were born to them, both becoming distinguished scholars, and their descendants held official position without interruption.

And down to this present time, the men of Yen Ping Fu say, when they are at first unsuccessful in the examination, that they must take the "Luckless Graduate" as their pattern; and a subsequent scholar wrote the following verse in his honour:

Deserted by all for ten long years, he lived in poverty dire,  
Before a lucky wind set in and brought him his heart's desire.  
The flowers of autumn and spring he culls as they open to his glance,  
And no more he drifts as the helpless prey of the waves of the sea of chance.

[Page 220]

## Notes

*Note.* 53. ---The author of this story seems to have been confused regarding the period with which it deals. The Emperor Chu Ch'ichen, whose dynastic title was Ying Tsung, reigned for two periods, the "reign-titles" of which were Cheng T'ung (1436-1450) and T'ien Shun (1457-1465) respectively. The emperor who filled the gap was his brother Chu Ch'i-yu, whose reign-title was Ching T'ai (1450-1457). This interval in Ying Tsung's reign was necessitated by the unfortunate episode of his capture in 1449 by the Oirad Tartars under Yeh Hsien at T'u Mu, an incident which is euphemistically here alluded to as a "hunting expedition," for it would not do to mention more directly the fact of the Son of

Heaven having been defeated, much less taken prisoner, by the barbarians.

The story is laid, as will appear, in the first part (Cheng T'ung) of the Emperor's reign and not, as stated, in the second part---T'ien Shun.

During the Cheng T'ung period, the Emperor was entirely swayed by the unprincipled eunuch, Wang Chen, who was in command of the imperial troops at T'u Mu; and it was through the incompetence of this eunuch that the army was out-maneuvered and defeated and the Emperor himself captured. After the battle Wang Chen was killed by his own troops as they made their escape, and, under the interim rule of the Emperor's brother, Wang was posthumously found guilty of treachery, his family---*i.e.*, parents, brothers, etc. was exterminated, and all his vast wealth, which was said to have filled "sixty large treasure-rooms," confiscated.

*Note 54.* ---Yen Tzu-yuan, born about 510 B.C. He entered public life and became governor of Wu Ch'eng in modern Shantung, where he tried to reorganize society by instructing the people in music and ceremonial.

*Note 55.* ---Yu Shih-nan, A.D. 558-638. He served under the Ch'en dynasty and afterwards under the Emperor Yang Ti of the Sui dynasty. It is recorded that on one occasion, when desired by the Emperor to transcribe upon a screen the text of a certain biographical work, he wrote the whole off from memory without a single mistake, for he had no copy of the work at hand. On another occasion, when the Emperor was about to start on a tour of inspection, some official submitted that it would be well to pack up the imperial library. "Oh, no," cried His Majesty, "Yu Shih-nan is my book of reference!" The Emperor was accustomed to declare that Yu possessed five surpassing qualifications: virtuous conduct, loyalty, profound learning, a polished style, and an elegant handwriting.

[Page 221]

*Note 56.* ---*i.e.*, Two characters each to denote the year, the month, the day, and the hour of birth. The usual method of telling fortunes in China is by casting the horoscope. Palmistry and physiognomy are also used, but to a less extent.

*Note 57.* ---The period of mourning for a parent was and still is, nominally three years in memory of the three years after birth during which the child was wholly dependent on its parents. During his mourning period no one was allowed to compete in the public examinations, and should either parent of anyone holding office die, the bereaved had to retire into private life until his mourning period was completed.

*Note 58.* ---It so happens that the names of the twelve gates of Nanking in Ming times, taken in order, fall into a neat quatrain in Chinese. In my version I have had to alter the order in two instances. There are still twelve gates to the city, seven of them retaining the original names here given.

*Note 59.* ---Wu Yun, fifth and sixth centuries B.C. a native of the Ch'u State (*Vide* Note 65). His father and mother were put to death by Prince P'ing, and when Wu came into power in after years he had the grave of this prince opened and the corpse taken out and publicly flogged.

*Note 60.* ---Lu Meng-cheng, died A.D. 1011, a minister who served with great distinction under the founder of the Sung dynasty. He kept a list of all competent men, and was thus able to fill any vacant post at a moment's notice. When quite a boy he was driven from home by his father and was received and brought up by Buddhist priests.

*Note 61.* ---This renowned temple was constructed outside the present South Gate of Nanking by the Emperor Yung Lo at the beginning of the fifteenth century, as a thank-offering to his father Hung Wu, the founder of the Ming dynasty. before the capital was removed from Nanking to Peking (*Vide Note 38*). Hard by stood the famous "Porcelain" Pagoda, begun in the year 1413 and finished nineteen years later. The temple was burnt to the ground in 1,522. but the pagoda stood on until it was destroyed by the Taiping rebels when they took Nanking in 1853. The pagoda is said to have been over 300 feet high, octagonal in shape, and completely covered by earthenware tiles glazed in five brilliant colours, while the roofs of its nine stories were covered by copper inlaid with gold. A description of this remarkable edifice will be found in Capt. Granville F. Loeb's "Closing Events of the Campaign in China," London, 1843.

*Note 62.* ---In former days it was very often the case that military officers, even of high grade, were quite illiterate, for the examinations for military rank consisted entirely of practical tests in riding, archery, etc. The profession of a soldier used therefore to be held very lightly in popular esteem, and the general feeling on the subject was well summed up in the proverb:

[Page 222]

Liang T'ieh pu tso ting  
Hao Jen pu tso ping."

"Sound iron is not used to make nails,  
Good men are not used to make soldiers."

Events in China during the past fifteen years are not likely to have mitigated this feeling.

*Note 63.* ---The cangue was a solid and heavy wooden framework some three feet square, made in two sections so that it could be locked round a culprit's neck and could rest on his shoulders. An offender condemned to wear this instrument, on which was written a statement of his crime, was made to sit during the, daytime in public, generally at the scene of the offence. The use of the cangue was abolished some years ago.

## THE SACRIFICE OF YANG CHIAO-AI

### I

IN ancient days there lived in the State of Ch'i [1] a man named Kuan Chung and a man named Pao Shu. The two had been fast friends from childhood, and remained constant to one another through their poverty. Subsequently Pao Shu obtained the confidence of Duke Huan of the Ch'i State, and, after rising to great eminence, he recommended Kuan Chung to be prime minister. Kuan Chung thus became greater than his friend; but the two were constant in their desire to act in all things for the good of the State, and remained true to one another in the time of plenty as they had been in the days of their distress.

A saying of Kuan Chung has remained: "Three battles have I fought and each time have I been defeated, yet Pao Shu has never attributed to me lack of courage for he knows that I had an old mother. I have served thrice as minister and three times have I been dismissed, yet Pao Shu has never attributed to me lack of ability, for he knows that it was because I was unlucky. I have thrice asked advice of Pao Shu, yet he has never attri-

buted to me a lack of intelligence, for he knows when a situation is a difficult one. I have often engaged in buying and selling with Pao Shu and have always taken the larger share of the profits. Yet he did not think that this was due to avarice, since he knew of my poverty. My father and my mother brought me up, but Pao Shu alone has understood me."

I wish now to tell of two friends who met together by chance but became sworn brothers. Each sacrificed his life for the other, thus leaving behind him a reputation like to endure for ten thousand years.

### II

During the Period of Spring and Autumn, [1] there reigned in the State of Ch'u a king who held scholars in high esteem and regarded highly the path of virtue, encouraging the learned to remain near his person and attracting to himself all those of virtuous behaviour. And scholars of all districts, hearing of this correct attitude, left their homes and went in great numbers to dwell in the State of Ch'u.

Now in the far north-west, among the Mountains of Piled Rocks, there was a certain worthy named Tso Po-t'ao, whose parents had died while he was in infancy but who, applying himself to his studies with assiduity beyond the common, acquired learning sufficient to enable him to assist his generation and to bring comfort to the common people. And when this man was about forty

years of age, he observed how all the petty rulers under heaven were constantly warring one upon another, and how those who practised charity to others were few while those who followed violent ways were many. On this account he did not embark upon an official career, but later, when he heard that the King of Ch'u was an upright and virtuous person and was seeking for scholars and men of correct behaviour, he put his books into a bag, and, taking leave of his neighbours, set forth for the Ch'u State and came at length to the district of Yung. It was then the depth of winter and he was overtaken by a terrible storm of sleet and snow, to describe which the following verse has been composed:

The cruel wind whirls down, its chill blast cuts the skin;  
 The searching sleet swirls round, each garment lets it in;  
 It freezes as it falls, and then how bitter is the cold;  
 Oh! that the warm days of springtime would begin!  
 By night the fitful moon emits no guiding ray;  
 The sun can hardly pierce the gloomy clouds by day.  
 And "Now to be at home again, I would give much gold!"  
 All poor wayfarers abroad wistfully do say.

Nevertheless Tso Po-t'ao walked all day through the storm, his clothes wet through to the skin, and as dusk fell he came to a village where he hoped to find a resting-

place for the night. Seeing, through a grove of bamboos, a light shining from some window, he made his way hastily towards it, and encountered a low fence surrounding a grass-thatched hut. He opened the gate of the fence and knocked upon the crazy door of the hut, which was at once thrown open, and a man came out to greet him. Tso stood under the eaves and made a hasty reverence.

"I am a man from the far north-west," he said, and "my name is Tso Po-t'ao. I am on a journey to the State of Ch'u and have been overtaken by this storm. I know not where to seek a lodging, and I would pray you to allow me to rest here for the night, faring forth again when daylight comes once more. Will you grant me this favour, sir?"

On hearing this request, the man hurriedly returned Po-t'ao's salutation and asked him to enter the hut, which, as Po-t'ao saw when he was within, contained no furniture at all except a large bed, on which was a heap of books. Since his host was thus evidently a scholar, Po-t'ao was about to prostrate himself when the other begged him not to do so but to rest until a fire had been kindled and then he could dry his garments and they could talk together. So saying, he lit a fire of dried bamboo sticks and Po-t'ao dried his clothes. The host then prepared a meal of food and wine, which he set before his guest, treating him with kindness and liberality; and Po-t'ao inquired the other's name.

"Your servant is called Yang Chiao-ai," was the answer. "In my early infancy, both my parents died

and I live here alone. I was ever devoted to learning and I do not till the soil. To-day, by the luck of heaven, you have come here from afar and my only shame is that I have so poor an entertainment to offer you. I pray that you will forgive my shortcomings in this matter."

"In that I am blessed with shelter in the midst of yonder storm," replied Po-t'ao, "and that I receive food and wine in addition, I am your debtor to an extent that I shall never forget."

And that night the two lay upon the bed, head to foot and foot to head, and each in turn spoke out the learning that his breast contained and neither closed his eyes in sleep. Next day at dawn the storm blew as hard as ever, and Yang therefore retained Po-t'ao in his hut and placed before him all the food he had. They swore brotherhood together, and Yang kotoed first to Po-t'ao, for the latter was his senior by five years. Thus they dwelt together for three days, and at last the storm died down.

"You, my worthy brother, have talent enough to fit you to become prime minister to a king," said Po-t'ao, "and sufficient resolution to adjust all human affairs. Do you not intend to register your name as a prospective official? It would be pity indeed were you to grow old among the forests and the streams."

"It is not because I am unwilling to hold office," was the reply. "I have never met with any opportunity to rise."

"But," said Po-t'ao, "this ruler of Ch'u is a man

of upright character, who is now begging scholars to enter his service. If such is your intention, why do you not journey to him now with me?"

"I ask nothing better than to obey you, sir," replied Yang Chiao-ai. And, putting together a few cash, he left his hut of reeds, and the two set forth together with their faces towards the south. But after they had journeyed for two days, the blizzard swept down upon them once more, and they stayed for shelter in an inn until their stock of cash was exhausted. Then, carrying their single bundle alternately, they started once more through the storm, which ceased not at all, the wind blowing harder and ever harder. At last the sleet turned to snow alone, and fell all day.

The bitter wind drives down the sleet  
And colder grows the whirling snow.  
Like clouds of willow catkins in the spring it falls;  
Like down from off the breast of the wild swan it drives.  
In the void, round and round eddy the flakes,  
Swirling this way and that as if in combat fierce.  
As earth is hidden and heaven blotted out,  
The hue of the snow seems to change, now red, now yellow, now black.

And poets who seek for plum-blossom [1] haste back to their homes,  
While travellers caught in the storm are like to be frozen to death.

[Page 231]

The two came at length to Ch'i Yang, where their way joined a road through the mountains of Liang. There they met a charcoal burner, who said: "This road has no habitation upon it for a hundred *li* and more. It is a wild and mountainous region before you, where tigers and packs of wolves roam abroad. You will be well advised not to go farther."

Po-t'ao and his friend consulted together.

"The old saying has it that in life and in death all things are settled by heaven's decree," said Yang. "Since we have come thus far, we had better go on without regret."

So on they went for one more day, and at night they sheltered in an ancient grave. But their clothes were thin and the bitter wind cut them to the very bones. Next day the snow fell thicker than ever and soon stood fully a foot deep all over the mountains. The cold was more than Po-t'ao could bear.

"There is no habitation of man in front of us for the next hundred *li*," he said. "Our stock of food will soon be at an end, and we are but ill-clad to resist the cold. If one of us goes on alone to Ch'u, he may arrive there; but if both of us go on we will both either freeze or starve to death. We shall thus perish like the grass on the hillside and no one will look after our bodies. What profit will there be in that? I will therefore now take off my clothes and will give them to you to wear over your own, my worthy brother, and you can take all the food with you likewise. Push on with all your

[Page 232]

strength and resolution, for I am indeed unable to move further. Better that I die in this place, and you can go on and see the king of Ch'u, who will certainly give you employment in the affairs of state. Then you can come again to this place and find my body and bury it. The delay will make no matter."

"What reason is there in such a plan?" cried Chiao-ai. "We two, though not born of the same parents, have an affection for one another which surpasses that of real brothers. How can I go on alone in order to gain advancement?" Thus he refused, and, supporting his friend, struggled on with him.

After another ten *li*, Po-t'ao said: "The snowstorm is more severe than ever; I am unable to move further. Let us find a resting-place by the wayside."

They saw hard by an old hollow mulberry tree, which afforded some slight shelter from the storm; but within the hollow there was room only for one man. Chiao-ai helped Po-t'ao inside, and Po-t'ao begged him to strike a spark with his flint and steel and kindle a fire of dry sticks to warm them somewhat. This he did, but when he returned after his quest for fuel he found Po-t'ao stripped naked and all his clothes lying in a heap on the ground.

"What is this, my brother?" asked Chiao-ai in alarm.

"There is no other course," was the answer. "Do not spoil your own chance, but put on my clothes over your own, and go forward with the food. As for me, I will wait here for death."

[Page 233]

"No, no," cried Chian-ai, embracing his friend and weeping bitterly, "Let us rather both die together, for how can we be parted?"

"If we both die here of cold and hunger," replied Po-t'ao, "our bones will bleach, and who will bury them?"

"True," answered Chiao-ai, "but if only one is to go on, let me be the one to remain. Put on my clothes; do you take the food and walk on, and I will die here!"

"I have ever suffered from sickness," said the other, "while you are younger and much stronger than I. Moreover, my learning is not equal to yours, and I am therefore less fitted than you to survive. When you meet the King of Ch'u, he will certainly give you a post of importance. My death will matter little, so delay no longer but hurry away!"

"This day you are dying of hunger in a hollow mulberry tree," wailed Chiao-ai, "and it is I alone who benefits. That stamps me as one without virtue. I cannot do this thing!"

"Since I entered your hut on that night, after I had left the Mountains of Piled Rocks," replied Po-t'ao, "I have regarded you as an old and tried friend. I know moreover that your learning is of no common order. I therefore beseech you to go forward. That I was caught in the storm that night was a sign of heaven's will that my end was near. If you stay here and die with me, it will be imputed to me as a crime."

So saying, Po-t'ao made as if to throw himself into the swollen river that flowed before them, but Chiao-ai

[Page 234]

embraced him, weeping and attempting to wrap the clothes again round him, and thrust him back into the hollow of the tree. Po-t'ao cast him off, and again Chiao-ai tried to protect him, but as he strove he saw a change come over his friend's body; he saw that his arms and legs became white and stiffened and that he could no longer speak. Po-t'ao motioned with his hand as if once more to bid him depart, and Chiao-ai for the last time attempted to envelop his friend in his garments. But the cold had pierced his marrow, his hands and his feet were frozen, and his breathing had almost ceased.

"If I stay here, too," thought Chiao-ai, "I shall undoubtedly die also, and when I am dead, who will bury my brother?" So he knelt down in the snow and kotowed, weeping, to the other. "Your virtueless younger brother will leave you," he cried. "I pray that your spirit will protect me. If I obtain even a

small post, I will bury your body with all pomp."

Po-t'ao inclined his head slightly as if in reply, and anent afterwards breathed his last.

Chiao-ai then put on the other's clothes and took the food. He cast one last look upon his friend's body and then left, weeping bitterly.

A later poet has thus immortalized the death of Po-t'ao In the hollow of the tree:

[Page 235]

Deep lies the snow upon the mountain track,  
Whereon two comrades wend their bitter way.  
Paltry the stock of food within their pack,  
Doubled the pains of travel, day on day.  
If both divide the food, they both must die.  
If all is given to one he may survive.  
If both do starve, what profit comes thereby?  
One saved, the other's funeral may contrive.  
Thus Tso gives up his life, a hero brave,  
His friend's career and life alike to save.

### III

Chiao-ai arrived at length at the Ch'u State, half-frozen and half-starved. He entered an inn to rest, and next day went into the city, where he was told that the King of Ch'u was indeed inviting learned men to help him. He heard also how he could obtain an audience, for outside the palace gates a house of reception had been erected, and the King had ordered a high minister of state called P'ei Chung to meet and entertain all scholars who came. Chiao-ai accordingly made his way thither and happened to arrive just as the minister was alighting from his chariot. He went up, therefore, and saluted him, and the minister seeing that, though the clothes of Chiao-ai were ragged, his deportment was most dignified and correct, hastily returned the salutation and asked him whence he came.

"Your humble servant is named Yang Chiao-ai," was

[Page 236]

the reply, "a man from Yung Chou. Hearing that your honourable country had a need of scholars, I have come hither to offer my services."

So P'ei Chung invited him into the house of reception and caused food and wine to be laid before him, placing also a sleeping-room at his disposal. Next day P'ei Chung came again to visit him and to put to him certain questions upon literary matters to test his knowledge. These were answered as quickly as the flowing of water and P'ei Chung was greatly pleased. He repaired to the King's presence and

reported the arrival of Chiao-ai, to whom the King gave immediate audience.

"How can my country become rich, and at the same time maintain an efficient army?" asked the King; and Chiao-ai gave a prompt answer under ten headings, all bearing upon the political difficulties existing at that time. The King was overjoyed at the reply and caused a feast to be prepared for Chiao-ai at the royal table. He then conferred upon him the title and standing of a vice-minister of state, and gave him a hundred taels of fine gold and a hundred rolls of brocaded satin. At this, Chiao-ai kotowed again, but as he did so his tears broke forth and he wept bitterly.

Why, sir," asked the King, "do you weep?"

Then Chiao-ai related the story of how Tso Po-t'ao had given to him his clothes, his food, and his life.

The story cut the King to the heart, and all his ministers expressed their sorrow and admiration.

"And what, sir, is your desire in this matter?" asked the King.

[Page 237]

"Your servant would crave leave to return to that place," replied Chiao-ai, "and bury the body of my friend. That done, I will come again and serve your majesty."

The King then conferred upon Tso Po-t'ao the posthumous rank of vice-minister, and granted a large sum for his funeral. Thus Chiao-ai took leave of the King and hastened back to the mountains of Liang, where he searched for and found the hollow mulberry tree and in it the body of Po-t'ao. And the body appeared the same as it had been in life.

Chiao-ai ordered his men to summon the headman of the nearest village. An auspicious site was selected---a terrace on the mountain side near to a reedy pond. In front there was a mountain torrent, behind was a high mass of rocks, and all round the mountains formed a half-circle. The protection of the favouring powers of nature was complete. [\[1\]](#)

The body was then washed in water and fragrant essences, and was clad in the robes of a minister of state. The inner and outer coffins were prepared and the body placed therein and buried, a mound being raised over the spot. A wall was built to surround the place, trees were planted all round, and thirty paces from the tomb a temple for sacrifice was erected, and in it an effigy of Tso Po-t'ao was set up. Outside they raised a memorial archway of white stone, and, near by, a small house was built for a caretaker.

When all this was at last completed, a sacrifice was

[Page 238]

performed in the temple, and at the ceremonial mourning there was no one of the dwellers around who did not come to weep, all remaining until the sacrificial ceremony was at an end.

That night Chiao-ai sat up in the temple, and, with candles lighted around him, he sighed and meditated, sleeping not at all. Of a sudden he felt a breath of cold air blowing round him. The candles flickered and then shone bright again. He looked and saw the figure of a man standing in the shadows, as though in doubt whether to advance or retire, and a sound as of distant moaning was heard.

"Who is there?" asked Chiao-ai. "And what do you here in the dead of the night?"

No answer came, so Chiao-ai rose and stepped forward to look. To his great amazement he saw the figure of Po-t'ao standing before him.

"My elder brother," he said, "you have not long departed this life, and in that you come this night to see me there must be some special cause."

"That you have not forgotten me, brother," replied the shade, "I am indeed grateful. No sooner had you received your appointment than you came hither to bury my body. I, too, thanks to you, have been granted distinction and the burial rites appropriate thereto. All that has been of the best. But I grieve to say that my grave has been placed adjacent to that of Ching K'o, [\[1\]](#) a man who while on earth plotted to assassinate the King of Ch'in. His plot failed and he was decapitated; but

[Page 239]

Kao Chien-li buried his body in this place, and now the spirit of Ching K'o is fierce and terrible. Each night he comes with a drawn sword and menaces me with curses. 'You are one who died of cold and hunger,' he cries. 'How dare you have your grave built on my land, thus spoiling the favouring influences of my own tomb? If you do not remove yourself, I will break open your grave and take out the coffin, casting it in pieces to the void! 'Thus am I threatened, and I have come specially to tell you, and to ask you to move my burial-place elsewhere, thereby averting this calamity which threatens me.'

Chiao-ai was about to question the apparition further when again he felt the gust of cold air, and the figure vanished.

He found himself back in his seat in the sacrificial temple and thought at first that he must have been dreaming. But the spirit's words were very fresh in his memory.

#### IV

When day came he summoned the headman of the village and asked him if there were any other tomb near by.

"Yes, indeed, sir," was the reply. "Yonder, where the pine trees are thickest, is the tomb of Ching K'o, and his temple stands in front of it."

[Page 240]

"That one was executed for attempting the assassination of the King of Ch'in," said Chiao-ai. "Why, then, is he buried here?"

"Kao Chien-li was a man of this place," replied the headman, "and when he heard that his friend Ching K'o had met a violent end, his body being cast away outside the capital, he stole the body and brought it to this place, burying it here. Up to the present time the spirit of Ching K'o has caused the prayers of these country people to be answered, so that they built a temple here and now sacrifice thereat four times a year so as to ensure good luck."

On hearing these words, Chiao-ai bethought him of his vision, and he with his attendants repaired to the temple of Ching K'o. He pointed at the effigy of Ching K'o which was within, and cursed him, saying: "You were but a rustic of the state of Yen, and you received protection and benefit at the hands of the Prince of Yen, namely, a remarkable concubine and valuable jewels for our own use. You had not the wit to devise a means of carrying out the mission entrusted to you, for, going to the Chin-state to assassinate the king thereof, you failed and met your own end, thus confounding the fortunes of the state of Yen. Then you came to this place and are now deceiving these rustics into doing sacrifice to you. My elder brother, Tso Po-t'ao, on the other hand, was one of the most noteworthy scholars of the age, a person of pure virtue and noble incorruptibility. How can you dare to attempt to drive him out? If you persist, I will pull down your temple and dig

[Page 241]

up your grave, and I will also put an end to these sacrifices which are performed in your honour."

His threat thus ended, he went across to the tomb of Tso Po-t'ao.

"If Ching K'o comes again to-night," he prayed, "appear to me once more and tell me of it." He then went over to the temple of Tso Po-t'ao and in the evening lit the candles and waited. At dead of night he saw the figure of his friend approaching and heard him moaning in dismay.

"Your action, my worthy younger brother," said the spirit, "has only succeeded in arousing still more the wrath of Ching K'o. He has now with him a large following of retainers, which he has acquired through the devotion of the rustics of this place, in that they have burned constantly in sacrifice the paper effigies of men. [1] So up! my worthy younger brother, and help me by making other effigies of dry grass stuffed into garments of terrifying colours. Let each one bear weapons in his hands and let all be burned before my tomb. Thus shall I obtain the protection of these effigies and Ching K'o will no longer have power to do me harm."

The apparition vanished and Chiao-ai spent the night in causing his retainers to make the necessary effigies, dressing them up in gaudy raiment, a sword and a pike being provided for each one. Thus many tens were made and they were all drawn up in line before the tomb and burned.

Chiao-ai then prayed, saying: "If there be a cessation

of this trouble, my worthy elder brother, I beseech that you will appear again and tell me of it."

He returned to the temple, and the next night he heard the wind rise, and through the storm there was a sound as of the cries of men fighting in the distance. Chiao-ai arose and looked out from the window, and there he saw the figure of Po-t'ao hurrying towards him.

"The men that you burned," cried the spirit, "have proved to be of no worth! Ching K'o has the assistance of Kao Chien-li, and in a short while my body will be cast out of my tomb. Move my grave elsewhere, I beseech you, that this calamity may be avoided."

"But how can this man dare to act thus?" exclaimed Chiao-ai. "I must myself assist you in your fight against him."

"You are one who is still living," replied the spirit, "while we are shades. Although living men may have great valour and strength, yet a great gulf separates them from the land of the departed, and no human aid can avail in such a case. It is true that I have the assistance of the grass effigies that you gave me, but these, as it turns out, are unable to do anything but shout and cannot oppose spirits so powerful as those which compass my hurt."

"It is well," replied Chiao-ai. "Go now, and I will find a way when to-morrow's light comes."

Next morning Chiao-ai went again to the temple of Ching K'o and renewed his cursing. He smashed down the image and was about to fire the temple when the

elders of the village came and besought him vehemently not to do so.

"This is the place," they cried, "whither we all come to burn our incense. If we cause offence to the spirit of Ching K'o, a grave calamity will certainly overwhelm us."

And more and more of the villagers came, and supplicated with such intensity that Chiao-ai could not bring himself to oppose their wish. So he repaired again to the temple of Po-t'ao.

There he composed a memorial of thanks to the King of Ch'u.

"Tso Po-t'ao gave up his stock of food to Your servant," the memorial ran, "and Your servant was thus able to survive to have the honour of meeting Your Sacred Majesty. Your servant has received at Your Majesty's hands honours and rank sufficient for the needs of his whole life. And in a future reincarnation, Your servant's entire existence will be devoted to repaying the obligation."

Thus he wrote with all sincerity; and he handed the memorial to his followers, telling them to deliver it upon their return. Then he went again to the tomb of Tso Po-t'ao, and, prostrating himself, he wept

for a long space. At last he rose, and, turning once more to his men, he spoke as follows:

"My elder brother is being oppressed by a terrible spirit, that of the infamous Ching K'o. He has therefore no rest in his tomb. This state of things is intolerable to me and I would have burned Ching K'o's temple

[Page 244]

and devastated his grave but that I would not willingly offend these country folk. It is better for me, therefore, to die and myself become a spirit, thus acquiring ability to give my strength in helping my brother to oppose the danger that threatens him. I charge you all, then, to bury my body here on the right hand of his tomb, and so, alive or dead, we shall bear each other company. His noble act of self-sacrifice in giving to me his stock of food will in this way also be repaid.

"Return therefore to the King of Ch'u and beseech him to follow my advice, and he will always be able to protect his country from the oppression of others."

Having spoken these words, Chiao-ai drew a knife from his girdle and plunged it deep into his own throat. Thus he fell and died.

His followers tried to raise him up, but his life was spent. They quickly prepared a coffin and placed his body, clad appropriately, within it, and Yang Chiao-ai was buried by the side of his friend Tso Po-t'ao.

## V

That night, in the second watch, a terrible storm of wind and rain arose. Lightning and thunder clove the air and in the midst of the storm there were sounds as of men in the battlefield urging each other on to kill. Full ten *li* away could this be heard.

When dawn approached, all went out to see. They found that the grave of Ching K'o had been struck by

[Page 245]

a thunderbolt and split open, and that his white bones were scattered all round in front of the grave, while the pines and cypress-trees that before stood round had all been plucked out by the roots. As they gazed, the temple itself caught fire and was burned to the ground. The headman of the village was terrified at the sight, and one and all repaired to the tomb of Tso and Yang to burn incense and to prostrate themselves.

The retainers all returned to the land of Ch'u and reported these matters to the King, who was touched to the heart by the virtuous act of Chiao-ai. He sent a high official to the spot to raise a handsome temple to his memory and he promoted Chiao-ai to yet higher rank. He granted also for the temple a wooden tablet, on which was inscribed:

"In Commemoration of a Loyal Sacrifice,"

and he erected a monument in stone, on which were recorded the exploits of the two friends, while to this day incense is burned in their memory.

Thus the divinity of Ching K'o was from that time brought to naught, and the villagers performed their seasonal sacrifices instead to the holy pair, from whom they received a never-ending series of remarkable manifestations.



# NOTES

[1] A.D. 819.

[2] *Note 1.* ---P'ei Tu, Duke of Chin, was an historic personage and, during his later years, was an intimate friend of the poets Po Chu-i and Lin Yu-hsi. He was born about the year 753 and died in 838, thus living in the reign of nine of the T'ang emperors. During his life-time successive sovereigns actively encouraged not only the Buddhist religion but Taoist superstitions. The Elixir of Immortality compounded by Taoist charlatans, was eagerly sought after and consumed by the emperors, several of whom died from the effects of the potent medicine, the recipe for which has not been handed down.

[1] *Note 41.* ---The former system of examination for the civil service of China was a matter of supreme importance, for the examinations were the sole avenue to office, and therefore to riches, power, and honour. Competitors were examined almost entirely in their knowledge of the classics, and a wise rule existed that no one, on appointment as an official, could serve in his own province. The examinations were open to all except those of a status held to be disreputable, such as actors, barbers, and executioners; and, in theory, no favour was shown. Though complicated in detail, the system in outline was simple. The three chief literary degrees were those of Hsiu Ts'ai ("Refined Talent"), Chu Jen ("The Man Raised Up"), and Chin Shih ("Advanced Scholar"), and in earlier times only Chin Shih could hold office; later, however, Chu Jen were admitted. The examination for the Hsiu Ts'ai degree was held yearly in each provincial capital; that for Chu Jen was held triennially, in the provincial capital, where only Hsiu Ts'ai were allowed to compete, and in Peking; while Chin Shih were selected from Chu Jen by triennial examination in Peking alone.

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purchaseable for the paltry sum of twenty taels.

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The former civil service examination system which was uniform throughout China, has now entirely disappeared and so far no uniform system has replaced it, a fact which militates against the possibility of satisfactory government.

[1] *Note 2.* ---"The festival of Clear Brightness" : called in Chinese Ch'ing Ming. This festival falls annually in April, and on this day representatives of every Chinese family go to burn incense and offer sacrifices at the graves of their ancestors, the graves being repaired every year in anticipation of the event.

## THE INFANT COURTIER

[1] *Note 3.* ---The greatest festival in the Chinese year is the New Year Festival. It is a time of payment of debts, of family reunions, of feasting, of friendly calls, of new clothes, and of general cessation from business, official and otherwise. All houses attain a maximum degree of cleanliness and spruceness, and outside all doors, even those of the poorest mud hovels, are pasted pieces of red paper-red being the colour of good omen---inscribed with characters conveying wishes for general prosperity. Even on carts and wheelbarrows appear strips of paper bearing such inscriptions as " May these wheels revolve without cease to the prosperity of the owner."

On the last night of the year no one goes to bed, and, after a supper which (like the English Christmas dinner) is the most exuberant of the whole year, firecrackers are exploded in deafening volleys which resound till dawn comes to welcome back Tsao Wang, the Kitchen God.

This tutelary deity of every home is represented by a picture on red paper affixed to the wall above the stove where the food for the household is prepared. The picture is taken down and burned on the night of the 23rd of the 12th moon; thus the god goes to heaven to make his annual report on the conduct of the family. On the last night of the year he returns, and a new picture is fixed in its place.

Official yamens are closed, and the seals (without which no business can be transacted) locked up, from the 20th of the 12th moon till the 20th of the 1st moon. As regards private business, essential services are maintained, but it is difficult to make most purchases, or to get work done, for a period of two or three weeks after New Year's Day, and the normal state of affairs is not resumed until the end of the 1st moon.

It is in the middle of this general holiday that the Feast of Lanterns (called "Shang Yuan" or "Yuan

Hsiao") occurs. The name Shang Yuan means, to give its full significance, "The first of the three occasions on which the Life Force is manifested," for the festival marks the beginning of spring. The other two are the Chung (Middle) Yuan, the 15th of the 7th moon, the beginning of autumn when nature is at its fullest maturity, and the Hsia (Lower) Yuan, the 15th of the 10th moon, which marks the beginning of winter when nature enters upon her period of decline. The fifteenth day is chosen because it is then that the moon (which typifies the Feminine, the source of the Life Force, in nature) is at its full.

The Feast of Lanterns, which celebrates the beginning of spring, the season of promise, corresponds to our Easter and the primitive festival which preceded it. The use of lanterns is doubtless connected with the worship of fire as typifying the heat and light of the sun.

**[2]** *Note 4.* ---The Chinese credit the moon with having a variety of inhabitants. There is the Old Man of the moon, who makes marriages on earth (see "The Inconstancy of Madam Chuang," story 6, Note 50); the Woman of the moon; the Hare; the Ch'an, or three-legged toad; and the Cassia-tree.

The Woman of the moon was Ch'ang O, or Heng O, the wife of Hou I. She stole from her husband a drug conferring immortality and fled with it to the moon, where she was transformed into a three-legged toad (Ch'an). The Hare myth is common to many nations; according to the Chinese idea this animal spends his time in pounding in a mortar herbs wherewith to compound the elixir of immortality. The toad myth is allied to a Hindu legend with the peculiarity that the three-legged variety of toad is supposed by the Chinese to belong to a genuine but rare species of reptile living on the earth. I have received assurances from various Chinese that this creature really exists in suitable localities and that they have actually seen specimens. The Ch'an is briefly described in the "Erh Ya," an encyclopadia said to have been compiled in the twelfth century B.C.

The Cassia-tree myth probably owes its origin to the shape of the volcanic contours of the moon and to the colour of the moon at the full, which resembles that of the extremely fragrant flowers of the Chinese *Osmanthus fragrans*, generally known as the Cassia-tree.

The term "ice-wheel" is self-explanatory; "jade-wheel" is another poetical name for the moon.

**[2-3]** *Note 5.* ---Though famous for the development of literature, painting and pottery, the Sung dynasty (A.D. 960-1280) was a time when China was rent asunder by internal dissensions and by the inroads of the border states Annamese, Tanguts, Khitans, Kins and Mongols -culmi nat ing in the subjugation of the entire empire by the famous Mongol leader Genghis Khan and the foundation of the Yuan (Mongol) dynasty. During the Sung period the capital was first at Pien Ching, the present K'ai Feng Fu in the Honan province. but, when the northern half of China was over-run by the Kins in 1126, the centre of government was removed successively to Nanking, Chinkiang, Lin An, Hangchow and other places south of the Yangtze, north of which river the Sung Emperors had ceased to have authority.

**[2-4]** *Note 6.* ---Ching K'ang : a reign title. The reign of each emperor was composed of one or more periods, each period having its title. The period here indicated consisted of the single year 1126, in which the northern Sung empire came to an end---*vide* Note 5.

**[2-5]** *Note 7.* ---Prince Kang : his dynastic title as first of the Southern Sung emperors was Kao Tsung.

**[2-6]** *Note 8.* ---Yuan Hsiao. A literary name of the Lantern Festival---see Note 3.

[2-7] Note 9. ---The Ch'an: a three-legged toad, one of the inhabitants of the moon-*vide* Note 4.

[1] *i.e.*, fireworks.

[1] 1068-1086.

[2] Note 10. ---Wang An-shih (1021-1086) was one of the most remarkable men in Chinese history. As confidential adviser of the Emperor Sheri Tsung, he attempted to put into effect a series of fiscal and social reforms which, though admirable in theory, were productive of much evil in practice. The reason for the fact that his name has been handed down with execration in Chinese history, however, is probably that his schemes entailed the upsetting of existing institutions and customs rather than that they were productive of hardship to the people whom they were designed to protect.

As an individual, Wang was distinguished by his obstinacy and by his frugality which took the extreme form of abstaining from wearing clean clothes and even from washing his face (Giles' *Biog. Dict.*).

[1] Note 11. ---This exact equivalent of modern slang is a literal translation.

[1] Note 12. ---Beyond the fact that the Hsiao and the Ching (the former an owl-like bird, and the latter a quadruped) are supposed to devour their own parents and thus be guilty of the most heinous conduct possible in nature, nothing is known of these creatures. Until quite recently in China, a parricide was always executed by the slicing process.

[1] 1111-1118

## THE LUCK OF JO-SHU

[1] Note 13. ---The Sung Dynasty, A.D. 960-1278. For a brief note on the dynasty see Note 5.

[1] Note 14. ---Yuan Hung, A.D. 328-376. A scholar and official under Chin Dynasty, who, having been left an orphan in straitened circumstances, rose by means of his own abilities to become Vice-President of the Board of Rites and Governor of Tung Yang in the Chekiang province. He was regarded as one of the foremost men of letters of his day, and was also distinguished as a general. The allusion here is to his feat of scholarship in having written a long official dispatch on his way to the battlefield, using his horse's flank as a desk. In former days no literary ability, of even the simplest order, was expected of military officials-hence the noteworthiness of this performance.

[2] Note 15. ---Yang Yu-chi. A minister of the Ch'u State during the Chou Dynasty (1122-255 B.C.). It was said of this worthy that he was once ordered by the Prince of the Ch'u State to shoot a great wild ape which was terrifying the people. So great was Yang's reputation as an archer that no sooner had he bent his bow than the ape clung to a tree howling.

[3] Note 16. --- "The Little God of Good Luck." This verse alludes possibly to the toy known from time immemorial to Far Eastern children and consisting of a short squatting human figure of wood or other light material so weighted below that when tipped over it will oscillate until it comes to rest on its base. These toys are called in Chinese, "Tsao Hua Hsiao Erh" ("the little fellow, Chance") or "Pu Tao Weng" ("the not-falling-down old man"), but are now far more common in Japan than in China. In Japan a similar name exists for them, but they are more often called "Daruma," after the patriarch missionary Bhodidharma, who came to China from India to teach Buddhism in the sixth century A.D. During his sojourn in China, where he died, Bhodidharma is said to have spent nine years in uninterrupted meditation with his face to a wall, during which time he remained motionless and with his legs doubled up under him and concealed by his robes. It is natural, therefore, to have connected his name with the toy above-mentioned.

[1] *Note 17.* ---Hui An. This was one of the names of the famous commentator Chu Hsi (A.D. 1130-1200). That he actually became a Buddhist priest is uncertain, though his inclination towards Buddhism was undoubted. He was a voluminous writer and is chiefly famous for his commentary on the Confucian Canon, in which his interpretation differed greatly from that which had, up to his time, been accepted as authentic. He is also celebrated for his revision of the famous History of China by Ssu-ma Kuang, who died in 1086.

[2] *Note 18.* ---Su Tung-p'o (A.D. 1036-1101). An official and scholar of the Sung Dynasty. His personal name was Shih, but he called himself Tung-p'o, or "Eastern Slope" since, after he was dismissed from office owing to the machinations of his rivals, he retired to Huang Chou, where he lived in a hut built on the eastern slope of a hill. As a poet and essayist he stands in the first rank.

[3] *Note 19.* ---"The Kingdom on a snail's horn." See Professor Giles' "Chuang-tzu, Mystic, Moralizer and Social Reformer" for the origin of the allegory (based on the mere relativity of the great and the small) here indicated.

"A fly's-head profit" is a common phrase used by merchants to express dissatisfaction with the small amount of their takings.

[4] *Note 20.* ---"Everything is decided by Fate." The doctrine here enunciated is a general one in China, but in this matter, as is the case with most other things, there is a vast difference between theory and practice. No people in the world take more infinite pains to make money than the Chinese, who, while subscribing theoretically to the fatalistic idea, are in practice very little inclined to leave things to chance. I think, however, that their phenomenal resignation under unfavourable conditions which they consider to be beyond their power to improve---such as famine, floods, oppression, etc.--may be attributed in some measure to this doctrine.

[1] *Note 21.* ---Silver ingots. See below, Note 26.

[1] *Note 22.* ---"Poor Thorn" or "Stupid Thorn" "my wife." The term "thorn" is not derogatory, but refers to the thrift of a virtuous woman, who will use a thorn as a hairpin rather than one of precious metal. This expression is not often used except in writing, the ordinary expression in colloquial Chinese to denote one's wife being "The Person Within."

[1] 1465-1488.

[2] *Note 23.* ---"Shih" means "sound" or "full"; "Jo" means "as though"; "Hsu" means "unsound" or "empty." His two personal names, taken together, therefore mean "Full, but appearing empty," or "Not such a fool as he looks."

[1] *Note 24.* ---Chang, Li, Chao and Ch'ien are all common names. The equivalents in an English story would be "Brown, Jones, Smith and Robinson."

[2] *Note 25.* ---"Ch'eng Yun" means "one who takes advantage of an opportunity."

[1] *Note 26.* ---Coins. There are no coinage laws in China, and the adoption of a system of token coinage, even in these days, would be impossible. No coin is therefore worth more than its weight in metal. It is only from a comparatively recent date that there have been any coins at all in China, except copper coins ("cash"). Before the minting of Chinese silver dollars and subsidiary coins, begun some thirty years ago, the only silver coins in use were foreign dollars imported from Mexico, etc. Silver, therefore, when used, was handled in shaped lumps called "shoes" or "sycee" by foreigners and these were weighed and cut with each transaction. A tael is a weight (1 1/3 oz.) and not a coin.

[1] *Note 27.* ---Here is inserted in the original text an imaginary colloquy between the narrator and the reader regarding the value of the coins for which Wen Jo-hsu sold his oranges, the reader arguing

that the other traders would have done well to have contented themselves with selling their merchandise outright for silver coins, and the narrator explaining that their gain was far more by bartering their wares for local produce and then selling the latter on their return to China. As the argument is long and rather difficult for a western reader to follow, the passage is omitted.

[1] Note 28. ---Buckets used to draw water in China are merely half-baskets made of closely woven withes. As they are thus very light, it is necessary, when they reach the surface of the water, to agitate them violently to make them fill.

[1] Note 29. ---A proverb gives to men from Soochow this unenviable distinction. It is quite undeserved.

[2] Note 30. ---Puttees are as generally worn in China, particularly in mountainous districts, as they are in India.

[3] Note 31. ---The tortoise is one of the four supernatural creatures (the other three being the Dragon, the Phoenix, and the Unicorn), and a halo of superstition surrounds it. Chinese writing is said to have originated from the markings on its back, and the shell was formerly much used in divination, slivers of it being heated and the future foretold from the shapes assumed. The shell of the tortoise is still widely used as a drug in China; it is powdered, mixed into a paste with water, and administered to anemic women.

The tortoise here indicated must be distinguished from the soft-shelled river tortoise (*Trionix*) which is a common article of food in China, just as the terrapin is in America. The river tortoise is supposed to be incapable of mating with its own kind but to be compelled to couple with a snake. Thus to call a man "the son of a tortoise" (or, as it is euphemistically put, a "wang pa tan," *i.e.*, a "forget-eight-egg" or "the spawn of the creature that forgets the eight principles of propriety") is to call him a bastard.

[1] Note 32. ---Guess-fingers: a forfeit game almost invariably played at Chinese dinner parties, the loser having to drink a cup of wine as a forfeit. The game resembles the Italian "Morra."

[1] Note 33. ---The "Four jewels of the Scholar" are his pen, his paper, his ink-slab, and his cake of ink.

[1] Note 34. ---A middleman is employed in most important business transactions in China. The advantage is that each principal can put his case as strongly as he likes without offending the other. The middleman generally gets a commission from both sides.

[1] Note 35. ---Lack of mutual trust is widespread in China and is at the root of the coinage difficulty alluded to above (Note 26). 50,000 taels would be the equivalent of over two tons, and even if so much silver were successfully transported to the junk, there remained the danger of pirates on the high seas-and in this matter it may be of interest to record that a superstition credits Chinese pirates with the power of seeing by the wash made by a junk (just as land robbers are supposed to be able to tell by the dust raised by the wheels of a cart) whether or not a large quantity of valuables is being transported.

But apart from such dangers of loss, the problem of dealing with so large an amount of money all at once was no small one. There were no banks, in our sense of the term; and capitalists in China usually invested their money, as they do still, in land or in business ventures. The offer of the Persian, therefore, which may seem strange to a western reader, would have been most welcome to anyone in Wen Jo-hsu's position.

[2] Note 36. ---Houses in China are built in "Chien" or sections, and have not evolved greatly from the original tent form which preceded them, the roof being supported on upright posts and not resting on the walls. A "chien" therefore is the lateral space between two pairs of pillars. An ordinary room would consist of, say, three "chien," a large room being the equivalent of say, eight or ten "chien." A

house of 100 "chien" would probably contain twenty-odd rooms, large and small.

## THE COURTESAN

[1] *Note 37.* ---If an apology be needed for the setting of this story, it may be stated that there are practical difficulties which render nearly impossible a Chinese love-story after the western manner. For it hardly ever happens that one of the well-to-do classes sees his wife before marriage, and if a young man meets one of the opposite sex who is not a member of his own home circle, she is generally of the unfortunate class.

It may seem strange that, in a country where early marriage and concubinage are universal, there should be room for the profession round which this story is centered, but that this is so is a fact of which there is ample evidence in any large Chinese city. Recruits are made solely by purchase of female children from parents who, owing to famine or other cause, are unable to provide for a too numerous offspring.

To take a concubine from the unfortunate class is a step which is generally regarded with disfavour, but should this step be taken, or should a courtesan acquire enough money to purchase her own freedom, a kindly custom renders it impossible for a mistress to refuse to allow the redemption of any inmate of her establishment.

A concubine is acquired as a rule by purchase and is regarded as the property of the purchaser, who is called her "master." Her position in the household is practically that of a slave, but the Chinese are a tolerant race and harmony with the wife is the rule rather than the exception.

[2] *Note 38.* ---Yen Ching ("the Capital of Yen") is a name by which Peking is still known in literary style. Yen was the name of an ancient state in north China which lost its independence many centuries before the Ming dynasty, but at the time of this story the name still remained with territorial significance. Chu Yuan-chang, the founder of the Ming dynasty, after having established himself as Emperor (reigning as Hung Wu, 1368-1399) set up a civil government on the model of that of the T'ang emperors, including a system of territorial grants in outlying portions of the empire. His sons were among those who benefited in this way, and the most capable of them, the fourth, was made Prince of Yen.

At Hung Wu's death the throne descended, as the result of intrigue, not to any of his sons, but to his grandson, who at once attempted to deprive his uncles of their power and even of their lives. The Prince of Yen then revolted, and after four years of conflict succeeded in overcoming his nephew and establishing himself as the third Ming emperor (Yung Lo, 1403-1425). His accession was marked by fearful atrocities in the capital (Nanking) and elsewhere amongst those who had supported his nephew---deeds which are here euphemistically alluded to as "bringing tranquillity to the land" -- and, as recorded in this story, he moved the capital of the empire to Peking, where it has remained ever since.

The old name (still often used) for Nanking was Chin Ling, which is generally translated "Golden Tomb." The meaning is rather "Buried Gold," and legend has it that King Wei of the Ch'u State (sixth century B.C.), finding that there was in that district an emanation conducive to the birth of kings,

buried some gold there in order to stimulate that influence.

**[1]** *Note 39.* ---Wan Li was the thirteenth emperor (last but three) of the Ming dynasty and reigned from 1573 to 1620; not, as here stated, the eleventh emperor.

There is little to excuse the extravagant terms of praise with which the author of this story mentions this reign, except considerations for his own safety should his identity become known, for the story must have been written during the reign of the son, grandson or grand-nephew of the emperor in question.

The reign of Wan Li was a long record of the most unprincipled misgovernment and oppression and ushered in the final downfall of the dynasty. Some restraint was exercised by the prime minister for the first few years of Wan Li's reign, but thereafter the empire was virtually controlled by eunuchs, and taxation in consequence reached a maximum.

This reign is, however, interest to Europeans, in that it was about this time that trade with the west became constant. It was at this time that the Spaniards settled in the Philippine Islands, which they held until 1898. The Dutch and the Portuguese also established trading centres before and during the reign of Wan Li, and it was the same emperor who received and entertained the famous missionary, Matteo Ricci, who made his way to Peking and through his knowledge of astronomy and mathematics gained considerable influence at court.

**[2]** *Note 40.* ---P'ing Hsiu-chih was the Chinese name of the famous Japanese general, Taira Hideyoshi, afterwards Tycoon of Japan, who in 1592, seeing that affairs, in Korea were in confusion owing to the misrule of the king, landed at Fusan with a large army and marched to Seoul, the capital, which he took and plundered. The King of Korea fled to the Yalu river in the north and implored the protection of the Chinese. An army was sent in response to this appeal, but it was defeated by the Japanese, who proceeded to invade Chinese territory. The Chinese eventually got the upper hand by destroying Hideyoshi's supplies, and the invaders retired temporarily to Fusan.

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The former civil service examination system which was uniform throughout China, has now entirely disappeared and so far no uniform system has replaced it, a fact which militates against the possibility of satisfactory government.

**[42]** *Note 42.* ---Chung K'uei Lao. An imaginary being, supposed to be able to avert evil spirits from a house. Pictures of him are pasted at the entrance to houses at the New Year. He corresponds to the Japanese Shokei, who figures frequently in the art of that country. Here, "devil" is used in a double sense.

**[43]** *Note 43.* ---White Tiger is the name of a star which brings ill-luck. Corresponding to this star, according to the "science" of Feng Shui or geomancy, are the subterranean currents which must be avoided in the selection of a site---*e.g.*, for a house.

**[44]** *Note 44.* ---The "seven necessities" of daily life are: Rice, Fuel, Oil, Salt, Soy, Vinegar, and Tea.

**[45]** *Note 45.* ---Borrowing money. This is a universal custom in China. Often enough among friends no interest is charged, and, though repayment is usually made, genuine inability to pay excuses liability. In business, however, high rates of interest are charged, 2 per cent. a month being the

common rate.

**[46]** *Note 46.* ---Praying to the Great Bear ensures longevity. An elderly person, being nearer to the account which must be rendered death, is theoretically less likely to tell lies than a younger one.

**[47]** *Note 47.* ---Palm to palm. Formerly a common gesture on making verbal agreement, one party placing the palm of his right hand against the palm of the other's left. Possibly evidence of no concealed weapon and therefore of good faith.

**[48]** *Note 48.* ---150 taels would weigh about 12 lbs. avoirdupois. The kind of coverlet indicated here is a thick double quilt of heavy cotton cloth stuffed with cotton. It is quite conceivable that small pieces of silver aggregating 12 lbs. could be sewn in such a quilt without necessarily exciting suspicion.

**[49]** *Note 49.* ---In former days the normal route, except in the depth of winter, from Peking to the south was eastwards to Tungchow by road, then by river (the Pei Ho) to Tientsin and then by the Grand Canal across the Yellow River and the Yangtze to Chin-kiang Soochow and Hangchow. Lord Macartney's mission to China in 1795 followed this route and prolonged it up the Ch'ien T'ang River at Hangchow, over the divide into Kiangse province and thence via the Poyang Lake and two other rivers to Canton, a total journey by water of about 1,600 miles.

**[50]** *Note 50.* ---A girl of common origin. In the Far East, singing and dancing are almost exclusively professional arts.

**[51]** *Note 51.* ---This verse is by a poet and calligraphist of the T'ang dynasty named Liu Tsung-yuan (773-819). A pronounced Buddhist, he wrote an essay in defence of that religion, in which he said (Giles' translation): "Buddhism admits of no envious rivalry for place or power. The majority of its adherents love only to lead a simple life of contemplation amid the charms of hill and stream. And when I turn my gaze towards the turmoil of the age in its daily race for the seals and tassels of office, I ask myself if I am to reject those in order to take my place among the ranks of these."

The first line of the verse here introduced is quoted wrongly, without apparent reason, in the Chinese text; I have altered it in translation. The artist who was good enough to paint for me the original of the frontispiece to this volume has written on his picture a third version.

**[52]** *Note 52.* ---Possibly Kao Ch'an of the T'ang dynasty. On failing at the first attempt to take his Chin Shih degree, he consoled himself by writing some verses, in which he pointed out that the beautiful hibiscus blooms late, when the peach and the almond blossoms are over. He passed successfully on a later attempt.

## LUCKLESS GRADUATE

**[53]** *Note 53.* ---The author of this story seems to have been confused regarding the period with which it deals. The Emperor Chu Ch'ichen, whose dynastic title was Ying Tsung, reigned for two periods, the "reign-titles" of which were Cheng T'ung (1436-1450) and T'ien Shun (1457-1465) respectively. The emperor who filled the gap was his brother Chu Ch'i-yu, whose reign-title was Ching T'ai (1450-1457). This interval in Ying Tsung's reign was necessitated by the unfortunate episode of his capture in 1449 by the Oirad Tartars under Yeh Hsien at T'u Mu, an incident which is euphemistically here alluded to as a "hunting expedition," for it would not do to mention more directly the fact of the Son of Heaven having been defeated, much less taken prisoner, by the barbarians. The story is laid, as will appear, in the first part (Cheng T'ung) of the Emperor's reign and

not, as stated, in the second part---T'ien Shun. During the Cheng T'ung period, the Emperor was entirely swayed by the unprincipled eunuch, Wang Chen, who was in command of the imperial troops at T'u Mu; and it was through the incompetence of this eunuch that the army was out-maneuvered and defeated and the Emperor himself captured. After the battle Wang Chen was killed by his own troops as they made their escape, and, under the interim rule of the Emperor's brother, Wang was posthumously found guilty of treachery, his family---*i.e.*, parents, brothers, etc. was exterminated, and all his vast wealth, which was said to have filled "sixty large treasure-rooms," confiscated.

**[54]** Note 54. ---Yen Tzu-yuan, born about 510 B.C. He entered public life and became governor of Wu Ch'eng in modern Shantung, where he tried to reorganize society by instructing the people in music and ceremonial.

**[55]** Note 55. ---Yu Shih-nan, A.D. 558-638. He served under the Ch'en dynasty and afterwards under the Emperor Yang Ti of the Sui dynasty. It is recorded that on one occasion, when desired by the Emperor to transcribe upon a screen the text of a certain biographical work, he wrote the whole off from memory without a single mistake, for he had no copy of the work at hand. On another occasion, when the Emperor was about to start on a tour of inspection, some official submitted that it would be well to pack up the imperial library. "Oh, no," cried His Majesty, "Yu Shih-nan is my book of reference!" The Emperor was accustomed to declare that Yu possessed five surpassing qualifications: virtuous conduct, loyalty, profound learning, a polished style, and an elegant handwriting.

**[56]** Note 56. ---*i.e.*, Two characters each to denote the year, the month, the day, and the hour of birth. The usual method of telling fortunes in China is by casting the horoscope. Palmistry and physiognomy are also used, but to a less extent.

**[57]** Note 57. ---The period of mourning for a parent was and still is, nominally three years in memory of the three years after birth during which the child was wholly dependent on its parents. During his mourning period no one was allowed to compete in the public examinations, and should either parent of anyone holding office die, the bereaved had to retire into private life until his mourning period was completed.

**[58]** Note 58. ---It so happens that the names of the twelve gates of Nanking in Ming times, taken in order, fall into a neat quatrain in Chinese. In my version I have had to alter the order in two instances. There are still twelve gates to the city, seven of them retaining the original names here given.

**[59]** Note 59. ---Wu Yun, fifth and sixth centuries B.C. a native of the Ch'u State (*Vide* Note 65). His father and mother were put to death by Prince P'ing, and when Wu came into power in after years he had the grave of this prince opened and the corpse taken out and publicly flogged.

**[60]** Note 60. ---Lu Meng-cheng, died A.D. 1011, a minister who served with great distinction under the founder of the Sung dynasty. He kept a list of all competent men, and was thus able to fill any vacant post at a moment's notice. When quite a boy he was driven from home by his father and was received and brought up by Buddhist priests.

**[61]** Note 61. ---This renowned temple was constructed outside the present South Gate of Nanking by the Emperor Yung Lo at the beginning of the fifteenth century, as a thank-offering to his father Hung Wu, the founder of the Ming dynasty. before the capital was removed from Nanking to Peking (*Vide* Note 38). Hard by stood the famous "Porcelain" Pagoda, begun in the year 1413 and finished nineteen years later. The temple was burnt to the ground in 1,522. but the pagoda stood on until it was destroyed by the Taiping rebels when they took Nanking in 1853. The pagoda is said to have been over 300 feet high, octagonal in shape, and completely covered by earthenware tiles glazed in five brilliant colours, while the roofs of its nine stories were covered by copper inlaid with gold. A description of this remarkable edifice will be found in Capt. Granville F. Loeb's "Closing Events of

the Campaign in China," London, 1843.

[62] *Note 62.* ---In former days it was very often the case that military officers, even of high grade, were quite illiterate, for the examinations for military rank consisted entirely of practical tests in riding, archery, etc. The profession of a soldier used therefore to be held very lightly in popular esteem, and the general feeling on the subject was well summed up in the proverb:

Liang T'ieh pu tso ting  
Hao Jen pu tso ping."  
"Sound iron is not used to make nails,  
Good men are not used to make soldiers."

Events in China during the past fifteen years are not likely to have mitigated this feeling.

[63] *Note 63.* ---The cangue was a solid and heavy wooden framework some three feet square, made in two sections so that it could be locked round a culprit's neck and could rest on his shoulders. An offender condemned to wear this instrument, on which was written a statement of his crime, was made to sit during the, daytime in public, generally at the scene of the offence. The use of the cangue was abolished some years ago.

## THE SACRIFICE OF YANG CHIAO-AI

[64] *Note 64.* ---The Ch'i State embraced the larger portion of the present province of Shantung. It arose in 1122 B.C. and lasted until 412 B.C. Duke Huan lived from 684 B.C. to 642 B.C. An attempt was made on his life by the Kuan Chung mentioned here, who shot an arrow at him, but the shaft was arrested by the buckle of the Duke's girdle. When the Duke came into power he forgave his would-be-assassin and, as here stated, made him his prime minister.

[65] *Note 65.* ---The "Period of Spring and Autumn" was about the middle of the Chou dynasty, which lasted from 1122 to 255 B.C. There is a mistake here in the original, however, as the events recorded in this story---which is more or less historical---took place after the beginning of the Han dynasty, 206 B.C. The king of the Ch'u State mentioned here was named Liu Chiao and was the younger brother of Kao Tsu, the first Han emperor. See also Note 68. The Ch'u State comprised the present Hupei province.

[66] *Note 66.* ---The plum blossom is traditionally the first flower of the year to open in China, frequently appearing while the snow is still upon the ground. It has thus always proved inspiring to Chinese poets, and the name of one in particular, the famous Meng Hao-jan of the T'ang dynasty, is especially connected with this flower. He is generally portrayed as riding on an ass led by an attendant over a snow-clad scene, while the plum trees bloom in the background.

[67] *Note 67.* ---The orientation of tombs, houses, cities, etc., in China is regulated by the peculiar and obscure system known as "Feng Shui," which may be defined as the science of the Unseen World of Nature with special reference to the effect of the forces thereof upon human welfare. Any long description would be out of place here, but it may be said that the forces in question proceed from a proper combination of the "Yang" and the "Yin," the male and female elements from which the universe has been evolved.

In deciding upon the site of a grave, flowing water, hills and trees are important factors, and to this is due the fact that graves in China are often such pleasant places to visit, for the need for fuel which has

deforested so large an area of the country, almost invariably respects the trees planted round a grave.

The attention paid to graves is not entirely prompted by a sense of duty, for it is generally held that due observance of ceremonial in this direction will be rewarded by an increased measure of prosperity for the living members of the family.

**[68]** *Note 68.* ---Ching K'o was an adventurer of the Yen State, who was persuaded by his prince to undertake the assassination of the

King of Ch'in, who afterwards became the famous First Emperor, Shih Huang-ti of the Ch'in dynasty. Ching K'o was accordingly sent on a pretended mission to tender to the State of Ch'in the humble allegiance of the Yen State, carrying with him a rolled map of Yen in which a sword was concealed. Ching K'o obtained access to the sovereign, drew out his sword, and struck his blow. He only succeeded, however, in wounding his intended victim, whom he pursued down a passage, but the king drew his own sword as he ran and, turning suddenly, killed his assailant (227 B.C.).

**[69]** *Note 69.* ---Until as late as the Han dynasty, the practice of burying live people and animals with the bodies of kings and other powerful folk in China was widespread, the idea being, of course, that the unfortunates so treated should continue their services to their master after life. When this practice was discontinued, representative figures made of earthenware were first used, and, later, figures of paper or straw were made and burned at the grave.

That the need for such attentions to the dead is still felt is evidenced by the fact that to-day no elaborate funeral procession (in north China, at least) is complete without a paper motor-car --- a faithful replica of a certain inexpensive but excellent American vehicle. with number complete-which is carried round with the other paper desiderata and burned at the grave side.