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Studies in Chinese Dreamlore.

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I.

. . . . *händ Di vör de Inbillung*
De Inbillung is düller as de Pestilenz.—FRITZ REUTER.

LITERATURE.



HWANGTE.

Beschränkt mit diesem Bücherhauf,
 Den Würme nagen, Staub bedeckt.
 das ist eine Welt!

Hwangte, whom fairly reliable historians place on the world's stage about 2697 B.C., or contemporaneous with Noah, might have scratched (the characters were not written on the bamboo) guiding principles of interpretation for the benefit of Joseph, who will ever hold the chief place among mortals both as dreamer and interpreter of dreams. We might also look upon Hwangte as

THE Chinese have, as we might expect, an ample literature on the ever fertile subject of dreams. Dreams engaged the thoughts of their earliest writers and added many a joint or slat to the ancient bamboo libraries. Of these the worms have so long since made final disposition that no definite idea of their mechanical execution or shape obtains among scholars. And yet, as we address ourselves to the chosen task, we are almost inclined to exclaim in despair with Faust:

a distant forerunner of Artemidorus, of whom we learn much in "A Pleasaunt Treatise of the Interpretation of Sundrie Dreames gathered parte out of the woorcke of the Learned Philosopher Ponzettus and part out of Artemidorus."

The Chinese can doubtless claim the earliest literature ever produced on dreams, but unfortunately their early writings were not as safely handed down to posterity as might be desired. In this regard they differ from the sacred writings of the Hebrews to a marked degree. With all their superstitious reverence for even the merest scrap of written paper the Chinese never developed anything like the passion for original or for literally faithful copies which amounted to a "jot and tittle" cult among the "chosen people." And thus, while archæology more and more corroborates and explains the Bible, it has done nothing for the ancient bamboo and leather books of this people. It would almost seem as if the remarkable ability of the Chinese to retain in memory as well as their comparatively early knowledge of printing, had made them somewhat indifferent as to the preservation of autograph copies of even their most valuable books.

There is a remarkable agreement among both very early and also modern writers that Hwangte was the first to give his thoughts on dreams visible form, and that in doing so he used not less than eleven bamboo slats or joints. Notwithstanding the claims of frequent impostors it is also generally admitted that not a line of his scratchings has been faithfully handed down to modern times. It is indeed doubtful whether we have an idea or thought from him unchanged. The accounts we have of the repeated attempts to palm off spurious works on the public as the original eleven joints make us all the more sceptical.

So also the fact that as late as the eleventh century a medical work was published claiming to have come down from this same venerated "Yellow Emperor." The claim was based on the fact that the order for the burning of the books (B.C. 213) spared works on medicine, divination and agriculture. But even if writings had, in spite of perishableness of material and of sweeping revolutions, been preserved 2,000



SCRATCHED BAMBOO SLATS.

years and over, we do not know how much was included in the protected classes of books. It is very evident, however, that Ts'in and his servile flatterers by the "Fire in the Ts'in" made the most desperate effort ever made by man to break and have done with the past. Statesmen and scholars who showed any regard for antiquity were exterminated with their families.

Producing these apocryphal writings furnished welcome employment to those scholars who thought themselves in need of a livelier imagination on the one hand, and also to those who went in search of subjects on which to whet their critical acumen. Chinese penmanship and skill in literary composition owe much to the early use of this perishable material. A large field was open to those who knew how to make ideas visible. It was on the whole, however, a misfortune that the bamboo came so handy for bookmaking, inasmuch as it kept the Chinese from using clay by means of which records of civilizations much older than Hwangte were preserved and are now brought forth and placed before the reading world.

Again, as one takes up this dreamlore of the Chinese it becomes very plain that their scholars were more under the influence of a deep interest in psychology, with all its fascinating problems and phenomena, than under the spell of morbid superstition. Nor shall we censure them as backward psychologists after we have just been told by the greatest psychologist of our times (Hegel) that we ourselves have made no advance in this study since the days of Aristotle.

Turning now to the Classics we are disappointed in finding nothing on our subject in the famously dreamy Book of Changes. The Book of History and the Book of Odes offer a more inviting field. The Rituals, notably those of the great Chow Dynasty, deal specially with the subject. Tso, in his amplified Spring and Autumn Annals, narrates twenty-two dreams.

In the Miscellaneous Conversations, belonging to the Four Books, we read that Confucius, evidently conscious of advancing physical decay, deplored the fact that he had not dreamed for a long time and, consequently, had not as once before seen the Duke of Chow, who had ever been his ideal of an organizer and ruler. Mencius, it seems, took no interest whatever in our subject. And yet we might expect to find him studying it most carefully, not only because so many great writers had done so before him, but because the opening chapters of his works deal so largely with psychological questions. Like his contemporaries, Plato and Aristotle in the Western world, he made man his chief study, because on man's "essential Nature" he based his ethical teachings. Righteousness, he insisted, was the natural gift or characteristic of every heart and not a mere sentiment acquired from others. "It is man's

normal way. I love life and I love righteousness; if both cannot be attained I abandon life and choose righteousness." On his ethical system he based his conception of the properly organized state. "Above, . . . no *Tao* (ideal, truth) for comparison (example); below, . . . no law challenging obedience, . . . then the court will not be faithful to *Tao*, nor the artisan to the standard (rule, measure). Nobles sin against righteousness and the peasants against the penal code. If the state continue (to exist) it is simply by lucky chance."

The Miteh philosophy reached its greatest influence contemporaneously with that of the sage of Lu and was in Mencius' time shaking the very foundations of the venerable Chow Dynasty. Mencius entered the arena against these socialists. He finally vanquished them so completely that it is hard to find a copy of their writings, while his own have been placed among the Classics and are memorized in all the schools of the land. Sensualism, the perennial menace to society, was also rampant. Having come on the scene when the times were seriously out of joint, he became remarkable for the forcefulness of his style and for the scope of subjects discussed in his works. He felt himself called to champion a cause, a circumstance that gave his thoughts a very practical turn. We thus conclude that he had no time for—dreams.

Proceeding to Licius we begin to appreciate the lines at the head of this chapter on the freaks and pranks of imagination. The Chinese love to speak of him as their own (not an imported) Buddha. Mr. Wylie in his "Notes on Chinese Literature" says he flourished in the fourth century B.C., Dr. Faber declares him one of the greatest minds of China, and Dr. Giles, finally, pronounces him an allegorical personage invented by Chuang Tzu for purposes of illustration. This latter view is shared by many of the present-day native scholars and there seems to be but little prospect of substantiating either of the other views. This is certain, however, the work bearing his name is not only interesting but highly instructive as well. Strangely enough we find him describing paradise in the same words as it is described in the notoriously nonsensical Mountain and Ocean Classic. On the subject of dreams his book (for convenience we still speak of him as a real personage) is the most unique and original in the catalogue. It would afford us not a little satisfaction to know that he was not merely a dream but a *bona-fide* dreamer.

Chuang Tzu, coming immediately after the allegorical Licius and almost equally renowned, has left us the next best on our present subject. So far as the practical affairs of life are concerned he is described to us as one of China's wildest dreamers. In our day he would at least be called an "odd stick."

The work designated by the shortest possible title, "Dream Book," is probably no longer extant. In its place we have "Chin Sze-yuen's Guide to the Interpretation of Dreams," which dates from about the middle of the Ming Dynasty. From the popular view-point it is the completest work on the subject ever produced by a Chinese writer; for us it naturally lacks the interest of the older authors.

The "Hung Lou Mêng," usually called "The Dream of the Red Chamber," contains a short account of a dream and one of a frightful nightmare. Both accounts are vivid to a remarkable degree. The title of the great novel means the same as Ecclesiastes i, 2.

Was hilft es mir dass ich geniesse?
Wie Träume fliehn die wärmsten Küsse
Und alle Freude wie ein Kuss.—Goethe.

PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORIES.

In die Traum und Zaubersphäre
Sind wir, scheint es, eingegangen.—Faust.



THE DUAL POWERS YIN AND YANG.

It is as natural for a Chinese writer on dreams to examine into the psychology of the phenomenon as it is for a doctor to diagnose a disease. He also shows a remarkable facility for changing from the philosopher into the physiologist, naturalist, or astrologer. That they all have much to say about the dual principles, the Yin and the Yang, is only what we would expect. And, again, that their theories should at least now and then coincide with our own is as natural as it is for the Chinese to

have dreams similar to ours. In this similarity lies much of the interest with which we pursue this study.

Finally, these writers plagiarise each other without remorse, which, strange to say, was also among the weaknesses that prevailed among Artemidorus's* immediate predecessors.

* "For nearly all my predecessors of recent times, having become victims of the passion for literary fame, and feeling sure of gaining their object if they transmitted a work on the symbolism of dreams to posterity, have either copied from each other or taken and watered the fine and correct remarks of the ancients, or added a mass of comments to the sparse notes of the same, for they did not draw on experience but wrote extemporaneously and without preparation, as each one felt inclined."

Licius teaches that man's body has periods of increase alternating with periods of decrease, that like the tide, it rises and ebbs, keeping in conformity with its environment. If the female Yin principle is strong you dream of wading through deep water and experience a sense of fear. If the male principle Yang, predominates you dream of going through fire and getting burned. If the two are equally strong you dream of both promoting and destroying life. A full meal is followed by dreaming of giving food to others, "retiring on an empty stomach" causes one to dream of receiving food. Loss of vigour is accompanied by dreams of flying, chronic disease by dreams of falling in the water, sinking and drowning. If you sleep on your girdle you will dream of lying on a snake. If the birds get in your hair you will dream of flying. While the sky is lowering and during twilight the sleeper dreams of fire. An approaching illness causes one to dream of eating. Feasting and jollification by day bring dreams of sorrow and weeping. One is apt to dream about that which greatly occupied the mind while awake. When the spirit (soul) comes in contact with the body (form) dreams are produced.*

The forms (bodies) that appear to the mind constitute our thoughts by day and our dreams by night. Therefore, dreaming ceases as soon as the mind is perfectly calm and not at all disturbed by material forms. Dreams come from thoughts—dreaming is thinking. Those who believe in what they comprehend rarely speak, those who believe in dreams (meaning those who believe that they are to be taken literally) are inexperienced, for they originate in the mutations of our material being. The spiritually-minded (he calls them the *true people*) among the ancients on awakening from their meditations had forgotten all about material things.

Observing here the stress Licius lays on calmness of mind we do not wonder that the Chinese call him their Buddha. A certain state of nirvana seems to be very distinctly in his thoughts. Its reality and nature, however, he does not look for in India, but rather among his own ever-venerated ancients. Licius stands well among Chinese philosophers and psychologists but goes far afield in matters involving geographical and ethnographical information. He claimed to have knowledge of a country called Kumong, at the southern corner of the most distant west, where people awake but once every fifty days and consider their dreams realities and their waking observations nonsense. He does not say whether the landscape abounds in elms or not, but evidently—

"The god of sleep there hides his heavy head,
And empty dreams on every leaf are spread."

* This is one of the hardest passages to translate in Licius. Dr. Faber words it thus: "The meeting of the spirit (the spirits) is dreaming; accepting the form is a matter of business."

He then describes the region between the "Four Seas" where things are normal, sleeping and waking alternating regularly, the people considering that which they do while awake reality and that which they see in their dreams nonsense. In the extreme opposite direction of Kumong, that is, in the northern corner of the most distant east, lies the land of Fanloh where the people are fierce and never sleep.

He evidently makes use of these three countries, whether he believes in the existence of any but the middle region or not, to show what the effect is when either the one or the other of the dual powers prevails, as well as the result of their mutually balancing. ("The Benefit of Evil.") His illustration of the "law of compensation" by the dreams of the wealthy Yin of Tsao and his aged servant, as well as the dispute over the fawn, owing to an uncertainty of mind as to whether things seen in a dream are to be accepted as more real than what is observed while awake, are the most interesting chapters on this subject in Chinese literature. One might almost think Houwald had set himself the task of putting *Licium* into meter when he penned the lines:

Was steht denn nun als Wahrheit vor dir da?
Was wachend oder träumend dir geschehen?

Chuang Tzu takes up the subject by saying that dreams are the life germs of the male principle. A person's state of mind influences the heart, and the life germs are controlled by the heart. If the heart is joyful the dreams will usually be joyful, if angry the dream will be angry.

From here he repeats *Licium* almost verbally, saying in the dreaming state soul and body (spirit and form) are combined (or mingle in their activities) and when we awake each turns to its proper sphere. The perfect (true people) do not dream. Tennyson says of "The Sleeping Beauty":—"She sleeps, nor dreams, but ever dwells a perfect form in perfect rest." Weeping at night is followed by feasting during daytime, or, as our common saying insists, "dreams go by contraries."

The "Dream Book," if quoted correctly, says dreams are pictures of the moving life principle (essence, ether). "When the animal spirits (or energy) have commerce with the body in the absence of the spiritual faculties (the 'three souls and seven spirits'), in other words, when mental discrimination cannot take place, dreams are the result, because the female and male principles are moved. These also determine the nature, joyful or sorrowful, etc., of the dream. The dream may reveal an impending fault, putting the virtuous on his guard. Coming events are outlined for us in our dreams. The eye does not see, the ear does not hear, the nose does not smell, and the mouth does not

speak (while dreaming) because the soul has gone abroad recreating, and the body alone is on the couch.

"The heart is thinking, forgetting the body. This is the common theory of dreams.

"In his dreams a man receives messages and warnings from the spirits of heaven. If he do not grasp it (the message) firmly he soon forgets it or at best retains a bare impression while the words (details) are forgotten. (Dan. ii, 5, 11, 31.) The condition in which we may receive such messages is not called sleep but perception (*hellsehen*?), and the vision will certainly come to pass. Therefore every dynasty had its official interpreter of dreams."

Täuscht mich ein Traum?

Was seh'ich, grosse Götter!—Adelma Vigillar, 2,739.

The "Dream Book with Guide to Interpretation" says: "Dreams come from the three souls and seven spirits. The souls know things that have not yet come to pass, the spirits treasure experiences. By day the souls are in (belong to) the eye, but at night when we sleep the spirits reside in the liver and lungs. Because the souls are in the eye therefore we see; the spirits being in the liver, therefore we dream. Dreams are the result of the animal spirits' wanderings and mirror things to come. They are, therefore, the spiritual acts which the animal spirits run against (experience), these acts having bodies (or forms)."

Wen Chung-tzu, the ablest and best-hated scholar of the Sui Dynasty, assures us that the "perfect people" (the saints) of old did not dream.

Twan Shing-shih of the Tang says: "The illiterate as well as the 'perfect people' rarely dream. I asked a horseboy whether he had a dream. He replied: 'For a hundred nights I have not dreamed.' A monk said to me: 'Do not pay attention to dreams lest they cling to the heart and cause many complications.' Those who are born blind do not dream, hence we see that the dreamer gets the subject matter of his dreams from the objects he sees by day." This comes very near Jean Paul's idea, that sleep toys with us as we toy with our waking.

A cousin of Twan Shing-shih dreamed people were beating drums on the street, but found when he awoke that his little brother had been drumming on the door.

Chou He, the famous Fuhkien commentator of the Sung Dynasty (A.D. 1130-1200) enlightens us in the following words: "The animal spirits (immaterial energies) have communion with heaven, earth, and the dual powers, classifying our deeds by day in our dreams in the night, according as they are *yin* or *yang* (good or bad)."

Lü Tsu-chi'en, a great admirer and contemporary of Choo He and almost as famous as a writer, commenting on the dreams recorded in Tso's narratives, declares that these were neither revelations nor discoveries but merely the legitimate imaginings of what those ancients had within themselves.

The Taoists say dreams are the phantoms of the "Seven Spirits."



NOTE.—In addition to the authors and works mentioned in the foregoing, the writer has also consulted William's "Middle Kingdom" and Doolittle's "Vocabulary and Hand-Book of the Chinese Language."