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STRANGE STORIES

FROM A

CHINESE STUDIO.

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CHINESE STUDIO.

TRANSLATED AND ANNOTATED

BY

HERBERT A. GILES,

Of H.M.'s Consular Service.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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TO MY WIFE AND OUR CHILDREN:

BERTRAM,

LIONEL,

VALENTINE,

LANCELOT.

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INTRODUCTION.

I.—PERSONAL.—The public has, perhaps, a right to be made acquainted with the title under which I, an unknown writer, come forward as the translator of a difficult Chinese work. In the spring of 1867 I began the study of Chinese at H.B.M.'s Legation, Peking, under an implied promise, in a despatch from the then Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, that successful efforts would be rewarded by proportionately rapid advancement in the service of which I was a member. Then followed a long novitiate of utterly uninteresting and, indeed, most repellent labour,—inseparable, however, from the acquisition of this language, which throughout its early stages demands more from sheer memory than from the exercise of any

other intellectual faculty. At length, in the spring of 1877, while acting as Vice-Consul at Canton, I commenced the translation of the work here offered to the English reader. For such a task I had flattered myself into the belief that I possessed two of the requisite qualifications: an accurate knowledge of the grammatical structure of the language, and an extensive insight into the manners, customs, superstitions, and general social life of the Chinese. I had been variously stationed at Peking, Tientsin, Takow, and Taiwan Fu (in Formosa), Ningpo, Hankow, Swatow, and Canton, from the latter of which I was transferred—when my task was still only half finished—to Amoy. I had travelled beyond the Great Wall into Mongolia ; and I had made the journey overland from Swatow to Canton, a distance of five hundred miles ; besides which, in addition to my study of the language, my daily object in life had always been to familiarise myself as much as possible with Chinese sympathies and habits of thought. With these advantages, and by the interesting nature of the subject-matter, I hoped to be able on the one hand to arouse a somewhat deeper interest than is usually taken in the affairs of China ; and, on the other, to correct at any rate some of the erroneous views, too frequently palmed off by inefficient and disingenuous workers, and

too readily accepted as fact. And I would here draw attention to one most important point; namely, that although a great number of books have been published about China and the Chinese, there are extremely few in which the information is conveyed at first hand; in other words, in which the Chinese are allowed to speak for themselves.[1] Hence, perhaps, it may be that in an accurately-compiled work such as Tylor's *Primitive Culture*, allusions to the religious rites and ceremonies of nearly one-third of the human race are condensed within the limits of barely a dozen short passages. Hence, too, it undoubtedly is that many Chinese customs are ridiculed and condemned by turns, simply because the medium through which they have been conveyed has produced a distorted image. Much of what the Chinese do actually believe and practise in their religious and social life will be found in this volume, in the *ipsissima verba* of a highly-educated scholar writing about his fellow-countrymen and his native land; while for the notes with which I have essayed to make the picture more suggestive and more acceptable

[1] "How can a statement as to customs, myths, beliefs, &c., of a savage tribe, be treated as evidence, where it depends on the testimony of some traveller or missionary, who may be a superficial observer, more or less ignorant of the native language, a careless retailer of unsifted talk, a man prejudiced or even wilfully deceitful?"—TYLOR'S *Primitive Culture*, Vol. I., p. 9.

to the European eye, I claim only so much authority as is due to the opinion of one qualified observer who can have no possible motive in deviating ever so slightly from what his own personal experience has taught him to regard as the truth.

II.—BIOGRAPHICAL.—The barest skeleton of a biography is all that can be formed from the very scanty materials which remain to mark the career of a writer whose work has been for the best part of two centuries as familiar throughout the length and breadth of China as are the tales of the "Arabian Nights" in all English-speaking communities. The author of "Strange Stories" was a native of Tzu-chou, in the province of Shan-tung. His family name was P'u; his particular name was Sung-ling; and the designation or literary epithet by which, in accordance with Chinese usage, he was commonly known among his friends, was Liu-hsien, or "Last of the Immortals." A further fancy name, given to him probably by some enthusiastic admirer, was Liu-ch'üan, or "Willow Spring;" but he is now familiarly spoken of simply as P'u Sung-ling. We are unacquainted with the years of his birth or death; however, by the aid of a meagre entry in the *History of Tzü-chou* it is possible to make a pretty good guess at

the date of the former event. For we are there told that P'u Sung-ling successfully competed for the lowest or bachelor's degree before he had reached the age of twenty; and that in 1651 he was in the position of a graduate of ten years' standing, having failed in the interim to take the second, or master's, degree. To this failure, due, as we are informed in the history above quoted, to his neglect of the beaten track of academic study, we owe the existence of his great work; not, indeed, his only production, though the one *par excellence* by which, as Confucius said of his own "Spring and Autumn," men will know him. All else that we have on record of P'u Sung-ling, besides the fact that he lived in close companionship with several eminent scholars of the day, is gathered from his own words, written when, in 1679, he laid down his pen upon the completion of a task which was to raise him within a short period to a foremost rank in the Chinese world of letters. Of that record I here append a close translation, accompanied by such notes as are absolutely necessary to make it intelligible to non-students of Chinese.

AUTHOR'S OWN RECORD.

"'Clad in wistaria, girdled with ivy;'[2] thus sang San-lü[3] in his *Dissipation of Grief*.[4] Of ox-headed devils and serpent Gods,[5] he of the long-nails[6] never wearied to tell. Each interprets in his own way the music of heaven;[7] and whether it be discord or not, depends upon antecedent causes.[8] As for me, I cannot, with my poor autumn fire-fly's light, match myself against the hobgoblins of the age.[9] I am but the dust in the sun-

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[2] Said of the bogies of the hills, in allusion to their *clothes*. Here quoted with reference to the official classes, in ridicule of the title under which they hold posts which, from a literary point of view, they are totally unfit to occupy.

[3] A celebrated statesman (B.C. 314) who, having lost his master's favour by the intrigues of a rival, finally drowned himself in despair. The Annual Dragon Festival is said by some to be a "search" for his body.

[4] A poem addressed by San-Lü to his Prince, after his disgrace. Its non-success was the immediate cause of his death.

[5] That is, of the supernatural generally.

[6] A poet of the T'ang Dynasty whose eyebrows met, whose nails were very long, and who could write very fast.

[7] "You know the music of earth," said the Taoist sage, Chuang-tzŭ; "but you have not heard the music of heaven."

[8] That is, to the operation of some influence surviving from a previous existence.

[9] This is another hit at the ruling classes. Chi K'ang, a celebrated musician and alchemist (A.D. 223–262), was sitting one night alone, playing upon his lute, when suddenly a man with a tiny face walked in, and began to stare hard at him, the stranger's face enlarging all the time. "I'm not going to match myself against a devil!" cried the musician, after a few moments, and instantly blew out the light.

beam, a fit laughing-stock for devils.[10] For my talents are not those of Yü Pao,[11] elegant explorer of the records of the Gods; I am rather animated by the spirit of Su Tung-p'o,[12] who loved to hear men speak of the supernatural. I get people to commit what they tell me to writing, and subsequently I dress it up in the form of a story; and thus in the lapse of time my friends from all quarters have supplied me with quantities of material, which, from my habit of collecting, has grown into a vast pile.[13]

"Human beings, I would point out, are not beyond the pale of fixed laws, and yet there are more remarkable phenomena in their midst than in the country of those who crop their hair;[14] antiquity is unrolled before us, and many tales are to be found therein stranger than that of the nation of Flying Heads.[15] 'Irrepressible bursts, and

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[10] When Liu Chüan, Governor of Wu-ling, determined to relieve his poverty by trade, he saw a devil standing by his side, laughing and rubbing its hands for glee. "Poverty and wealth are matters of destiny," said Liu Chüan; "but to be laughed at by a devil——," and accordingly he desisted from his intention.

[11] A writer who flourished in the early part of the fourth century, and composed a work in thirty books entitled *Supernatural Researches*.

[12] The famous poet, statesman, and essayist, who flourished A.D. 1036–1101.

[13] "And his friends had the habit of jotting down for his unfailing delight anything quaint or comic that they came across."—*The World* on Charles Dickens: 24th July, 1878.

[14] It is related in the *Historical Record* that when T'ai Po and Yü Chung visited the southern savages they saw men with tattooed bodies and short hair.

[15] A fabulous community, placed by geographers to the west of the Dragon city—wherever that may be. So called because the

luxurious ease,'[16]—such was always his enthusiastic strain. 'For ever indulging in liberal thought,'[17]—thus he spoke openly without restraint. Were men like these to open my book, I should be a laughing-stock to them indeed. At the cross-roads[18] men will not listen to me, and yet I have some knowledge of the three states of existence[19] spoken of beneath the cliff;[20] neither should the words I utter be set aside because of him that utters them.[21] When the bow[22] was hung at my father's door, he dreamed that a sickly-looking Buddhist priest, but half-covered by his stole, entered the chamber. On one of his breasts

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heads of the men are in the habit of leaving their bodies, and flying down to marshy places to feed on worms and crabs. A red ring is seen the night before the flight encircling the neck of the man whose head is about to fly. At daylight the head returns.

[16] A quotation from the admired works of Wang Po, a brilliant scholar and poet, who was drowned at the early age of twenty-eight, A.D. 675.

[17] I have hitherto failed in all attempts to identify this quotation.

[18] The cross-road of the "Five Fathers" is here mentioned, which the commentator tells us is merely the name of the place.

[19] The past, present, and future life, of the Buddhist system of metempsychosis.

[20] A certain man, who was staying at a temple, dreamt that an old priest appeared to him beneath a jade-stone cliff, and, pointing to a stick of burning incense, said to him, "That incense represents a vow to be fulfilled; but I say unto you, that ere its smoke shall have curled away, your three states of existence will have been already accomplished." The meaning is that time on earth is as nothing to the Gods.

[21] This remark occurs in the fifteenth of the Confucian Gospels, section 22.

[22] The birth of a boy was formerly signalled by hanging a bow at the door; that of a girl, by displaying a small towel—indicative of the parts that each would hereafter play in the drama of life.

was a round piece of plaster like a *cash*;[23] and my father, waking from sleep, found that I, just born, had a similar black patch on my body. As a child, I was thin and constantly ailing, and unable to hold my own in the battle of life. Our home was chill and desolate as a monastery; and working there for my livelihood with my pen,[24] I was as poor as a priest with his alms-bowl.[25] Often and often I put my hand to my head[26] and exclaimed, 'Surely he who sat with his face to the wall[27] was myself in a previous state of existence;' and thus I referred my non-success in this life to the influence of a destiny surviving from the last. I have been tossed hither and thither in the direction of the ruling wind, like a flower falling in filthy places; but the six paths[28] of transmigration are inscrutable indeed, and I have no right to complain. As it is, midnight finds me with an expiring lamp, while the wind whistles mournfully without; and over my cheerless table I piece together my tales,[29] vainly hoping to produce a sequel to the *Infernal*

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[23] See note 2 to No. II.

[24] Literally, "ploughing with my pen."

[25] The *patra* or bowl, used by Buddhist mendicants, in imitation of the celebrated alms-dish of Shâkyamuni Buddha.

[26] Literally, "scratched my head," as is often done by the Chinese in perplexity or doubt.

[27] Alluding to the priest Dharma-nandi, who came from India to China, and tried to convert the Emperor Wu Ti of the Liang Dynasty; but, failing in his attempt, he retired full of mortification to a temple at Sung-shan, where he sat for nine years before a rock, until his own image was imprinted thereon.

[28] The six *gâti* or conditions of existence, namely:—angels, men, demons, hungry devils, brute beasts, and tortured sinners.

[29] Literally, "putting together the pieces under the forelegs (of foxes) to make robes." This part of the fox-skin is the most valuable for making fur clothes.

Regions.[30] With a bumper I stimulate my pen, yet I only succeed thereby in 'venting my excited feelings,'[31] and as I thus commit my thoughts to writing, truly I am an object worthy of commiseration. Alas! I am but the bird that, dreading the winter frost, finds no shelter in the tree: the autumn insect that chirps to the moon, and hugs the door for warmth. For where are they who know me?[32] They are 'in the bosky grove, and at the frontier pass'[33]—wrapped in an impenetrable gloom!"

From the above curious document the reader will gain some insight into the abstruse, but at the same time marvellously beautiful, style of this gifted writer. The whole essay—for such it is, and among the most perfect of its kind—is intended chiefly as a satire upon the scholarship of the age; scholarship which had turned the author

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[30] The work of a well-known writer, named Lin I-ch'ing, who flourished during the Sung Dynasty.

[31] Alluding to an essay by Han Fei, a philosopher of the third century B.C., in which he laments the iniquity of the age in general, and the corruption of officials in particular. He finally committed suicide in prison, where he had been cast by the intrigues of a rival minister.

[32] Confucius (*Gospel* xiv., sec. 37) said, "Alas! there is no one who knows me (to be what I am)."

[33] The great poet Tu Fu (A.D. 712–770) dreamt that his greater predecessor, Li T'ai-po (A.D. 699–762) appeared to him, "coming when the maple-grove was in darkness, and returning while the frontier-pass was still obscured;"—that is, at night, when no one could see him; the meaning being that he never came at all, and that those "who know me (P'u Sung-ling)" are equally non-existent.

back to the disappointment of a private life, himself conscious all the time of the inward fire that had been lent him by heaven. It is the key-note to his own subsequent career, spent in the retirement of home, in the society of books and friends; as also to the numerous uncomplimentary allusions which occur in all his stories relating to official life. Whether or not the world at large has been a gainer by this instance of the fallibility of competitive examinations has been already decided in the affirmative by the millions of P'u Sung-ling's own countrymen, who for the past two hundred years have more than made up to him by a posthumous and enduring reverence for the loss of those earthly and ephemeral honours which he seems to have coveted so much.

III. —BIBLIOGRAPHICAL.—*Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*, known to the Chinese as the *Liao-Chai-Chih-I*, or more familiarly, the *Liao-Chai*, has hardly been mentioned by a single foreigner without some inaccuracy on the part of the writer concerned. For instance, the late Mr. Mayers states in his *Chinese Reader's Manual*, p. 176, that this work was composed "circa A.D. 1710," the fact being that the collection was actually completed in 1679, as we know by the date attached to the "Author's Own Re-

cord" given above. It is consequently two centuries, almost to the day, since the first appearance of a book destined to a popularity which the lapse of time seems wholly unable to diminish; and the present may fairly be considered a fitting epoch for its first presentation to the English reader in an English dress. I should mention, however, that the *Liao-Chai* was originally, and for many years, circulated in manuscript only. P'u Sung-ling, as we are told in a colophon by his grandson to the first edition, was too poor to meet the heavy expense of block-cutting; and it was not until as late as 1740, when the author must have been already for some time a denizen of the dark land he so much loved to describe, that his aforesaid grandson printed and published the collection now so universally famous. Since then many editions have been laid before the Chinese public, the best of which is that by Tan Ming-lun, a Salt Commissioner, who flourished during the reign of Tao Kuang, and who in 1842 produced, at his own expense, an excellent edition in sixteen small octavo volumes of about 160 pages each. And as various editions will occasionally be found to contain various readings, I would here warn students of Chinese who wish to compare my rendering with the text, that it is from the edition of Tan Ming-lun, collated with that of Yü Chi,

published in 1766, that this translation has been made. Many have been the commentaries and disquisitions upon the meaning of obscure passages and the general scope of this work; to say nothing of the prefaces with which the several editions have been ushered into the world. Of the latter, I have selected one specimen, from which the reader will be able to form a tolerably accurate opinion as to the true nature of these always singular and usually difficult compositions. Here it is:—

T'ANG MÊNG LAI'S PREFACE.

"The common saying, 'He regards a camel as a horse with a swelled back,' trivial of itself, may be used in illustration of greater matters. Men are wont to attribute an existence only to such things as they daily see with their own eyes, and they marvel at whatsoever, appearing before them at one instant, vanishes at the next. And yet it is not at the sprouting and falling of foliage, or at the metamorphosis of insects that they marvel, but only at the manifestations of the supernatural world; though of a truth, the whistling of the wind and the movement of streams, with nothing to set the one in motion or give sound to the other, might well be ranked among extraordinary phenomena. We are accustomed to these, and therefore do not note them. We marvel at devils and foxes: we do not marvel at man. But who is it that causes a man to move and to speak?—to which question comes the ready answer of each individual so questioned, '*I* do.' This 'I do,' however, is merely a personal con-

sciousness of the facts under discussion. For a man can see with his eyes, but he cannot see what it is that makes him see; he can hear with his ears, but he cannot hear what it is that makes him hear; how, then, is it possible for him to understand the rationale of things he can neither see nor hear. Whatever has come within the bounds of their own ocular or auricular experience men regard as proved to be actually existing; and only such things.[34] But this term 'experience' may be understood in various senses. For instance, people speak of something which has certain attributes as *form*, and of something else which has certain other attributes as *substance;* ignorant as they are that form and substance are to be found existing without those particular attributes. Things which are thus constituted are inappreciable, indeed, by our ears and eyes; but we cannot argue that therefore they do not exist. Some persons can see a mosquito's eye, while to others even a mountain is invisible; some can hear the sound of ants battling together, while others again fail to catch the roar of a thunder-peal. Powers of seeing and hearing vary; there should be no reckless imputations of blindness. According to the schoolmen,

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[34] "Thus, since countless things exist that the senses *can* take account of, it is evident that nothing exists that the senses can *not* take account of."—The "Professor" in W. H. Mallock's *New Paul and Virginia.*

This passage recalls another curious classification by the great Chinese philosopher Han Wên-kung. "There are some things which possess form but are devoid of sound, as for instance jade and stones; others have sound but are without form, such as wind and thunder; others again have both form and sound, such as men and animals; and lastly, there is a class devoid of both, namely, *devils and spirits.*"

man at his death is dispersed like wind or fire, the origin and end of his vitality being alike unknown; and as those who have seen strange phenomena are few, the number of those who marvel at them is proportionately great, and the 'horse with a swelled back' parallel is very widely applicable. And ever quoting the fact that Confucius would have nothing to say on these topics, these schoolmen half discredit such works as the *Ch'i-chieh-chih-kuai* and the *Yü-ch'u-chi-i*,[35] ignorant that the Sage's unwillingness to speak had reference only to persons of an inferior mental calibre; for his own *Spring and Autumn* can hardly be said to be devoid of all allusions of the kind. Now P'u Liu-hsien devoted himself in his youth to the marvellous, and as he grew older was specially remarkable for his comprehension thereof; and being moreover a most elegant writer, he occupied his leisure in recording whatever came to his knowledge of a particularly marvellous nature. A volume of these compositions of his formerly fell into my hands, and was constantly borrowed by friends; now, I have another volume, and of what I read only about three-tenths was known to me before. What there is, should be sufficient to open the eyes of those schoolmen, though I much fear it will be like talking of ice to a butterfly. Personally, I disbelieve in the irregularity of natural phenomena, and regard as evil spirits only those who injure their neighbours. For eclipses, falling stars, the flight of herons, the nest of a mina, talking stones, and the combats of dragons, can hardly be classed as irregular; while the phenomena of nature occurring

[35] I have never seen any of these works, but I believe they treat, as implied by their titles, chiefly of the supernatural world.

out of season, wars, rebellions, and so forth, may certainly be relegated to the category of evil. In my opinion the morality of P'u Liu-hsien's work is of a very high standard, its object being distinctly to glorify virtue and to censure vice, and as a book calculated to elevate mankind may be safely placed side by side with the philosophical treatises of Yang Hsiung which Huan Tan declared to be so worthy of a wide circulation."

With regard to the meaning of the Chinese words *Liao-Chai-Chih-I*, this title has received indifferent treatment at the hands of different writers. Dr. Williams chose to render it by "Pastimes of the Study," and Mr. Mayers by "The Record of Marvels, or Tales of the Genii;" neither of which is sufficiently near to be regarded in the light of a translation. Taken literally and in order, these words stand for "Liao—library—record —strange," "Liao" being simply a fanciful name given by our author to his private library or studio. An apocryphal anecdote traces the origin of this selection to a remark once made by himself with reference to his failure for the second degree. "Alas!" he is reported to have said, "I shall now have no resource (*Liao*) for my old age;" and accordingly he so named his study, meaning that in his pen he would seek that resource which fate had denied to him as an official. For this untranslatable "Liao" I have ventured to substitute

"Chinese," as indicating more clearly the nature of what is to follow. No such title as "Tales of the Genii" fully expresses the scope of this work, which embraces alike weird stories of Taoist devilry and magic, marvellous accounts of impossible countries beyond the sea, simple scenes of Chinese every-day life, and notices of extraordinary natural phenomena. Indeed, the author once had it in contemplation to publish only the more imaginative of the tales in the present collection under the title of "Devil and Fox Stories;" but from this scheme he was ultimately dissuaded by his friends, the result being the heterogeneous mass which is more aptly described by the title I have given to this volume. In a similar manner, I too had originally determined to publish a full and complete translation of the whole of these sixteen volumes; but on a closer acquaintance many of the stories turned out to be quite unsuitable for the age in which we live, forcibly recalling the coarseness of our own writers of fiction in the last century. Others again were utterly pointless, or mere repetitions in a slightly altered form. Of the whole, I therefore selected one hundred and sixty-four of the best and most characteristic stories, of which eight had previously been published by Mr. Allen in the *China Review*, one by Mr. Mayers in *Notes aud Queries on China and*

Japan, two by myself in the columns of the *Celestial Empire*, and four by Dr. Williams in a now forgotten handbook of Chinese. The remaining one hundred and forty-nine have never before, to my knowledge, been translated into English. To those, however, who can enjoy the *Liao-Chai* in the original text, the distinctions between the various stories of felicity in plot, originality, and so on, are far less sharply defined, so impressed as each competent reader must be by the incomparable style in which even the meanest is arrayed. For in this respect, as important now in Chinese eyes as it was with ourselves in days not long gone by, the author of the *Liao-Chai* and the rejected candidate succeeded in founding a school of his own, in which he has since been followed by hosts of servile imitators with more or less success. Terseness is pushed to its extreme limits; each particle that can be safely dispensed with is scrupulously eliminated; and every here and there some new and original combination invests perhaps a single word with a force it could never have possessed except under the hands of a perfect master of his art. Add to the above, copious allusions and adaptations from a course of reading which would seem to have been co-extensive with the whole range of Chinese literature, a wealth of metaphor and an artistic use of figures generally

to which only the *chef-d'œuvres* of Carlyle form an adequate parallel; and the result is a work which for purity and beauty of style is now universally accepted in China as the best and most perfect model. Sometimes the story runs along plainly and smoothly enough; but the next moment we may be plunged into pages of abstruse text, the meaning of which is so involved in quotations from and allusions to the poetry or history of the past three thousand years as to be recoverable only after diligent perusal of the commentary and much searching in other works of reference. In illustration of the popularity of this book, Mr. Mayers once stated that "the porter at his gate, the boatman at his mid-day rest, the chair-coolie at his stand, no less than the man of letters among his books, may be seen poring with delight over the elegantly-narrated marvels of the *Liao-Chai;*" but he would doubtless have withdrawn this judgment in later years, with the work lying open before him. Ever since I have been in China, I have made a point of never, when feasible, passing by a reading Chinaman without asking permission to glance at the volume in his hand; and at my various stations in China I have always kept up a borrowing acquaintance with the libraries of my private or official servants; but I can safely affirm that I have not once detected the *Liao-Chai* in the

hands of an ill-educated man. Mr. Mayers made, perhaps, a happier hit when he observed that "fairy-tales told in the style of the *Anatomy of Melancholy* would scarcely be a popular book in Great Britain;" though except in some particular points of contact, the styles of these two writers could scarcely claim even the most distant of relationships.

Such, then, is the setting of this collection of *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*, many of which contain, in addition to the advantages of style and plot, a very excellent moral. The intention of most of them is, in the actual words of T'ang Mêng-lai, "to glorify virtue and to censure vice,"—always, it must be borne in mind, according to the Chinese and not to a European interpretation of these terms. As an addition to our knowledge of the folk-lore of China, and as an *aperçu* of the manners, customs, and social life of that vast Empire, my translation of the *Liao-Chai* may not be wholly devoid of interest. The amusement and instruction I have myself derived from the task thus voluntarily imposed has already more than repaid me for the pains I have been at to put this work before the English public in a pleasing and available form.

STRANGE STORIES

FROM A

CHINESE STUDIO.

I.

EXAMINATION FOR THE POST OF GUARDIAN ANGEL.[1]

My eldest sister's husband's grandfather, named Sung Tao, was a graduate.[2] One day, while lying down from indisposition, an official messenger arrived, bringing the usual notification in his hand and leading a horse with a white forehead, to summon him to the examination for his master's degree. Mr. Sung here remarked that the Grand Examiner had not yet come, and asked why there should be this hurry. The messenger did not reply to this, but pressed so earnestly that at length Mr. Sung roused himself, and getting upon the horse

[1] The tutelar deity of every Chinese city.

[2] That is, he had taken the first or bachelor's degree. I shall not hesitate to use strictly English equivalents for all kinds of Chinese terms. The three degrees are literally, (1) Cultivated Talent, (2) Raised Man, and (3) Promoted Scholar.

rode with him. The way seemed strange, and by-and-by they reached a city which resembled the capital of a prince. They then entered the Prefect's *yamên*,[3] the apartments of which were beautifully decorated; and there they found some ten officials sitting at the upper end, all strangers to Mr. Sung, with the exception of one whom he recognised to be the God of War.[4] In the verandah were two tables and two stools, and at the end of one of the former a candidate was already seated, so Mr. Sung sat down alongside of him. On the table were writing materials for each, and suddenly down flew a piece of paper with a theme on it, consisting of the following eight words:—"One man, two men; by intention, without intention." When Mr. Sung had finished his essay, he took it into the hall. It contained the following passage:—"Those who are virtuous by intention, though virtuous, shall not be rewarded. Those who are wicked without intention, though wicked, shall receive no punishment." The presiding deities praised this sentiment very much, and calling Mr. Sung to come forward, said to him "A Guardian Angel is wanted in Honan. Go you and take up the appointment." Mr. Sung no sooner heard this than he bowed his head and wept, saying, "Unworthy though I am of the honour

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[3] The official residence of a mandarin above a certain rank.

[4] The Chinese Mars. A celebrated warrior, named Kuan Yü, who lived about the beginning of the third century of our era. He was raised after death to the rank of a God, and now plays a leading part in the Chinese Pantheon.

you have conferred upon me, I should not venture to decline it but that my aged mother has reached her seventh decade, and there is no one now to take care of her. I pray you let me wait until she has fulfilled her destiny, when I will hold myself at your disposal." Thereupon one of the deities, who seemed to be the chief, gave instructions to search out his mother's term of life, and a long-bearded attendant forthwith brought in the Book of Fate. On turning it over, he declared that she still had nine years to live; and then a consultation was held among the deities, in the middle of which the God of War said, "Very well. Let Mr. graduate Chang take the post, and be relieved in nine years' time." Then, turning to Mr. Sung, he continued, "You ought to proceed without delay to your post; but as a reward for your filial piety, you are granted a furlough of nine years. At the expiration of that time you will receive another summons." He next addressed a few kind words to Mr Chang; and the two candidates, having made their *kotow*, went away together. Grasping Mr. Sung's hand, his companion, who gave "Chang Ch'i of Ch'ang-shan" as his name and address, accompanied him beyond the city walls and gave him a stanza of poetry at parting. I cannot recollect it all, but in it occurred this couplet:—

"With wine and flowers we chase the hours,
In one eternal spring:
No moon, no light, to cheer the night—
Thyself that ray must bring."

Mr. Sung here left him and rode on, and before very

long reached his own home; here he awaked as if from a dream, and found that he had been dead three days,[5] when his mother, hearing a groan in the coffin, ran to it and helped him out. It was some time before he could speak, and then he at once inquired about Ch'ang-shan, where, as it turned out, a graduate named Chang had died that very day.

Nine years afterwards, Mr Sung's mother, in accordance with fate, passed from this life; and when the funeral obsequies were over, her son, having first purified himself, entered into his chamber and died also. Now his wife's family lived within the city, near the western gate; and all of a sudden they beheld Mr. Sung, accompanied by numerous chariots and horses with carved trappings and red-tasselled bits, enter into the hall, make an obeisance, and depart. They were very much disconcerted at this, not knowing that he had become a spirit, and rushed out into the village to make inquiries, when they heard he was already dead. Mr. Sung had an account of his adventure written by himself; but unfortunately after the insurrection it was not to be found. This is only an outline of the story.

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[5] Catalepsy, which is the explanation of many a story in this collection, would appear to be of very common occurrence amongst the Chinese. Such, however, is not the case; in which statement I am borne out by my friend, Dr. Manson, of Amoy, who, after many years' practice among the natives of that port, and also of Formosa, informs me that he has never even heard of a single instance of this strange complaint.

II.

THE TALKING PUPILS.

At Ch'ang-ngan there lived a scholar, named Fang Tung, who though by no means destitute of ability was a very unprincipled rake, and in the habit of following and speaking to any woman he might chance to meet. The day before the spring festival of Clear Weather,[1] he was strolling about outside the city when he saw a small carriage with red curtains and an embroidered awning, followed by a crowd of waiting-maids on horseback, one of whom was exceedingly pretty, and riding on a small palfrey. Going closer to get a better view, Mr. Fang noticed that the carriage curtain was partly open, and inside he beheld a beautifully dressed girl of about sixteen, lovely beyond anything he had ever seen. Dazzled by the sight, he could not take his eyes off her; and, now before, now behind, he followed the carriage for many a mile. By-and-by he heard the young lady call out to her maid, and, when the latter came alongside, say to her, "Let down the screen for me. Who is this

[1] One of the twenty-four solar terms. It falls on or about the 5th of April, and is the special time for worshipping at the family tombs.

rude fellow that keeps on staring so?" The maid accordingly let down the screen, and looking angrily at Mr. Fang, said to him, "This is the bride of the Seventh Prince in the City of Immortals going home to see her parents, and no village girl that you should stare at her thus." Then taking a handful of dust, she threw it at him and blinded him. He rubbed his eyes and looked round, but the carriage and horses were gone. This frightened him, and he went off home, feeling very uncomfortable about the eyes. He sent for a doctor to examine his eyes, and on the pupils was found a small film, which had increased by next morning, the eyes watering incessantly all the time. The film went on growing, and in a few days was as thick as a cash.[2] On the right pupil there came a kind of spiral, and as no medicine was of any avail, the sufferer gave himself up to grief and wished for death. He then bethought himself of repenting of his misdeeds, and hearing that the *Kuang-ming* sutra could relieve misery, he got a copy and hired a man to teach it to him. At first it was very tedious work, but by degrees he became more composed, and spent every evening in a posture of devotion, telling his beads. At the end of a year he had arrived at a state of perfect calm, when one day he heard a small voice, about as loud as a fly's, calling out from his left

[2] The common European name for the only Chinese coin, about twenty of which go to a penny. Each has a square hole in the middle, for the convenience of stringing them together; hence the expression "strings of cash."

eye:—"It's horridly dark in here." To this he heard a reply from the right eye, saying, "Let us go out for a stroll, and cheer ourselves up a bit." Then he felt a wriggling in his nose which made it itch, just as if something was going out of each of the nostrils; and after a while he felt it again as if going the other way. Afterwards he heard a voice from one eye say, "I hadn't seen the garden for a long time: the epidendrums are all withered and dead." Now Mr. Fang was very fond of these epidendrums, of which he had planted a great number, and had been accustomed to water them himself; but since the loss of his sight he had never even alluded to them. Hearing, however, these words, he at once asked his wife why she had let the epidendrums die. She inquired how he knew they were dead, and when he told her she went out to see, and found them actually withered away. They were both very much astonished at this, and his wife proceeded to conceal herself in the room. She then observed two tiny people, no bigger than a bean, come down from her husband's nose and run out of the door, where she lost sight of them. In a little while they came back and flew up to his face, like bees or beetles seeking their nests. This went on for some days, until Mr. Fang heard from the left eye, "This roundabout road is not at all convenient. It would be as well for us to make a door." To this the right eye answered, "My wall is too thick; it wouldn't be at all an easy job." "I'll try and open mine," said the left eye, "and then it will do for both of us." Whereupon Mr. Fang felt a pain in his left eye as

if something was being split, and in a moment he found he could see the tables and chairs in the room. He was delighted at this and told his wife, who examined his eye and discovered an opening in the film, through which she could see the black pupil shining out beneath, the eyeball itself looking like a cracked pepper-corn. By next morning the film had disappeared, and when his eye was closely examined it was observed to contain two pupils. The spiral on the right eye remained as before; and then they knew that the two pupils had taken up their abode in one eye. Further, although Mr. Fang was still blind of one eye, the sight of the other was better than that of the two together. From this time he was more careful of his behaviour, and acquired in his part of the country the reputation of a virtuous man.[3]

[3] The belief that the human eye contains a tiny being of the human shape is universal in China. It originated, of course, from the reflection of oneself that is seen on looking into the pupil of anybody's eye, or even, with the aid of a mirror, into one's own.

III.

THE PAINTED WALL.

A KIANG-SI gentleman, named Mêng Lung-t'an, was lodging at the capital with a Mr. Chu, M.A., when one day chance led them to a certain monastery, within which they found no spacious halls or meditation chambers, but only an old priest in *deshabille.* On observing the visitors, he arranged his dress and went forward to meet them, leading them round and showing whatever there was to be seen. In the chapel they saw an image of Chih Kung, and the walls on either side were beautifully painted with life-like representations of men and things. On the east side were pictured a number of fairies, among whom was a young girl whose maiden tresses were not yet confined by the matron's knot. She was picking flowers and gently smiling, while her cherry lips seemed about to move, and the moisture of her eyes to overflow. Mr. Chu gazed at her for a long time without taking his eyes off, until at last he became unconscious of anything but the thoughts that were engrossing him. Then, suddenly, he felt

himself floating in the air, as if riding on a cloud, and found himself passing through the wall,[1] where halls and pavilions stretched away one after another, unlike the abodes of mortals. Here an old priest was preaching the Law of Buddha, surrounded by a large crowd of listeners. Mr. Chu mingled with the throng, and after a few moments perceived a gentle tug at his sleeve. Turning round, he saw the young girl above-mentioned, who walked laughing away. Mr. Chu at once followed her, and passing a winding balustrade arrived at a small apartment beyond which he dared not venture further. But the young lady, looking back, waved the flowers she had in her hand as though beckoning him to come on. He accordingly entered and found nobody else within. Then they fell on their knees and worshipped heaven and earth together,[2] and rose up as man and wife, after which the bride went away, bidding Mr. Chu keep quiet until she came back. This went on for a couple of days, when the young lady's companions began to smell a rat and discovered Mr. Chu's hiding-place. Thereupon they all laughed and said, "My dear, you are now a married woman, and should leave off that maidenly *coiffure.*" So they gave her the proper hair-pins and head ornaments, and bade her go bind her hair, at which she blushed very much but said nothing. Then

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[1] Which will doubtless remind the reader of *Alice through the Looking-glass, and what she saw there.*

[2] The all-important item of a Chinese marriage ceremony; amounting, in fact, to calling God to witness the contract.

one of them cried out, "My sisters, let us be off. Two's company, more's none." At this they all giggled again and went away

Mr. Chu found his wife very much improved by the alteration in the style of her hair. The high top-knot and the coronet of pendants were very becoming to her. But suddenly they heard a sound like the tramping of heavy-soled boots, accompanied by the clanking of chains and the noise of angry discussion. The bride jumped up in a fright, and she and Mr. Chu peeped out. They saw a man clad in golden armour, with a face as black as jet, carrying in his hand chains and whips, and surrounded by all the girls. He asked, "Are you all here?" "All," they replied. "If," said he, "any mortal is here concealed amongst you, denounce him at once, and lay not up sorrow for yourselves." Here they all answered as before that there was no one. The man then made a movement as if he would search the place, upon which the bride was dreadfully alarmed, and her face turned the colour of ashes. In her terror she said to Mr. Chu, "Hide yourself under the bed," and opening a small lattice in the wall, disappeared herself. Mr. Chu in his concealment hardly dared to draw his breath; and in a little while he heard the boots tramp into the room and out again, the sound of the voices getting gradually fainter and fainter in the distance. This reassured him, but he still heard the voices of people going backwards and forwards outside; and having been a long time in a cramped position, his ears began to sing as if there

was a locust in them, and his eyes to burn like fire. It was almost unbearable; however, he remained quietly awaiting the return of the young lady without giving a thought to the why and wherefore of his present position.

Meanwhile, Mêng Lung-t'an had noticed the sudden disappearance of his friend, and thinking something was wrong, asked the priest where he was. "He has gone to hear the preaching of the Law," replied the priest. "Where?" said Mr. Mêng. "Oh, not very far," was the answer. Then with his finger the old priest tapped the wall and called out, "Friend Chu! what makes you stay away so long?" At this, the likeness of Mr. Chu was figured upon the wall, with his ear inclined in the attitude of one listening. The priest added, "Your friend here has been waiting for you some time;" and immediately Mr. Chu descended from the wall, standing transfixed like a block of wood, with starting eyeballs and trembling legs. Mr. Mêng was much terrified, and asked him quietly what was the matter. Now the matter was that while concealed under the bed he had heard a noise resembling thunder and had rushed out to see what it was.

Here they all noticed that the young lady on the wall with the maiden's tresses had changed the style of her *coiffure* to that of a married woman. Mr. Chu was greatly astonished at this and asked the old priest the reason.

He replied, "Visions have their origin in those who see them: what explanation can I give?" This answer

was very unsatisfactory to Mr. Chu; neither did his friend, who was rather frightened, know what to make of it all; so they descended the temple steps and went away.

IV.

PLANTING A PEAR-TREE.

A COUNTRYMAN was one day selling his pears in the market. They were unusually sweet and fine flavoured, and the price he asked was high. A Taoist[1] priest in rags and tatters stopped at the barrow and

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[1] That is, of the religion of *Tao*, or, as it is sometimes called, *Rationalism*. It was founded some six centuries before the Christian era by a man named Lao-tzŭ, "Old boy," who was said to have been born with white hair and a beard. Originally a pure system of metaphysics, it is now but a shadow of its former self, and is corrupted by the grossest forms of superstition borrowed from Buddhism, which has in its turn adopted many of the forms and beliefs of Taoism, so that the two religions are hardly distinguishable one from the other.

"What seemed to me the most singular circumstance connected with the matter, was the presence of half-a-dozen Taoist priests, who joined in all the ceremonies, doing everything that the Buddhist priests did, and presenting a very old appearance, with their top-knots and cues, among their closely shaven Buddhist brethren. It seemed strange that the worship of Sakyamuni by celibate Buddhist priests, with shaved heads, into which holes were duly burned at their initiation, should be participated in by married Taoist priests, whose heads are not wholly shaven, and have never been burned."—*Initiation of Buddhist Priests at Kooshan*, by S. L. B.

Taoist priests are credited with a knowledge of alchemy and the black art in general.

begged one of them. The countryman told him to go away, but as he did not do so he began to curse and swear at him. The priest said, "You have several hundred pears on your barrow; I ask for a single one, the loss of which, Sir, you would not feel. Why then get angry?" The lookers-on told the countryman to give him an inferior one and let him go, but this he obstinately refused to do. Thereupon the beadle of the place, finding the commotion too great, purchased a pear and handed it to the priest. The latter received it with a bow and turning to the crowd said, "We who have left our homes and given up all that is dear to us[2] are at a loss to understand selfish niggardly conduct in others. Now I have some exquisite pears which I shall do myself the honour to put before you. Here somebody asked, "Since you have pears yourself, why don't you eat those?" "Because," replied the priest, "I wanted one of these pips to grow them from." So saying, he munched up the pear; and when he had finished took a pip in his hand, unstrapped a pick from his back, and proceeded to make a hole in the ground, several inches deep, wherein he deposited the pip, filling in the earth as before. He then asked the bystanders for a little hot water to water it with, and one among them who loved a joke fetched him some boiling water from a neighbouring shop. The

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[2] A celibate priesthood belongs properly to Buddhism, and is not a doctrine of the Taoist church.

priest poured this over the place where he had made the hole, and every eye was fixed upon him when sprouts were seen shooting up, and gradually growing larger and larger. By-and-by, there was a tree with branches sparsely covered with leaves; then flowers, and last of all fine, large, sweet-smelling pears hanging in great profusion. These the priest picked and handed round to the assembled crowd until all were gone, when he took his pick and hacked away for a long time at the tree, finally cutting it down. This he shouldered, leaves and all, and sauntered quietly away. Now, from the very beginning, our friend the countryman had been amongst the crowd, straining his neck to see what was going on, and forgetting all about his business. At the departure of the priest he turned round and discovered that every one of his pears was gone. He then knew that those the old fellow had been giving away so freely were really his own pears. Looking more closely at the barrow he also found that one of the handles was missing, evidently having been newly cut off. Boiling with rage, he set out in pursuit of the priest, and just as he turned the corner he saw the lost barrow-handle lying under the wall, being in fact the very pear-tree that the priest had cut down. But there were no traces of the priest—much to the amusement of the crowd in the market-place.

V.

THE TAOIST PRIEST OF LAO-SHAN.

THERE lived in our village a Mr. Wang, the seventh son in an old family. This gentleman had a *penchant* for the Taoist religion; and hearing that at Lao-shan there were plenty of Immortals,[1] shouldered his knapsack and went off for a tour thither. Ascending a peak of the mountain he reached a secluded monastery where he found a priest sitting on a rush mat, with long hair flowing over his neck, and a pleasant expression on his face. Making a low bow, Wang addressed him thus:—"Mysterious indeed is the doctrine: I pray you, Sir, instruct me therein." "Delicately-nurtured and wanting in energy as you are," replied the priest, "I fear you could not support the fatigue." "Try me," said Wang.

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[1] The "angels" of Taoism—immortality in a happy land being the reward held out for a life on earth in accordance with the doctrines of Tao, for which, as Mr. Chalmers says, "three terms suggest themselves—the Way, Reason, and the *Word;* but they are all liable to objection."

Taoist priests are believed by some to possess an elixir of immortality in the form of a precious liquor; others again hold that the elixir consists solely in a virtuous conduct of life.

So when the disciples, who were very many in number, collected together at dusk, Wang joined them in making obeisance to the priest, and remained with them in the monastery. Very early next morning the priest summoned Wang, and giving him a hatchet sent him out with the others to cut firewood. Wang respectfully obeyed, continuing to work for over a month until his hands and feet were so swollen and blistered that he secretly meditated returning home. One evening when he came back he found two strangers sitting drinking with his master. It being already dark, and no lamp or candles having been brought in, the old priest took some scissors and cut out a circular piece of paper like a mirror, which he proceeded to stick against the wall. Immediately it became a dazzling moon, by the light of which you could have seen a hair or a beard of corn. The disciples all came crowding round to wait upon them, but one of the strangers said, "On a festive occasion like this we ought all to enjoy ourselves together." Accordingly he took a kettle of wine from the table and presented it to the disciples, bidding them drink each his fill; whereupon our friend Wang began to wonder how seven or eight of them could all be served out of a single kettle. The disciples, too, rushed about in search of cups, each struggling to get the first drink for fear the wine should be exhausted. Nevertheless, all the candidates failed to empty the kettle, at which they were very much astonished, when suddenly one of the strangers said, "You have given us a fine bright moon; but it's dull work drinking by ourselves. Why not call

Ch'ang-ngo[2] to join us?" He then seized a chop-stick and threw it into the moon, whereupon a lovely girl stepped forth from its beams. At first she was only a foot high, but on reaching the ground lengthened to the ordinary size of women. She had a slender waist and a beautiful neck, and went most gracefully through the Red Garment figure.[3] When this was finished she sang the following words:—

"Ye fairies! ye fairies! I'm coming back soon,
Too lonely and cold is my home in the moon."

Her voice was clear and well sustained, ringing like the notes of a flageolet, and when she had concluded her song she pirouetted round and jumped up on the table, where, with every eye fixed in astonishment upon her, she once more became a chop-stick. The three friends laughed loudly, and one of them said, "We are very jolly to-night, but I have hardly room for any more wine. Will you drink a parting glass with me in the palace of the moon?" They then took up the table and walked into the moon where they could be seen drinking so plainly, that their eyebrows and beards appeared like reflections in a looking-glass. By-and-by the moon became obscured; and when the disciples

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[2] The beautiful wife of a legendary chieftain, named Hou I, who flourished about 2,500 B.C. She is said to have stolen from her husband the elixir of immortality, and to have fled with it to the moon.

[3] The name of a celebrated *pas seul* of antiquity.

brought a lighted candle they found the priest sitting in the dark alone. The viands, however, were still upon the table and the mirror-like piece of paper on the wall. "Have you all had enough to drink?" asked the priest; to which they answered that they had. "In that case," said he, "you had better get to bed, so as not to be behindhand with your wood-cutting in the morning." So they all went off, and among them Wang, who was delighted at what he had seen, and thought no more of returning home. But after a time he could not stand it any longer; and as the priest taught him no magical arts he determined not to wait, but went to him and said, "Sir, I travelled many long miles for the benefit of your instruction. If you will not teach me the secret of Immortality, let me at any rate learn some trifling trick, and thus soothe my cravings for a knowledge of your art. I have now been here two or three months, doing nothing but chop firewood, out in the morning and back at night, work to which I was never accustomed in my own home." "Did I not tell you," replied the priest, "that you would never support the fatigue? To-morrow I will start you on your way home." "Sir," said Wang, "I have worked for you a long time. Teach me some small art, that my coming here may not have been wholly in vain." "What art?" asked the priest. "Well," answered Wang, "I have noticed that whenever you walk about anywhere, walls and so on are no obstacle to you. Teach me this, and I'll be satisfied." The priest laughingly assented, and taught Wang a formula which he bade him recite. When he had

done so he told him to walk through the wall; but Wang, seeing the wall in front of him, didn't like to walk at it. As, however, the priest bade him try, he walked quietly up to it and was there stopped. The priest here called out, "Don't go so slowly. Put your head down and rush at it." So Wang stepped back a few paces and went at it full speed; and the wall yielding to him as he passed, in a moment he found himself outside. Delighted at this, he went in to thank the priest, who told him to be careful in the use of his power, or otherwise there would be no response, handing him at the same time some money for his expenses on the way. When Wang got home, he went about bragging of his Taoist friends and his contempt for walls in general; but as his wife disbelieved his story, he set about going through the performance as before. Stepping back from the wall, he rushed at it full speed with his head down; but coming in contact with the hard bricks, finished up in a heap on the floor. His wife picked him up and found he had a bump on his forehead as big as a large egg, at which she roared with laughter; but Wang was overwhelmed with rage and shame, and cursed the old priest for his base ingratitude.

VI.

THE BUDDHIST PRIEST OF CH'ANG-CH'ING.

At Ch'ang-ch'ing there lived a Buddhist priest of exceptional virtue and purity of conduct, who, though over eighty years of age, was still hale and hearty. One day he fell down and could not move; and when the other priests rushed to help him up, they found he was already gone. The old priest was himself unconscious of death, and his soul flew away to the borders of the province of Honan. Now it chanced that the scion of an old family residing in Honan, had gone out that very day with some ten or a dozen followers to hunt the hare with falcons;[1] but his horse having run away with him

[1] This form of sport may still be seen in the north of China. A hare being started, two Chinese greyhounds (which are very slow) are slipped from their leash in pursuit. But, as the hare would easily run straight away from them, a falcon is released almost simultaneously. The latter soars to a considerable height, and then swoops down on the hare, striking it a violent blow with the "pounce," or claw. This partially stuns the hare, and allows the dogs to regain lost ground, by which time the hare is ready once more, and off they go again. The chase is ended by the hare getting to earth in a fox's burrow, or being ultimately overtaken by

he fell off and was killed. Just at that moment the soul of the priest came by and entered into the body, which thereupon gradually recovered consciousness. The servants crowded round to ask him how he felt, when opening his eyes wide, he cried out, "How did I get here?" They assisted him to rise and and led him into the house where all his ladies came to see him and inquire how he did. In great amazement he said, "I am a Buddhist priest. How came I hither?" His servants thought he was wandering, and tried to recall him by pulling his ears. As for himself, he could make nothing of it, and closing his eyes refrained from saying anything further. For food, he would only eat rice, refusing all wine and meat; and avoided the society of his wives.[2] After some days he felt inclined for a stroll,

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the dogs. In the latter case the heart and liver are cut out on the spot, and given to the falcon; otherwise he would hunt no more that day. Two falcons are often released, one shortly after the other. They wear hoods, which are removed at the moment of flying, and are attached by a slip-string from one leg to the falconer's wrist. During the night previous to a day's hunting, they are not allowed to sleep. Each falconer lies down with one falcon on his left wrist, and keeps up an incessant tapping with the other on the bird's head. This is done to make them fierce. Should the quarry escape, a hare's skin is thrown down, by which means the falcons are secured, and made ready for a further flight. Occasionally, but rarely, the falcon misses its blow at the hare, with the result of a broken or injured "arm."

[2] Abstinence from wine and meat, and celibacy, are among the most important dogmas of the Buddhist church, as specially applied to its priesthood. At the door of every Buddhist monastery may be seen a notice that "No wine or meat may enter here!" Even the laity are not supposed to drink wine.

at which all his family were delighted; but no sooner had he got outside and stopped for a little rest than he was besieged by servants begging him to take their accounts as usual. However, he pleaded illness and want of strength, and no more was said. He then took occasion to ask if they knew the district of Ch'ang-ch'ing, and on being answered in the affirmative expressed his intention of going thither for a trip, as he felt dull and had nothing particular to do, bidding them at the same time look after his affairs at home. They tried to dissuade him from this on the ground of his having but recently risen from a sick bed; but he paid no heed to their remonstrances, and on the very next day set out. Arriving in the Ch'ang-ch'ing district, he found everything unchanged; and without being put to the necessity of asking the road, made his way straight to the monastery. His former disciples received him with every token of respect as an honoured visitor; and in reply to his question as to where the old priest was, they informed him that their worthy teacher had been dead for some time. On asking to be shewn his grave, they led him to a spot where there was a solitary mound some three feet high, over which the grass was not yet green. Not one of them knew his motives for visiting this place; and by-and-by he ordered his horse, saying to the disciples, "Your master was a virtuous priest. Carefully preserve whatever relics of him you may have, and keep them from injury." They all promised to do this, and he then set off on his way home. When he arrived there, he fell into a listless state and took no

interest in his family affairs. So much so, that after a few months he ran away and went straight to his former home at the monastery, telling the disciples that he was their old master. This they refused to believe, and laughed among themselves at his pretensions; but he told them the whole story, and recalled many incidents of his previous life among them, until at last they were convinced. He then occupied his old bed and went through the same daily routine as before, paying no attention to the repeated entreaties of his family, who came with carriages and horses to beg him to return.

About a year subsequently, his wife sent one of the servants with splendid presents of gold and silk, all of which he refused with the exception of a single linen robe. And whenever any of his old friends passed this monastery, they always went to pay him their respects, finding him quiet, dignified, and pure. He was then barely thirty, though he had been a priest for more than eighty years.[3]

[3] Having renewed his youth by assuming the body of the young man into which his soul had entered.

VII.

THE MARRIAGE OF THE FOX'S DAUGHTER.

A PRESIDENT of the Board of Civil Office,[1] named Yin, and a native of Li-ch'êng, when a young man, was very badly off, but was endowed with considerable physical courage. Now in his part of the country there was a large establishment, covering several acres, with an unbroken succession of pavilions and verandahs, and belonging to one of the old county families; but because ghosts and apparitions were frequently seen there, the place had for a long time remained untenanted, and was overgrown with grass and weeds, no one venturing to enter in even in broad daylight. One evening when Yin was carousing with some fellow-students, one of them jokingly said, "If anybody will pass a night in the haunted house, the rest of us will stand him a dinner." Mr. Yin jumped up at this, and cried out, "What is there difficult in that?" So, taking with him a sleeping-mat, he proceeded thither, escorted by

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[1] One of the "Six Boards" at the capital, equivalent to our own War Office, Board of Works, etc.

all his companions as far as the door, where they laughed and said, "We will wait here a little while. In case you see anything, shout out to us at once." "If there are any goblins or foxes," replied Yin, "I'll catch them for you." He then went in, and found the paths obliterated by long grass, which had sprung up, mingled with weeds of various kinds. It was just the time of the new moon, and by its feeble light he was able to make out the door of the house. Feeling his way, he walked on until he reached the back pavilion, and then went up on to the Moon Terrace, which was such a pleasant spot that he determined to stop there. Gazing westwards, he sat for a long time looking at the moon—a single thread of light embracing in its horns the peak of a hill—without hearing anything at all unusual; so, laughing to himself at the nonsense people talked, he spread his mat upon the floor, put a stone under his head for a pillow, and lay down to sleep. He had watched the Cow-herd and the Lady[2] until they were just disappearing, and was on the point of dropping off, when suddenly he heard footsteps down below coming up the stairs. Pretending to be asleep, he saw a servant enter, carrying in his hand a lotus-shaped lantern,[3] who, on observing Mr. Yin, rushed back in a fright, and said to someone behind, "There is a stranger here!" The person spoken to asked who it was, but the servant did not know; and then up came

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[2] The Chinese names for two stars: $\beta\gamma$ Aquila and α Lyra.

[3] Lanterns very prettily made to resemble all kinds of flowers are to be seen at the Chinese New Year.

an old gentleman, who, after examining Mr. Yin closely, said, "It's the future President: he's as drunk as can be. We needn't mind him; besides, he's a good fellow, and won't give us any trouble." So they walked in and opened all the doors; and by-and-by there were a great many other people moving about, and quantities of lamps were lighted, till the place was as light as day. About this time Mr. Yin slightly changed his position, and sneezed; upon which the old man, perceiving that he was awake, came forward and fell down on his knees, saying, "Sir, I have a daughter who is to be married this very night. It was not anticipated that Your Honour would be here. I pray, therefore, that we may be excused." Mr. Yin got up and raised the old man, regretting that, in his ignorance of the festive occasion, he had brought with him no present.[4] "Ah, Sir," replied the old man, "your very presence here will ward off all noxious influences; and that is quite enough for us." He then begged Mr. Yin to assist in doing the honours, and thus double the obligation already conferred. Mr. Yin readily assented, and went inside to look at the gorgeous arrangements they had made. He was here met by a lady, apparently about forty years of age, whom the old gentleman introduced as his wife; and he had hardly made his bow when he heard the sound of flageolets,[5] and someone came hurrying in, saying,

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[4] This is, as with us, obligatory on all friends invited to a marriage.

[5] The accompaniment of all weddings and funerals in China.

"He has come!" The old gentleman flew out to meet this personage, and Mr. Yin also stood up, awaiting his arrival. In no long time, a bevy of people with gauze lanterns ushered in the bridegroom himself, who seemed to be about seventeen or eighteen years old, and of a most refined and prepossessing appearance. The old gentleman bade him pay his respects first to their worthy guest; and upon his looking towards Mr. Yin, that gentleman came forward to welcome him on behalf of the host. Then followed ceremonies between the old man and his son-in-law; and when these were over, they all sat down to supper. Hosts of waiting-maids brought in profuse quantities of wine and meats, with bowls and cups of jade or gold, till the table glittered again. And when the wine had gone round several times, the old gentleman told one of the maids to summon the bride. This she did, but some time passed and no bride came. So the old man rose and drew aside the curtain, pressing the young lady to come forth; whereupon a number of women escorted out the bride, whose ornaments went *tinkle tinkle* as she walked along, sweet perfumes being all the time diffused around. Her father told her to make the proper salutation, after which she went and sat by her mother. Mr. Yin took a glance at her, and saw that she wore on her head beautiful ornaments made of kingfisher's feathers, her beauty quite surpassing anything he had ever seen. All this time they had been drinking their wine out of golden goblets big enough to hold several pints, when it flashed across him that one of these goblets would be a capital thing to carry back to

his companions in evidence of what he had seen. So he secreted it in his sleeve, and, pretending to be tipsy,[6] leaned forward with his head upon the table as if going off to sleep. "The gentleman is drunk," said the guests; and by-and-by Mr. Yin heard the bridegroom take his leave, and there was a general trooping down-stairs to the tune of a wedding march. When they were all gone the old gentleman collected the goblets, one of which was missing, though they hunted high and low to find it. Someone mentioned the sleeping guest; but the old gentleman stopped him at once for fear Mr. Yin should hear, and before long silence reigned throughout. Mr. Yin then arose. It was dark, and he had no light; but he could detect the lingering smell of the food, and the place was filled with the fumes of wine. Faint streaks of light now appearing in the east, be began quietly to make a move, having first satisfied himself that the goblet was still in his sleeve. Arriving at the door, he found his friends already there; for they had been afraid he might come out after they left, and go in again early in the morning. When he produced the goblet they were all lost in astonishment; and on hear-

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[6] The soberest people in the world, amongst whom anything like sottishness is comparatively unknown, think it no disgrace, but rather complimentary, to get pleasantly tipsy on all festive occasions; and people who are physically unable to do so, frequently go so far as to hire substitutes to drink for them. Mandarins especially suffer very much from the custom of being obliged to "take wine" with a large number of guests. For further on this subject, see No. LIV., note 1.

ing his story, they were fain to believe it, well knowing that a poor student like Yin was not likely to have such a valuable piece of plate in his possession.

Later on Mr. Yin took his doctor's degree, and was appointed magistrate over the district of Fei-ch'iu, where there was an old-established family of the name of Chu. The head of the family asked him to a banquet in honour of his arrival, and ordered the servants to bring in the large goblets. After some delay a slave-girl came and whispered something to her master which seemed to make him very angry. Then the goblets were brought in, and Mr. Yin was invited to drink. He now found that these goblets were of precisely the same shape and pattern as the one he had at home, and at once begged his host to tell him where he had had these made. "Well," said Mr. Chu, "there should be eight of them. An ancestor of mine had them made, when he was a minister at the capital, by an experienced artificer. They have been handed down in our family from generation to generation, and have now been carefully laid by for some time; but I thought we would have them out to-day as a compliment to your Honour. However, there are only seven to be found. None of the servants can have touched them, for the old seals of ten years ago are still upon the box, unbroken. I don't know what to make of it." Mr. Yin laughed, and said, "It must have flown away! Still, it is a pity to lose an heir-loom of that kind; and as I have a very similar one at home, I shall take upon myself to send it to you." When the banquet was over, Mr. Yin went home, and taking out

his own goblet, sent it off to Mr. Chu. The latter was somewhat surprised to find that it was identical with his own, and hurried away to thank the magistrate for his gift, asking him at the same time how it had come into his possession. Mr. Yin told him the whole story, which proves conclusively that although a fox may obtain possession of a thing, even at a distance of many hundred miles, he will not venture to keep it altogether.[7]

[7] The wedding-party was, of course, composed entirely of foxes; this animal being believed by the Chinese to be capable of appearing at will under the human form, and of doing either good or evil to its friends or foes. These facts will be prominently brought out in several of the stories to follow.

VIII.

MISS CHIAO-NO.

K'UNG HSÜEH-LI was a descendant of Confucius.[1] He was a man of considerable ability, and an excellent poet.[2] A fellow-student, to whom he was much attached, became magistrate at T'ien-t'ai, and sent for K'ung to join him. Unfortunately, just before K'ung

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[1] Lineal descendants of Confucius are to be found at this day living together as a clan, near their founder's mausoleum in Shantung. The head of the family is an hereditary *kung* or "duke," and each member enjoys a share of the revenues with which the family has been endowed, in well-merited recognition of the undying influence of China's greatest sage.

[2] More or less proficiency in the art of poetry is an absolutely essential qualification for all who present themselves at the great competitive tests by which successful candidates are admitted to Chinese official life. [See *Appendix* A.] The following anecdote is given by the London correspondent of the *Leeds Mercury*:—

"The new Chinese ambassador in this country is a man of considerable literary ability, and perhaps one of the few diplomatists since the days of Matthew Prior (Lord Lytton alone excepted) who has achieved distinction as a poet. Shortly after his arrival in this country, he expressed a wish to become acquainted with the principal English poets, and as Mr. Browning is more accessible and more a man of the world than the Poet Laureate, an arrangement was made the other day by which the two should be brought

arrived his friend died, and he found himself without the means of returning home; so he took up his abode in a Buddhist monastery, where he was employed in transcribing for the priests. Several hundred paces to the west of this monastery there was a house belonging to a Mr. Shan, a gentleman who had known better days, but who had spent all his money in a heavy law-suit; and then, as his family was a small one, had gone away to live in the country and left his house vacant. One day there was a heavy fall of snow which kept visitors away from the monastery; and K'ung, finding it dull, went out. As he was passing by the door of the house above-mentioned, a young man of very elegant appearance came forth, who, the moment he saw K'ung, ran up to him, and with a bow, entered into conversation, asking him to be pleased to walk in. K'ung was much taken with the young man, and followed him inside. The rooms were not particularly large, but adorned

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in contact with one another. After the mutual courtesies, Mr. Browning having learnt that His Excellency was also a poet, expressed a desire to know how much he had published. "Only three or four volumes," was the reply, through the interpreter. "Then," said Mr. Browning, "I am a greater offender than His Excellency, and unequal to him in self-restraint. What kind of poetry does His Excellency write: pastoral, humorous, epic—or what?" There was a pause for a short time. At length the interpreter said that His Excellency thought his poetry would be better described as the "enigmatic." "Surely," replied Mr. Browning, "there ought then to be the deepest sympathy between us, for that is just the criticism which is brought against my own works; and I believe it to be a just one."

throughout with embroidered curtains, and from the walls hung scrolls and drawings by celebrated masters. On the table lay a book, the title of which was, "Jottings from Paradise;" and turning over its leaves, K'ung found therein many strange things. He did not ask the young man his name, presuming that as he lived in the Shan family mansion, he was necessarily the owner of the place. The young man, however, inquired what he was doing in that part of the country, and expressed great sympathy with his misfortunes, recommending him to set about taking pupils. "Alas!" said K'ung, "who will play the Mæcenas to a distressed wayfarer like myself?" "If," replied the young man, "you would condescend so far, I for my part would gladly seek instruction at your hands." K'ung was much gratified at this, but said he dared not arrogate to himself the position of teacher, and begged merely to be considered as the young man's friend. He then asked him why the house had been shut up for so long; to which the young man replied, "This is the Shan family mansion. It has been closed all this time because of the owner's removal into the country. My surname is Huang-fu, and my home is in Shen-si; but as our house has been burnt down in a great fire, we have put up here for a while." Thus Mr. K'ung found out that his name was not Shan. That evening they spent in laughing and talking together, and K'ung remained there for the night. In the morning a lad came in to light the fire; and the young man, rising first, went into the private part of the house. Mr. K'ung

was sitting up with the bed-clothes still huddled round him, when the lad looked in and said, "Master's coming!" So he jumped up with a start, and in came an old man with a silvery beard, who began to thank him, saying, "I am very much obliged to you for your condescension in becoming my son's tutor. At present he writes a villanous hand; and I can only hope you will not allow the ties of friendship to interfere with discipline." Thereupon, he presented Mr. K'ung with an embroidered suit of clothes, a sable hat, and a set of shoes and stockings; and when the latter had washed and dressed himself he called for wine and food. K'ung could not make out what the valances of the chairs and tables were made of: they were so very bright-coloured and dazzling. By-and-by, when the wine had circulated several times, the old gentleman picked up his walking-stick and took his leave. After breakfast, the young man handed in his theme, which turned out to be written in an archaic style, and not at all after the modern fashion of essay-writing. K'ung asked him why he had done this, to which the young man replied that he did not contemplate competing at the public examinations. In the evening they had another drinking-bout, but it was agreed that there should be no more of it after that night. The young man then called the boy and told him to see if his father was asleep or not; adding, that if he was, he might quietly summon Miss Perfume. The boy went off, first taking a guitar out of a very pretty case; and in a few minutes in came a very nice-looking young girl. The young

man bade her play the *Death of Shun*;[3] and seizing an ivory plectrum she swept the chords, pouring forth a vocal melody of exquisite sweetness and pathos. He then gave her a goblet of wine to drink, and it was midnight before they parted. Next morning they got up early and settled down to work. The young man proved an apt scholar; he could remember what he had once read, and at the end of two or three months had made astonishing progress. Then they agreed that every five days they would indulge in a symposium, and that Miss Perfume should always be of the party. One night when the wine had gone into K'ung's head, he seemed to be lost in a reverie; whereupon his young friend, who knew what was the matter with him, said, "This girl was brought up by my father. I know you find it lonely, and I have long been looking out for a nice wife for you." "Let her only resemble Miss Perfume," said K'ung, "and she will do." "Your experience," said the young man, laughing, "is but limited, and, consequently, anything is a surprise to you. If Miss Perfume is your *beau ideal*, why it will not be difficult to satisfy you."

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[3] One of the two celebrated but legendary rulers of China in the golden ages of antiquity. Yao—who died B.C. 2258—nominated as his successor a young and virtuous husbandman named Shun, giving him both his daughters in marriage. At the death of Shun, these ladies are said to have wept so much that their tears literally drenched the bamboos which grew beside their husband's grave; and the speckled bamboo is now commonly known as the bamboo of Shun's wives.

Some six months had passed away, when one day Mr. K'ung took it into his head that he would like to go out for a stroll in the country. The entrance, however, was carefully closed; and on asking the reason, the young man told him that his father wished to receive no guests for fear of causing interruption to his studies. So K'ung thought no more about it; and by-and-by, when the heat of summer came on, they moved their study to a pavilion in the garden. At this time Mr. K'ung had a swelling on the chest about as big as a peach, which, in a single night, increased to the size of a bowl. There he lay groaning with the pain, while his pupil waited upon him day and night. He slept badly and took hardly any food; and in a few days the place got so much worse that he could neither eat nor drink. The old gentleman also came in, and he and his son lamented over him together. Then the young man said, "I was thinking last night that my sister, Chiao-no, would be able to cure Mr. K'ung, and accordingly I sent over to my grandmother's asking her to come. She ought to be here by now." At that moment a servant entered and announced Miss Chiao-no, who had come with her cousin, having been at her aunt's house. Her father and brother ran out to meet her, and then brought her in to see Mr. K'ung. She was between thirteen and fourteen years old, and had beautiful eyes with a very intelligent expression in them, and a most graceful figure besides. No sooner had Mr. K'ung beheld this lovely creature than he quite forgot to groan, and began to brighten up. Meanwhile the young man was saying,

"This respected friend of mine is the same to me as a brother. Try, sister, to cure him." Miss Chiao-no immediately dismissed her blushes, and rolling up her long sleeves approached the bed to feel his pulse.[4] As she was grasping his wrist, K'ung became conscious of a perfume more delicate than that of the epidendrum; and then she laughed, saying, "This illness was to be expected; for the heart is touched. Though it is severe, a cure can be effected; but, as there is already a swelling, not without using the knife." Then she drew from her arm a gold bracelet which she pressed down upon the suffering spot, until by degrees the swelling rose within the bracelet and overtopped it by an inch and more, the outlying parts that were inflamed also passing under, and thus very considerably reducing the extent of the tumour. With one hand she opened her robe and took out a knife with an edge as keen as paper, and pressing the bracelet down all the time with the other, proceeded to cut lightly round near the root of the swelling. The dark blood gushed forth, and stained the bed and the mat; but Mr. K'ung was delighted to be near such a beauty,—not only felt no pain, but would willingly have continued the operation that she might sit by him a little longer. In a few moments the whole

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[4] Volumes have been written by Chinese doctors on the subject of the pulse. They profess to distinguish as many as twenty-four different kinds, among which is one well known to our own practitioners—namely, the "thready" pulse; they, moreover, make a point of feeling the pulses of *both* wrists.

thing was removed, and the place looked like the knot on a tree where a branch has been cut away. Here Miss Chiao-no called for water to wash the wound, and from between her lips she took a red pill as big as a bullet, which she laid upon the flesh, and, after drawing the skin together, passed round and round the place. The first turn felt like the searing of a hot iron; the second like a gentle itching; and at the third he experienced a sensation of lightness and coolness which penetrated into his very bones and marrow. The young lady then returned the pill to her mouth, and said, "He is cured," hurrying away as fast as she could. Mr. K'ung jumped up to thank her, and found that his complaint had quite disappeared. Her beauty, however, had made such an impression on him that his troubles were hardly at an end. From this moment he gave up his books, and took no interest in anything. This state of things was soon noticed by the young man, who said to him, "My brother, I have found a fine match for you." "Who is it to be?" asked K'ung. "Oh, one of the family," replied his friend. Thereupon Mr. K'ung remained some time lost in thought, and at length said, "Please don't!" Then turning his face to the wall, he repeated these lines:—

"Speak not of lakes and streams to him who once has seen the sea;
The clouds that circle Wu's peak are the only clouds for me."

The young man guessed to whom he was alluding, and replied, "My father has a very high opinion of

your talents, and would gladly receive you into the family, but that he has only one daughter, and she is much too young. My cousin, Ah-sung, however, is seventeen years old, and not at all a bad-looking girl. If you doubt my word, you can wait in the verandah until she takes her daily walk in the garden, and thus judge for yourself." This Mr. K'ung acceded to, and accordingly saw Miss Chiao-no come out with a lovely girl—her black eyebrows beautifully arched, and her tiny feet encased in phœnix-shaped shoes—as like one another as they well could be. He was of course delighted, and begged the young man to arrange all preliminaries; and the very next day his friend came to tell him that the affair was finally settled. A portion of the house was given up to the bride and bridegroom, and the marriage was celebrated with plenty of music and hosts of guests, more like a fairy wedding than anything else. Mr. K'ung was very happy, and began to think that the position of Paradise had been wrongly laid down, until one day the young man came to him and said, "For the trouble you have been at in teaching me, I shall ever remain your debtor. At the present moment, the Shan family law-suit has been brought to a termination, and they wish to resume possession of their house immediately. We therefore propose returning to Shen-si, and as it is unlikely that you and I will ever meet again, I feel very sorrowful at the prospect of parting." Mr. K'ung replied that he would go too, but the young man advised him to return to his old home. This, he observed, was no easy matter; upon which the young

man said, "Don't let that trouble you: I will see you safe there." By-and-by his father came in with Mr. K'ung's wife, and presented Mr. K'ung with one hundred ounces of gold; and then the young man gave the husband and wife each one of his hands to grasp, bidding them shut their eyes. The next instant they were floating away in the air, with the wind whizzing in their ears. In a little while he said, "You have arrived," and opening his eyes, K'ung beheld his former home. Then he knew that the young man was not a human being. Joyfully he knocked at the old door, and his mother was astonished to see him arrive with such a nice wife. They were all rejoicing together, when he turned round and found that his friend had disappeared. His wife attended on her mother-in-law with great devotion, and acquired a reputation both for virtue and beauty, which was spread round far and near. Some time passed away, and then Mr. K'ung took his doctor's degree, and was appointed Governor of the Gaol in Yen-ngan. He proceeded to his post with his wife only, the journey being too long for his mother, and by-and-by a son was born. Then he got into trouble by being too honest an official, and threw up his appointment; but had not the wherewithal to get home again. One day when out hunting he met a handsome young man riding on a nice horse, and seeing that he was staring very hard looked closely at him. It was young Huang-fu. So they drew bridle, and fell to laughing and crying by turns,—the young man then inviting K'ung to go along with him. They rode on

together until they had reached a village thickly shaded with trees, so that the sun and sky were invisible overhead, and entered into a most elaborately-decorated mansion, such as might belong to an old-established family. K'ung asked after Miss Chiao-no, and heard that she was married; also that his own mother-in-law was dead, at which tidings he was greatly moved. Next day he went back and returned again with his wife. Chiao-no also joined them, and taking up K'ung's child played with it, saying, "Your mother played us truant." Mr. K'ung did not forget to thank her for her former kindness to him, to which she replied, "You're a great man now. Though the wound has healed, haven't you forgotten the pain yet?" Her husband, too, came to pay his respects, returning with her on the following morning. One day the young Huang-fu seemed troubled in spirit, and said to Mr. K'ung, "A great calamity is impending. Can you help us?" Mr. K'ung did not know what he was alluding to, but readily promised his assistance. The young man then ran out and summoned the whole family to worship in the ancestral hall, at which Mr. K'ung was alarmed, and asked what it all meant. "You know," answered the young man, "I am not a man but a fox. To-day we shall be attacked by thunder;[5] and if only you will aid

[5] The Chinese believe that wicked people are struck by the God of Thunder, and killed in punishment for some hidden crime. They regard lightning merely as an arrangement by which the God is enabled to see his victim.

us in our trouble, we may still hope to escape. If you are unwilling, take your child and go, that you may not be involved with us." Mr. K'ung protested he would live or die with them, and so the young man placed him with a sword at the door, bidding him remain quiet there in spite of all the thunder. He did as he was told, and soon saw black clouds obscuring the light until it was all as dark as pitch. Looking round, he could see that the house had disappeared, and that its place was occupied by a huge mound and a bottomless pit. In the midst of his terror, a fearful peal was heard which shook the very hills, accompanied by a violent wind and driving rain. Old trees were torn up, and Mr. K'ung became both dazed and deaf. Yet he stood firm until he saw in a dense black column of smoke a horrid thing with a sharp beak and long claws, with which it snatched some one from the hole, and was disappearing up with the smoke. In an instant K'ung knew by her clothes and shoes that the victim was no other than Chiao-no, and instantly jumping up he struck the devil violently with his sword, and cut it down. Immediately the mountains were riven, and a sharp peal of thunder laid K'ung dead upon the ground. Then the clouds cleared away, and Chiao-no gradually came round, to find K'ung dead at her feet. She burst out crying at the sight, and declared that she would not live since K'ung had died for her. K'ung's wife also came out, and they bore the body inside. Chiao-no then made Ah-sung hold her husband's head, while her brother prised open his teeth with a hair-pin, and she herself

arranged his jaw. She next put a red pill into his mouth, and bending down breathed into him. The pill went along with the current of air, and presently there was a gurgle in his throat, and he came round. Seeing all the family about him, he was disturbed as if waking from a dream. However they were all united together, and fear gave place to joy; but Mr. K'ung objected to live in that out-of-the-way place, and proposed that they should return with him to his native village. To this they were only too pleased to assent—all except Chiao-no; and when Mr. K'ung invited her husband, Mr. Wu, as well, she said she feared her father and mother-in-law would not like to lose the children. They had tried all day to persuade her, but without success, when suddenly in rushed one of the Wu family's servants, dripping with perspiration and quite out of breath. They asked what was the matter, and the servant replied that the Wu family had been visited by a calamity on the very same day, and had every one perished. Chiao-no cried very bitterly at this, and could not be comforted; but now there was nothing to prevent them from all returning together. Mr. K'ung went into the city for a few days on business, and then they set to work packing-up night and day. On arriving at their destination, separate apartments were allotted to young Mr. Huang-fu, and these he kept carefully shut up, only opening the door to Mr. K'ung and his wife.

Mr. K'ung amused himself with the young man and his sister Chiao-no, filling up the time with

chess,[6] wine, conversation, and good cheer, as if they had been one family. His little boy, Huan, grew up to be a handsome young man, with a fox-like *penchant* for roaming about; and it was generally known that he was actually the son of a fox.

[6] Chinese "chess" is similar to, but not identical with, our game. The board is divided by a river, and the king is confined to a small square of moves on his own territory. The game *par excellence* in China is *wei-ch'i*, an account of which I contributed to the *Temple Bar* Magazine for January, 1877.

IX.

MAGICAL ARTS.

A CERTAIN Mr. Yü was a spirited young fellow, fond of boxing and trials of strength. He was able to take two kettles and swing them round about with the speed of the wind. Now, during the reign of Ch'ung Chêng,[1] when up for the final examination at the capital, his servant became seriously ill. Much troubled at this, he applied to a necromancer in the market-place[2] who was skilful at determining the various leases of life allotted to men. Before he had uttered a word, the

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[1] The last emperor of the Ming dynasty. Began to reign A.D. 1628.

[2] The trade of fortune-teller is one of the most flourishing in China. A large majority of the candidates who are unsuccessful at the public examinations devote their energies in this direction; and in every Chinese city there are regular establishments whither the superstitious people repair to consult the oracle on every imaginable subject;—not to mention hosts of itinerant soothsayers, both in town and country, whose stock-in-trade consists of a trestle-table, pen, ink, and paper, and a few other mysterious implements of their art. The nature of the response, favourable or otherwise, is determined by an inspection of the year, month, day and hour at which the applicant was born, taken in combination with other particulars referring to the question at issue.

necromancer asked him, saying, "Is it not about your servant, Sir, that you would consult me?" Mr. Yü was startled at this, and replied that it was. "The sick man," continued the necromancer, "will come to no harm; you, Sir, are the one in danger." Mr. Yü then begged him to cast his nativity, which he proceeded to do, finally saying to Mr. Yü, "You have but three days to live!" Dreadfully frightened, he remained some time in a state of stupefaction, when the necromancer quietly observed that he possessed the power of averting this calamity by magic, and would exert it for the sum of ten ounces of silver. But Mr. Yü reflected that Life and Death are already fixed,[3] and he didn't see how magic could save him. So he refused, and was just going away, whereupon the necromancer said, "You grudge this trifling outlay. I hope you will not repent it." Mr. Yü's friends also urged him to pay the money, advising him rather to empty his purse than not secure the necromancer's compassion Mr. Yü, however, would not hear of it, and the three days slipped quickly away. Then he sat down calmly in his inn to see what was going to happen. Nothing did happen all day, and

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[3] A firm belief in predestination is an important characteristic of the Chinese mind. "All is destiny" is a phrase daily in the mouth of every man, woman, and child, in the empire. Confucius himself, we are told, objected to discourse to his disciples upon this topic; but it is evident from many passages in the *Lun Yü*, or *Confucian Gospels*, [Book VI. ch. 8., Book XIV. ch. 38, &c.] that he believed in a certain pre-arrangement of human affairs, against which all efforts would be unavailing.

at night he shut his door and trimmed the lamp; then, with a sword at his side, he awaited the approach of death.

By-and-by, the clepsydra[4] shewed that two hours had already gone without bringing him any nearer to dissolution; and he was thinking about lying down, when he heard a scratching at the window, and then saw a tiny little man creep through, carrying a spear on his shoulder, who, on reaching the ground, shot up to the ordinary height. Mr. Yü seized his sword and at once struck at it; but only succeeded in cutting the air. His visitor instantly shrunk down small again, and made an attempt to escape through the crevice of the window; but Yü redoubled his blows and at last brought him to the ground. Lighting the lamp, he found only a paper man,[5] cut right through the middle. This made him

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[4] An appliance of very ancient date in China, now superseded by cheap clocks and watches. A large clepsydra, consisting of four copper jars standing on steps one above the other, is still, however, to be seen in the city of Canton, and is in excellent working order, the night-watches being determined by reference to its indicator in the lower jar. By its aid, coils of "joss-stick," or pastille, are regulated to burn so many hours, and are sold to the poor, who use them both for the purpose of guiding their extremely vague notions of time, and for lighting the oft-recurring tobacco-pipe.

[5] "Paper men" are a source of great dread to the people at large. During the year 1876 whole provinces were convulsed by the belief that some such superstitious agency was at work to deprive innocent persons of their tails; and the so-called "Pope" of the Taoist religion even went so far as to publish a charm against the machinations of the unseen. It ran as follows:—"Ye who urge filthy devils to spy out the people!—the Master's spirits

afraid to sleep, and he sat up watching, until in a little time he saw a horrid hobgoblin creep through the same place. No sooner did it touch the ground than he assailed it lustily with his sword, at length cutting it in half. Seeing, however, that both halves kept on wriggling about, and fearing that it might get up again, he went on hacking at it. Every blow told, giving forth a hard sound, and when he came to examine his work, he found a clay image all knocked to pieces. Upon this he moved his seat near to the window, and kept his eye fixed upon the crack. After some time, he heard a noise like a bull bellowing outside the window, and something pushed against the window-frame with such force as to make the whole house tremble and seem about to fall. Mr. Yü, fearing he should be buried under the ruins, thought he could not do better than fight outside; so he accordingly burst open the door with a crash and rushed out. There he found a huge devil, as tall as the house, and he saw by the dim light of the moon that its face was as black as coal. Its eyes

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are at hand and will soon discover you. With this charm anyone may travel by sunlight, moonlight, or starlight all over the earth." At one time popular excitement ran so high that serious consequences were anticipated; and the mandarins in the affected districts found it quite as much as they could do to prevent lynch-law being carried out on harmless strangers who were unlucky enough to give rise to the slightest suspicion.

Taoist priests are generally credited with the power of cutting out human, animal, or other figures, of infusing vitality into them on the spot, and of employing them for purposes of good or evil.

shot forth yellow fire: it had nothing either upon its shoulders or feet; but held a bow in its hand and had some arrows at its waist. Mr. Yü was terrified; and the devil discharged an arrow at him which he struck to the ground with his sword. On Mr. Yü preparing to strike, the devil let off another arrow which the former avoided by jumping aside, the arrow quivering in the wall beyond with a smart crack. The devil here got very angry, and drawing his sword flourished it like a whirlwind, aiming a tremendous blow at Mr. Yü. Mr. Yü ducked, and the whole force of the blow fell upon the stone wall of the house, cutting it right in two. Mr. Yü then ran out from between the devil's legs, and began hacking at its back—whack!—whack! The devil now became furious, and roared like thunder, turning round to get another blow at his assailant. But Mr. Yü again ran between his legs, the devil's sword merely cutting off a piece of his coat. Once more he hacked away—whack!—whack!—and at length the devil came tumbling down flat. Mr. Yü cut at him right and left, each blow resounding like the watchman's wooden gong;[6] and then, bringing a light, he found it was a wooden image about as tall as a man. The bow and arrows were still there, the latter attached to its waist. Its carved and painted features were most hideous to behold; and wherever

[6] Watchmen in China, when on their nightly rounds, keep up an incessant beating on what, for want of a better term, we have called a wooden gong. The object is to let thieves know they are awake and on the look-out.

Mr. Yü had struck it with his sword, there was blood. Mr. Yü sat with the light in his hand till morning, when he awaked to the fact that all these devils had been sent by the necromancer in order to kill him, and so evidence his own magical power. The next day, after having told the story far and wide, he went with some others to the place where the necromancer had his stall; but the latter, seeing them coming, vanished in the twinkling of an eye. Some one observed that the blood of a dog would reveal a person who had made himself invisible, and Mr. Yü immediately procured some and went back with it. The necromancer disappeared as before, but on the spot where he had been standing they quickly threw down the dog's blood. Thereupon they saw his head and face all smeared over with the blood, his eyes glaring like a devil's; and at once seizing him, they handed him over to the authorities, by whom he was put to death.

X.

JOINING THE IMMORTALS.

A MR. CHOU, of Wên-têng, had in his youth been fellow-student with a Mr. Ch'êng, and a firm friendship was the result. The latter was poor, and depended very much upon Chou, who was the elder of the two. He called Chou's wife his "sister," and had the run of the house just as if he was one of the family. Now this wife happening to die in child-bed, Chou married another named Wang; but as she was quite a young girl, Ch'êng did not seek to be introduced.[1] One day her younger brother came to visit her, and was being entertained in the "inner" apartments[2] when Ch'êng chanced to call. The servant announced his arrival, and Chou bade him ask Mr. Ch'êng in. But Ch'êng would not enter, and took his leave. Thereupon Chou caused the entertainment to be moved into the public part of the house, and, sending after Ch'êng, succeeeded in bringing him

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[1] This is a characteristic touch. Only the most intimate of friends ever see each other's wives.

[2] Where the women of the family live, and into which no stranger ever penetrates. Among other names by which a Chinese husband speaks of his wife, a very common one is "the inner [wo]man."

back. They had hardly sat down before some one came in to say that a former servant of the establishment had been severely beaten at the magistrate's yamên; the facts of the case being that a cow-boy of the Huang family connected with the Board of Rites had driven his cattle across the Chou family's land, and that words had arisen between the two servants in consequence; upon which the Huang family's servant had complained to his master, who had seized the other and had sent him in to the magistrate's, where he had been bambooed. When Mr. Chou found out what the matter was, he was exceedingly angry, and said, "How dares this pig-boy fellow behave thus? Why, only a generation ago his master was my father's servant! He emerges a little from his obscurity, and immediately thinks himself I don't know what!" Swelling with rage, he rose to go in quest of Huang, but Ch'êng held him back, saying, "The age is corrupt: there is no distinction between right and wrong. Besides, the officials of the day are half of them thieves, and you will only get yourself into hot water." Chou, however, would not listen to him; and it was only when tears were added to remonstrances that he consented to let the matter drop. But his anger did not cease, and he lay tossing and turning all night. In the morning he said to his family, "I can stand the insults of Mr. Huang; but the magistrate is an officer of the Government, and not the servant of influential people. If there is a case of any kind, he should hear both plaintiff and defendant, and not act like a dog, biting anybody he is set upon. I will bring an action against the cow-boy,

and see what the magistrate will do to him. As his family rather egged him on, he accordingly proceeded to the magistrate's and entered a formal plaint; but that functionary tore up his petition, and would have nothing to do with it. This roused Chou's anger, and he told the magistrate plainly what he thought of him, in return for which contempt of court he was at once seized and bound. During the forenoon Mr. Ch'êng called at his house, where he learnt that Chou had gone into the city to prosecute the cow-boy, and immediately hurried after him with a view to stop proceedings. But his friend was already in the gaol, and all he could do was to stamp his foot in anger. Now it happened that three pirates had just been caught; and the magistrate and Huang, putting their heads together, bribed these fellows to say that Chou was one of their gang, whereupon the higher authorities were petitioned to deprive him of his status as a graduate,[3] and the magistrate then had him most unmercifully bambooed.[4] Mr. Ch'êng gained admittance to the gaol, and, after a painful interview, proposed that a petition should be presented direct to

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[3] Until which he would be safe, by virtue of his degree, from the degrading penalty of the bamboo.

[4] This is the instrument commonly used for flogging criminals in China, and consists of a strip of split bamboo planed down smooth. Strictly speaking there are two kinds, the *heavy* and the *light*; the former is now hardly if ever used. Until the reign of K'ang Hsi all strokes were given across the back; but that humane Emperor removed the *locus operandi* lower down, "for fear of injuring the liver or the lungs."

the Throne. "Alas!" said Chou, "here am I bound and guarded, like a bird in a cage. I have indeed a young brother, but it is as much as he can do to provide me with food." Then Ch'êng stepped forward, saying, "I will perform this service. Of what use are friends who will not assist in the hour of trouble?" So away he went, and Chou's son provided him with money to defray his expenses. After a long journey he arrived at the capital, where he found himself quite at a loss as to how he should get the petition presented. However, hearing that the Emperor was about to set out on a hunting tour, he concealed himself in the market-place, and when His Majesty passed by, prostrated himself on the ground with loud cries and gesticulations. The Emperor received his petition, and sent it to the Board of Punishments,[5] desiring to be furnished with a report on the case. It was then more than ten months since the beginning of the affair, and Chou, who had been made to confess[6] to this false charge, was already under sentence of death; so that the officers of the Board were very much alarmed when they received the Imperial instructions, and set to work to re-hear the case in person. Huang was also much alarmed, and devised a plan for killing Mr. Chou by bribing the gaolers to stop his food and drink; so that when his brother brought provisions he

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[5] *See* No. VII., note 1.

[6] It is a principle of Chinese jurisprudence that no sentence can be passed until the prisoner has confessed his guilt—a principle, however, not unfrequently set aside in practice.

was rudely thrust back and prevented from taking them in. Mr. Ch'êng complained of this to the Viceroy of the province, who investigated the matter himself, and found that Chou was in the last stage of starvation, for which the gaolers were bambooed to death. Terrified out of his wits, Huang, by dint of bribing heavily, succeeded in absconding and escaping a just punishment for his crimes. The magistrate, however, was banished for perversion of the law, and Chou was permitted to return home, his affection for Ch'êng being now very much increased. But ever after the prosecution and his friend's captivity, Mr. Ch'êng took a dismal view of human affairs, and one day invited Chou to retire with him from the world. The latter, who was deeply attached to his young wife, threw cold water on the proposition, and Mr. Ch'êng pursued the subject no farther, though his own mind was fully made up. Not seeing him for some days afterwards, Mr. Chou sent to inquire about him at his house; but there they all thought he was at Chou's, neither family, in fact, having seen anything of him. This looked suspicious, and Chou, aware of his peculiarity, sent off people to look for him, bidding them search all the temples and monasteries in the neighbourhood. He also from time to time supplied Ch'êng's son with money and other necessaries.

Eight or nine years had passed away when suddenly Ch'êng re-appeared, clad in a yellow cap and stole, and wearing the expression of a Taoist priest. Chou was delighted, and seized his arm, saying, "Where have you

been?—letting me search for you all over the place." "The solitary cloud and the wild crane," replied Ch'êng, laughing, "have no fixed place of abode. Since we last met my equanimity has happily been restored." Chou then ordered wine, and they chatted together on what had taken place in the interval. He also tried to persuade Ch'êng to detach himself from the Taoist persuasion, but the latter only smiled and answered nothing. "It is absurd!" argued Chou. "Why cast aside your wife and child as you would an old pair of shoes?" "Not so," answered Ch'êng; "a man may wish to cast aside his son, but how can he do so?" Chou asked where he lived, to which he replied, "In the Great Pure Mansion on Mount Lao." They then retired to sleep on the same bed; and by-and-by Chou dreamt that Ch'êng was lying on his chest so that he could not breathe. In a fright he asked him what he was doing, but got no answer; and then he waked up with a start. Calling to Ch'êng and receiving no reply, he sat up and stretched out his hand to touch him. The latter, however, had vanished, he knew not whither. When he got calm, he found he was lying at Ch'êng's end of the bed, which rather startled him. "I was not tipsy last night," reflected he; "how could I have got over here?" He next called his servants, and when they came and struck a light, lo! he was Ch'êng. Now Chou had had a beard, so he put up his hand to feel for it, but found only a few straggling hairs. He then seized a mirror to look at himself, and cried out in alarm: "If this is Mr. Ch'êng, where on earth am I?" By this

time he was wide awake, and knew that Ch'êng had employed magic to induce him to retire from the world. He was on the point of entering the ladies' apartments; but his brother, not recognising who he was, stopped him, and would not let him go in; and as he himself was unable to prove his own identity, he ordered his horse that he might go in search of Ch'êng. After some days' journey he arrived at Mount Lao; and, as his horse went along at a good rate, the servant could not keep up with him. By-and-by he rested awhile under a tree, and saw a great number of Taoist priests going backwards and forwards, and among them was one who stared fixedly at him. So he inquired of him where he should find Ch'êng; whereat the priest laughed and said, "I know the name. He is probably in the Great Pure Mansion." When he had given this answer he went on his way, Chou following him with his eyes about a stone's throw, until he saw him speak with some one else, and, after saying a few words, proceed onwards as before. The person whom he had spoken with came on to where Chou was, and turned out to be a fellow-townsman of his. He was much surprised at meeting Chou, and said, "I haven't seen you for some years. They told me you had gone to Mount Lao to be a Taoist priest. How is it you are still amusing yourself among mortals?" Chou told him who he really was; upon which the other replied, "Why, I thought the gentleman I just met was you! He has only just left me, and can't have got very far." "Is it possible," cried Chou, "that I didn't know my own face?" Just then the

servant came up, and away they went full speed, but could not discover the object of their search. All around them was a vast desert, and they were at a loss whether to go on or to return. But Chou reflected that he had no longer any home to receive him, and determined to carry out his design to the bitter end; but as the road was dangerous for riding, he gave his horse to the servant, and bade him go back. On he went cautiously by himself, until he spied a boy sitting by the wayside alone. He hurried up to him and asked the boy to direct him where he could find Mr. Ch'êng. "I am one of his disciples," replied the lad; and, shouldering Chou's bundle, started off to shew the way. They journeyed on together, taking their food by the light of the stars, and sleeping in the open air, until, after many miles of road, they arrived in three days at their destination. But this Great Pure locality was not like that generally spoken of in the world. Though as late as the middle of the tenth moon, there was a great profusion of flowers along the road, quite unlike the beginning of winter. The lad went in and announced the arrival of a stranger, whereupon Mr. Ch'êng came out, and Chou recognised his own features. Ch'êng grasped his hand and led him inside, where he prepared wine and food, and they began to converse together. Chou noticed many birds of strange plumage, so tame that they were not afraid of him; and these from time to time would a light on the table and sing with voices like Pan-pipes. He was very much astonished at all this, but a love of mundane pleasures, had eaten into his soul, and he had

no intention of stopping. On the ground were two rush-mats, upon which Ch'êng invited his friend to sit down with him. Then about midnight a serene calm stole over him; and while he was dozing off for a moment, he seemed to change places with Ch'êng. Suspecting what had happened, he put his hand up to his chin, and found it covered with a beard as before. At dawn he was anxious to return home, but Ch'êng pressed him to stay; and when three days had gone by Ch'êng said to him, "I pray you take a little rest now: to-morrow I will set you on your way." Chou had barely closed his eyelids before he heard Ch'êng call out, "Everything is ready for starting!" So he got up and followed him along a road other than that by which he had come, and in a very short time he saw his home in the distance. In spite of Chou's entreaties, Ch'êng would not accompany him so far, but made Chou go, waiting himself by the roadside. So the latter went alone, and when he reached his house, knocked at the door. Receiving no answer, he determined to get over the wall, when he found that his body was as light as a leaf, and with one spring he was over. In the same manner he passed several inner walls, until he reached the ladies' apartments, where he saw by the still burning lamp that the inmates had not yet retired for the night. Hearing people talking within, he licked a hole in the paper window[7] and peeped through, and saw his wife

[7] Wooden frames covered with a semi-transparent paper are used all over the northern provinces of China; in the south, oyster-

sitting drinking with a most disreputable-looking fellow. Bursting with rage, his first impulse was to surprise them in the act; but seeing there were two against one, he stole away and let himself out by the entrance-gate, hurrying off to Ch'êng, to whom he related what he had seen, and finally begged his assistance. Ch'êng willingly went along with him; and when they reached the room, Chou seized a big stone and hammered loudly at the door. All was then confusion inside, so Chou hammered again, upon which the door was barricaded more strongly than before. Here Ch'êng came forward with his sword,[8] and burst the door open with a crash. Chou rushed in, and the man inside rushed out; but Ch'êng was there, and with his sword cut his arm right off. Chou rudely seized his wife, and asked what it all meant; to which she replied that the man was a friend who sometimes came to take a cup of wine with them. Thereupon Chou borrowed Ch'êng's sword and cut off her head,[9] hanging up the trunk on a tree in the court-

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shells, cut square and planed down thin, are inserted tile-fashion in the long narrow spaces of a wooden frame made to receive them, and used for the same purpose. But glass is gradually finding its way into the houses of the well-to-do, large quantities being made at Canton and exported to various parts of the empire.

[8] Every Taoist priest has a magic sword, corresponding to our "magician's wand."

[9] In China, a man has the right to slay his adulterous wife, but he must slay her paramour also; both or neither. Otherwise, he lays himself open to a prosecution for murder. The act completed, he is further bound to proceed at once to the magistrate of the district and report what he has done.

yard. He then went back with Ch'êng. By-and-by he awaked and found himself on the bed, at which he was somewhat disturbed, and said, "I have had a strangely-confused dream, which has given me a fright." "My brother," replied Ch'êng, smiling, "you look upon dreams as realities: you mistake realities for dreams." Chou asked what he meant by these words; and then Ch'êng shewed him his sword besmeared with blood. Chou was terrified, and sought to destroy himself; but all at once it occurred to him that Ch'êng might be deceiving him again. Ch'êng divined his suspicions, and made haste at once to see him home. In a little while they arrived at the village-gate, and then Ch'êng said, "Was it not here that, sword in hand, I awaited you that night? I cannot look upon the unclean spot. I pray you go on, and let me stay here. If you do not return by the afternoon, I will depart alone." Chou then approached his house, which he found all shut up as if no one was living there; so he went into his brother's.

The latter, when he beheld Chou, began to weep bitterly, saying, "After your departure, thieves broke into the house and killed my sister-in-law, hanging her body upon a tree. Alas! alas! The murderers have not yet been caught." Chou then told him the whole story of his dream, and begged him to stop further proceedings; at all of which his brother was perfectly lost in astonishment. Chou then asked after his son, and his brother told the nurse to bring him in; whereupon the former said, "Upon this infant are

centered the hopes of our race.[10] Tend him well; for I am going to bid adieu to the world." He then took his leave, his brother following him all the time with tears in his eyes to induce him to remain. But he heeded him not; and when they reached the village-gate his brother saw him go away with Ch'êng. From afar he looked back and said, "Forbear, and be happy!" His brother would have replied; but here Ch'êng whisked his sleeve, and they disappeared. The brother remained there for some

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[10] The importance of male offspring in Chinese social life is hardly to be expressed in words. To the son is confided the task of worshipping at the ancestral tombs, the care of the ancestral tablets, and the due performance of all rites and ceremonies connected with the departed dead. No Chinaman will die, if he can help it, without leaving a son behind him. If his wife is childless he will buy a concubine; and we are told on page 41, vol. xiii., of the *Liao Chai*, that a good wife, "who at thirty years of age has not borne a child should forthwith pawn her jewellery and purchase a concubine for her husband; for to be without a son is hard indeed!" Another and a common resource is to adopt a nephew; and sometimes a boy is bought from starving parents, or from a professional kidnapper. Should a little boy die, no matter how young, his parents do not permit even him to be without the good offices of a son. They adopt some other child on his behalf; and when the latter grows up it becomes his duty to perform the proper ceremonies at his baby father's tomb. Girls do not enjoy the luxury of this sham posterity. They are quietly buried in a hole near the family vault, and their disembodied spirits are left to wander about in the realms below uncared for and unappeased. Every mother, however, shares in the ancestral worship, and her name is recorded on the tombstone, side by side with that of her husband. Hence it is that Chinese tombstones are always to the memory either of a father or of a mother, or of both, with occasionally the addition of the grandfather and grandmother, and sometimes even that of the generation preceding.

time, and then went back overwhelmed with grief. He was an unpractical man, and before many years were over all the property was gone and the family reduced to poverty. Chou's son, who was growing up, was thus unable to secure the services of a tutor, and had no one but his uncle to teach him. One morning, on going into the school-room, the uncle found a letter lying on his desk addressed to himself in his brother's hand-writing. There was, however, nothing in it but a finger-nail about four inches in length. Surprised at this, he laid the nail down on the ink-slab while he went out to ask whence the letter had come. This no one knew; but when he went back he found that the ink-stone had been changed into a piece of shining yellow gold. More than ever astonished, he tried the nail on copper and iron things, all of which were likewise turned to gold. He thus became very rich, sharing his wealth with Chou's son; and it was bruited about that the two families possessed the secret of transmutation.[11]

[11] The belief that a knowledge of alchemy is obtainable by leading the life of a pure and perfect Taoist, is one of the numerous additions in later ages to this ancient form of religion. See No. IV. note 1.

XI.

THE FIGHTING QUAILS.

WANG CH'ENG belonged to an old family in P'ing-yüan, but was such an idle fellow that his property gradually disappeared, until at length all he had left was an old tumble-down house. His wife and he slept under a coarse hempen coverlet, and the former was far from sparing of her reproaches. At the time of which we are speaking the weather was unbearably hot; and Wang went to pass the night with many other of his fellow-villagers in a pavilion which stood among some dilapidated buildings belonging to a family named Chou. With the first streaks of dawn his comrades departed; but Wang slept well on till about nine o'clock, when he got up and proceeded leisurely home. All at once he saw in the grass a gold hair-pin; and taking it up to look at it, found engraved thereon in small characters—"The property of the Imperial family." Now Wang's own grandfather had married into the Imperial family,[1]

[1] The direct issue of the Emperors of the present dynasty and their descendants in the male line for ever are entitled to wear a yellow girdle in token of their relationship to the Imperial family, each generation becoming a degree lower in rank, but always

and consequently he had formerly possessed many similar articles; but while he was thinking it over up came an old woman in search of the hair-pin, which Wang, who though poor was honest, at once produced and handed to her. The old woman was delighted, and thanked Wang very much for his goodness, observing that the pin was not worth much in itself, but was a relic of her departed husband. Wang asked what her husband had been; to which she replied, "his name was Wang Chien-chih, and he was connected by marriage with the Imperial family." "My own grandfather!" cried Wang, in great surprise; "how could you have known him?" "You, then," said the old woman, "are his grandson. I am a fox, and many years ago I was married to your grandfather; but when he died I retired from the world. Passing by here I lost my hair-pin, which destiny conveyed into your hands." Wang had heard of his grandfather's fox-wife, and believing therefore the old woman's story, invited her to return with him, which she did. Wang called his wife out to receive her; but when she came in rags and tatters, with unkempt hair and dirty face, the old woman sighed, and said, "Alas! alas! has Wang Chien-chih's grandson come to this?" Then looking at the broken, smokeless

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retaining this distinctive badge. Members of the collateral branches wear a red girdle, and are commonly known as *gioros*. With the lapse of two hundred and fifty years, the wearers of these badges have become numerous, and in many cases disreputable; and they are now to be found even among the lowest dregs of Chinese social life.

stove, she added, "How, under these circumstances, have you managed even to support life?" Here Wang's wife told the tale of their poverty, with much sobbing and tears; whereupon the old woman gave her the hair-pin, bidding her go pawn it, and with the proceeds buy some food, saying that in three days she would visit them again. Wang pressed her to stay, but she said, "You can't even keep your wife alive; what would it benefit you to have me also dependent on you?" So she went away, and then Wang told his wife who she was, at which his wife felt very much alarmed; but Wang was so loud in her praises, that finally his wife consented to treat her with all proper respect. In three days she returned as agreed, and, producing some money, sent out for a hundred-weight of rice and a hundred-weight of corn. She passed the night with them, sleeping with Mrs. Wang, who was at first rather frightened, but who soon laid aside her suspicions when she found that the old lady meant so well towards them. Next day, the latter addressed Wang, saying, "My grandson, you must not be so lazy. You should try to make a little money in some way or other." Wang replied that he had no capital; upon which the old lady said, "When your grandfather was alive, he allowed me to take what money I liked; but not being a mortal, I had no use for it, and consequently did not draw largely upon him. I have, however, saved from my pin-money the sum of forty ounces of silver, which has long been lying idle for want of an investment. Take it, and buy summer cloth, which you may carry to

the capital and re-sell at a profit. So Wang bought some fifty pieces of summer cloth; and the old lady made him get ready, calculating that in six or seven days he would reach the capital. She also warned him, saying,

"Be neither lazy nor slow—
For if a day too long you wait,
Repentance comes a day too late."

Wang promised all obedience, and packed up his goods and went off. On the road he was overtaken by a rainstorm which soaked him through to the skin; and as he was not accustomed to be out in bad weather, it was altogether too much for him. He accordingly sought shelter in an inn, but the rain went on steadily till night, running over the eaves of the house like so many ropes. Next morning the roads were in a horrible state; and Wang, watching the passers-by slipping about in the slush, unable to see any path, dared not face it all, and remained until noon, when it began to dry up a little. Just then, however, the clouds closed over again, and down came the rain in torrents, causing him to stay another night before he could go on. When he was nearing the capital, he heard to his great joy that summer cloth was at a premium; and on arrival proceeded at once to take up his quarters at an inn. There the landlord said it was a pity he had come so late, as communications with the south having been only recently opened, the supply of summer cloth had been small; and there being a great demand for it among the wealthy families of the metropolis, its price had gone up to three times the usual figure. "But," he added, "two days

ago several large consignments arrived, and the price went down again, so that the late comers have lost their market." Poor Wang was thus left in the lurch, and as every day more summer cloth came in, the value of it fell in a corresponding ratio. Wang would not part with his at a loss, and held on for some ten days, when his expenses for board and lodging were added to his present distress. The landlord urged him to sell even at a loss, and turn his attention to something else, which he ultimately did, losing over ten ounces of silver on his venture. Next day he rose in the morning to depart, but on looking in his purse found all his money gone. He rushed away to tell the landlord, who, however, could do nothing for him. Some one then advised him to take out a summons and make the landlord reimburse him; but he only sighed, and said, "It is my destiny, and no fault of the landlord's." Thereupon the landlord was very grateful to him, and gave him five ounces of silver to enable him to go home. He did not care, however, to face his grandmother empty-handed, and remained in a very undecided state, until suddenly he saw a quail-catcher winning heaps of money by fighting his birds, and selling them at over 100 *cash* a-piece. He then determined to lay out his five ounces of silver in quails, and pay back the landlord out of the profits. The latter approved very highly of this plan, and not only agreed to lend him a room but also to charge him little or nothing for his board. So Wang went off rejoicing, and bought two large baskets of quails, with which he returned to the city, to the great satisfaction of

the landlord who advised him to lose no time in disposing of them. All that night it poured in torrents, and the next morning the streets were like rivers, the rain still continuing to fall. Wang waited for it to clear up, but several days passed and still there were no signs of fine weather. He then went to look at his quails, some of which he found dead and others dying. He was much alarmed at this, but was quite at a loss what to do; and by the next day a lot more had died, so that only a few were left, which he fed all together in one basket. The day after this he went again to look at them, and lo! there remained but a single quail. With tears in his eyes he told the landlord what had happened, and he, too, was much affected. Wang then reflected that he had no money left to carry him home, and that he could not do better than cease to live. But the landlord spoke to him and soothed him, and they went together to look at the quail. "This is a fine bird," said the landlord, "and it strikes me that it has simply killed the others. Now, as you have got nothing to do, just set to work and train it; and if it is good for anything, why you'll be able to make a living out of it." Wang did as he was told; and when the bird was trained, the landlord bade him take it into the street and gamble for something to eat. This, too, he did, and his quail won every main; whereupon the landlord gave him some money to bet with the young fellows of the neighbourhood. Everything turned out favourably, and by the end of six months he had saved twenty ounces of silver, so that he became quite easy in his mind

and looked upon the quail as a dispensation of his destiny.

Now one of the princes was passionately fond of quail-fighting, and always at the Feast of Lanterns anybody who owned quails might go and fight them in the palace against the prince's birds. The landlord therefore said to Wang, "Here is a chance of enriching yourself by a single stroke; only I can't say what your luck will do for you." He then explained to him what it was, and away they went together, the landlord saying, "If you lose, burst out into lamentations; but if you are lucky enough to win, and the prince wishes, as he will, to buy your bird, don't consent. If he presses you very much watch for a nod from me before you agree." This settled, they proceeded to the palace where they found crowds of quail-fighters already on the ground; and then the prince came forth, heralds proclaiming to the multitude that any who wished to fight their birds might come up. Some man at once stepped forward, and the prince gave orders for the quails to be released; but at the first strike the stranger's quail was knocked out of time. The prince smiled, and by-and-by won several more mains, until at last the landlord said, "Now's our time," and went up together with Wang. The Prince looked at their bird and said, "It has a fierce-looking eye and strong feathers. We must be careful what we are doing." So he commanded his servants to bring out Iron Beak to oppose Wang's bird; but, after a couple of strikes, the prince's quail was signally defeated. He sent for a better bird, but that shared the same fate; and then he

cried out, "Bring the Jade Bird from the palace!" In a little time it arrived, with pure white feathers like an egret, and an unusually martial appearance. Wang was much alarmed, and falling on his knees prayed to be excused this main, saying, "Your highness's bird is too good. I fear lest mine should be wounded, and my livelihood be taken from me." But the Prince laughed and said, "Go on. If your quail is killed I will make it up to you handsomely." Wang then released his bird and the prince's quail rushed at it at once; but when the Jade bird was close by, Wang's quail awaited its coming head down and full of rage. The former made a violent peck at its adversary, and then sprung up to swoop down on it. Thus they went on up and down, backwards and forwards, until at length they got hold of each other, and the prince's bird was beginning to show signs of exhaustion. This enraged it all the more, and it fought more violently than ever; but soon a perfect snowstorm of feathers began to fall, and, with drooping wings, the Jade bird made its escape. The spectators were much moved by the result; and the prince himself, taking up Wang's bird, examined it closely from beak to claws, finally asking if it was for sale. "My sole dependence," replied Wang, "is upon this bird. I would rather not part with it." "But," said the prince, "if I give you as much as the capital, say of an ordinary tradesman, will not that tempt you?" Wang thought some time, and then answered, "I would rather not sell my bird; but as your highness has taken a fancy to it I will only ask enough to find me in food and clothes."

"How much do you want?" inquired the prince; to which Wang replied that he would take a thousand ounces of silver. "You fool!" cried the Prince; "do you think your bird is such a jewel as all that?" "If your highness," said Wang, "does not think the bird a jewel, I value it more than that stone which was priced at fifteen cities." "How so?" asked the prince. "Why," said Wang, "I take my bird every day into the market-place. It there wins for me several ounces of silver, which I exchange for rice; and my family, over ten in number, has nothing to fear from either cold or hunger. What jewel could do that?" "You shall not lose anything," replied the prince; "I will give you two hundred ounces." But Wang would not consent, and then the prince added another hundred; whereupon Wang looked at the landlord, who, however, made no sign. Wang then offered to take nine hundred; but the prince ridiculed the idea of paying such a price for a quail, and Wang was preparing to take his leave with the bird, when the prince called him back, saying, "Here! here! I will give you six hundred. Take it or leave it as you please." Wang here looked at the landlord, and the landlord remained motionless as before. However, Wang was satisfied himself with this offer, and being afraid of missing his chance, said to his friend, "If I get this price for it I shall be quite content. If we go on haggling and finally come to no terms, that will be a very poor end to it all." So he took the prince's offer, and the latter, overjoyed, caused the money to be handed to him. Wang then returned with his earnings;

but the landlord said to him, "What did I say to you? You were in too much of a hurry to sell. Another minute, and you would have got eight hundred." When Wang got back he threw the money on the table and told the landlord to take what he liked; but the latter would not, and it was only after some pressing that he would accept payment for Wang's board. Wang then packed up and went home, where he told his story and produced his silver to the great delight of all of them. The old lady counselled the purchase of a quantity of land, the building of a house, and the purchase of implements; and in a very short time they became a wealthy family. The old lady always got up early in the morning and made Wang attend to the farm, his wife to her spinning; and rated them soundly at any signs of laziness. The husband and wife henceforth lived in peace, and no longer abused each other, until at the expiration of three years the old lady declared her intention of bidding them adieu. They both tried to stop her, and with the aid of tears succeeded in persuading her; but the next day she had disappeared.[2]

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[2] Quail fighting is not so common now in China as it appears to have been formerly. Cricket-fighting is, however, a very favourite form of gambling, large quantities of these insects being caught every year for this purpose, and considerable sums frequently staked on the result of a contest between two champions.

XII.

THE PAINTED SKIN.

At T'AI-YÜAN there lived a man named Wang. One morning he was out walking when he met a young lady carrying a bundle and hurrying along by herself. As she moved along with some difficulty,[1] Wang quickened

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[1] Impeded, of course, by her small feet. This practice is said to have originated about A.D. 970, with Yao Niang, the concubine of the pretender Li Yü, who wished to make her feet like the "new moon." The Mancha or Tartar ladies have not adopted this custom, and therefore the empresses of modern times have feet of the natural size; neither is it in force among the Hakkas or hill-tribes of China and Formosa. The practice was forbidden in 1664 by the Manchu Emperor, K'ang Hsi; but popular feeling was so strong on the subject that four years afterwards the prohibition was withdrawn. Protestant missionaries are now making a dead set at this shameful custom, but so far with very indifferent success; as parents who do not cramp the feet of their daughters would experience no small difficulty in finding husbands for them when they grow up. Besides, the gait of a young lady hobbling along, as we should say, seems to be much admired by the other sex. The following seven reasons why this custom still keeps its hold upon the Chinese mind emanate from a native convert:—

"1st.—If a girl's feet are not bound, people say she is not like a woman but like a man; they laugh at her, calling her names, and her parents are ashamed of her.

"2nd.—Girls are like flowers, like the willow. It is very important that their feet should be bound short so that they can walk beautifully, with mincing steps, swaying gracefully, thus showing they are persons of respectability. People praise them. If not bound short, they say the mother has not trained her daughter care-

his pace and caught her up, and found she was a pretty girl of about sixteen. Much smitten, he inquired whither she was going so early, and no one with her. "A traveller like you," replied the girl, "cannot alleviate my distress; why trouble yourself to ask?" "What distress is it?" said Wang; "I'm sure I'll do anything I can for you." "My parents," answered she, "loved money, and they sold me as concubine into a rich family, where the wife was very jealous, and beat and abused me morning and night. It was more than I

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fully. She goes from house to house with noisy steps, and is called names. Therefore careful persons bind short.

"3rd.—One of a good family does not wish to marry a woman with long feet. She is commiserated because her feet are not perfect. If betrothed, and the size of her feet is not discovered till after marriage, her husband and mother-in-law are displeased, her sisters-in-law laugh at her, and she herself is sad.

"4th.—The large-footed has to do rough work, does not sit in a sedan when she goes out, walks in the street barefooted, has no red clothes, does not eat the best food. She is wetted by the rain, tanned by the sun, blown upon by the wind. If unwilling to do all the rough work of the house she is called 'gormandizing and lazy.' Perhaps she decides to go out as a servant. She has no fame and honour. To escape all this her parents bind her feet.

"5th.—There *are* those with unbound feet who do no heavy work, wear gay clothing, ride in a sedan, call others to wait upon them. Although so fine they are low and mean. If a girl's feet are unbound, she cannot be distinguished from one of these.

"6th.—Girls are like gold, like gems. They ought to stay in their own house. If their feet are not bound they go here and go there with unfitting associates; they have no good name. They are like defective gems that are rejected.

"7th.—Parents are covetous. They think small feet are pleasing and will command a high price for a bride."—*On Foot-binding*, by Miss S. Woolston.

could stand, so I have run away." Wang asked her where she was going; to which she replied that a runaway had no fixed place of abode. "My house," said Wang, "is at no great distance; what do you say to coming there?" She joyfully acquiesced; and Wang, taking up her bundle, led the way to his house. Finding no one there, she asked Wang where his family were; to which he replied that that was only the library. "And a very nice place, too," said she; "but if you are kind enough to wish to save my life, you musn't let it be known that I am here." Wang promised he would not divulge her secret, and so she remained there for some days without anyone knowing anything about it. He then told his wife, and she, fearing the girl might belong to some influential family, advised him to send her away. This, however, he would not consent to do; when one day, going into the town, he met a Taoist priest, who looked at him in astonishment, and asked him what he had met. "I have met nothing," replied Wang. "Why," said the priest, "you are bewitched; what do you mean by not having met anything?" But Wang insisted that it was so, and the priest walked away, saying, "The fool! Some people don't seem to know when death is at hand." This startled Wang, who at first thought of the girl; but then he reflected that a pretty young thing as she was couldn't well be a witch, and began to suspect that the priest merely wanted to do a stroke of business. When he returned, the library door was shut, and he couldn't get in, which made him suspect that something was wrong; and so he

climbed over the wall, where he found the door of the inner room shut too. Softly creeping up, he looked through the window and saw a hideous devil, with a green face and jagged teeth like a saw, spreading a human skin upon the bed and painting it with a paint-brush. The devil then threw aside the brush, and giving the skin a shake out, just as you would a coat, threw it over its shoulders, when, lo! it was the girl. Terrified at this, Wang hurried away with his head down in search of the priest who had gone he knew not whither; subsequently finding him in the fields, where he threw himself on his knees and begged the priest to save him. "As to driving her away," said the priest, "the creature must be in great distress to be seeking a substitute for herself;[2] besides, I could hardly endure to injure a living thing."[3] However, he gave

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[2] The disembodied spirits of the Chinese *Inferno* are permitted, under certain conditions of time and good conduct, to appropriate to themselves the vitality of some human being, who, as it were, exchanges places with the so-called "devil." The devil does not, however, reappear as the mortal whose life it has become possessed of, but is merely born again into the world; the idea being that the amount of life on earth is a constant quantity, and cannot be increased or diminished, reminding one in a way of the great modern doctrine of the conservation of energy. This curious belief has an important bearing that will be brought out in a subsequent story.

[3] Here again is a Taoist priest quoting the Buddhist commandment, "Thou shalt not take life." The Buddhist laity in China, who do not hesitate to take life for the purposes of food, salve their consciences from time to time by buying birds, fishes, &c., and letting them go, in the hope that such acts will be set down on the credit side of their record of good and evil.

Wang a fly-brush, and bade him hang it at the door of the bedroom, agreeing to meet again at the Ch'ing-ti temple. Wang went home, but did not dare enter the library; so he hung up the brush at the bedroom door, and before long heard a sound of footsteps outside. Not daring to move, he made his wife peep out; and she saw the girl standing looking at the brush, afraid to pass it. She then ground her teeth and went away; but in a little while came back, and began cursing, saying, "You priest, you won't frighten me. Do you think I am going to give up what is already in my grasp?" Thereupon, she tore the brush to pieces, and bursting open the door, walked straight up to the bed, where she ripped open Wang and tore out his heart, with which she went away. Wang's wife screamed out, and the servant came in with a light; but Wang was already dead and presented a most miserable spectacle. His wife, who was in an agony of fright, hardly dared cry for fear of making a noise; and next day she sent Wang's brother to see the priest. The latter got into a great rage, and cried out, "Was it for this that I had compassion on you, devil that you are?" proceeding at once with Wang's brother to the house, from which the girl had disappeared without anyone knowing whither she had gone. But the priest, raising his head, looked all round, and said, "Luckily she's not far off." He then asked who lived in the apartments on the south side, to which Wang's brother replied that he did; whereupon the priest declared that there she would be found. Wang's brother was horribly frightened

and said he did not think so; and then the priest asked him if any stranger had been to the house. To this he answered that he had been out to the Ch'ing-ti temple and couldn't possibly say; but he went off to inquire, and in a little while came back and reported that an old woman had sought service with them as a maid-of-all-work, and had been engaged by his wife. "That is she," said the priest, as Wang's brother added she was still there; and they all set out to go to the house together. Then the priest took his wooden sword, and standing in the middle of the court-yard, shouted out, "Base-born fiend, give me back my fly-brush!" Meanwhile the new maid-of-all-work was in a great state of alarm, and tried to get away by the door; but the priest struck her and down she fell flat, the human skin dropped off, and she became a hideous devil. There she lay grunting like a pig, until the priest grasped his wooden sword and struck off her head. She then became a dense column of smoke curling up from the ground, when the priest took an uncorked gourd and threw it right into the midst of the smoke. A sucking noise was heard, and the whole column was drawn into the gourd; after which the priest corked it up closely and put it in his pouch.[4] The skin, too, which was complete even to the eyebrows, eyes, hands, and feet, he also rolled up as if it had been a scroll,

[4] This recalls the celebrated story of the fisherman in the *Arabian Nights*.

and was on the point of leaving with it, when Wang's wife stopped him, and with tears entreated him to bring her husband to life. The priest said he was unable to do that; but Wang's wife flung herself at his feet, and with loud lamentations implored his assistance. For some time he remained immersed in thought, and then replied, "My power is not equal to what you ask. I myself cannot raise the dead; but I will direct you to some one who can, and if you apply to him properly you will succeed." Wang's wife asked the priest who it was; to which he replied, "There is a maniac in the town who passes his time grovelling in the dirt. Go, prostrate yourself before him, and beg him to help you. If he insults you, shew no sign of anger." Wang's brother knew the man to whom he alluded, and accordingly bade the priest adieu, and proceeded thither with his sister-in-law.

They found the destitute creature raving away by the road side, so filthy that it was all they could do to go near him. Wang's wife approached him on her knees; at which the maniac leered at her, and cried out, "Do you love me, my beauty?" Wang's wife told him what she had come for, but he only laughed and said, "You can get plenty of other husbands. Why raise the dead one to life?" But Wang's wife entreated him to help her; whereupon he observed, "It's very strange: people apply to me to raise their dead as if I was king of the infernal regions." He then gave Wang's wife a thrashing with his staff, which she bore without a murmur, and before

a gradually increasing crowd of spectators. After this he produced a loathsome pill which he told her she must swallow, but here she broke down and was quite unable to do so. However, she did manage it at last, and then the maniac crying out, "How you do love me!" got up and went away without taking any more notice of her. They followed him into a temple with loud supplications, but he had disappeared, and every effort to find him was unsuccessful. Overcome with rage and shame, Wang's wife went home, where she mourned bitterly over her dead husband, grievously repenting the steps she had taken, and wishing only to die. She then bethought herself of preparing the corpse, near which none of the servants would venture; and set to work to close up the frightful wound of which he died.

While thus employed, interrupted from time to time by her sobs, she felt a rising lump in her throat, which by-and-by came out with a pop and fell straight into the dead man's wound. Looking closely at it, she saw it was a human heart; and then it began as it were to throb, emitting a warm vapour like smoke. Much excited, she at once closed the flesh over it, and held the sides of the wound together with all her might. Very soon, however, she got tired, and finding the vapour escaping from the crevices, she tore up a piece of silk and bound it round, at the same time bringing back circulation by rubbing the body and covering it up with clothes. In the night, she removed the coverings, and found that breath was coming from

the nose; and by next morning her husband was alive again, though disturbed in mind as if awaking from a dream and feeling a pain in his heart. Where he had been wounded, there was a cicatrix about as big as a cash, which soon after disappeared.

XIII.

THE TRADER'S SON.

In the province of Hunan there dwelt a man who was engaged in trading abroad; and his wife, who lived alone, dreamt one night that some one was in her room. Waking up, she looked about, and discovered a small creature which on examination she knew to be a fox; but in a moment the thing had disappeared, although the door had not been opened. The next evening she asked the cook-maid to come and keep her company; as also her own son, a boy of ten, who was accustomed to sleep elsewhere. Towards the middle of the night, when the cook and the boy were fast asleep, back came the fox; and the cook was waked up by hearing her mistress muttering something as if she had nightmare. The former then called out, and the fox ran away; but from that moment the trader's wife was not quite herself. When night came she dared not blow out the candle, and bade her son be sure and not sleep too soundly. Later on, her son and the old woman having taken a nap as they leant against the wall, suddenly waked up and found her gone. They waited some time, but she did not return, and the cook was too frightened to go and look after her; so her son took a light, and at length found her fast asleep in another room. She didn't seem aware that anything particular had happened, but she became queerer and queerer every day,

and wouldn't have either her son or the cook to keep her company any more. Her son, however, made a point of running at once into his mother's room if he heard any unusual sounds; and though his mother always abused him for his pains, he paid no attention to what she said. At the same time, the more people urged him on to keep a sharp look-out, the more eccentric were his mother's ways. One day she played at being a mason, and piled up stones upon the window-sill, in spite of all that was said to her; and if anyone took away a stone, she threw herself on the ground, and cried like a child, so that nobody dare go near her. In a few days she had got both windows blocked up and the light excluded; and then she set to filling up the chinks with mud. She worked hard all day without minding the trouble, and when it was finished she smoothed it off with the kitchen chopper. Everyone who saw her was disgusted with such antics, and would take no notice of her. At night her son darkened his lamp, and, with a knife concealed on his person, sat waiting for his mother to mutter. As soon as she began he uncovered his light, and, blocking up the doorway, shouted out at the top of his voice. Nothing, however, happened, and he moved from the door a little way, when suddenly out rushed something like a fox, which was disappearing through the door, when he made a quick movement and cut off about two inches of its tail, from which the warm blood was still dripping as he brought the light to bear upon it. His mother hereupon cursed and reviled him, but he pretended not to hear her, regretting only

as he went to bed that he hadn't hit the brute fair. But he consoled himself by thinking that although he hadn't killed it outright, he had done enough to prevent it coming again. On the morrow he followed the tracks of blood over the wall and into the garden of a family named Ho; and that night, to his great joy, the fox did not reappear. His mother was meanwhile prostrate, with hardly any life in her, and in the midst of it all his father came home. The boy told him what had happened, at which he was much alarmed, and sent for a doctor to attend his wife; but she only threw the medicine away, and cursed and swore horribly. So they secretly mixed the medicine with her tea and soup, and in a few days she began to get better, to the inexpressible delight of both her husband and son. One night, however, her husband woke up and found her gone; and after searching for her with the aid of his son, they discovered her sleeping in another room. From that time she became more eccentric than ever, and was always being found in strange places, cursing those who tried to remove her. Her husband was at his wits' end. It was no use keeping the door locked, for it opened of itself at her approach; and he had called in any number of magicians to exorcise the fox, but without obtaining the slightest result. One evening her son concealed himself in the Ho family garden, and lay down in the long grass with a view to detecting the fox's retreat. As the moon rose he heard the sound of voices, and, pushing aside the grass, saw two people drinking, with a long-bearded servant pouring out their wine,

dressed in an old dark-brown coat. They were whispering together, and he could not make out what they said; but by-and-by he heard one of them remark, "Get some white wine for to-morrow," and then they went away, leaving the long-bearded servant alone. The latter then threw off his coat, and lay down to sleep on the stones; whereupon the trader's son eyed him carefully, and saw that he was like a man in every respect except that he had a tail. The boy would then have gone home; but he was afraid the fox might hear him, and accordingly remained where he was till near dawn, when he saw the other two come back, one at a time, and then they all disappeared among the bushes. On reaching home his father asked him where he had been, and he replied that he had stopped the night with the Ho family. He then accompanied his father to the town, where he saw hanging up at a hat-shop a fox's tail, and finally, after much coaxing, succeeded in making his father buy it for him. While the latter was engaged in a shop, his son, who was playing about beside him, availed himself of a moment when his father was not looking and stole some money from him, and went off and bought a quantity of white wine, which he left in charge of the wine-merchant. Now an uncle of his, who was a sportsman by trade, lived in the city, and thither he next betook himself. His uncle was out, but his aunt was there, and inquired after the health of his mother. "She has been better the last few days," replied he; "but she is now very much upset by a rat having gnawed a dress of hers, and has sent me to ask

for some poison." His aunt opened the cupboard and gave him about the tenth of an ounce in a piece of paper, which he thought was very little; so, when his aunt had gone to get him something to eat, he took the opportunity of being alone, opened the packet, and abstracted a large handful. Hiding this in his coat, he ran to tell his aunt that she needn't prepare anything for him, as his father was waiting in the market, and he couldn't stop to eat it. He then went off; and having quietly dropped the poison into the wine he had bought, went sauntering about the town. At nightfall he returned home, and told his father that he had been at his uncle's. This he continued to do for some time, until one day he saw amongst the crowd his long-bearded friend. Marking him closely, he followed him, and at length entered into conversation, asking him where he lived. "I live at Pei-ts'un," said he; "where do you live?" "I," replied the trader's son, falsely, "live in a hole on the hill-side." The long-bearded man was considerably startled at his answer, but much more so when he added, "We've lived there for generations: haven't *you?*" The other then asked his name, to which the boy replied, "My name is Hu.[1] I saw you with two gentlemen in the Ho family garden, and haven't forgotten you." Questioning him more fully, the long-bearded man was still in a half-and-half state of belief and doubt, when the trader's son opened his coat a little bit, and showed him the end of the tail he had bought,

[1] *Hu* is the sound of the character for "fox;" it is also the sound of quite a different character, which is used as a surname.

saying, "The like of us can mix with ordinary people, but unfortunately we can never get rid of this." The long-bearded man then asked him what he was doing there, to which he answered that his father had sent him to buy wine; whereupon the former remarked that that was exactly what he had come for, and the boy then inquired if he had bought it yet or not. "We are poor," replied the stranger, "and as a rule I prefer to steal it." "A difficult and dangerous job," observed the boy. "I have my master's instructions to get some," said the other, "and what am I to do?" The boy then asked him who his masters were, to which he replied that they were the two brothers the boy had seen that night. "One of them has bewitched a lady named Wang; and the other, the wife of a trader who lives near. The son of the last-mentioned lady is a violent fellow, and cut off my master's tail, so that he was laid up for ten days. But he is putting her under spells again now." He was then going away, saying he should never get his wine; but the boy said to him, "It's much easier to buy than steal. I have some at the wine-shop there which I will give to you. My purse isn't empty, and I can buy some more." The long-bearded man hardly knew how to thank him; but the boy said, "We're all one family. Don't mention such a trifle. When I have time I'll come and take a drink with you." So they went off together to the wine-shop, where the boy gave him the wine and they then separated. That night his mother slept quietly and had no fits, and the boy knew that something must have happened. He then told his

father, and they went to see if there were any results; when lo! they found both foxes stretched out dead in the arbour. One of the foxes was lying on the grass, and out of its mouth blood was still trickling. The wine-bottle was there; and on shaking it they heard that some was left. Then his father asked him why he had kept it all so secret; to which the boy replied that foxes were very sagacious, and would have been sure to scent the plot. Thereupon his father was mightily pleased, and said he was a perfect Ulysses[2] for cunning. They then carried the foxes home, and saw on the tail of one of them the scar of a knife-wound. From that time they were left in peace; but the trader's wife became very thin, and though her reason returned, she shortly afterwards died of consumption. The other lady, Mrs. Wang, began to get better as soon as the foxes had been killed; and as to the boy, he was taught riding and archery[3] by his proud parent, and subsequently rose to high rank in the army.

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[2] The name of the Chinese type was Ch'ên P'ing. See Mayer's *Reader's Manual*, No. 102.

[3] At the date at which we are writing skill in archery is still *de rigueur* for all Manchus, and for those who would rise in the Chinese army. Only the other day the progressive Governor-General of the Two Kiang, Shên Pao-chên, memorialised the Throne with a view to the abandonment of this effete and useless form of military drill, and received a direct snub for his pains. Two hundred odd years ago, when the Manchus were establishing their power, the dexterity of their bowmen doubtless stood them in good stead; though if we are to judge of their skill then by the ordinary practice of to-day, as seen on any Chinese parade-ground, they could never have been more than very third-rate archers after all.

XIV.

JUDGE LU.

AT Ling-yang there lived a man named Chu Erh-tan, whose literary designation[1] was Hsiao-ming. He was a fine manly fellow, but an egregious dunce, though he tried hard to learn. One day he was taking wine with a number of fellow-students, when one of them

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[1] Every Chinese man and woman inherits a family name or surname. A woman takes her husband's surname, followed in official documents by her maiden name. Children usually have a pet name given to them soon after birth, which is dropped after a few years. Then there is the *ming* or name, which once given is unchangeable, and by which the various members of a family are distinguished. But only the father and mother and certain other relatives are allowed to use this. Friends call each other by their literary designations or "book-names," which are given generally by the teacher to whom the boy's education is first entrusted. Brothers and sisters and others have all kinds of nick-names as with us. Dogs and cats are called by such names as "Blackey," "Whitey," "Yellowy," "Jewel," "Pearly," &c., &c. Junks are christened "Large Profits," "Abounding Wealth," "Favourite of Fortune," &c., &c. Places are often named after some striking geographical feature; *e.g.*, *Hankow*—"mouth of the Han river," *i.e.*, its point of junction with the Yang-tsze; or they have fancy names, such as *Fuhkien*—"happily established;" *Tientsin*—"Heaven's ford;" or names implying a special distinction, such as *Nanking*—"southern capital;" *Shan-tung*—"east of the mountains," &c.

said to him, by way of a joke, "People credit you with plenty of pluck. Now, if you will go in the middle of the night to the Chamber of Horrors,[2] and bring back the Infernal Judge from the left-hand porch, we'll all stand you a dinner." For at Ling-yang there was a representation of the Ten Courts of Purgatory, with the Gods and devils carved in wood, and almost life-like in appearance; and in the eastern vestibule there was a full-length image of the Judge with a green face, and a red beard, and a hideous expression in his features. Sometimes sounds of examination under the whip were heard to issue during the night from both porches, and persons who went in found their hair standing on end from fear; so the other young men thought it would be a capital test for Mr. Chu. Thereupon Chu smiled, and rising from his seat went straight off to the temple; and before many minutes had elapsed they heard him shouting outside, "His Excellency has arrived!" At this they all got up, and in came Chu with the image on his back, which he proceeded to deposit on the table, and then poured out a triple libation in its

[2] The name given by foreigners in China to the imitation of the ten torture-chambers of purgatory, as seen in every *Ch'êng-huang* or municipal temple. The various figures of the devil-lictors and the tortured sinners are made either of clay or wood, and painted in very bright colours; and in each chamber is depicted some specimen of the horrible tortures that wicked people will undergo in the world to come. I have given in the *Appendix* a translation of the "*Yu-li-ch'ao*," a celebrated Taoist work on this subject, which should at any rate be glanced at by persons who would understand the drift of some of these stories.

honour. His comrades who were watching what he did, felt ill at ease, and did not like to resume their seats; so they begged him to carry the Judge back again. But he first poured some wine upon the ground, invoking the image as follows:—"I am only a fool-hardy, illiterate fellow: I pray Your Excellency excuse me. My house is close by, and whenever Your Excellency feels so disposed I shall be glad to take a cup of wine with you in a friendly way." He then carried the Judge back, and the next day his friends gave him the promised dinner, from which he went home half-tipsy in the evening. But not feeling that he had had enough, he brightened up his lamp, and helped himself to another cup of wine, when suddenly the bamboo curtain was drawn aside, and in walked the Judge. Mr. Chu got up and said, "Oh, dear! Your Excellency has come to cut off my head for my rudeness the other night." The Judge parted his thick beard, and smiling, replied, "Nothing of the kind. You kindly invited me last night to visit you; and as I have leisure this evening, here I am." Chu was delighted at this, and made his guest sit down, while he himself wiped the cups and lighted a fire.[3] "It's warm weather," said the Judge; "let's drink the wine cold." Chu obeyed, and putting the bottle on the table, went out to tell his servants to get some supper. His wife was much alarmed when she heard who was there, and begged him not to go

[3] To heat the wine, which is almost invariably taken hot.

back; but he only waited until the things were ready, and then returned with them. They drank out of each other's cups,[4] and by-and-by Chu asked the name of his guest. "My name is Lu," replied the Judge; "I have no other names." They then conversed on literary subjects, one capping the other's quotation as echo responds to sound. The Judge then asked Chu if he understood composition; to which he answered that he could just tell good from bad; whereupon the former repeated a little infernal poetry which was not very different from that of mortals. He was a deep drinker, and took off ten goblets at a draught; but Chu who had been at it all day, soon got dead drunk and fell fast asleep with his head on the table. When he waked up the candle had burnt out and day was beginning to break, his guest having already departed; and from this time the Judge was in the habit of dropping in pretty often, until a close friendship sprang up between them. Sometimes the latter would pass the night at the house, and Chu would show him his essays, all of which the Judge scored and underlined as being good for nothing. One night Chu got tipsy and went to bed first, leaving the Judge drinking by himself. In his drunken sleep he seemed to feel a pain in his stomach, and waking up he saw that the Judge, who was standing by the side of the bed, had opened him, and was carefully arranging his inside. "What harm have I done you?" cried Chu,

[4] In token of their mutual good feeling.

"that you should thus seek to destroy me?" "Don't be afraid," replied the Judge, laughing, "I am only providing you with a more intelligent heart."[5] He then quietly put back Chu's viscera, and closed up the opening, securing it with a bandage tied tightly round his waist. There was no blood on the bed, and all Chu felt was a slight numbness in his inside. Here he observed the Judge place a piece of flesh upon the table, and asked him what it was. "Your heart," said the latter, "which wasn't at all good at composition, the proper orifice being stuffed up.[6] I have now provided you with a better one, which I procured from Hades, and I am keeping yours to put in its place."[7] He then opened the door and took his leave. In the morning Chu undid the bandage, and looked at his waist, the wound on which had quite healed up, leaving only a red seam. From that moment he became an apt scholar, and found his memory much improved; so much so, that a few days afterwards he showed an essay to the Judge for which he was very much commended. "However," said the latter, "your success will be limited to the master's degree. You won't get beyond that." "When shall I take it?"

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[5] The Chinese as a nation believe to this day that the heart is the seat of the intellect and the emotions.

[6] The heart itself is supposed to be pierced by a number of "eyes," which pass right through; and in physical and mental health these passages are believed to be clear.

[7] *See* No. XII., note 2.

asked Chu. "This year," replied the Judge. And so it turned out. Chu passed first on the list for the bachelor's degree, and then among the first five for the master's degree. His old comrades, who had been accustomed to make a laughing-stock of him, were now astonished to find him a full blown M.A., and when they learned how it had come about, they begged Chu to speak to the Judge on their behalf. The Judge promised to assist them, and they made all ready to receive him; but when in the evening he did come, they were so frightened at his red beard and flashing eyes that their teeth chattered in their heads, and one by one they stole away. Chu then took the Judge home with him to have a cup together, and when the wine had mounted well into his head, he said, "I am deeply grateful to Your Excellency's former kindness in arranging my inside; but there is still another favour I venture to ask which possibly may be granted." The Judge asked him what it was; and Chu replied, "If you can change a person's inside, you surely could also change his face. Now my wife is not at all a bad figure, but she is very ugly. I pray Your Excellency try the knife upon her." The Judge laughed, and said he would do so, only it would be necessary to give him a little time. Some days subsequently, the Judge knocked at Chu's door towards the middle of the night; whereupon the latter jumped up and invited him in. Lighting a candle, it was evident that the Judge had something under his coat, and in answer to Chu's inquiries, he said, "It's what you asked me for. I have

had great trouble in procuring it." He then produced the head of a nice-looking young girl, and presented it to Chu, who found the blood on the neck was still warm. "We must make haste," said the Judge, "and take care not to wake the fowls or dogs."[8] Chu was afraid his wife's door might be bolted; but the Judge laid his hand on it and it opened at once. Chu then led him to the bed where his wife was lying asleep on her side; and the Judge, giving Chu the head to hold, drew from his boot a steel blade shaped like the handle of a spoon. He laid this across the lady's neck, which he cut through as if it had been a melon, and the head fell over the back of the pillow. Seizing the head he had brought with him, he now fitted it on carefully and accurately, and pressing it down to make it stick, bolstered the lady up with pillows placed on either side. When all was finished, he bade Chu put his wife's old head away, and then took his leave. Soon after Mrs. Chu waked up, and perceived a curious sensation about her neck, and a scaly feeling about the jaws. Putting her hand to her face, she found flakes of dry blood; and much frightened called a maid-servant to bring water to wash it off. The maid-servant was also greatly alarmed at the appearance of her face, and

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[8] The *Hsi-yuan-lu*, a well-known work on Chinese medical jurisprudence, and *an officially-authorised book*, while giving an absurd antidote against a poison that never existed [see my *Chinese Sketches*, p. 190], gravely insists that it is to be prepared at certain dates only, "in some place quite away from women, fowls, and dogs."

proceeded to wash off the blood, which coloured a whole basin of water; but when she saw her mistress's new face she was almost frightened to death. Mrs. Chu took a mirror to look at herself, and was staring at herself in utter astonishment, when her husband came in and explained what had taken place. On examining her more closely, Chu saw that she had a well-featured pleasant face, of a medium order of beauty; and when he came to look at her neck, he found a red seam all round, with the parts above and below of a different coloured flesh. Now the daughter of an official named Wu was a very nice-looking girl who, though nineteen years of age, had not yet been married, two gentlemen who were engaged to her having died before the day.[9] At the Feast of Lanterns,[10] this young lady happened to visit the Chamber of Horrors, whence she was followed home by a burglar, who that night broke into the house and killed her. Hearing a noise, her

[9] It was almost a wonder that she got a second *fiancé*, few people caring to affiance their sons in a family where such a catastrophe has once occurred. The death of an engaged girl is a matter of much less importance, but is productive of a very curious ceremony. Her betrothed goes to the house where she is lying dead and steps over the coffin containing her body, returning home with a pair of the girl's shoes. He thus severs all connection with her, and her spirit cannot haunt him as it otherwise most certainly would.

[10] Held annually on the 15th of the first Chinese month—*i.e.*, at the first full moon of the year, when coloured lanterns are hung at every door. It was originally a ceremonial worship in the temple of the First Cause, and dates from about the time of the Han dynasty, or nearly two thousand years ago.

mother told the servant to go and see what was the matter; and the murder being thus discovered, every member of the family got up. They placed the body in the hall, with the head alongside, and gave themselves up to weeping and wailing the livelong night. Next morning, when they removed the coverings, the corpse was there but the head had disappeared. The waiting-maids were accordingly flogged for neglect of duty, and consequent loss of the head, and Mr. Wu brought the matter to the notice of the Prefect. This officer took very energetic measures, but for three days no clue could be obtained; and then the story of the changed head in the Chu family gradually reached Mr. Wu's ears. Suspecting something, he sent an old woman to make inquiries; and she at once recognised her late young mistress's features, and went back and reported to her master. Thereupon Mr. Wu, unable to make out why the body should have been left, imagined that Chu had slain his daughter by magical arts, and at once proceeded to the house to find out the truth of the matter; but Chu told him that his wife's head had been changed in her sleep, and that he knew nothing about it, adding that it was unjust to accuse him of the murder. Mr. Wu refused to believe this, and took proceedings against him; but as all the servants told the same story, the Prefect was unable to convict him. Chu returned home and took counsel with the Judge, who told him there would be no difficulty, it being merely necessary to make the murdered girl herself speak. That night Mr. Wu dreamt that his daughter

came and said to him, "I was killed by Yang Ta-nien, of Su-ch'i. Mr. Chu had nothing to do with it; but desiring a better-looking face for his wife, Judge Lu gave him mine, and thus my body is dead while my head still lives. Bear Chu no malice." When he awaked, he told his wife, who had dreamt the same dream; and thereupon he communicated these facts to the officials. Subsequently, a man of that name was captured, who confessed under the bamboo that he had committed the crime; so Mr. Wu went off to Chu's house, and asked to be allowed to see his wife, regarding Chu from that time as his son-in-law. Mrs. Chu's old head was fitted on to the young lady's body, and the two parts were buried together.

Subsequent to these events Mr. Chu tried three times for his doctor's degree, but each time without success, and at last he gave up the idea of entering into official life. Then when thirty years had passed away, Judge Lu appeared to him one night, and said, "My friend, you cannot live for ever. Your hour will come in five days' time." Chu asked the Judge if he could not save him; to which he replied, "The decrees of Heaven cannot be altered to suit the purposes of mortals. Besides, to an intelligent man life and death are much the same.[11] Why necessarily regard life as a boon and

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[11] It was John Stuart Mill who pointed out that the fear of death is due to "the illusion of imagination, which makes one conceive oneself as if one were alive and feeling oneself dead" (*The Utility of Religion*).

death as a misfortune?" Chu could make no reply to this, and forthwith proceeded to order his coffin and shroud;[12] and then, dressing himself in his grave-clothes, yielded up the ghost. Next day, as his wife was weeping over his bier, in he walked at the front door, to her very great alarm. "I am now a disembodied spirit," said Chu to her, "though not different from what I was in life; and I have been thinking much of the widow and orphan I left behind." His wife, hearing this, wept till the tears ran down her face, Chu all the time doing his best to comfort her. "I have heard tell," said she, "of dead bodies returning to life; and since your vital spark is not extinct, why does it not resume the flesh?" "The ordinances of Heaven," replied her husband, "may not be disobeyed." His wife here asked him what he was doing in the infernal regions; and he said that Judge Lu had got him

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[12] "Boards of old age" and "Clothes of old age sold here" are common shop-signs in every Chinese city; death and burial being always, if possible, spoken of euphemistically in some such terms as these. A dutiful son provides, when he can afford it, decent coffins for his father and mother. They are generally stored in the house, sometimes in a neighbouring temple; and the old people take pleasure in seeing that their funeral obsequies are properly provided for, though the subject is never raised in conversation. Chinese coffins are beautifully made; and when the body has been in for a day or two, a candle is closely applied to the seams all round to make sure it is air-tight,—any crack, however fine, being easily detected by the flickering of the flame in the escaping gas. Thus bodies may be kept unburied for a long time, until the geomancer has selected an auspicious site for the grave.

an appointment as Registrar, with a certain rank attached, and that he was not at all uncomfortable. Mrs. Chu was proceeding to inquire further, when he interrupted her, saying, "The Judge has come with me; get some wine ready and something to eat." He then hurried out, and his wife did as he had told her, hearing them laughing and drinking in the guest chamber just like old times come back again. About midnight she peeped in, and found that they had both disappeared; but they came back once in every two or three days, often spending the night, and managing the family affairs as usual. Chu's son was named Wei, and was about five years old; and whenever his father came he would take the little boy upon his knee. When he was about eight years of age, Chu began to teach him to read; and the boy was so clever that by the time he was nine he could actually compose. At fifteen he took his bachelor's degree, without knowing all this time that he had no father. From that date Chu's visits became less frequent, occurring not more than once or so in a month; until one night he told his wife that they were never to meet again. In reply to her inquiry as to whither he was going, he said he had been appointed to a far-off post, where press of business and distance would combine to prevent him from visiting them any more. The mother and son clung to him, sobbing bitterly; but he said, "Do not act thus. The boy is now a man, and can look after your affairs. The dearest friends must part some day." Then, turning to his son, he added, "Be an honourable man, and

take care of the property. Ten years hence we shall meet again." With this he bade them farewell, and went away.

Later on, when Wei was twenty-two years of age, he took his doctor's degree, and was appointed to conduct the sacrifices at the Imperial tombs. On his way thither he fell in with a retinue of an official, proceeding along with all the proper insignia,[13] and, looking carefully at the individual sitting in the carriage, he was astonished to find that it was his own father. Alighting from his horse, he prostrated himself with tears at the side of the road; whereupon his father stopped and said, "You are well spoken of. I now take leave of this world." Wei remained on the ground, not daring to rise; and his father, urging on his carriage, hurried away without saying any more. But when he had gone a short distance, he looked back, and unloosing a sword from his waist, sent it as a present to his son, shouting out to him, "Wear this and you will succeed." Wei tried to follow him; but, in an instant, carriage, retinue, and horses, had vanished with the speed of wind. For a long time his son gave himself up to grief, and then seizing the sword began to examine it closely. It was of exquisite workmanship, and on the blade was engraved this legend:—"*Be bold, but cautious; round in disposition,*

[13] Gongs, red umbrellas, men carrying boards on which the officer's titles are inscribed in large characters, a huge wooden fan, &c., &c.

square in action."[14] Wei subsequently rose to high honours, and had five sons named Ch'en, Ch'ien, Wu, Hun, and Shên. One night he dreamt that his father told him to give the sword to Hun, which he accordingly did; and Hun rose to be a Viceroy of great administrative ability.

[14] "Be like a cash" [see No. II., note 2] is a not uncommon saying among the Chinese, the explanation of which rests upon the fact that a cash is "round in shape and convenient for use," which words are pronounced identically with a corresponding number of words meaning "round in disposition, square in action." It is, in fact, a play on words.

XV.

MISS YING-NING, OR THE LAUGHING GIRL.

At Lo-tien, in the province of Shantung, there lived a youth named Wang Tzŭ-fu, who had been left an orphan when quite young. He was a clever boy, and took his bachelor's degree at the age of fourteen, being quite his mother's pet, and not allowed by her to stray far away from home. One young lady to whom he had been betrothed having unhappily died, he was still in search of a wife when, on the occasion of the Feast of Lanterns, his cousin Wu asked him to come along for a stroll. But they had hardly got beyond the village before one of his uncle's servants caught them up and told Wu he was wanted. The latter accordingly went back; but Wang, seeing plenty of nice girls about and being in high spirits himself, proceeded on alone. Amongst others, he noticed a young lady with her maid. She had just picked a sprig of plum-blossom, and was the prettiest girl he had ever heard of—a perfect bunch of smiles. He stared and stared at her quite regardless of appearances; and when she had passed by,

she said to her maid, "That young fellow has a wicked look in his eyes." As she was walking away, laughing and talking, the flower dropped out of her hand; and Wang, picking it up, stood there disconsolate as if he had lost his wits. He then went home in a very melancholy mood; and, putting the flower under his pillow, lay down to sleep. He would neither talk nor eat; and his mother became very anxious about him, and called in the aid of the priests.[1] By degrees, he fell off in flesh and got very thin; and the doctor felt his pulse and gave him medicines to bring out the disease. Occasionally, he seemed bewildered in his mind, but in spite of all his mother's inquiries would give no clue as to the cause of his malady. One day when his cousin Wu came to the house, Wang's mother told him to try and find out what was the matter; and the former, approaching the bed, gradually and quietly led up to the point in question. Wang, who had wept bitterly at the sight of his cousin, now repeated to him the whole story, begging him to lend some assistance in the matter. "How foolish you are, cousin," cried Wu; "there will be no difficulty at all, I'll make inquiries for you. The girl herself can't belong to a very aristocratic family to be walking alone in the country. If she's not already engaged, I have no doubt we can arrange the affair; and even if she is unwilling, an extra outlay will

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[1] Sickness being supposed to result from evil influences, witchcraft, &c., just as often as from more natural causes.

easily bring her round.[2] You make haste and get well: I'll see to it all." Wang's features relaxed when he heard these words; and Wu left him to tell his mother how the case stood, immediately setting on foot inquiries as to the whereabouts of the girl. All his efforts, however, proved fruitless, to the great disappointment of Wang's mother; for since his cousin's visit Wang's colour and appetite had returned. In a few days Wu called again, and in answer to Wang's questions falsely told him that the affair was settled. "Who do you think the young lady is?" said he. "Why, a cousin of ours, who is only waiting to be betrothed; and though you two are a little near,[3] I daresay the circumstances of the case will be allowed to overrule this objection." Wang was overjoyed, and asked where she lived; so Wu had to tell another lie, and say, "On the south-west hills, about ten miles from here." Wang begged him again and again to do his best for him, and Wu undertook to get the betrothal satisfactorily arranged. He then took

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[2] The rule which guides betrothals in China is that "the doors should be opposite"—*i.e.*, that the families of the bride and bridegroom should be of equal position in the social scale. Any unpleasantness about the value of the marriage presents, and so on, is thereby avoided.

[3] Marriages between persons of the same surname is forbidden by law, for such are held to be blood relations, descended lineally from the original couple of that name. Inasmuch, however, as the line of descent is traced through the male branches only, a man may marry his cousins on the maternal side without let or hindrance except that of sentiment, which is sufficiently strong to keep these alliances down to a minimum.

leave of his cousin, who from this moment was rapidly restored to health. Wang drew the flower from underneath his pillow, and found that, though dried up, the leaves had not fallen away. He often sat playing with this flower and thinking of the young lady; but by-and-by, as Wu did not reappear, he wrote a letter and asked him to come. Wu pleaded other engagements, being unwilling to go; at which Wang got in a rage and quite lost his good spirits; so that his mother, fearing a relapse, proposed to him a speedy betrothal in another quarter. Wang shook his head at this, and sat day after day waitting for Wu, until his patience was thoroughly exhausted. He then reflected that ten miles was no great distance, and that there was no particular reason for asking anybody's aid; so, concealing the flower in his sleeve, he went off in a huff by himself without letting it be known. Having no opportunity of asking the way, he made straight for the hills; and after about ten miles walking found himself right in the midst of them, enjoying their exquisite verdure, but meeting no one, and with nothing better than mountain paths to guide him. Away down in the valley below, almost buried under a densely luxuriant growth of trees and flowers, he espied a small hamlet, and began to descend the hill and make his way thither. He found very few houses, and all built of rushes, but otherwise pleasant enough to look at. Before the door of one, which stood at the northern end of the village, were a number of graceful willow trees, and inside the wall plenty of peach and apricot trees, with tufts of bamboo between them, and birds chirping on

the branches. As it was a private house he did not venture to go in, but sat down to rest himself on a huge smooth stone opposite the front door. By-and-by he heard a girl's voice from within calling out Hsiao-jung; and, noticing that it was a sweet-toned voice, set himself to listen, when a young lady passed with a bunch of apricot-flowers in her hand, and occupied in putting hair-pins into her downcast head. As soon as she raised her face she saw Wang, and stopped putting in hair-pins; then, smothering a laugh, picked a few flowers and ran in. Wang perceived to his intense delight that she was none other than his heroine of the Feast of Lanterns; but recollecting that he had no right to follow her in, was on the point of calling after her as his cousin. There was no one, however, in the street, and he was afraid lest he might have made a mistake; neither was there anybody at the door of whom he could make inquiries. So he remained there in a very restless state till the sun was well down in the west, and his hopes were almost at an end, forgetting all about food and drink. He then saw the young lady peep through the door, apparently very much astonished to find him still there; and in a few minutes out came an old woman leaning on a stick, who said to him, "Whence do you come, Sir? I hear you have been here ever since morning. What is it you want? Aren't you hungry?" Wang got up, and making a bow, replied that he was in search of some relatives of his; but the old woman was deaf and didn't catch what he said, so he had to shout it out again at the top of his voice. She asked him what their names

were, but he was unable to tell her; at which she laughed and said, "It is a funny thing to look for people when you don't know their names. I am afraid you are an unpractical gentleman. You had better come in and have something to eat; we'll give you a bed and you can go back to-morrow and find out the names of the people you are in quest of." Now Wang was just beginning to get hungry, and, besides, this would bring him nearer to the young lady; so he readily accepted and followed the old woman in. They walked along a paved path banked on both sides with hibiscus, the leaves of which were scattered about on the ground; and passing through another door, entered a court-yard full of trained creepers and other flowers. The old woman showed Wang into a small room with beautifully white walls and a branch of a crab-apple tree coming through the window, the furniture being also nice and clean. They had hardly sat down when it was clear that some one was taking a peep through the window; whereupon the old woman cried out, "Hsiao-jung! make haste and get dinner," and a maid from outside immediately answered "Yes, ma'am." Meanwhile, Wang had been explaining who he was; and then the old lady said, "Was your maternal grandfather named Wu?" "He was," replied Wang. "Well, I never!" cried the old woman, "he was my uncle, and your mother and I are cousins. But in consequence of our poverty, and having no sons, we have kept quite to ourselves, and you have grown to be a man without my knowing you." "I came here," said Wang, "about my

cousin, but in the hurry I forgot your name." "My name is Ch'in," replied the old lady; "I have no son: only a girl, the child of a concubine, who, after my husband's death, married again[4] and left her daughter with me. She's a clever girl, but has had very little education; full of fun and ignorant of the sorrows of life. I'll send for her by-and-by to make your acquaintance." The maid then brought in the dinner —a large dish full of choice morsels of fowl—and the old woman pressed him to eat. When they had finished, and the things were taken away, the old woman said, "Call Miss Ning," and the maid went off to do so. After some time there was a giggling at the door, and the old woman cried out, "Ying-ning! your cousin is here." There was then a great tittering as the maid pushed her in, stopping her mouth all the time to try and keep from laughing. "Don't you know better than to behave like that?" asked the old woman, "and before a stranger, too." So Ying-ning controlled her feelings, and Wang made her a bow, the old woman saying, "Mr. Wang is your cousin: you have never seen him before. Isn't that funny?" Wang asked how old his cousin was, but the old woman didn't hear him, and he had to say it again, which sent Ying-ning off into another fit of laughter. "I told you," observed the old woman, "she hadn't much education; now you see it.

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[4] A very unjustifiable proceeding in Chinese eyes, unless driven to it by actual poverty.

She is sixteen years old, and as foolish as a baby." "One year younger than I am," remarked Wang. "Oh, you're seventeen are you? Then you were born in the year ——, under the sign of the horse."[5] Wang nodded assent, and then the old woman asked who his wife was, to which Wang replied that he had none. "What! a clever, handsome young fellow of seventeen not yet engaged?[6] Ying-ning is not engaged either: you two would make a nice pair if it wasn't for the relationship." Wang said nothing, but looked hard at his cousin; and just then the maid whispered to her, "It is the fellow with the wicked eyes! He's at his old game." Ying-ning laughed, and proposed to the maid that they should go and see if the peaches were in blossom or not; and off they went together, the former with her sleeve stuffed into her mouth until she got outside, where she burst into a hearty fit of laughing. The old woman gave orders for a bed to be got ready for Wang, saying to him, "It's not often we meet: you must spend a few days with us now you are here, and then we'll send you

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[5] The Chinese years are distinguished by the names of twelve animals—namely, rat, ox, tiger, hare, dragon, serpent, horse, sheep, monkey, cock, dog, and boar. To the common question, "What is your honourable age?" the reply is frequently, "I was born under the ——;" and the hearer by a short mental calculation can tell at once how old the speaker is, granting, of course, the impossibility of making an error of so much as twelve years.

[6] Parents in China like to get their sons married as early as possible, in the hope of seeing themselves surrounded by grandsons, and the family name in no danger of extinction. Girls are generally married at from fifteen to seventeen.

home. If you are at all dull, there's a garden behind where you can amuse yourself, and books for you to read." So next day Wang strolled into the garden, which was of moderate size, with a well-kept lawn and plenty of trees and flowers. There was also an arbour consisting of three posts with a thatched roof, quite shut in on all sides by the luxurious vegetation. Pushing his way among the flowers, Wang heard a noise from one of the trees, and looking up saw Ying-ning, who at once burst out laughing and nearly fell down. "Don't! don't!" cried Wang, "you'll fall!" Then Ying-ning came down, giggling all the time, until, when she was near the ground, she missed her hold, and tumbled down with a run. This stopped her merriment, and Wang picked her up, gently squeezing her hand as he did so. Ying-ning began laughing again, and was obliged to lean against a tree for support, it being some time before she was able to stop. Wang waited till she had finished, and then drew the flower out of his sleeve and handed it to her. "It's dead," said she; "why do you keep it?" "You dropped it, cousin, at the Feast of Lanterns," replied Wang, "and so I kept it." She then asked him what was his object in keeping it, to which he answered, "To show my love, and that I have not forgotten you. Since that day when we met, I have been very ill from thinking so much of you, and am quite changed from what I was. But now that it is my unexpected good fortune to meet you, I pray you have pity on me." "You needn't make such a fuss about a trifle," replied she, "and with your own relatives, too. I'll give orders

to supply you with a whole basketful of flowers when you go away." Wang told her she did not understand, and when she asked what it was she didn't understand, he said, "I didn't care for the flower itself; it was the person who picked the flower." "Of course," answered she, "everybody cares for their relations; you needn't have told me that." "I wasn't talking about ordinary relations," said Wang, "but about husbands and wives." "What's the difference?" asked Ying-ning. "Why," replied Wang, "husband and wife are always together." "Just what I shouldn't like," cried she, "to be always with anybody."[7] At this juncture up came the maid, and Wang slipped quietly away. By-and-by they all met again in the house, and the old woman asked Ying-ning where they had been; whereupon she said they had been talking in the garden. "Dinner has been ready a long time. I can't think what you have had to say all this while," grumbled the old woman. "My cousin," answered Ying-ning, "has been talking to me about husbands and wives." Wang was much dis-

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[7] This scene should for ever disabuse people of the notion that there is no such thing as "making love" among the Chinese. That the passion is just as much a disease in China as it is with us will be abundantly evident from several subsequent stories; though by those who have lived and mixed with the Chinese people, no such confirmation will be needed. I have even heard it gravely asserted by an educated native that not a few of his countrymen had "died for love" of the beautiful Miss Lin, the charming but fictitious heroine of *The Dream of the Red Chamber*.

Play-goers can here hardly fail to notice a very striking similarity to the close of the first act of Mr. W. S. Gilbert's "Sweethearts."

concerted, and made a sign to her to be quiet, so she smiled and said no more; and the old woman luckily did not catch her words, and asked her to repeat them. Wang immediately put her off with something else, and whispered to Ying-ning that she had done very wrong. The latter did not see that; and when Wang told her that what he had said was private, answered him that she had no secrets from her old mother. "Besides," added she, "what harm can there be in talking on such a common topic as husbands and wives?" Wang was angry with her for being so dull, but there was no help for it; and by the time dinner was over he found some of his mother's servants had come in search of him, bringing a couple of donkeys with them. It appeared that his mother, alarmed at his non-appearance, had made strict search for him in the village; and when unable to discover any traces of him, had gone off to the Wu family to consult. There her nephew, who recollected what he had previously said to young Wang, advised that a search should be instituted in the direction of the hills; and accordingly the servants had been to all the villages on the way until they had at length recognised him as he was coming out of the door. Wang went in and told the old woman, begging that he might be allowed to take Ying-ning with him. "I have had the idea in my head for several days," replied the old woman, overjoyed; "but I am a feeble old thing myself, and couldn't travel so far. If, however, you will take charge of my girl and introduce her to her aunt, I shall be very pleased." So she called Ying-ning, who came

up laughing as usual; whereupon the old woman rebuked her, saying, "What makes you always laugh so? You would be a very good girl but for that silly habit. Now, here's your cousin, who wants to take you away with him. Make haste and pack up." The servants who had come for Wang were then provided with refreshment, and the old woman bade them both farewell, telling Ying-ning that her aunt was quite well enough off to maintain her, and that she had better not come back. She also advised her not to neglect her studies, and to be very attentive to her elders, adding that she might ask her aunt to provide her with a good husband. Wang and Ying-ning then took their leave; and when they reached the brow of the hill, they looked back and could just discern the old woman leaning against the door and gazing towards the north. On arriving at Wang's home, his mother, seeing a nice-looking young girl with him, asked in astonishment who she might be; and Wang at once told her the whole story. "But that was all an invention of your cousin Wu's," cried his mother; "I haven't got a sister, and consequently I can't have such a niece." Ying-ning here observed, "I am not the daughter of the old woman; my father was named Ch'in and died when I was a little baby, so that I can't remember anything." "I *had* a sister," said Wang's mother, "who actually did marry a Mr. Ch'in, but she died many years ago, and can't be still living, of course." However, on inquiring as to facial appearance and characteristic marks, Wang's mother was obliged to acknowledge the identity, wondering at the same time

how her sister could be alive when she had died many years before. Just then in came Wu, and Ying-ning retired within; and when he heard the story, remained some time lost in astonishment, and then said, "Is this young lady's name Ying-ning?" Wang replied that it was, and asked Wu how he came to know it. "Mr. Ch'in," answered he, "after his wife's death was bewitched by a fox, and subsequently died. The fox had a daughter named Ying-ning, as was well known to all the family; and when Mr. Ch'in died, as the fox still frequented the place, the Taoist Pope[8] was called in to exorcise it. The fox then went away, taking Ying-ning with it, and now here she is." While they were thus discussing, peals of laughter were heard coming from within, and Mrs. Wang took occasion to remark what a foolish girl she was. Wu begged to be introduced, and Mrs. Wang went in to fetch her, finding her in an uncontrollable fit of laughter, which she subdued only with great difficulty, and by turning her face to the wall. By-and-by she went out; but, after making a bow, ran back and burst out laughing again to the great discomfiture of all the

[8] The semi-divine head of the Taoist religion, sometimes called the Master of Heaven. In his body is supposed to reside the soul of a celebrated Taoist, an ancestor of his, who actually discovered the elixir of life and became an immortal some eighteen hundred years ago. At death, the precious soul above-mentioned will take up its abode in the body of some youthful member of the family to be hereinafter revealed. Meanwhile, the present Pope makes a very respectable income from the sale of charms, by working miracles, and so forth; and only about two years ago he visited Shanghai, where he was interviewed by several foreigners.

ladies. Wang then said he would go and find out for them all about Ying-ning and her queer story, so as to be able to arrange the marriage; but when he reached the spot indicated, village and houses had all vanished, and nothing was to be seen except hill-flowers scattered about here and there. Wu recollected that Mrs. Ch'in had been buried at no great distance from that spot; he found, however, that the grave had disappeared, and he was no longer able to determine its position. Not knowing what to make of it all, he returned home, and then Mrs. Wang told him she thought the girl must be a disembodied spirit. Ying-ning shewed no signs of alarm at this remark; neither did she cry at all when Mrs. Wang began to condole with her on no longer having a home. She only laughed in her usual silly way, and fairly puzzled them all. Sharing Miss Wang's room, she now began to take her part in the duties of a daughter of the family; and as for needlework, they had rarely seen anything like hers for fineness. But she could not get over that trick of laughing, which, by the way, never interfered with her good looks, and consequently rather amused people than otherwise, amongst others a young married lady who lived next door. Wang's mother fixed an auspicious day for the wedding, but still feeling suspicious about Ying-ning, was always secretly watching her. Finding, however, that she had a proper shadow,[9]

[9] Disembodied spirits are supposed to have no shadow, and but very little appetite. There are also certain occasions on which they cannot stand the smell of sulphur. Fiske, in his *Myths*

and that there was nothing extraordinary in her behaviour, she had her dressed up when the day came, in all the finery of a bride; and would have made her perform the usual ceremonies, only Ying-ning laughed so much she was unable to kneel down.[10] They were accordingly obliged to excuse her, but Wang began to fear that such a foolish girl would never be able to keep the family counsel. Luckily, she was very reticent and did not indulge in gossip; and moreover, when Mrs. Wang was in trouble or out of temper, Ying-ning could always bring her round with a laugh. The maid-servants, too, if they expected a whipping for anything, would always ask her to be present when they appeared before their mistress, and thus they often escaped punishment. Ying-ning had a perfect passion for flowers. She got all she could out of her relations, and even secretly pawned her jewels to buy rare specimens; and by the end of a few months the whole place was one mass of flowers. Behind the house there was one especial tree[11] which belonged to the neighbours on that side; but Ying-ning was always climbing up and picking the flowers, for which Mrs. Wang rebuked her severely, though without any result. One day the owner saw her, and gazed at her some time in rapt astonishment; however, she didn't

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and Myth-makers (page 230) says, "Almost universally, ghosts, however impervious to thrust of sword or shot of pistol, can eat and drink like Squire Westerns."

[10] See No. III, note 2.

[11] The *Mu hsiang* or *Costus amarus*.

move, deigning only to laugh. The gentleman was much smitten with her; and when she smilingly descended the wall on her own side, pointing all the time with her finger to a spot hard by, he thought she was making an assignation. So he presented himself at nightfall at the same place, and sure enough Ying-ning was there. Seizing her hand, to tell his passion, he found that he was grasping only a log of wood which stood against the wall; and the next thing he knew was that a scorpion had stung him violently on the finger. There was an end of his romance, except that he died of the wound during the night, and his family at once commenced an action against Wang for having a witch-wife. The magistrate happened to be a great admirer of Wang's talent, and knew him to be an accomplished scholar; he therefore refused to grant the summons, and ordered the prosecutor to be bambooed for false accusation.[12] Wang interposed and got him off this punishment, and returned home himself. His mother then scolded Ying-ning well, saying, "I knew your too playful disposition would some day bring sorrow upon you. But for our intelligent magistrate we should have been in a nice mess. Any ordinary hawk-like official would have had you publicly interrogated in court; and then how could your husband ever have held up his head again?" Ying-ning looked grave and did not laugh this time; and Mrs. Wang continued, "There's no

[12] Strictly in accordance with Chinese criminal law.

harm in laughing as long as it is seasonable laughter;" but from that moment Ying-ning laughed no more, no matter what people did to make her, though at the same time her expression was by no means gloomy. One evening she went in tears to her husband, who wanted to know what was the matter. "I couldn't tell you before," said she, sobbing; "we had known each other such a short time. But now that you and your mother have been so kind to me, I will keep nothing from you, but tell you all. I am the daughter of a fox. When my mother went away she put me in the charge of the disembodied spirit of an old woman, with whom I remained for a period of over ten years. I have no brothers: only you to whom I can look. And now my foster-mother is lying on the hill-side with no one to bury her and appease her discontented shade. If not too much, I would ask you to do this, that her spirit may be at rest, and know that it was not neglected by her whom she brought up." Wang consented, but said he feared they would not be able to find her grave; on which Ying-ning said there was no danger of that, and accordingly they set forth together. When they arrived, Ying-ning pointed out the tomb in a lonely spot amidst a thicket of brambles, and there they found the old woman's bones. Ying-ning wept bitterly, and then they proceeded to carry her remains home with them, subsequently interring them in the Ch'in family vault. That night Wang dreamt that the old woman came to thank him, and when he waked he told Ying-ning, who said that she had seen her also, and had been warned by her

not to frighten Mr. Wang. Her husband asked why she had not detained the old lady; but Ying-ning replied, "She is a disembodied spirit, and would be ill at ease for any time surrounded by so much life."[13] Wang then enquired after Hsiao-jung, and his wife said, "She was a fox too, and a very clever one. My foster-mother kept her to wait on me, and she was always getting fruit and cakes for me, so that I have a friendship for her and shall never forget her. My foster-mother told me yesterday she was married."

After this, whenever the great fast-day[14] came round, husband and wife went off without fail to worship at the Ch'in family tomb; and by the time a year had passed she gave birth to a son, who wasn't a bit afraid of strangers, but laughed at everybody, and in fact took very much after his mother.

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[13] These disembodied spirits are unable to stand for any length of time the light and life of this upper world, darkness and death being as it were necessary to their existence and comfort.

[14] The day before the annual spring festival.

XVI.

THE MAGIC SWORD,

NING LAI-CH'ÊN was a Chekiang man, and a good-natured, honourable fellow, fond of telling people that he had only loved once. Happening to go to Chin-hua, he took shelter in a temple to the north of the city; very nice as far as ornamentation went, but overgrown with grass taller than a man's head, and evidently not much frequented. On either side were the priest's apartments, the doors of which were ajar, with the exception of a small room on the south side, where the lock had a new appearance. In the east corner he espied a group of bamboos, growing over a large pool of water-lilies in flower; and, being much pleased with the quiet of the place, determined to remain; more especially as, the Grand Examiner being in the town, all lodgings had gone up in price. So he roamed about waiting till the priests should return; and in the evening, a gentleman came and opened the door on the south side. Ning quickly made up to him, and with a bow informed him of his design. "There is no one here whose permission you need ask," replied the stranger; "I am only lodging here,

and if you don't object to the loneliness, I shall be very pleased to have the benefit of your society." Ning was delighted, and made himself a straw bed, and put up a board for a table, as if he intended to remain some time; and that night, by the beams of the clear bright moon, they sat together in the verandah and talked. The stranger's name was Yen Ch'ih-hsia, and Ning thought he was a student up for the provincial examination, only his dialect was not that of a Chekiang man. On being asked, he said he came from Shensi; and there was an air of straightforwardness about all his remarks. By-and-by, when their conversation was exhausted, they bade each other good night and went to bed; but Ning, being in a strange place, was quite unable to sleep; and soon he heard sounds of voices from the room on the north side. Getting up, he peeped through a window, and saw, in a small court-yard the other side of a low wall, a woman of about forty with an old maid-servant in a long faded gown, humped-backed and feeble-looking. They were chatting by the light of the moon; and the mistress said, "Why doesn't Hsiao-ch'ien come?" "She ought to be here by now," replied the other. "She isn't offended with you; is she?" asked the lady. "Not that I know of," answered the old servant; "but she seems to want to give trouble?" "Such people don't deserve to be treated well," said the other; and she had hardly uttered these words when up came a young girl of seventeen or eighteen, and very nice looking. The old servant laughed, and said, "Don't talk of people

behind their backs. We were just mentioning you as you came without our hearing you; but fortunately we were saying nothing bad about you. And, as far as that goes," added she, "if I were a young fellow why I should certainly fall in love with you." "If *you* don't praise me," replied the girl, "I'm sure I don't know who will;" and then the lady and the girl said something together, and Mr. Ning, thinking they were the family next door, turned round to sleep without paying further attention to them. In a little while no sound was to be heard; but, as he was dropping off to sleep, he perceived that somebody was in the room. Jumping up in great haste, he found it was the young lady he had just seen; and detecting at once that she was going to attempt to bewitch him, sternly bade her begone. She then produced a lump of gold which he threw away, and told her to go after it or he would call his friend. So she had no alternative but to go, muttering something about his heart being like iron or stone. Next day, a young canditate for the examination came and lodged in the east room with his servant. He, however, was killed that very night, and his servant the night after; the corpses of both shewing a small hole in the sole of the foot as if bored by an awl, and from which a little blood came. No one knew who had committed these murders, and when Mr. Yen came home, Ning asked him what he thought about it. Yen replied that it was the work of devils, but Ning was a brave fellow, and that didn't frighten him much. In the middle of the night Hsiao-ch'ien

appeared to him again, and said, "I have seen many men, but none with a steel cold heart like yours. You are an upright man, and I will not attempt to deceive you. I, Hsiao-ch'ien, whose family name is Nieh, died when only eighteen, and was buried alongside of this temple. A devil then took possession of me, and employed me to bewitch people by my beauty, contrary to my inclination. There is now nothing left in this temple to slay, and I fear that imps will be employed to kill you. Ning was very frightened at this, and asked her what he should do. "Sleep in the same room with Mr. Yen," replied she. "What!" asked he, "cannot the spirits trouble Yen?" "He is a strange man," she answered, "and they don't like going near him." Ning then inquired how the spirits worked. "I bewitch people," said Hsiao-ch'ien, "and then they bore a hole in the foot which renders the victim senseless, and proceed to draw off the blood, which the devils drink. Another method is to tempt people by false gold, the bones of some horrid demon; and if they receive it, their hearts and livers will be torn out. Either method is used according to circumstances." Ning thanked her, and asked when he ought to be prepared; to which she replied, "To-morrow night." At parting she wept, and said, "I am about to sink into the great sea, with no friendly shore at hand. But your sense of duty is boundless, and you can save me. If you will collect my bones and bury them in some quiet spot, I shall not again be subject to these misfortunes." Ning said he would do so, and asked

where she lay buried. "At the foot of the aspen-tree on which there is a bird's nest," replied she; and passing out of the door, disappeared. The next day Ning was afraid that Yen might be going away somewhere, and went over early to invite him across. Wine and food were produced towards noon; and Ning, who took care not to lose sight of Yen, then asked him to remain there for the night. Yen declined, on the ground that he liked being by himself; but Ning wouldn't hear any excuses, and carried all Yen's things to his own room, so that he had no alternative but to consent. However, he warned Ning, saying, "I know you are a gentleman and a man of honour. If you see anything you don't quite understand, I pray you not to be too inquisitive; don't pry into my boxes, or it may be the worse for both of us." Ning promised to attend to what he said, and by-and-by they both lay down to sleep; and Yen, having placed his boxes on the window-sill, was soon snoring loudly. Ning himself could not sleep; and after some time he saw a figure moving stealthily outside, at length approaching the window to peep through. It's eyes flashed like lightning, and Ning in a terrible fright was just upon the point of calling Yen, when something flew out of one of the boxes like a strip of white silk, and dashing against the window-sill returned at once to the box, disappearing very much like lightning. Yen heard the noise and got up, Ning all the time pretending to be asleep in order to watch what happened. The former then opened the box, and took out something which

he smelt and examined by the light of the moon. It was dazzlingly white like crystal, and about two inches in length by the width of an onion leaf in breadth. He then wrapped it up carefully and put it back in the broken box, saying, "A bold-faced devil that, to come so near my box;" upon which he went back to bed; but Ning, who was lost in astonishment, arose and asked him what it all meant, telling at the same time what he himself had seen. "As you and I are good friends," replied Yen, "I won't make any secret of it. The fact is I am a Taoist priest. But for the window-sill the devil would have been killed; as it is, he is badly wounded." Ning asked him what it was he had there wrapped up, and he told him it was his sword,[1] on which he had smelt the presence of the devil. At Ning's request he produced the weapon, a bright little miniature of a sword; and from that time Ning held his friend in higher esteem than ever.

Next day he found traces of blood outside the window which led round to the north of the temple; and there among a number of graves he discovered the aspen-tree with the bird's nest at its summit. He then fulfilled his promise and prepared to go home, Yen giving him a farewell banquet, and presenting him with an old leather case which he said contained a sword, and would keep at a distance from him all devils and bogies. Ning then wished to learn a little of Yen's art; but

[1] See No. X, note 8.

the latter replied that although he might accomplish this easily enough, being as he was an upright man, yet he was well off in life, and not in a condition where it would be of any advantage to him. Ning then pretending he had to go and bury his sister, collected Hsiao-ch'ien's bones, and, having wrapped them up in grave-clothes, hired a boat, and set off on his way home. On his arrival, as his library looked towards the open country, he made a grave hard by and buried the bones there, sacrificing, and invoking Hsiao-ch'ien as follows:—"In pity for your lonely ghost, I have placed your remains near my humble cottage, where we shall be near each other, and no devil will dare annoy you. I pray you reject not my sacrifice, poor though it be." After this, he was proceeding home when he suddenly heard himself addressed from behind, the voice asking him not to hurry; and turning round he beheld Hsiao-ch'ien, who thanked him, saying, "Were I to die ten times for you I could not discharge my debt. Let me go home with you and wait upon your father and mother; you will not repent it." Looking closely at her, he observed that she had a beautiful complexion, and feet as small as bamboo shoots,[2] being altogether much prettier now that he came to see her by daylight. So they went together to his home, and bidding her wait awhile, Ning ran in to tell his mother,

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[2] Which, well cooked, are a very good substitute for asparagus.

to the very great surprise of the old lady. Now Ning's wife had been ill for a long time, and his mother advised him not to say a word about it to her for fear of frightening her; in the middle of which in rushed Hsiao-ch'ien, and threw herself on the ground before them. "This is the young lady," said Ning; whereupon his mother in some alarm turned her attention to Hsiao-ch'ien, who cried out, "A lonely orphan, without brother or sister, the object of your son's kindness and compassion, begs to be allowed to give her poor services as some return for favours shewn." Ning's mother, seeing that she was a nice pleasant-looking girl, began to lose fear of her, and replied, "Madam, the preference you shew for my son is highly pleasing to an old body like myself; but this is the only hope of our family, and I hardly dare agree to his taking a devil-wife." "I have but one motive in what I ask," answered Hsiao-ch'ien, "and if you have no faith in disembodied people, then let me regard him as my brother, and live under your protection, serving you like a daughter." Ning's mother could not resist her straightforward manner, and Hsiao-ch'ien asked to be allowed to see Ning's wife, but this was denied on the plea that the lady was ill. Hsiao-ch'ien then went into the kitchen and got ready the dinner, running about the place as if she had lived there all her life. Ning's mother was, however, much afraid of her, and would not let her sleep in the house; so Hsiao-ch'ien went to the library, and was just entering when suddenly she fell back a few steps, and began walking hurriedly backwards and forwards in front

of the door. Ning seeing this, called out and asked her what it meant; to which she replied "The presence of that sword frightens me, and that is why I could not accompany you on your way home." Ning at once understood her, and hung up the sword-case in another place; whereupon she entered, lighted a candle, and sat down. For some time she did not speak: at length asking Ning if he studied at night or not—"For," said she, "when I was little I used to repeat the Lêng-yen *sutra*; but now I have forgotten more than half, and, therefore, I should like to borrow a copy, and when you are at leisure in the evening you might hear me." Ning said he would, and they sat silently there for some time, after which Hsiao-ch'ien went away and took up her quarters elsewhere. Morning and night she waited on Ning's mother, bringing water for her to wash in, occupying herself with household matters, and endeavouring to please her in every way. In the evening before she went to bed, she would always go in and repeat a little of the *sutra*, and leave as soon as she thought Ning was getting sleepy. Now the illness of Ning's wife had given his mother a great deal of extra trouble—more, in fact, than she was equal to; but ever since Hsiao-ch'ien's arrival all this was changed, and Ning's mother felt kindly disposed to the girl in consequence, gradually growing to regard her almost as her own child, and forgetting quite that she was a spirit. Accordingly, she didn't make her leave the house at night; and Hsiao-ch'ien, who being a devil had not tasted meat or drink since her

arrival,[3] now began at the end of six months to take a little thin gruel. Mother and son alike became very fond of her, and henceforth never mentioned what she really was; neither were strangers able to detect the fact. By-and-by, Ning's wife died, and his mother secretly wished him to espouse Hsiao-ch'ien, though she rather dreaded any unfortunate consequences that might arise. This Hsiao-ch'ien perceived, and seizing an opportunity said to Ning's mother, "I have been with you now more than a year, and you ought to know something of my disposition. Because I was unwilling to injure travellers I followed your son hither. There was no other motive; and, as your son has shewn himself one of the best of men, I would now remain with him for three years in order that he may obtain for me some mark of Imperial approbation[4] which will do me honour in the realms below." Ning's mother knew that she meant no evil, but hesitated to put the family hopes of a posterity into jeopardy. Hsiao-ch'ien, however, reassured her by saying that Ning would have three sons, and that the line would not be interrupted by his marrying her. On the strength of this the marriage was arranged to the great joy of Ning, a feast prepared, and friends and relatives invited; and when in response

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[3] See note 9 to the last story.

[4] Such as are from time to time bestowed upon virtuous widows and wives, filial sons and daughters, and others. These consist of some laudatory scroll or tablet, and are much prized by the family of the recipient.

to a call the bride herself came forth in her gay wedding-dress, the beholders took her rather for a fairy than for a devil. After this, numbers of congratulatory presents were given by the various female members of the family, who vied with one another in making her acquaintance; and these Hsiao-ch'ien returned by gifts of paintings of flowers, done by herself, in which she was very skilful, the receivers being extremely proud of such marks of her friendship. One day she was leaning at the window in a despondent mood, when suddenly she asked where the sword-case was. "Oh," replied Ning, "as you seemed afraid of it, I moved it elsewhere." "I have now been so long under the influence of surrounding life,"[5] said Hsiao-ch'ien, "that I shan't be afraid of it any more. Let us hang it on the bed. "Why so?" asked Ning. "For the last three days," explained she, "I have been much agitated in mind; and I fear that the devil at the temple, angry at my escape, may come suddenly and carry me off." So Ning brought the sword-case, and Hsiao-ch'ien, after examining it closely, remarked, "This is where the magician puts people. I wonder how many were slain before it got old and worn out as it is now. Even now when I look at it my flesh creeps." The case was then hung up, and next day removed to over the door. At night they sat up and watched, Hsiao-ch'ien warning Ning not to go to sleep; and suddenly something fell

[5] See note 13 to last story.

down flop like a bird. Hsiao-ch'ien in a fright got behind the curtain; but Ning looked at the thing, and found it was an imp of darkness, with glaring eyes and a bloody mouth, coming straight to the door. Stealthily creeping up it made a grab at the sword-case, and seemed about to tear it in pieces, when bang!—the sword-case became as big as a wardrobe, and from it a devil protruded part of his body and dragged the imp in. Nothing more was heard, and the sword-case resumed its original size. Ning was greatly alarmed, but Hsiao-ch'ien came out rejoicing, and said, "There's an end of my troubles." In the sword-case they found only a few quarts of clear water; nothing else.

After these events Ning took his doctor's degree and Hsiao-ch'ien bore him a son. He then took a concubine, and had one more son by each, all of whom became in time distinguished men.

XVII.

THE *SHUI-MANG* PLANT.

THE *shui-mang*[1] is a poisonous herb. It is a creeper, like the bean, and has a similar red flower. Those who eat of it die, and become *shui-mang* devils, tradition asserting that such devils are unable to be born again unless they can find some one else who has also eaten of this poison to take their place.[2] These *shui-mang* devils abound in the province of Hunan, where, by the way, the phrase "same-year man" is applied to those born in the same year, who exchange visits and call each other brother, their children addressing the father's "brother" as uncle. This has now become a regular custom there.[3]

A young man named Chu was on his way to visit a same-year friend of his, when he was overtaken by a violent thirst. Suddenly he came upon an old woman sitting by the roadside under a shed and distributing tea

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[1] Probably the *Illicium religiosum* is meant.

[2] See No. XII, note 2.

[3] The common application of the term "same-year-men," is to persons who have graduated at the same time.

gratis,[4] and immediately walked up to her to get a drink. She invited him into the shed, and presented him with a bowl of tea in a very cordial spirit; but the smell of it did not seem like the smell of ordinary tea, and he would not drink it, rising up to go away. The old woman stopped him, and called out, "San-niang! bring some good tea." Immediately a young girl came from behind the shed, carrying in her hands a pot of tea. She was about fourteen or fifteen years old, and of very fascinating appearance, with glittering rings and bracelets on her fingers and arms. As Chu received the cup from her his reason fled; and drinking down the tea she gave him, the flavour of which was unlike any other kind, he proceeded to ask for more. Then, watching for a moment when the old woman's back was turned, he seized her wrist and drew a ring from her finger. The girl blushed and smiled; and Chu, more and more inflamed, asked her where she lived. "Come again this evening," replied she, "and you'll find me here." Chu begged for a handful of her tea, which he stowed away with the ring, and took his leave. Arriving at his destination, he felt a pain in his heart, which he at once attributed to

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[4] This is by no means an uncommon form of charity. During the temporary distress at Canton, in the summer of 1877, large tubs of gruel were to be seen standing at convenient points, ready for any poor person who might wish to stay his hunger. It is thus, and by similar acts of benevolence, such as building bridges, repairing roads, etc., etc., that the wealthy Chinaman strives to maintain an advantageous balance in his record of good and evil.

the tea, telling his friend what had occurred. "Alas! you are undone," cried the other; "they were *shui-mang* devils. My father died in the same way, and we were unable to save him. There is no help for you." Chu was terribly frightened, and produced the handful of tea, which his friend at once pronounced to be leaves of the *shui-mang* plant. He then shewed him the ring, and told him what the girl had said; whereupon his friend, after some reflection, said, "She must be San-niang, of the K'ou family." "How could you know her name?" asked Chu, hearing his friend use the same words as the old woman. "Oh," replied he, "there was a nice-looking girl of that name who died some years ago from eating of the same herb. She is doubtless the girl you saw." Here some one observed that if the person so entrapped by a devil only knew its name, and could procure an old pair of its shoes, he might save himself by boiling them in water and drinking the liquor as medicine. Chu's friend thereupon rushed off at once to the K'ou family, and implored them to give him an old pair of their daughter's shoes; but they, not wishing to prevent their daughter from finding a substitute in Chu, flatly refused his request. So he went back in anger and told Chu, who ground his teeth with rage, saying, "If I die, she shall not obtain her transmigration thereby." His friend then sent him home; and just as he reached the door he fell down dead. Chu's mother wept bitterly over his corpse, which was in due course interred; and he left behind one little boy barely a year old. His wife did not remain a widow, but in six

months married again and went away, putting Chu's son under the care of his grandmother, who was quite unequal to any toil, and did nothing but weep morning and night. One day she was carrying her grandson about in her arms, crying bitterly all the time, when suddenly in walked Chu. His mother, much alarmed, brushed away her tears, and asked him what it meant. "Mother," replied he, "down in the realms below I heard you weeping. I am therefore come to tend you. Although a departed spirit, I have a wife, who has likewise come to share your toil. Therefore do not grieve." His mother inquired who his wife was, to which he replied, "When the K'ou family sat still and left me to my fate I was greatly incensed against them; and after death I sought for San-niang, not knowing where she was. I have recently seen my old same-year friend, and he told me where she was. She had come to life again in the person of the baby-daughter of a high official named Jen; but I went thither and dragged her spirit back. She is now my wife, and we get on extremely well together." A very pretty and well-dressed young lady here entered, and made obeisance to Chu's mother, Chu saying, "This is San-niang, of the K'ou family;" and although not a living being, Mrs. Chu at once took a great fancy to her. Chu sent her off to help in the work of the house, and, in spite of not being accustomed to this sort of thing, she was so obedient to her mother-in-law as to excite the compassion of all. The two then took up their quarters in Chu's old apartments, and there they continued to remain.

Meanwhile San-niang asked Chu's mother to let the K'ou family know; and this she did, notwithstanding some objections raised by her son. Mr. and Mrs. K'ou were much astonished at the news, and, ordering their carriage, proceeded at once to Chu's house. There they found their daughter, and parents and child fell into each other's arms. San-niang entreated them to dry their tears; but her mother, noticing the poverty of Chu's household, was unable to restrain her feelings. "We are already spirits," cried San-niang; "what matters poverty to us? Besides, I am very well treated here, and am altogether as happy as I can be." They then asked her who the old woman was; to which she replied, "Her name was Ni. She was mortified at being too ugly to entrap people herself, and got me to assist her. She has now been born again at a soy-shop in the city." Then, looking at her husband, she added, "Come, since you are the son-in-law, pay the proper respect to my father and mother, or what shall I think of you?" Chu made his obeisance, and San-niang went into the kitchen to get food ready for them, at which her mother became very melancholy, and went away home, whence she sent a couple of maid-servants, a hundred ounces of silver, and rolls of cloth and silk, besides making occasional presents of food and wine, so that Chu's mother lived in comparative comfort. San-niang also went from time to time to see her parents, but would never stay very long, pleading that she was wanted at home, and such excuses; and if the old people attempted to keep her, she simply went off by

herself. Her father built a nice house for Chu with all kinds of luxuries in it; but Chu never once entered his father-in-law's door.

Subsequently a man of the village who had eaten *shui-mang*, and had died in consequence, came back to life, to the great astonishment of everybody. However, Chu explained it, saying, "I brought him back to life. He was the victim of a man named Li-Chiu; but I drove off Li's spirit when it came to make the other take his place." Chu's mother then asked her son why he did not get a substitute for himself; to which he replied, "I do not like to do this. I am anxious to put an end to, rather than take advantage of, such a system. Besides, I am very happy waiting on you, and have no wish to be born again." From that time all persons who had poisoned themselves with *shui-mang* were in the habit of feasting Chu and obtaining his assistance in their trouble. But in ten years' time his mother died, and he and his wife gave themselves up to sorrow, and would see no one, bidding their little boy put on mourning, beat his breast, and perform the proper ceremonies. Two years after Chu had buried his mother, his son married the granddaughter of a high official named Jen. This gentleman had had a daughter by a concubine, who had died when only a few months old; and now, hearing the strange story of Chu's wife, came to call on her and arrange the marriage. He then gave his granddaughter to Chu's son, and a free intercourse was maintained between the two families. However, one day Chu said to his son, "Because I have been of service to

my generation, God has appointed me Keeper of the Dragons; and I am now about to proceed to my post." Thereupon four horses appeared in the court-yard, drawing a carriage with yellow hangings, the flanks of the horses being covered with scale-like trappings. Husband and wife came forth in full dress, and took their seats, and, while son and daughter-in-law were weeping their adieus, disappeared from view. That very day the K'ou family saw their daughter arrive, and, bidding them farewell, she told them the same story. The old people would have kept her, but she said, "My husband is already on his way," and, leaving the house, parted from them for ever. Chu's son was named Ngo, and his literary name was Li-ch'ên. He begged San-niang's bones from the K'ou family, and buried them by the side of his father's.

XVIII.

LITTLE CHU.

A MAN named Li Hua dwelt at Ch'ang-chou. He was very well off, and about fifty years of age, but he had no sons; only one daughter, named Hsiao-hui, a pretty child on whom her parents doted. When she was fourteen she had a severe illness and died, leaving their home desolate and depriving them of their chief pleasure in life. Mr. Li then bought a concubine, and she by-and-by bore him a son, who was perfectly idolised, and called Chu, or the Pearl. This boy grew up to be a fine manly fellow, though so extremely stupid that when five or six years old he didn't know pulse from corn, and could hardly talk plainly. His father, however, loved him dearly, and did not observe his faults.

Now it chanced that a one-eyed priest came to collect alms in the town, and he seemed to know so much about everybody's private affairs that the people all looked upon him as superhuman. He himself declared he had control over life, death, happiness, and misfortune; and consequently no one dared refuse him whatever sum he chose to ask of them. From Li he demanded one hundred ounces of silver, but was offered only ten, which he

refused to receive. This sum was increased to thirty ounces, whereupon the priest looked sternly at Li and said, "I must have one hundred; not a fraction less." Li now got angry, and went away without giving him any, the priest, too, rising up in a rage and shouting after him, "I hope you won't repent." Shortly after these events little Chu fell sick, and crawled about the bed scratching the mat, his face being of an ashen paleness. This frightened his father, who hurried off with eighty ounces of silver, and begged the priest to accept them. "A large sum like this is no trifling matter to earn," said the priest, smiling; "but what can a poor recluse like myself do for you?" So Li went home, to find that little Chu was already dead; and this worked him into such a state that he immediately laid a complaint before the magistrate. The priest was accordingly summoned and interrogated; but the magistrate wouldn't accept his defence, and ordered him to be bambooed. The blows sounded as if falling on leather, upon which the magistrate commanded his lictors to search him; and from about his person they drew forth two wooden men, a small coffin, and five small flags. The magistrate here flew into a passion, and made certain mystic signs with his fingers, which when the priest saw he was frightened, and began to excuse himself; but the magistrate would not listen to him, and had him bambooed to death. Li thanked him for his kindness, and, taking his leave, proceeded home. In the evening, after dusk, he was sitting alone with his wife, when suddenly in popped a little boy, who said, "Pa! why did you hurry on so fast?

I couldn't catch you up." Looking at him more closely, they saw that he was about seven or eight years old, and Mr. Li, in some alarm, was on the point of questioning him, when he disappeared, re-appearing again like smoke, and, curling round and round, got upon the bed. Li pushed him off, and he fell down without making any sound, crying out, "Pa! why do you do this?" and in a moment he was on the bed again. Li was frightened, and ran away with his wife, the boy calling after them, "Pa! Ma! boo-oo-oo." They went into the next room, bolting the door after them; but there was the little boy at their heels again. Li asked him what he wanted, to which he replied, "I belong to Su-chou; my name is Chan; at six years of age I was left an orphan; my brother and his wife couldn't bear me, so they sent me to live at my maternal grandfather's. One day, when playing outside, a wicked priest killed me by his black art underneath a mulberry-tree, and made of me an evil spirit, dooming me to everlasting devildom without hope of transmigration. Happily you exposed him; and I would now remain with you as your son." "The paths of men and devils," replied Li, "lie in different directions. How can we remain together?" "Give me only a tiny room," cried the boy, "a bed, a mattress, and a cup of cold gruel every day. I ask for nothing more." So Li agreed, to the great delight of the boy, who slept by himself in another part of the house, coming in the morning and walking in and out like any ordinary person. Hearing Li's concubine crying bitterly, he asked how long little Chu had been dead, and she

told him seven days. "It's cold weather now," said he, "and the body can't have decomposed. Have the grave opened, and let me see it; if not too far gone, I can bring him to life again," Li was only too pleased, and went off with the boy; and when they opened the grave they found the body in perfect preservation; but while Li was controlling his emotions, lo! the boy had vanished from his sight. Wondering very much at this, he took little Chu's body home, and had hardly laid it on the bed when he noticed the eyes move. Little Chu then called for some broth, which put him into a perspiration, and then he got up. They were all overjoyed to see him come to life again; and, what is more, he was much brighter and cleverer than before. At night, however, he lay perfectly stiff and rigid, without shewing any signs of life; and, as he didn't move when they turned him over and over, they were much frightened, and thought he had died again. But towards daybreak he awaked as if from a dream, and in reply to their questions said that when he was with the wicked priest there was another boy named Ko-tzŭ;[1] and that the day before, when he had been unable to catch up his father, it was because he had stayed behind to bid adieu to Ko-tzŭ; that Ko-tzŭ was now the son of an official in Purgatory named Chiang, and very comfortably settled; and that he had invited him (Chan) to go and play with

[1] It may be necessary here to remind the reader that Chan's spirit is speaking from Chu's body.

him that evening, and had sent him back on a white-nosed horse. His mother then asked him if he had seen little Chu in Purgatory; to which he replied, "Little Chu has already been born again. He and our father here had not really the destiny of father and son. Little Chu was merely a man named Yen Tzŭ-fang, from Chin-ling, who had come to reclaim an old debt."[2] Now Mr. Li had formerly traded to Chin-ling, and actually owed money for goods to a Mr. Yen; but he had died, and no one else knew anything about it, so that he was now greatly alarmed when he heard this story. His mother next asked (the quasi) little Chu if he had seen his sister, Hsiao-hui; and he said he had not, promising to go again and inquire about her. A few days afterwards he told his mother that Hsiao-hui was very happy in Purgatory, being married to a son of one of the Judges; and that she had any quantity of jewels,[3] and crowds of attendants when she went abroad. "Why doesn't she come home to see her parents?" asked his mother. "Well," replied the boy, "dead people, you know, haven't got any flesh or bones; however, if you can only remind them of something that happened in their past lives, their feelings are at once touched. So yesterday I managed, through Mr. Chiang, to get an interview with Hsiao-hui; and we sat together on a coral

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[2] We shall come by and by to a story illustrative of this extraordinary belief.

[3] The *summum bonum* of many a Chinese woman.

couch, and I spoke to her of her father and mother at home, all of which she listened to as if she was asleep. I then remarked, 'Sister, when you were alive you were very fond of embroidering double-stemmed flowers; and once you cut your finger with the scissors, and the blood ran over the silk, but you brought it into the picture as a crimson cloud. Your mother has that picture still, hanging at the head of her bed, a perpetual souvenir of you. Sister, have you forgotten this?' Then she burst into tears, and promised to ask her husband to let her come and visit you." His mother asked when she would arrive; but he said he could not tell. However, one day he ran in and cried out, "Mother, Hsiao-hui has come, with a splendid equipage and a train of servants; we had better get plenty of wine ready." In a few moments he came in again, saying, "Here is my sister," at the same time asking her to take a seat and rest. He then wept; but none of those present saw anything at all. By-and-by he went out and burnt a quantity of paper money[4] and made offerings of wine outside the door, returning shortly and saying he had sent away her attendants for a while. Hsiao-hui then

[4] Chinese silver, called sycee (from the Cantonese *sai see* "fine silk;" because, if pure, it may be drawn out under the application of heat into fine silk threads), is cast in the form of "shoes," weighing from one to one hundred ounces. Paper imitations of these are burnt for the use of the spirits in the world below. The sharp edges of a "shoe" of sycee are caused by the mould containing the molten silver being gently shaken until the metal has set, with a view to secure uniform fineness throughout the lump.

asked if the green coverlet, a small portion of which had been burnt by a candle, was still in existence. "It is," replied her mother, and, going to a box, she at once produced the coverlet. "Hsiao-hui would like a bed made up for her in her old room," said her (quasi) brother; "she wants to rest awhile, and will talk with you again in the morning."

Now their next-door neighbour, named Chao, had a daughter who was formerly a great friend of Hsiao-hui's, and that night she dreamt that Hsiao-hui appeared with a turban on her head and a red mantle over her shoulders, and that they talked and laughed together precisely as in days gone by. "I am now a spirit," said Hsiao-hui, "and my father and mother can no more see me than if I was far separated from them. Dear sister, I would borrow your body, from which to speak to them. You need fear nothing." On the morrow when Miss Chao met her mother, she fell on the ground before her and remained some time in a state of unconsciousness, at length saying, "Madam, it is many years since we met; your hair has become very white." "The girl's mad," said her mother, in alarm; and, thinking something had gone wrong, proceeded to follow her out of the door. Miss Chao went straight to Li's house, and there with tears embraced Mrs. Li, who did not know what to make of it all. "Yesterday," said Miss Chao, "when I came back, I was unhappily unable to speak with you. Unfilial wretch that I was, to die before you and leave you to mourn my loss. How can I redeem such behaviour?" Her mother thereupon began to

understand the scene, and, weeping, said to her, "I have heard that you hold an honourable position, and this is a great comfort to me; but, living as you do in the palace of a Judge, how is it you are able to get away?" "My husband," replied she, "is very kind; and his parents treat me with all possible consideration. I experience no harsh treatment at their hands." Here Miss Chao rested her cheek upon her hand, exactly as Hsiao-hui had been wont to do when she was alive; and at that moment in came her brother to say that her attendants were ready to return. "I must go," said she, rising up and weeping bitterly all the time; after which she fell down, and remained some time unconscious as before.

Shortly after these events Mr. Li became dangerously ill, and no medicines were of any avail, so that his son feared they would not be able to save his life. Two devils sat at the head of his bed, one holding an iron staff, the other a nettle-hemp rope four or five feet in length. Day and night his son implored them to go, but they would not move; and Mrs. Li in sorrow began to prepare the funeral clothes.[5] Towards evening her son entered and cried out, "Strangers and women, leave the room! My sister's husband is coming to see his father-in-law." He then clapped his hands, and burst out laughing. "What is the matter?" asked his mother.

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[5] Death is regarded as a summons from the authorities of purgatory; lictors are sent to arrest the doomed man, armed with a written warrant similar to those issued on earth from a magistrate's yamên.

"I am laughing," answered he, "because when the two devils heard my sister's husband was coming, they both ran under the bed, like terrapins, drawing in their heads. By-and-by, looking at nothing, he began to talk about the weather, and ask his sister's husband how he did, and then he clapped his hands, and said, "I begged the two devils to go, but they would not; it's all right now." After this he went out to the door and returned, saying, "My sister's husband has gone. He took away the two devils tied to his horse. My father ought to get better now. Besides, Hsiao-hui's husband said he would speak to the Judge, and obtain a hundred years' lease of life both for you and my father." The whole family rejoiced exceedingly at this, and, when night came, Mr. Li was better, and in a few days quite well again. A tutor was engaged for (the quasi) little Chu, who shewed himself an apt pupil, and at eighteen years of age took his bachelor's degree. He could also see things of the other world; and when anyone in the village was ill, he pointed out where the devils were, and burnt them out with fire, so that everybody got well. However, before long he himself became very ill, and his flesh turned green and purple; whereupon he said, "The devils afflict me thus because I let out their secrets. Henceforth I shall never divulge them again."

XIX.

MISS QUARTA HU.

MR. SHANG was a native of T'ai-shan, and lived quietly with his books alone. One autumn night when the Silver River[1] was unusually distinct and the moon shining brightly in the sky, he was walking up and down under the shade, with his thoughts wandering somewhat at random, when lo! a young girl leaped over the wall, and, smiling, asked him, "What are you thinking about, Sir, all so deeply?" Shang looked at her, and seeing that she had a pretty face, asked her to walk in. She then told him her name was Hu,[2] and that she was called Tertia; but when he wanted to know where she lived, she laughed and would not say. So he did not inquire any further; and by degrees they struck up a friendship, and Miss Tertia used to come and chat with him every evening. He was so smitten that he could hardly take his eyes off her, and at last she said to him, "What *are* you looking

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[1] The Milky Way is known to the Chinese under this name—unquestionably a more poetical one than our own.

[2] See No. XIII, note 1.

at?" "At you," cried he, "my lovely rose, my beautiful peach. I could gaze at you all night long." "If you think so much of poor me," answered she, "I don't know where your wits would be if you saw my sister Quarta." Mr. Shang said he was sorry he didn't know her, and begged that he might be introduced; so next night Miss Tertia brought her sister, who turned out to be a young damsel of about fifteen, with a face delicately powdered and resembling the lily, or like an apricot-flower seen through mist; and altogether as pretty a girl as he had ever seen. Mr. Shang was charmed with her, and inviting them in, began to laugh and talk with the elder, while Miss Quarta sat playing with her girdle, and keeping her eyes on the ground. By-and-by Miss Tertia got up and said she was going, whereupon her sister rose to take leave also; but Mr Shang asked her not to be in a hurry, and requested the elder to assist in persuading her. "You needn't hurry," said she to Miss Quarta; and accordingly the latter remained chatting with Mr. Shang without reserve, and finally told him she was a fox. However, Mr. Shang was so occupied with her beauty, that he didn't pay any heed to that; but she added, "And my sister is very dangerous; she has already killed three people. Any one bewitched by her has no chance of escape. Happily, you have bestowed your affections on me, and I shall not allow you to be destroyed. You must break off your acquaintance with her at once." Mr. Shang was very frightened, and implored her to help him; to which she replied, "Although a fox, I am skilled in the

arts of the Immortals;[3] I will write out a charm for you which you must paste on the door, and thus you will keep her away." So she wrote down the charm, and in the morning when her sister came and saw it, she fell back, crying out, "Ungrateful minx! you've thrown me up for him, have you? You two being destined for each other, what have I done that you should treat me thus?" She then went away; and a few days afterwards Miss Quarta said she too would have to be absent for a day, so Shang went out for a walk by himself, and suddenly beheld a very nice-looking young lady emerge from the shade of an old oak that was growing on the hill-side. "Why so dreadfully pensive?" said she to him; "those Hu girls can never bring you a single cent." She then presented Shang with some money, and bade him go on ahead and buy some good wine, adding, "I'll bring something to eat with me, and we'll have a jolly time of it." Shang took the money and went home, doing as the young lady had told him; and by-and-by in she herself came, and threw on the table a roast chicken and a shoulder of salt pork, which she at once proceeded to cut up. They now set to work to enjoy themselves, and had hardly finished when they heard some one coming in, and the next minute in walked Miss Tertia and her sister. The strange young lady didn't know where to hide, and managed to lose her shoes; but the other two

[3] That is, of the Taoists. See No. III., note 1.

began to revile her, saying, "Out upon you, base fox; what are you doing here?" They then chased her away after some trouble, and Shang began to excuse himself to them, until at last they all became friends again as before.

One day, however, a Shensi man arrived, riding on a donkey, and coming to the door said, "I have long been in search of these evil spirits: now I have got them." Shang's father thought the man's remark rather strange, and asked him whence he had come. "Across much land and sea," replied he; "for eight or nine months out of every year I am absent from my native place. These devils killed my brother with their poison, alas! alas! and I have sworn to exterminate them; but I have travelled many miles without being able to find them. They are now in your house, and if you do not cut them off, you will die even as my brother." Now Shang and the young ladies had kept their acquaintance-ship very dark; but his father and mother had guessed that something was up, and, much alarmed, bade the Shensi man walk in and perform his exorcisms. The latter then produced two bottles which he placed upon the ground, and proceeded to mutter a number of charms and cabalistic formulæ; whereupon four wreaths of smoke passed two by two into each bottle. "I have the whole family," cried he, in an ecstacy of delight; as he proceeded to tie down the mouths of the bottles with pig's bladder, sealing them with the utmost care. Shang's father was likewise very pleased, and kept his guest to dinner; but the young man himself was sadly

dejected, and approaching the bottles unperceived, bent his ear to listen. "Ungrateful man," said Miss Quarta from within, "to sit there and make no effort to save me." This was more than Shang could stand, and he immediately broke the seal, but found that he couldn't untie the knot. "Not so," cried Miss Quarta; "merely lay down the flag that now stands on the altar, and with a pin prick the bladder, and I can get out." Shang did as she bade him, and in a moment a thin streak of white smoke issued forth from the hole and disappeared in the clouds. When the Shensi man came out, and saw the flag lying on the ground, he started violently, and cried out, "Escaped! This must be your doing, young Sir." He then shook the bottle and listened, finally exclaiming, "Luckily only one has got away. She was fated not to die, and may therefore be pardoned."[4] Thereupon he took the bottles and went his way.

Some years afterwards Shang was one day superintending his reapers cutting the corn, when he descried Miss Quarta at a distance, sitting under a tree. He approached, and she took his hand, saying, "Ten years have rolled away since last we met. Since then

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[4] Predestination *after the event* is, luckily for China, the form of this superstition which really appeals to her all-practical children. Not a larger percentage than with ourselves allow belief in an irremediable destiny to divert their efforts one moment from the object in view; though thousands upon thousands are ready enough to acknowledge the "will of heaven" in any national or individual calamities that may befall. See No. IX., note 3.

I have gained the prize of immortality;[5] but I thought that perhaps you had not quite forgotten me, and so I came to see you once more." Shang wished her to return home with him; to which she replied, "I am no longer what I was that I should mingle in the affairs of mortals. We shall meet again." And as she said this, she disappeared; but twenty years later, when Shang was one day alone, Miss Quarta walked in. Shang was overjoyed, and began to address her; but she answered him, saying, "My name is already enrolled in the Register of the Immortals, and I have no right to return to earth. However, out of gratitude to you I determined to announce to you the date of your dissolution that you might put your affairs in order. Fear nothing; I will see you safely through to the happy land. She then departed, and on the day named Shang actually died. A relative of a friend of mine, Mr. Li Wên-yü, frequently met the above-mentioned Mr. Shang.[6]

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[5] Any disembodied spirit whose conduct for a certain term of years is quite satisfactory is competent to obtain this reward. Thus, instead of being born again on earth, perhaps as an animal, they become angels or good spirits, and live for ever in heaven in a state of supreme beatitude.

[6] Our author occasionally ends up with a remark of this kind; and these have undoubtedly had their weight with his too credulous countrymen.

XX.

MR. CHU, THE CONSIDERATE HUSBAND.

At the village of Chu in Chi-yang, there was a man named Chu, who died at the age of fifty and odd years. His family at once proceeded to put on their mourning robes, when suddenly they heard the dead man cry out. Rushing up to the coffin, they found that he had come to life again; and began, full of joy, to ask him all about it. But the old gentleman replied only to his wife, saying, "When I died I did not expect to come back. However, by the time I had got a few miles on my way, I thought of the poor old body I was leaving behind me, dependent for everything on others, and with no more enjoyment of life. So I made up my mind to return, and take you away with me." The bystanders thought this was only the disconnected talk of a man who had just regained consciousness, and attached no importance to it; but the old man repeated it, and then his wife said, "It's all very well, but you have only just come to life; how can you go and die again directly?" "It is extremely simple," replied her husband; "you go and pack up everything ready." The old lady laughed and did nothing; upon

which Mr. Chu urged her again to prepare, and then left the house. In a short time he returned, and his wife pretended that she had done what he wanted. "Then you had better dress," said he; but Mrs. Chu did not move until he pressed her again and again, after which she did not like to cross him, and by-and-by came out all fully equipped. The other ladies of the family were laughing on the sly, when Mr. Chu laid his head upon the pillow, and told his wife to do likewise. "It's too ridiculous," she was beginning to say, when Mr. Chu banged the bed with his hand, and cried out, "What is there to laugh at in dying?" upon which the various members of the family, seeing the old gentleman was in a rage, begged her to gratify his whim. Mrs. Chu then lay down alongside of her husband, to the infinite amusement of the spectators; but it was soon noticed that the old lady had ceased to smile, and by-and-by her two eyes closed. For a long time not a sound was heard, as if she was fast asleep; and when some of those present approached to touch her, they found she was as cold as ice, and no longer breathing; then, turning to her husband, they perceived that he also had passed away.

This story was fully related by a younger sister-in-law of Mr. Chu's, who, in the twenty-first year of the reign K'ang Hsi,[1] was employed in the house of a high official named Pi.

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[1] A.D. 1682.

XXI.

THE MAGNANIMOUS GIRL.

At Chin-ling there lived a young man named Ku, who had considerable ability but was very poor; and having an old mother, he was very loth to leave home. So he employed himself in writing or painting[1] for people, and gave his mother the proceeds, going on thus till he was twenty-five years of age without taking a wife. Opposite to their house was another building, which had long been untenanted; and one day an old woman and a young girl came to occupy it, but there being no gentleman with them young Ku did not make any inquiries as to who they were or whence they hailed. Shortly afterwards it chanced that just as Ku was entering the house he observed a young lady come out of his mother's door. She was about

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[1] The usual occupation of poor scholars who are ashamed to go into trade, and who have not enterprise enough to start as doctors or fortune-tellers. Besides painting pictures and fans, and illustrating books, these men write fancy scrolls in the various ornamental styles so much prized by the Chinese; they keep accounts for people, and write or read business and private letters for the illiterate masses.

eighteen or nineteen, very clever and refined looking, and altogether such a girl as one rarely sets eyes on; and when she noticed Mr. Ku, she did not run away, but seemed quite self-possessed. "It was the young lady over the way; she came to borrow my scissors and measure," said his mother, "and she told me that there was only her mother and herself. They don't seem to belong to the lower classes. I asked her why she didn't get married, to which she replied that her mother was old. I must go and call on her to-morrow, and find out how the land lies. If she doesn't expect too much, you could take care of her mother for her." So next day Ku's mother went, and found that the girl's mother was deaf, and that they were evidently poor, apparently not having a day's food in the house. Ku's mother asked what their employment was, and the old lady said they trusted for food to her daughter's ten fingers. She then threw out some hints about uniting the two families, to which the old lady seemed to agree; but, on consultation with her daughter, the latter would not consent. Mrs. Ku returned home and told her son, saying, "Perhaps she thinks we are too poor. She doesn't speak or laugh, is very nice-looking, and as pure as snow; truly no ordinary girl." There ended that; until one day, as Ku was sitting in his study, up came a very agreeable young fellow, who said he was from a neighbouring village, and engaged Ku to draw a picture for him. The two youths soon struck up a firm friendship and met constantly, when it happened that the stranger chanced to see the young

lady of over the way. "Who is that?" said he, following her with his eyes. Ku told him, and then he said, "She is certainly pretty, but rather stern in her appearance." By-and-by Ku went in, and his mother told him the girl had come to beg a little rice, as they had had nothing to eat all day. "She's a good daughter," said his mother, "and I'm very sorry for her. We must try and help them a little." Ku thereupon shouldered a peck of rice, and, knocking at their door, presented it with his mother's compliments. The young lady received the rice but said nothing; and then she got into the habit of coming over and helping Ku's mother with her work and household affairs, almost as if she had been her daughter-in-law, for which Ku was very grateful to her, and whenever he had anything nice he always sent some of it in to her mother, though the young lady herself never once took the trouble to thank him. So things went on until Ku's mother got an abscess on her leg, and lay writhing in agony day and night. Then the young lady devoted herself to the invalid, waiting on her and giving her medicine with such care and attention that at last the sick woman cried out, "Oh, that I could secure such a daughter-in-law as you, to see this old body into its grave!" The young lady soothed her, and replied, "Your son is a hundred times more filial than I, a poor widow's only daughter." "But even a filial son makes a bad nurse," answered the patient; "besides, I am now drawing towards the evening of my life, when my body will be exposed to the mists and the dews, and I am vexed in

spirit about our ancestral worship and the continuance of our line." As she was speaking Ku walked in; and his mother, weeping, said, "I am deeply indebted to this young lady; do not forget to repay her goodness." Ku made a low bow, but the young lady said, "Sir, when you were kind to my mother, I did not thank you; why, then, thank me?" Ku thereupon became more than ever attached to her; but could never get her to depart in the slightest degree from her cold demeanour towards himself. One day, however, he managed to squeeze her hand, upon which she told him never to do so again; and then for some time he neither saw nor heard anything of her. She had conceived a violent dislike to the young stranger above-mentioned; and one evening when he was sitting talking with Ku, the young lady reappeared. After a while she got angry at something he said, and drew from her robe a glittering knife about a foot long. The young man, seeing her do this, ran out in a fright and she after him, only to find that he had vanished. She then threw her dagger up into the air, and whish! a streak of light like a rainbow, and something came tumbling down with a flop. Ku got a light, and ran to see what it was; and lo! there lay a white fox, head in one place and body in another. "There is your *friend*," cried the girl; "I knew he would cause me to destroy him sooner or later." Ku dragged it into the house, and said, "Let us wait till to-morrow to talk it over; we shall then be more calm." Next day the young lady arrived, and Ku inquired about her know-

ledge of the black art; but she told Ku not to trouble himself about such affairs, and to keep it secret or it might be prejudicial to his happiness. Ku then entreated her to consent to their union, to which she replied that she had already been as it were a daughter-in-law to his mother, and there was no need to push the thing further. "Is it because I am poor?" asked Ku. "Well, I am not rich," answered she, "but the fact is I had rather not." She then took her leave, and the next evening when Ku went across to their house to try once more to persuade her, the young lady had disappeared, and was never seen again.

XXII.

THE BOON-COMPANION.

ONCE upon a time there was a young man named Ch'ê, who was not particularly well off, but at the same time very fond of his wine; so much so, that without his three stoups of liquor every night, he was quite unable to sleep, and bottles were seldom absent from the head of his bed. One night he had waked up and was turning over and over, when he fancied some one was in the bed with him; but then, thinking it was only the clothes which had slipped off, he put out his hand to feel, and, lo! he touched something silky like a cat, only larger. Striking a light, he found it was a fox, lying in a drunken sleep like a dog; and then looking at his wine bottle he saw that it had been emptied. "A boon-companion," said he, laughing, as he avoided startling the animal, and covering it up, lay down to sleep with his arm across it, and the candle alight so as to see what transformation it might undergo. About midnight, the fox stretched itself, and Ch'ê cried, "Well, to be sure, you've had a nice sleep!" He then drew off the clothes, and beheld an elegant young man in a scholar's dress; but the young

man jumped up, and making a low obeisance, returned his host many thanks for not cutting off his head. "Oh," replied Ch'ê, "I am not averse to liquor myself; in fact they say I'm too much given to it. You shall play Pythias to my Damon;[1] and if you have no objection, we'll be a pair of bottle-and-glass chums." So they lay down and went to sleep again, Ch'ê urging the young man to visit him often, and saying that they must have faith in each other. The fox agreed to this, but when Ch'ê awoke in the morning his bedfellow had already disappeared. So he prepared a goblet of first-rate wine in expectation of his friend's arrival, and at nightfall sure enough he came. They then sat together drinking, and the fox cracked so many jokes that Ch'ê said he regretted he had not known him before. "And truly I don't know how to repay your kindness," replied the former, "in preparing all this nice wine for me." "Oh," said Ch'ê, "what's a pint or so of wine?—nothing worth speaking of." "Well," rejoined the fox, "you are only a poor scholar, and money isn't so easily to be got. I must try if I can't secure a little wine capital for you." Next evening when he arrived, he said to Ch'ê, "Two miles down towards the south-east you will find some silver lying by the wayside. Go early in the morning and get it." So on the morrow Ch'ê set off and actually obtained two lumps

[1] Kuan Chung and Pao Shu are the Chinese types of friendship. They were two statesmen of considerable ability, who flourished in the seventh century B.C.

of silver with which he bought some choice morsels to help them out with their wine that evening. The fox now told him that there was a vault in his back-yard which he ought to open; and when he did so, he found therein more than a hundred strings of cash.[2] "Now then," cried Ch'ê, delighted, "I shall have no more anxiety about funds for buying wine with all this in my purse." "Ah," replied the fox, "the water in a puddle is not inexhaustible. I must do something further for you." Some days afterwards the fox said to Ch'ê, "Buckwheat is very cheap in the market just now. Something is to be done in this line." Accordingly, Ch'ê bought over forty tons, and thereby incurred general ridicule; but by-and-by there was a bad drought and all kinds of grain and beans were spoilt. Only buckwheat would grow, and Ch'ê sold off his stock at a profit of one thousand per cent. His wealth thus began to increase; he bought two hundred acres of rich land, and always planted his crops, corn, millet, or what not, upon the advice of the fox secretly given him beforehand. The fox looked on Ch'ê's wife as a sister, and on Ch'ê's children as his own; but when, subsequently, Ch'ê died, it never came to the house again.

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[2] Say about £10. See No. II., note 2.

XXIII.

MISS LIEN-HSIANG.

THERE was a young man named Sang Tzŭ-ming, a native of I-chou, who had been left an orphan when quite young. He lived near the Saffron market, and kept himself very much to himself, only going out twice a day for his meals to a neighbour's close by, and sitting quietly at home all the rest of his time. One day the said neighbour called, and asked him in joke if he wasn't afraid of devil-foxes, so much alone as he was. "Oh," replied Sang, laughing, "what has the superior man[1] to fear from devil-foxes. If they come as men, I have here a sharp sword for them; and if as women, why, I shall open the door and ask them to walk in." The neighbour went away, and having arranged with a friend of his, they got a young lady of their acquaintance to climb over Sang's wall with the help of a ladder, and knock at the door. Sang peeped through, and called out "Who's there?" to which

[1] The term constantly employed by Confucius to denote the man of perfect probity, learning, and refinement. The nearest, if not an exact, translation would be "gentleman."

the girl answered, "A devil!" and frightened Sang so dreadfully that his teeth chattered in his head. The girl then ran away, and next morning when his neighbour came to see him, Sang told him what had happened, and said he meant to go back to his native place. The neighbour then clapped his hands, and said to Sang, "Why didn't you ask her in?" Whereupon Sang perceived that he had been tricked, and went on quietly again as before.

Some six months afterwards, a young lady knocked at his door; and Sang, thinking his friends were at their old tricks, opened it at once, and asked her to walk in. She did so; and he beheld to his astonishment a perfect Helen for beauty.[2] Asking her whence she came, she replied that her name was Lien-hsiang, and that she lived not very far off, adding that she had long been anxious to make his acquaintance. After that she used to drop in every now and again for a chat; but one evening when Sang was sitting alone expecting her, another young lady suddenly walked in. Thinking it was Lien-hsiang, Sang got up to meet her, but found that the new-comer was somebody else. She was about fifteen or sixteen years of age, wore very full sleeves, and dressed her hair after the fashion of unmarried girls, being otherwise very stylish-looking and refined, and apparently hesitating whether to go on or go back.

[2] Literally, "a young lady whose beauty would overthrow a kingdom," in allusion to an old story which it is not necessary to reproduce here.

Sang, in a great state of alarm, took her for a fox; but the young lady said, "My name is Li, and I am of a respectable family. Hearing of your virtue and talent, I hope to be accorded the honour of your acquaintance." Sang laughed, and took her by the hand, which he found was as cold as ice; and when he asked the reason, she told him that she had always been delicate, and that it was very chilly outside. She then remarked that she intended to visit him pretty frequently, and hoped it would not inconvenience him; so he explained that no one came to see him except another young lady, and that not very often. "When she comes, I'll go," replied the young lady, "and only drop in when she's not here." She then gave him an embroidered slipper, saying that she had worn it, and that whenever he shook it she would know that he wanted to see her, cautioning him at the same time never to shake it before strangers. Taking it in his hand he beheld a very tiny little shoe almost as fine pointed as an awl, with which he was much pleased; and next evening, when nobody was present, he produced the shoe and shook it, whereupon the young lady immediately walked in. Henceforth, whenever he brought it out, the young lady responded to his wishes and appeared before him. This seemed so strange that at last he asked her to give him some explanation; but she only laughed, and said it was mere coincidence. One evening after this Lien-hsiang came, and said in alarm to Sang, "Whatever has made you look so melancholy?" Sang replied that he did not know, and by-and-by she

took her leave, saying, they would not meet again for some ten days. During this period Miss Li visited Sang every day, and on one occasion asked him where his other friend was. Sang told her; and then she laughed and said, "What is your opinion of me as compared with Lien-hsiang?" "You are both of you perfection," replied he, "but you are a little *colder* of the two." Miss Li did'nt much like this, and cried out, "*Both of us perfection* is what you say to *me*. Then she must be a downright Cynthia,[3] and I am no match for her." Somewhat out of temper, she reckoned that Lien-hsiang's ten days had expired, and said she would have a peep at her, making Sang promise to keep it all secret. The next evening Lien-hsiang came, and while they were talking she suddenly exclaimed, "Oh, dear! how much worse you seem to have become in the last ten days. You must have encountered something bad." Sang asked her why so; to which she answered, "First of all your appearance; and then your pulse is very thready.[4] You've got the devil-disease."

The following evening when Miss Li came, Sang asked her what she thought of Lien-hsiang. "Oh," said she, "there's no question about her beauty; but she's a fox. When she went away I followed her to her hole on the hill side." Sang, however, attributed this

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[3] The Lady of the Moon. See No. V., note 2.

[4] See No. VIII., note 4.

remark to jealousy, and took no notice of it; but the next evening when Lien-hsiang came, he observed, "I don't believe it myself, but some one has told me you are a fox." Lien-hsiang asked who had said so, to which Sang replied that he was only joking; and then she begged him to explain what difference there was between a fox and an ordinary person. "Well," answered Sang, "foxes frighten people to death, and, therefore, they are very much dreaded." "Don't you believe that!" cried Lien-hsiang; "and now tell me who has been saying this of me." Sang declared at first that it was only a joke of his, but by-and-by yielded to her instances, and let out the whole story. "Of course I saw how changed you were," said Lien-hsiang; "she is surely not a human being to be able to cause such a rapid alteration in you. Say nothing, to-morrow I'll watch her as she watched me." The following evening Miss Li came in; and they had hardly interchanged half-a-dozen sentences when a cough was heard outside the window, and Miss Li ran away. Lien-hsiang then entered and said to Sang, "You are lost! She is a devil, and if you do not at once forbid her coming here, you will soon be on the road to the other world." "All jealousy," thought Sang, saying nothing, as Lien-hsiang continued, "I know that you don't like to be rude to her; but I, for my part, cannot see you sacrificed, and to-morrow I will bring you some medicine to expel the poison from your system. Happily, the disease has not yet taken firm hold of you, and in ten days you will be well again." The next evening she produced a knife and chopped

up some medicine for Sang, which made him feel much better; but, although he was very grateful to her, he still persisted in disbelieving that he had the devil-disease. After some days he recovered and Lien-hsiang left him, warning him to have no more to do with Miss Li. Sang pretended that he would follow her advice, and closed the door and trimmed his lamp. He then took out the slipper, and on shaking it Miss Li appeared, somewhat cross at having been kept away for several days. "She merely attended on me these few nights while I was ill," said Sang; "don't be angry." At this Miss Li brightened up a little; but by-and-by Sang told her that people said she was a devil. "It's that nasty fox," cried Miss Li, after a pause, "putting these things into your head. If you don't break with her, I won't come here again." She then began to sob and cry, and Sang had some trouble in pacifying her. Next evening Lien-hsiang came and found out that Miss Li had been there again; whereupon she was very angry with Sang, and told him he would certainly die. "Why need you be so jealous?" said Sang, laughing; at which she only got more enraged, and replied, "When you were nearly dying the other day and I saved you, if I had not been jealous, where would you have been now?" Sang pretended he was only joking, and said that Miss Li had told him his recent illness was entirely owing to the machinations of a fox; to which she replied, "It's true enough what you say, only you don't see *whose* machinations. However, if anything happens to you, I should never clear myself even had I a hundred mouths; we will, therefore, part.

A hundred days hence I shall see you on your bed." Sang could not persuade her to stay, and away she went; and from that time Miss Li became a regular visitor.

Two months passed away, and Sang began to experience a feeling of great lassitude, which he tried at first to shake off, but by-and-by he became very thin, and could only take thick gruel. He then thought about going back to his native place; however, he could not bear to leave Miss Li, and in a few more days he was so weak that he was unable to get up. His friend next door, seeing how ill he was, daily sent in his boy with food and drink; and now Sang began for the first time to suspect Miss Li. So he said to her, "I am sorry I didn't listen to Lien-hsiang before I got as bad as this." He then closed his eyes and kept them shut for some time; and when he opened them again Miss Li had disappeared. Their acquaintanceship was thus at an end, and Sang lay all emaciated as he was upon his bed in his solitary room longing for the return of Lien-hsiang. One day, while he was still thinking about her, some one drew aside the screen and walked in. It was Lien-hsiang; and approaching the bed she said with a smile, "Was I then talking such nonsense?" Sang struggled a long time to speak; and, at length, confessing he had been wrong, implored her to save him. "When the disease has reached such a pitch as this," replied Lien-hsiang, "there is very little to be done. I merely came to bid you farewell, and to clear up your doubts about my jealousy." In great tribulation, Sang asked her to take something she

would find under his pillow and destroy it; and she accordingly drew forth the slipper, which she proceeded to examine by the light of the lamp, turning it over and over. All at once Miss Li walked in, but when she saw Lien-hsiang she turned back as though she would run away, which Lien-hsiang instantly prevented by placing herself in the doorway. Sang then began to reproach her, and Miss Li could make no reply; whereupon Lien-hsiang said, "At last we meet. Formerly you attributed this gentleman's illness to me; what have you to say now?" Miss Li bent her head in acknowledgement of her guilt, and Lien-hsiang continued, "How is it that a nice girl like you can thus turn love into hate?" Here Miss Li threw herself on the ground in a flood of tears and begged for mercy; and Lien-hsiang, raising her up, inquired of her as to her past life. "I am a daughter of a petty official named Li, and I died young, leaving the web of my destiny incomplete, like the silkworm that perishes in the spring. To be the partner of this gentleman was my ardent wish; but I had never any intention of causing his death." "I have heard, "remarked Lien-hsiang, "that the advantage devils obtain by killing people is that their victims are ever with them after death. Is this so?" "It is not," replied Miss Li; "the companionship of two devils gives no pleasure to either. Were it otherwise, I should not have wanted for friends in the realms below. But tell me, how do foxes manage not to kill people." "You allude to such foxes as suck the breath out of people?" replied Lien-hsiang; "I am

not of that class. Some foxes are harmless; no devils are,[5] because of the dominance of the *yin*[6] in their compositions." Sang now knew that these two girls were really a fox and a devil; however, from being long accustomed to their society, he was not in the least alarmed. His breathing had dwindled to a mere thread, and at length he uttered a cry of pain. Lien-hsiang looked round and said, "How shall we cure him?" upon which Miss Li blushed deeply and drew back; and then Lien-hsiang added, "If he does get well, I'm afraid you will be dreadfully jealous." Miss Li drew herself up, and replied, "Could a physician be found to wipe away the wrong I have done to this gentleman, I would bury my head in the ground. How should I look the world in the face?" Lien-hsiang here opened a bag and drew forth some drugs, saying, "I have been looking forward to this day. When I left this gentleman I proceeded to gather my simples, as it would take three months for the medicine to be got ready; but then, should the poison have brought any one even to death's door, this medicine is able to call him back. The only condition is that it be administered by the very hand

[5] Miss Lien-hsiang was here speaking without book, as will be seen in a story later on.

[6] The female principle. In a properly-constituted human being the male and female principles are harmoniously combined. Nothing short of a small volume would place this subject, the basis of Chinese metaphysics, in a clear light before the uninitiated reader. Broadly speaking, the *yin* and the *yang* are the two primeval forces from the interaction of which all things have been evolved.

which wrought the ill." Miss Li did as she was told, and put the pills Lien-hsiang gave her one after another into Sang's mouth. They burnt his inside like fire; but soon vitality began to return, and Lien-hsiang cried out, "He is cured!" Just at this moment Miss Li heard the cock crow and vanished,[7] Lien-hsiang remaining behind in attendance on the invalid, who was unable to feed himself. She bolted the outside door and pretended that Sang had returned to his native place, so as to prevent visitors from calling. Day and night she took care of him, and every evening Miss Li came in to render assistance, regarding Lien-hsiang as an elder sister, and being treated by her with great consideration and kindness. Three months afterwards Sang was as strong and well as ever he had been, and then for several evenings Miss Li ceased to visit them, only staying a few moments when she did come, and seeming very uneasy in her mind. One evening Sang ran after her and carried her back in his arms, finding her no heavier than so much straw; and then, being obliged to stay, she curled herself up and lay down, to all appearance

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[7] "*Ber.*—It was about to speak, when the cock crew.
Hor.—And then it started like a guilty thing
Upon a fearful summons. I have heard,
The cock, that is the trumpet to the morn,
Doth with his lofty and shrill-sounding throat
Awake the God of Day; and, at his warning,
Whether in sea or fire, in earth or air,
The extravagant and erring spirit hies
To his confine." *Hamlet.*

in a state of unconsciousness, and by-and-by she was gone. For many days they heard nothing of her, and Sang was so anxious that she should come back that he often took out her slipper and shook it. "I don't wonder at your missing her," said Lien-hsiang, "I do myself very much indeed. "Formerly," observed Sang, "when I shook the slipper she invariably came. I thought it very strange, but I never suspected her of being a devil. And now, alas! all I can do is to sit and think about her with this slipper in my hand." He then burst into a flood of tears.

Now a young lady named Yen-êrh, belonging to the wealthy Chang family, and about fifteen years of age, had died suddenly, without any apparent cause, and had come to life again in the night, when she got up and wished to go out. They barred the door and would not hear of her doing so; upon which she said, "I am the spirit daughter of a petty magistrate. A Mr. Sang has been very kind to me, and I have left my slipper at his house. I am really a spirit; what is the use of keeping me in?" There being some reason for what she said, they asked her why she had come there; but she only looked up and down without being able to give any explanation. Some one here observed, that Mr. Sang had already gone home, but the young lady utterly refused to believe them. The family was much disturbed at all this; and when Sang's neighbour heard the story, he jumped over the wall, and peeping through beheld Sang sitting there chatting with a pretty-looking girl. As he went in, there was some commotion, during which

Sang's visitor had disappeared, and when his neighbour asked the meaning of it all, Sang replied, laughing, "Why, I told you if any ladies came I should ask them in." His friend then repeated what Miss Yen-êrh had said; and Sang, unbolting his door, was about to go and have a peep at her, but unfortunately had no means of so doing. Meanwhile Mrs. Chang, hearing that he had not gone away, was more lost in astonishment than ever, and sent an old woman-servant to get back the slipper. Sang immediately gave it to her, and Miss Yen-êrh was delighted to recover it, though when she came to try it on it was too small for her by a good inch. In considerable alarm, she seized a mirror to look at herself; and suddenly became aware that she had come to life again in some one else's body. She therefore told all to her mother, and finally succeeded in convincing her, crying all the time because she was so changed for the worse as regarded personal appearance from what she had been before. And whenever she happened to see Lien-hsiang, she was very much disconcerted, declaring that she had been much better off as a devil than now as a human being. She would sit and weep over the slipper, no one being able to comfort her; and finally, covering herself up with bed-clothes, she lay all stark and stiff, positively refusing to take any nourishment. Her body swelled up, and for seven days she refused all food, but did not die; and then the swelling began to subside, and an intense hunger to come upon her which made her once more think about

eating. Then she was troubled with a severe irritation, and her skin peeled entirely away; and when she got up in the morning, she found that the shoes had fallen off. On trying to put them on again, she discovered that they did not fit her any longer; and then she went back to her former pair which were now exactly of the right size and shape. In an ecstasy of joy, she grasped her mirror, and saw that her features had also changed back to what they had formerly been; so she washed and dressed herself and went in to visit her mother. Every one who met her was much astonished; and when Lien-hsiang heard the strange story, she tried to persuade Mr. Sang to make her an offer of marriage. But the young lady was rich and Sang was poor, and he did not see his way clearly. However, on Mrs. Chang's birthday, when she completed her cycle of sixty-one years,[8] Sang went along with the others to wish her many happy returns of the day; and when the old

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[8] "From time immemorial, the Chinese have employed a combination of two sets of characters, numbering ten and twelve respectively, to form a cycle of sixty terms for the purpose of chronological notation. The period at which this cycle was invented is a subject upon which complete uncertainty prevails, but there is little doubt that it first came into use as a method of reckoning years after the reform of the calendar in B.C. 104."—Mayers' *Reader's Manual.*

The birthday on which any person completes his cycle is considered a very auspicious occasion. The second emperor of the present dynasty, K'ang Hsi, completed a cycle in his *reign*, with one year to spare; and his grandson, Ch'ien Lung (or Kien Lung) fell short of this only by a single year, dying in the same cyclical period as that in which he had ascended the throne.

lady knew who was coming, she bade Yen-êrh take a peep at him from behind the curtain. Sang arrived last of all; and immediately out rushed Miss Yen-êrh and seized his sleeve, and said she would go back with him. Her mother scolded her well for this, and she ran in abashed; but Sang, who had looked at her closely, began to weep, and threw himself at the feet of Mrs. Chang who raised him up without saying anything unkind. Sang then took his leave, and got his uncle to act as medium between them; the result being that an auspicious day was fixed upon for the wedding. At the appointed time Sang proceeded to the house to fetch her; and when he returned he found that, instead of his former poor-looking furniture, beautiful carpets were laid down from the very door, and thousands of coloured lanterns were hung about in elegant designs. Lien-hsiang assisted the bride to enter, and took off her veil, finding her the same bright girl as ever. She also joined them while drinking the wedding cup,[9] and inquired of her friend as to her recent transmigration; and Yen-êrh related as follows:—"Overwhelmed with grief, I began to shrink

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[9] Bride and bridegroom drink wine together out of two cups joined by a red string, typical of that imaginary bond which is believed to unite the destinies of husband and wife long before they have set eyes on each other Popular tradition assigns to an old man who lives in the moon the arrangement of all matches among mortals; hence the common Chinese expression, "Marriages are made in the moon."

from myself as some unclean thing; and, after separating from you that day, I would not return any more to my grave. So I wandered about at random, and whenever I saw a living being, I envied its happy state. By day I remained among trees and shrubs, but at night I used to roam about anywhere. And once I came to the house of the Chang family, where, seeing a young girl lying upon the bed, I took possession of her mortal coil, unknowing that she would be restored to life again." When Lien-hsiang heard this she was for some time lost in thought; and a month or two afterwards became very ill. She refused all medical aid and gradually got worse and worse, to the great grief of Mr. Sang and his wife, who stood weeping at her bedside. Suddenly she opened her eyes, and said, "You wish to live; I am willing to die. If fate so ordains it, we shall meet again ten years hence." As she uttered these words, her spirit passed away, and all that remained was the dead body of a fox. Sang, however, insisted on burying it with all the proper ceremonies.

Now his wife had no children; but one day a servant came in and said, "There is an old woman outside who has got a little girl for sale." Sang's wife gave orders that she should be shown in; and no sooner had she set eyes on the girl than she cried out, "Why, she's the image of Lien-hsiang!" Sang then looked at her, and found to his astonishment that she was really very like his old friend. The old woman said she was fourteen years old; and when asked what her price was, declared that her only wish was to get the girl comfortably

settled, and enough to keep herself alive, and ensure not being thrown out into the kennel at death. So Sang gave a good price for her;[10] and his wife, taking the girl's hand, led her into a room by themselves. Then, chucking her under the chin, she asked her, smiling, "Do you know me?" The girl said she did not; after which she told Mrs. Sang that her name was Wei, and that her father, who had been a pickle-merchant at Hsü-ch'êng, had died three years before. Mrs. Sang then calculated that Lien-hsiang had been dead just ten years; and, looking at the girl, who resembled her so exactly in every trait, at length patted her on the head, saying, "Ah, my sister, you promised to visit us again in ten years, and you have not played us false." The girl here seemed to wake up as if from a dream, and, uttering an exclamation of surprise, fixed a steady

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[10] The bill of sale always handed to the purchaser of a child in China, as a proof that the child is his *bonâ fide* property and has not been kidnapped, is by a pleasant fiction called a "deed of gift," the amount paid over to the seller being therein denominated "ginger and vinegar money," or compensation for the expense of rearing and educating up to the date of sale. This phrase originates from the fact that a dose of ginger and vinegar is administered to every Chinese woman immediately after the delivery of her child.

We may here add that the value of male children to those who have no heirs, and of female children to those who want servants, has fostered a regular kidnapping trade, which is carried on with great activity in some parts of China, albeit the penalty on discovery is instant decapitation. Some years ago I was present in the streets of Tientsin when a kidnapper was seized by the infuriated mob, and within two hours I heard that the man had been summarily executed.

gaze upon Sang's wife. Sang himself laughed, and said, "Just like the return of an old familiar swallow." "Now I understand," cried the girl, in tears; "I recollect my mother saying that when I was born I was able to speak; and that, thinking it an inauspicious manifestation, they gave me dog's blood to drink, so that I should forget all about my previous state of existence.[11] Is it all a dream, or are you not the Miss Li who was so ashamed of being a devil?" Thus they chatted of their existence in a former life, with alternate tears and smiles; but when it came to the day for worshipping at the tombs, Yen-êrh explained that she and her husband were in the habit of annually visiting and mourning over her grave. The girl replied that she would accompany them; and when they got there they found the whole place in disorder, and the coffin wood all warped. "Lien-hsiang and I," said Yen-êrh to her husband, "have been attached to each other in two states of existence. Let us not be separated, but bury my bones here with hers." Sang consented, and opening Miss Li's tomb, took out the bones and buried them with those of Lien-hsiang, while friends and relatives, who had heard the strange story, gathered round the grave in gala dress to the number of many hundreds.

I learnt the above when travelling through I-chou,

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[11] The power of recalling events which have occurred in a previous life will be enlarged upon in several stories to come.

where I was detained at an inn by rain, and read a biography of Mr. Sang written by a comrade of his named Wang Tzŭ-chang. It was lent me by a Mr. Liu Tzŭ-ching, a relative of Sang's, and was quite a long account. This is merely an outline of it.

XXIV.

MISS A-PAO; OR, PERSEVERANCE REWARDED.

In the province of Kuang-si there lived a scholar of some reputation, named Sun Tzŭ-ch'u. He was born with six fingers, and such a simple fellow was he that he readily believed any nonsense he was told. Very shy with the fair sex, the sight of a woman was enough to send him flying in the opposite direction; and once when he was inveigled into a room where there were some young ladies, he blushed down to his neck and the perspiration dripped off him like falling pearls. His companions laughed heartily at his discomfiture, and told fine stories of what a noodle he looked, so that he got the nickname of Silly Sun.

In the town where our hero resided, there was a rich trader whose wealth equalled that of any prince or nobleman, and whose connections were all highly aristocratic.[1] He had a daughter, A-pao, of great beauty, for

[1] There is nothing in China like an aristocracy of birth. Any man may raise himself from the lowest level to the highest; and as long as he and his family keep themselves there, they may be considered aristocratic. Wealth has nothing to do with the question; official rank and literary tastes, separate or combined, these con-

whom he was seeking a husband; and the young men of position in the neighbourhood were vying with each other to obtain her hand, but none of them met with the father's approval. Now Silly Sun had recently lost his wife; and some one in joke persuaded him to try his luck and send in an application. Sun, who had no idea of his own shortcomings, proceeded at once to follow this advice; but the father, though he knew him to be an accomplished scholar, rejected his suit on the ground of poverty. As the go-between[2] was leaving the house, she chanced to meet A-pao, and related to her the object of her visit. "Tell him," cried A-pao, laughing, "that if he'll cut off his extra finger, I'll marry him." The old woman reported this to Sun, who replied, "That is not very difficult;" and, seizing a chopper, cut the finger clean off. The wound was extremely painful and he lost so much blood that he nearly died, it being many days before he was about again. He then sought out the go-between, and bade her inform Miss A-pao, which she did; and A-pao was taken rather aback, but she told the

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stitute a man's title to the esteem of his fellows. Trade is looked upon as ignoble and debasing; and friendly intercourse between merchants and officials, the two great social divisions, is so rare as to be almost unknown.

[2] The medium, without whose good offices no marriage can be arranged. Generally, but not always, a woman.

This system of go-betweens is not confined to matrimonial engagements. No servant ever offers himself for a place; he invariably employs some one to introduce him. So also in mercantile transactions the broker almost invariably appears upon the scene.

old woman to go once more and bid him cut off the "silly" from his reputation. Sun got much excited when he heard this, and denied that he was silly; however, as he was unable to prove it to the young lady herself, he began to think that probably her beauty was over-stated, and that she was giving herself great airs. So he ceased to trouble himself about her until the following spring festival,[3] when it was customary for both men and women to be seen abroad, and the young rips of the place would stroll about in groups and pass their remarks on all and sundry. Sun's friends urged him to join them in their expedition, and one of them asked him with a smile if he did not wish to look out for a suitable mate. Sun knew they were chaffing him, but he thought he should like to see the girl that had made such a fool of him, and was only too pleased to accompany them. They soon perceived a young lady resting herself under a tree, with a throng of young fellows crowding round her, and they immediately determined that she must be A-pao, as in fact they found she was. Possessed of peerless beauty, the ring of her admirers gradually increased, till at last she rose up to go. The excitement among the young men was intense; they criticised her face and discussed her feet,[4] Sun only

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[3] See No. II., note 1.

[4] The so-called "golden lilies" always come in for a large share of criticism. See No. XII., note 1. This term originated with an emperor who reigned in the fifth century, when, in ecstasies at the graceful dancing of a concubine upon a stage ornamented with lilies, he cried out, "Every footstep makes a lily grow."

remaining silent; and when they had passed on to something else, there they saw Sun rooted like an imbecile to the same spot. As he made no answer when spoken to, they dragged him along with them, saying, "Has your spirit run away after A-pao?" He made no reply to this either; but they thought nothing of that, knowing his usual strangeness of manner, so by dint of pushing and pulling they managed to get him home. There he threw himself on the bed and did not get up again for the rest of the day, lying in a state of unconsciousness just as if he were drunk. He did not wake when called; and his people, thinking that his spirit had fled, went about in the fields calling out to it to return.[5] However, he shewed no signs of improvement; and when they shook him, and asked him what was the matter, he only answered in a sleepy kind of voice, "I am at A-pao's house;" but to further questions he would not make any reply, and left his family in a state of keen suspense.

Now when Silly Sun had seen the young lady get up to go, he could not bear to part with her, and found himself first following and then walking along by her side without anyone saying anything to him. Thus he went back with her to her home, and there he remained for three days, longing to run home and get something to eat, but unfortunately not knowing the way. By that

[5] A common custom; *e.g.* in the case of a little child lying dangerously ill, its mother will go outside the door into the garden or field, and call out its name several times, in the hope of bringing back the wandering spirit.

time Sun had hardly a breath left in him; and his friends, fearing that he was going to die, sent to beg of the rich trader that he would allow a search to be made for Sun's spirit in his house. The trader laughed and said, "He wasn't in the habit of coming here, so he could hardly have left his spirit behind him;" but he yielded to the entreaties of Sun's family, and permitted the search to be made. Thereupon a magician proceeded to the house, taking with him an old suit of Sun's clothes and some grass matting; and when Miss A-pao heard the reason for which he had come, she simplified matters very much by leading the magician straight to her own room. The magician summoned the spirit in due form, and went back towards Sun's house. By the time he had reached the door, Sun groaned and recovered consciousness; and he was then able to describe all the articles of toilette and furniture in A-pao's room without making a single mistake. A-pao was amazed when the story was repeated to her, and could not help feeling kindly towards him on account of the depth of his passion. Sun himself, when he got well enough to leave his bed, would often sit in a state of abstraction as if he had lost his wits; and he was for ever scheming to try and have another glimpse at A-pao.

One day he heard that she intended to worship at the Shui-yüeh temple on the 8th of the fourth moon, that day being the Wash-Buddha festival; and he set off early in the morning to wait for her at the roadside. He was nearly blind with straining his eyes, and the sun was already past noontide before the young lady arrived; but

when she saw from her carriage a gentleman standing there, she drew aside the screen and had a good stare at him. Sun followed her in a great state of excitement, upon which she bade one of her maids to go and ask his name. Sun told her who he was, his perturbation all the time increasing; and when the carriage drove on he returned home. Again he became very ill, and lay on his bed unconscious, without taking any food, occasionally calling on A-pao by name, at the same time abusing his spirit for not having been able to follow her as before. Just at this juncture a parrot that had been long with the family died; and a child, playing with the body, laid it upon the bed. Sun then reflected that if he was only a parrot one flap of his wings would bring him into the presence of A-pao; and while occupied with these thoughts, lo! the dead body moved and the parrot flew away. It flew straight to A-pao's room, at which she was delighted; and catching it, tied a string to its leg, and fed it upon hemp-seed. "Dear sister," cried the bird, "do not tie me by the leg: I am Sun Tzŭ-ch'u." In great alarm A-pao untied the string, but the parrot did not fly away. "Alas!" said she, "your love has engraved itself upon my heart; but now you are no longer a man, how shall we ever be united together?" "To be near your dear self," replied the parrot, "is all I care about." The parrot then refused to take food from anyone else, and kept close to Miss A-pao wherever she went, day and night alike. At the expiration of three days, A-pao, who had grown very fond of her parrot, secretly sent some one to ask how

Mr. Sun was; but he had already been dead three days, though the part over his heart had not grown cold. "Oh! come to life again as a man," cried the young lady, "and I swear to be yours for ever." "You are surely not in earnest," said the parrot, "are you?" Miss A-pao declared she was, and the parrot, cocking its head aside, remained some time as if absorbed in thought. By-and-by A-pao took off her shoes to bind her feet a little tighter;[6] and the parrot, making a rapid grab at one, flew off with it in its beak. She called loudly after it to come back, but in a moment it was out of sight; so she next sent a servant to inquire if there was any news of Mr. Sun, and then learnt that he had come round again, the parrot having flown in with an embroidered shoe and dropped down dead on the ground. Also, that directly he regained consciousness he asked for the shoe, of which his people knew nothing; at which moment her servant had arrived, and demanded to know from him where it was. "It was given to me by Miss A-pao as a pledge of faith," replied Sun; "I beg you will tell her I have not forgotten her promise." A-pao was greatly astonished at this, and instructed her maid to divulge the whole affair to her mother, who, when she had made some inquiries, observed that Sun was well known as a clever fellow, but was desperately poor, "and to get such a son-in-law after all our trouble

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[6] This process must be regularly gone through night and morning, otherwise the bandages become loose, and the gait of the walker unsteady.

would give our aristocratic friends the laugh against us."[7] However, A-pao pleaded that with the shoe there as a proof against her, she would not marry anybody else; and, ultimately, her father and mother gave their consent. This was immediately announced to Mr. Sun, whose illness rapidly disappeared in consequence. A-pao's father would have had Sun come and live with them;[8] but the young lady objected, on the score that a son-in-law should not remain long at a time with the family of his wife,[9] and that as he was poor he would lower himself still more by doing so. "I have accepted him," added she, "and I shall gladly reside in his humble cottage, and share his poor fare without complaint. The marriage was then celebrated, and bride and bridegroom met as if for the first time in their lives.[10] The dowry A-pao brought with her somewhat raised their pecuniary position, and gave them a certain amount of

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[7] I have explained before that any great disparity of means is considered an obstacle to a matrimonial alliance between two families.

[8] This is a not unusual arrangement in cases where there are other sons in the bridegroom's family, but none in that of the bride's, especially if the advantage of wealth is on the side of the latter.

[9] Such is the Chinese rule, adopted simply with a view to the preservation of harmony.

[10] They are supposed never to see each other before the wedding-day; but, after careful investigation of the subject, I have come to the conclusion that certainly in seven cases out of ten, the intended bridegroom secretly procures a sight of his future wife. I am now speaking of the higher classes; among the poor, both sexes mix almost as freely as with us.

comfort; but Sun himself stuck only to his books, and knew nothing about managing affairs in general. Luckily his wife was clever in that respect, and did not bother him with such things; so much so that by the end of three years they were comparatively well off, when Sun suddenly fell ill and died. Mrs. Sun was inconsolable, and refused either to sleep or take nourishment, being deaf to all entreaties on the subject; and before long, taking advantage of the night, she hanged herself.[11] Her maid, hearing a noise, ran in and cut her down just in time: but she still steadily refused all food. Three days passed away, and the friends and relatives of Sun came to attend his funeral, when suddenly they heard a sigh proceeding forth from the coffin. The coffin was then opened and they found that Sun had come to life again. He told them that he had been before the Great Judge, who, as a reward for his upright and honourable life, had conferred upon him an official appointment. "At this moment," said Sun, "it was reported that my wife was close at hand,[12] but the Judge, referring to the register, observed that her time had not yet come. They told him she had taken no food for three days; and then the Judge, looking at me, said that as a recompense for her wifely virtues she should be permitted to return to life. Thereupon he gave orders to his attendants to put to the horses and see us safely back." From that hour

[11] This would still be considered a creditable act on the part of a Chinese widow. It is, however, of exceedingly rare occurrence.

[12] Being nearly dead from hanging.

Sun gradually improved, and the next year went up for his master's degree. All his old companions chaffed him exceedingly before the examination, and gave him seven themes on out-of-the-way subjects, telling him privately that they had been surreptitiously obtained from the examiners. Sun believed them as usual, and worked at them day and night until he was perfect, his comrades all the time enjoying a good laugh against him. However, when the day came it was found that the examiners, fearing lest the themes they had chosen in an ordinary way should have been dishonestly made public,[13] took a set of fresh ones quite out of the common run—in fact, on the very subjects Sun's companions had given to him. Consequently, he came out at the head of the list; and the next year, after taking his doctor's degree, he was entered among the Han-lin Academicians.[14] The Emperor, too, happening to hear of his curious adventures, sent for him and made him repeat his story; subsequently, summoning A-pao and making her some very costly presents.

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[13] This is occasionally done, great influence or a heavy bribe being brought to bear upon the Examiners, of whom there are only two for the Master's degree, and the second of these, or Assistant-Examiner, holds but a subordinate position. See *Appendix* A, and No. LXXV., note 2.

[14] Admission to the Han-lin, or Chinese National Academy, is the highest honour obtainable by a scholar. Its members are employed in drawing up Government documents, histories, etc.

XXV.

JÊN HSIU.

JEN CHIEN-CHIH was a native of Yü-t'ai, and a dealer in rugs and furs. One day he set off for Shensi, taking with him every penny he could scrape together; and on the road he met a man who told him that his name was Shên Chu-t'ing, and his native place Su-ch'ien. These two soon became firm friends, and entered into a masonic bond[1] with each other, journeying on together by the same stages until they reached their destination. By-and-by Mr. Jen fell sick, and his companion had to nurse him, which he did with the utmost attention, but

[1] Besides the numerous secret societies so much dreaded by the Government, membership of which is punishable by death, very intimate friends are in the habit of adopting each other as sworn brothers, bound to stand by one another in cases of danger and difficulty, to the last drop of blood. The bond is cemented by an oath, accompanied by such ceremonies as fancy may at the moment dictate. The most curious of all, however, are the so-called "Golden Orchid" societies, the members of which are young girls, who have sworn never to enter into the matrimonial state. To such an extent have these sisterhoods spread in the Kuang-tung Province, that the authorities have been compelled to prohibit them under severe penalties.

for ten days he gradually got worse and worse, and at length said to Shên, "My family is very poor. Eight mouths depend upon my exertions for food; and now, alas! I am about to die, far from my own home. You and I are brothers. At this distance there is no one else to whom I can look. Now in my purse you will find two hundred ounces of silver. Take half, and when you have defrayed my funeral expenses, use the balance for your return journey; and give the other half to my family, that they may be able to send for my coffin.[2] If, however, you will take my mortal remains with you home to my native place, these expenses need not be incurred." He then, with the aid of a pillow, wrote a letter, which he handed to Shên, and that evening he died. Thereupon Shên purchased a cheap coffin[3] for some five or six ounces of silver; and, as the landlord kept urging him to take away the body, he said he would go out and seek for a temple where it might

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[2] A Chinaman loves to be buried alongside of his ancestors, and poor families are often put to great straits to pay this last tribute of respect and affection to the deceased. At all large cities are to be found temporary burial grounds, where the bodies of strangers are deposited until their relatives can come to carry them away. Large freights of dead bodies are annually brought back to China from California, Queensland, and other parts to which the Chinese are in the habit of emigrating, to the great profit of the steamer-companies concerned. Coffins are also used as a means of smuggling, respect for the dead being so great that they are only opened under the very strongest suspicion.

[3] See No. XIV., note 12. The price of an elaborate Chinese coffin goes as high as £100 or £150.

be temporarily deposited. But he ran away and never went back to the inn; and it was more than a year before Jen's family knew what had taken place. His son was just about seventeen years of age, and had recently been reading with a tutor; but now his books were laid aside, and he proposed to go in search of his father's body. His mother said he was too young; and it was only when he declared he would rather not live than stay at home, that with the aid of the pawn-shop[4] enough money was raised to start him on his way. An old servant accompanied him, and it was six months before they returned and performed the last ceremonies over Jen's remains. The family was thus reduced to absolute destitution; but happily young Hsiu was a

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[4] The never-failing resource of an impecunious Chinaman who has any property whatever bearing an exchange value. The pawn-shop proper is a licensed institution, where three per cent. *per month* is charged on all loans, all pledges being redeemable within sixteen months. It is generally a very high brick structure, towering far above the surrounding houses, with the deposits neatly packed up in paper and arranged on the shelves of a huge wooden skeleton-like frame, that completely fills the interior of the building, on the top of which are ranged buckets of water in case of fire, and a quantity of huge stones to throw down on any thieves who may be daring enough to attempt to scale the wall. [In Pekin, houses are not allowed to be built above a certain height, as during the long summer months ladies are in the habit of sitting to spin or sew in their courtyards, very lightly clad.] Pawning goods in China is not held to be so disgraceful as with us; in fact, most people, at the beginning of the hot weather, pawn their furs and winter clothes, these being so much more carefully looked after there than they might be at home.

clever fellow, and when the days of mourning[5] were over, took his bachelor's degree. On the other hand, he was somewhat wild and very fond of gambling; and although his mother strictly prohibited such diversions, all her prohibitions were in vain. By-and-by the Grand Examiner arrived, and Hsiu came out in the fourth class. His mother was extremely angry, and refused to take food, which brought young Hsiu to his senses, and he promised her faithfully he would never gamble again. From that day he shut himself up, and the following year took a first class degree, coming out among the "senior" graduates.[6] His mother now advised him to take pupils, but his reputation as a disorderly fellow stuck to him, and no one would entrust their sons to his care.

Just then an uncle of his, named Chang, was about to start with merchandise for the capital, and recommended that Hsiu should go along with him, promising himself to pay all expenses, an offer which Hsiu was only too pleased to accept. When they reached Lin-ch'ing, they anchored outside the Custom House, where they found a great number of salt-junks, in fact a perfect forest of masts; and what with the noise of the water and the people it

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[5] Nominally of three years'—really of twenty-eight months'—duration.

[6] These are entitled to receive from Government a small allowance of rice, besides being permitted to exercise certain petty functions, for which a certain charge is authorized. See *Appendix* A.

was quite impossible to sleep. Besides, as the row was beginning to subside, the clear rattle of dice from a neighbouring boat fell upon Hsiu's ear, and before long he was itching to be back again at his old games. Listening to hear if all around him were sound asleep, he drew forth a string of cash that he had brought with him, and thought he would just go across and try his luck. So he got up quietly with his money, and was on the point of going, when he suddenly recollected his mother's injunctions, and at once tying his purse-strings laid himself down to sleep. He was far too excited, however, to close his eyes; and after a while got up again and re-opened his purse. This he did three times, until at last it was too much for him, and off he went with his money. Crossing over into the boat whence the sounds proceeded, he beheld two persons engaged in gambling for high stakes; so throwing his money on the table, he begged to be allowed to join. The others readily consented, and they began to play, Hsiu winning so rapidly that soon one of the strangers had no money left, and was obliged to get the proprietor of the boat to change a large piece of silver for him, proceeding to lay down as much as several ounces of silver for a single stake.

As the play was in full swing another man walked in, who after watching for some time at length got the proprietor to change another lump of silver for him of one hundred ounces in weight, and also asked to be allowed to join. Now Hsiu's uncle, waking up in the middle of the night, and finding his nephew gone, and

hearing the sound of dice-throwing hard by, knew at once where he was, and immediately followed him to the boat with a view of bringing him back. Finding, however, that Hsiu was a heavy winner, he said nothing to him, only carrying off a portion of his winnings to their own boat and making the others of his party get up and help him to fetch the rest, even then leaving behind a large sum for Hsiu to go on with. By-and-by the three strangers had lost all their ready money, and there wasn't a farthing left in the boat: upon which one of them proposed to play for lumps of silver, but Hsiu said he never went so high as that. This made them a little quarrelsome, Hsiu's uncle all the time trying to get him away; and the proprietor of the boat, who had only his own commission in view, managed to borrow some hundred strings of cash from another boat, and started them all again. Hsiu soon took this out of them; and, as day was beginning to dawn and the Custom House was about to open, he went off with his winnings back to his own boat.

The proprietor of the gambling-boat now found that the lumps of silver which he had changed for his customers were nothing more than so much tinsel, and rushing off in a great state of alarm to Hsiu's boat, told him what had happened and asked him to make it good; but when he discovered he was speaking to the son of his former travelling companion, Jen Chien-chih, he hung his head and slunk away covered with shame. For the proprietor of that boat was no other than Shên Chu-t'ing, of whom Hsiu had heard when he was in

Shensi; now, however, that with supernatural aid[7] the wrongs of his father had been avenged, he determined to pursue the man no further. So going into partnership with his uncle, they proceeded north together; and by the end of the year their capital had increased five-fold. Hsiu then purchased the status of *chien-shêng*,[8] and by further careful investment of his money ultimately became the richest man in that part of the country.

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[7] One of the strangers was the disembodied spirit of Hsiu's father, helping his son to take vengeance on the wicked Shên.

[8] An intermediate step between the first and second degrees, to which certain privileges are attached.

XXVI.

THE LOST BROTHER.

In Honan there lived a man named Chang, who originally belonged to Shantung. His wife had been seized and carried off by the soldiery during the period when Ching Nan's troops were overrunning the latter province;[1] and as he was frequently in Honan on business, he finally settled there and married a Honan wife, by whom he had a son named Na. By-and-by this wife died, and he took another, who bore him a son named Ch'êng. The last-mentioned lady was from the Niu family, and a very malicious woman. So jealous was she of Na, that she treated him like a slave or a beast of the field, giving him only the coarsest food, and making him cut a large bundle of wood every day, in default of which she would beat and abuse him in a most shameful manner. On the other hand, she secretly reserved all the tit-bits for Ch'êng, and also sent him to school. As Ch'êng grew up, and began to understand the meaning of filial piety and fraternal love,[2] he could not bear to see this treatment of his elder brother, and spoke pri-

[1] A.D. 1400.

[2] The first of the sixteen maxims which form the so-called Sacred Edict, embodies these two all-important family ties. The doctrine

vately to his mother about it; but she would pay no heed to what he said.

One day, when Na was on the hills performing his task, a violent storm came on, and he took shelter under a cliff. However, by the time it was over the sun had set, and he began to feel very hungry. So, shouldering his bundle, he wended his way home, where his step-mother, displeased with the small quantity of wood he had brought, refused to give him anything to eat. Quite overcome with hunger, Na went in and lay down; and when Ch'êng came back from school, and saw the state he was in, he asked him if he was ill. Na replied that he was only hungry, and then told his brother the whole story; whereupon Ch'êng coloured up and went away, returning shortly with some cakes, which he offered to Na. "Where did you get them?" asked the latter. "Oh," replied Ch'êng, "I stole some flour and got a neighbour's wife to make them for me. Eat away, and don't talk." Na ate them up; but begged his brother not to do this again, as he might get himself into trouble. "I shan't die," added he, "if I only get one meal a-day." "You are not strong," rejoined Ch'êng, "and shouldn't cut so much wood as you do."

Next day, after breakfast, Ch'êng slipped away to the

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of primogeniture is carried so far in China as to put every younger brother in a subordinate position to every elder brother. All property, however, of whatever kind, is equally divided among the sons. [The Sacred Edict was delivered by the great Emperor K'ang Hsi, and should be publicly read and explained in every city of the Empire on the first and fifteenth of each month.]

hills, and arrived at the place where Na was occupied with his usual task, to the great astonishment of the latter, who inquired what he was going to do. "To help you cut wood," replied Ch'êng. "And who sent you?" asked his brother. "No one," said he; "I came of my own accord." "Ah," cried Na, "you can't do this work; and even if you can you must not. Run along home again." Ch'êng, however, remained, aiding his brother with his hands and feet alone, but declaring that on the morrow he would bring an axe. Na tried to stop him, and found that he had already hurt his finger and worn his shoes into holes; so he began to cry, and said, "If you don't go home directly, I'll kill myself with my axe." Ch'êng then went away, his brother seeing him half-way home, and going back to finish his work by himself. He also called in the evening at Ch'êng's school, and told the master his brother was a delicate boy, and should not be allowed to go on the hills, where, he said, there were fierce tigers and wolves. The master replied that he didn't know where Ch'êng had been all the morning, but that he had caned him for playing truant. Na further pointed out to Ch'êng that by not doing as he had told him, he had let himself in for a beating. Ch'êng laughed, and said he hadn't been beaten; and the very next day off he went again, and this time with a hatchet. "I told you not to come," cried Na, much alarmed; "why have you done so?" Ch'êng made no reply, but set to work chopping wood with such energy that the perspiration poured down his face; and when he had cut about a bundle he went

away without saying a word. The master caned him again, and then Ch'êng told him how the matter stood, at which the former became full of admiration for his pupil's kind behaviour, and no longer prevented him from going. His brother, however, frequently urged him not to come, though without the slightest success; and one day, when they went with a number of others to cut wood, a tiger rushed down from the hills upon them. The wood-cutters hid themselves, in the greatest consternation; and the tiger, seizing Ch'êng, ran off with him in his mouth. Ch'êng's weight caused the tiger to move slowly; and Na, rushing after them, hacked away at the tiger's flanks with his axe. The pain only made the tiger hurry off, and in a few minutes they were out of sight. Overwhelmed with grief, Na went back to his comrades, who tried to soothe him; but he said, "My brother was no ordinary brother, and, besides, he died for me; why, then, should I live?" Here, seizing his hatchet, he made a great chop at his own neck, upon which his companions prevented him from doing himself any more mischief. The wound, however, was over an inch deep, and blood was flowing so copiously that Na became faint, and seemed at the point of death. They then tore up their clothes, and, after having bandaged his neck, proceeded to carry him home. His step-mother cried bitterly, and cursed him, saying, "You have killed my son, and now you go and cut your neck in this make-believe kind of way." "Don't be angry, mother," replied Na; "I will not live now that my brother is dead." He then threw himself on the bed;

but the pain of his wound was so great he could not sleep, and day and night he sat leaning against the wall in tears. His father, fearing that he too would die, went every now and then and gave him a little nourishment; but his wife cursed him so for doing it, that at length Na refused all food, and in three days he died.

Now in the village where these events took place there was a magician who was employed in certain devil-work among mortals,[3] and Na's ghost, happening to fall in with him, related the story of its previous sorrows, winding up by asking where his brother's ghost was. The magician said he didn't know, but turned round with Na and shewed him the way to a city where they saw an official servant coming out of the city gates. The magician stopped him, and inquired if he could tell them anything about Ch'êng; whereupon the man drew out a list from a pouch at his side, and, after carefully examining it, replied that among the male and female criminals within there was no one of the name of Chang.[4] The magician here suggested that the name might be on another list; but the man replied that he was in charge of that road, and surely ought to know. Na, however, was not satisfied, and persuaded the magician to enter the city, where they met many new

[3] Ordinary devils being unable to stand for any length of time the light and life of the upper world, the souls of certain persons are often temporarily employed in this work by the authorities of Purgatory, their bodies remaining meanwhile in a trance or cataleptic fit.

[4] Their family name.

and old devils walking about, among whom were some Na had formerly known in life. So he asked them if they could direct him to his brother; but none of them knew where he was; and suddenly there was a great commotion, the devils on all sides crying out, "P'u-sa[5] has come!" Then, looking up, Na beheld a most beautiful man descending from above, encircled by rays of glory, which shot forth above and below, lighting up all around him. "You are in luck's way, Sir," said the magician to Na; "only once in many thousand years does P'u-sa descend into hell and banish all suffering. He has come to-day." He then made Na kneel, and all the devils began with clasped hands to sing songs of praise to P'u-sa for his compassion in releasing them from their misery, shaking the very earth with the sound. P'u-sa himself, seizing a willow-branch, sprinkled them all with holy water; and when this was done the clouds and glory melted away, and he vanished from their sight. Na, who had felt the holy water fall upon his neck, now became conscious that the axe-wound was no longer painful; and the magician then proceeded to lead him back, not quitting him until within sight of the village gate. In fact, Na had been in a trance for two days, and when he recovered he told them all that he had seen, asserting positively that Ch'êng was not dead. His mother, however, looked

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[5] The Chinese corrupted form of Bodhisatva. Now widely employed to designate any deity of any kind.

upon the story as a make-up, and never ceased reviling him; and, as he had no means of proving his innocence, and his neck was now quite healed, he got up from the bed and said to his father, "I am going away to seek for my brother throughout the universe; if I do not find him, never expect to see me again, but I pray you regard me as dead." His father drew him aside and wept bitterly. However, he would not interfere with his son's design, and Na accordingly set off. Whenever he came to a large town or populous place he used to ask for news of Ch'êng; and by-and-by, when his money was all spent, he begged his way on foot. A year had passed away before he reached Nanking, and his clothes were all in tatters—as ragged as a quail's tail,[6] when suddenly he met some ten or a dozen horsemen, and drew away to the roadside. Among them was a gentleman of about forty, who appeared to be a mandarin, with numerous lusty attendants and fiery steeds accompanying him before and behind. One young man on a small palfrey, whom Na took to be the mandarin's son, and at whom, of course, he did not venture to stare, eyed him closely for some time, and at length stopped his steed, and, jumping off, cried out, "Are you not my brother?" Na then raised his head, and found that Ch'êng stood before him. Grasping each other's hands, the brothers burst into tears, and at length Ch'êng said, "My brother, how is it you have strayed so far as this?" Na told him the

[6] The usual similitude for a Chinese tatterdemalion.

circumstances, at which he was much affected; and Ch'êng's companions, jumping off their horses to see what was the matter, went off and informed the mandarin. The latter ordered one of them to give up his horse to Na, and thus they rode together back to the mandarin's house. Ch'êng then told his brother how the tiger had carried him away, and how he had been thrown down in the road, where he had passed a whole night; also how the mandarin, Mr. Chang,[7] on his return from the capital, had seen him there, and, observing that he was no common-looking youth, had set to work and brought him round again. Also how he had said to Mr. Chang that his home was a great way off, and how Mr. Chang had taken him to his own home, and finally cured him of his wounds; when, having no son of his own, he had adopted him. And now, happening to be out with his father, he had caught sight of his brother. As he was speaking Mr. Chang walked in, and Na thanked him very heartily for all his kindness; Ch'êng, meanwhile, going into the inner apartments to get some clothes for his brother. Wine and food was placed on the table; and while they were chatting together the mandarin asked Na about the number of their family in Honan. "There is only my father," replied Na, "and he is a Shantung man who came to live in Honan." "Why, I am a Shantung man too," rejoined Mr. Chang;

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[7] The surnames Chang, Wang, and Li, correspond in China to our Brown, Jones, and Robinson.

"what is the name of your father's native place?" "I have heard that it was in the Tung-ch'ang district," replied Na. "Then we are from the same place," cried the mandarin. "Why did your father go away to Honan?" "His first wife," said Na, "was carried off by soldiers, and my father lost everything he possessed; so, being in the habit of trading to Honan, he determined to settle down there for good." The mandarin then asked what his father's other name was, and when he heard, he sat some time staring at Na, and at length hurried away within. In a few moments out came an old lady, and when they had all bowed to her, she asked Na if he was Chang Ping-chih's grandson. On his replying in the affirmative, the old lady wept, and, turning to Mr. Chang, said, "These two are your younger brothers." And then she explained to Na and Ch'êng as follows:—"Three years after my marriage with your father, I was carried off to the north and made a slave[8]

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[8] Slavery, under a modified form, exists in China at the present day. All parents, having absolute power over their children, are at liberty to sell them as servants or slaves to their wealthier neighbours. This is not an infrequent occurrence in times of distress, the children even going so far as to voluntarily sell themselves, and exposing themselves in some public thoroughfare, with a notice affixed to a kind of arrow on their backs, stating that they are for sale, and the amount required from the purchaser. This I have seen with my own eyes. The chief source, however, from which the supply of slaves is kept up is kidnapping. [See No. XXIII., note 10.] As to the condition of the slaves themselves, it is by no means an unhappy one. Their master has nominally the power of life and death over them, but no Chinaman would ever dream of

in a mandarin's family. Six months afterwards your elder brother here was born, and in another six months the mandarin died. Your elder brother being his heir, he received this appointment, which he is now resigning. I have often thought of my native place, and have not unfrequently sent people to inquire about my husband, giving them the full particulars as to name and clan; but I could never hear anything of him. How should I know that he had gone to Honan?" Then, addressing Mr. Chang, she continued, "That was rather a mistake of yours, adopting your own brother." "He never told me anything about Shantung," replied Mr. Chang; "I suppose he was too young to remember the story; and I only looked at the difference between our ages." For he, the elder of the brothers, was forty-one; Ch'êng, the younger, being only sixteen; and Na, twenty years of age. Mr. Chang was very glad to get two young brothers; and when he heard the tale of their separa-

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availing himself of this dangerous prerogative. They are generally well fed, and fairly well clothed, being rarely beaten, for fear they should run away, and either be lost altogether or entail much expense to secure their capture. The girls do not have their feet compressed; hence they are infinitely more useful than small-footed women; and, on reaching a marriageable age, their masters are bound to provide them with husbands. They live on terms of easy familiarity with the whole household; and, ignorant of the meaning and value of liberty, seem quite contented with a lot which places them beyond the reach of hunger and cold. Slaves take the surnames of their masters, and the children of slaves are likewise slaves. Manumission is not uncommon; and Chinese history furnishes more than one example of a quondam slave attaining to the highest offices of State.

tion, proposed that they should all go back to their father. Mrs. Chang was afraid her husband would not care to receive her back again; but her eldest son said, "We will cast our lot together; all or none. How can there be a country where fathers are not valued?" They then sold their house and packed up, and were soon on the way to Honan. When they arrived, Ch'êng went in first to tell his father, whose third wife had died since Na left, and who now was a desolate old widower, left alone with only his own shadow. He was overjoyed to see Ch'êng again, and, looking fondly at his son, burst into a flood of tears. Ch'êng told him his mother and brothers were outside, and the old man was then perfectly transfixed with astonishment, unable either to laugh or to cry. Mr. Chang next appeared, followed by his mother; and the two old people wept in each other's arms, the late solitary widower hardly knowing what to make of the crowd of men and women-servants that suddenly filled his house. Here Ch'êng, not seeing his own mother, asked where she was; and when he heard she was dead, he fainted away, and did not come round for a good half-hour. Mr. Chang found the money for building a fine house, and engaged a tutor for his two brothers. Horses pranced in the stables, and servants chattered in the hall—it was quite a large establishment.

XXVII.

THE THREE GENII.

THERE was a certain scholar who, passing through Su-ch'ien on his way to Nanking, where he was going to try for his master's degree, happened to fall in with three other gentlemen, all graduates like himself, and was so charmed with their unusual refinement that he purchased a quantity of wine, and begged them to join him in drinking it. While thus pleasantly employed, his three friends told him their names. One was Chieh Ch'in-hêng; the second, Ch'ang Fêng-lin; and the other, Ma Hsi-ch'ih. They drank away and enjoyed themselves very much, until evening had crept upon them unperceived, when Chieh said, "Here we, who ought to have been playing the host, have been feasting at a stranger's expense. This is not right. But, come, my house is close by; I will provide you with a bed." Ch'ang and Ma got up, and, taking our hero by the arm, bade his servant come along with them. When they reached a hill to the north of the village, there before them was a house and grounds, with a stream of clear water in front of the door, all the apartments within being beautifully clean and nice. Chieh then gave

orders to light the lamps and see after his visitor's servant; whereupon Ma observed, "Of old it was customary to set intellectual refreshments before one's friends; let us not miss the opportunity of this lovely evening, but decide on four themes, one for each of us; and then, when we have finished our essays, we can set to work on the wine."[1] To this the others readily agreed; and each wrote down a theme and threw it on the table. These were next divided amongst them as they sat, and before the second watch[2] was over the essays were all completed and handed round for general inspection; and our scholar was so struck with the elegance and vigour of those by his three friends, that he ran off a copy of them and put it in his pocket. The host then produced some excellent wine, which was drunk by them in such bumpers that soon they were all tolerably tipsy. The other two now took their leave; but Chieh led the scholar into another room, where, so overcome was he with wine, that he went to bed in his boots and clothes.

The sun was high in the heavens when our hero awaked, and, looking round, he saw no house or

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[1] No Chinese wine-party is complete without more or less amusement of a literary character. Capping verses, composing impromptu odes on persons or places, giving historical and mythological allusions, are among the ordinary diversions of this kind.

[2] The Chinese night lasts from 7 p.m. to 5 a.m., and is divided into five watches of two hours each, which are subdivided into five "beats" of the watchman's wooden tom-tom.

grounds, only a dell on the hill-side, in which he and his servant had been sleeping. In great alarm he called out to the servant, who also got up, and then they found a hole with a rill of water trickling down before it. Much astonished at all this, he felt in his pocket, and there, sure enough, was the paper on which he had copied the three essays of his friends. On descending the hill and making inquiries, he found that he had been to the Grotto of the Three Genii—namely, Crab, Snake, and Frog, three very wonderful beings, who often came out for a stroll, and were occasionally visible to mortal eyes. Subsequently, when our hero entered the examination hall, lo! the three themes set were those of the Three Genii, and he came out at the top of the list.

XXVIII.

THE SINGING FROGS.

WANG Tzŭ-sun told me that when he was at the capital he saw a man in the street who gave the following performance:—He had a wooden box, divided by partitions into twelve holes, in each of which was a frog; and whenever he tapped any one of these frogs on the head with a tiny wand, the frog so touched would immediately begin to sing. Some one gave him a piece of silver, and then he tapped the frogs all round, just as if he was striking a gong; whereupon they all sang together, with their *Do*, *Ré*, *Mi*, *Fa*, in perfect time and harmony.

XXIX.

THE PERFORMING MICE.

MR. WANG also told me that there was a man at Ch'ang-an who made his living by exhibiting performing mice. He had a pouch on his back in which he kept some ten of these little animals; and whenever he got among a number of people he would fix a little frame on his back, exactly resembling a stage. Then beating a drum he would sing some old theatrical melody, at the first sounds of which the mice would issue forth from the pouch, and then, with masks on their faces, and arrayed in various costumes, they would climb up his back on to the stage, where standing on their hind-legs they would go through a performance portraying the various emotions of joy and anger, exactly like human actors of either sex.[1]

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[1] The *rôles* of women are always played in China by men, dressed up so perfectly, small feet and all, as to be quite undistinguishable from real women.

XXX.

THE TIGER OF CHAO-CH'ÊNG.

AT Chao-ch'êng there lived an old woman more than seventy years of age, who had an only son. One day he went up to the hills and was eaten by a tiger, at which his mother was so overwhelmed with grief that she hardly wished to live. With tears and lamentations she ran and told her story to the magistrate of the place, who laughed and asked her how she thought the law could be brought to bear on a tiger. But the old woman would not be comforted, and at length the magistrate lost his temper and bade her begone. Of this, however, she took no notice; and then the magistrate, in compassion for her great age and unwilling to resort to extremities, promised her that he would have the tiger arrested. Even then she would not go until the warrant had been actually issued; so the magistrate, at a loss what to do, asked his attendants which of them would undertake the job.[1] Upon this one of them,

[1] All underlings (and we might add overlings) in China being unpaid, it behoves them to make what they can out of the opportunities afforded. In most *yamêns*, the various warrants and such documents are distributed to the runners in turn, who squeeze the victims thus handed over to them. For a small bribe they will go

Li-Nêng, who happened to be gloriously drunk, stepped forward and said that he would; whereupon the warrant was immediately issued and the old woman went away. When our friend, Li-Nêng, got sober, he was sorry for what he had done; but reflecting that the whole thing was a mere trick of his master's to get rid of the old woman's importunities, did not trouble himself much about it, handing in the warrant as if the arrest had been made. "Not so," cried tbe magistrate, "you said you could do this, and now I shall not let you off." Li-Nêng was at his wits' end, and begged that he might be allowed to impress the hunters of the district,[2]

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back and report "not at home;" for a larger one "has absconded," and so on.

Gatekeepers charge a fee on every petition that passes through their hands; gaolers, for a consideration and with proper security, allow their prisoners to be at large until wanted; clerks take bribes to use their influence, honestly or dishonestly, with the magistrate who is to try the case; and all the servants share equally in the gratuities given by anyone to whom their master may send presents. The amount, whatever it may be, is enclosed in a red envelope and addressed to the sender of the present, with the words "Instead of tea," in large characters; the meaning being that the refreshments which should have been set before the servants who brought the gifts have been commuted by a money payment. This money is put into a general fund and equally divided at stated periods.

All Government officers holding a post, from the highest to the lowest, are entitled to a nominal, and what would be a quite inadequate, salary; but no one ever sees this. It is customary to refuse acceptance of it on some such grounds as want of merit, and refund it to the Imperial Treasury.

[2] Anybody is liable to be "impressed" at any moment for the service of the Government. Boat owners, sedan-chair and coolie

This was conceded; so collecting together these men, he proceeded to spend day and night among the hills in the hope of catching a tiger, and thus making a show of having fulfilled his duty.

A month passed away, during which he received several hundred blows with the bamboo,[3] and at length, in despair, he betook himself to the Ch'êng-huang temple in the eastern suburb, where, falling on his knees, he prayed and wept by turns. By-and-by a tiger walked in, and Li-Nêng, in a great fright, thought he was going to be eaten alive. But the tiger took no notice of anything, remaining seated in the doorway. Li-Nêng then addressed the animal as follows:—"O tiger, if thou didst slay that old woman's son, suffer me to bind thee with this cord;" and, drawing a rope from his pocket, threw it over the animal's neck. The tiger drooped its ears and allowing itself to be

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proprietors, especially dread the frequent and heavy calls that are made upon them for assistance, the remuneration they receive being in all cases insufficient to defray mere working expenses. But inasmuch as Chinese officials may not seize any men, or boats, or carts, holding passes to show that they are in the employ of a foreign merchant, a lively trade in such documents has sprung up in certain parts of China between the dishonest of the native and foreign commercial circles.

[3] Constables, detectives, and others, are liable to be bambooed at intervals, generally of three or five days, until the mission on which they are engaged has been successfully accomplished. In cases of theft and non-restoration of the stolen property within a given time, the detectives or constables employed may be required to make it good.

bound, followed Li-Nêng to the magistrate's office. The latter then asked it, saying, "Did you eat the old woman's son?" to which the tiger replied by nodding its head; whereupon the magistrate rejoined, "That murderers should suffer death has ever been the law.[4] Besides, this old woman had but one son, and by killing him you took from her the sole support of her declining years. But if now you will be as a son to her, your crime shall be pardoned." The tiger again nodded assent, and accordingly the magistrate gave orders that he should be released, at which the old woman was highly incensed, thinking that the tiger ought to have paid with its life for the destruction of her son.

Next morning, however, when she opened the door of her cottage, there lay a dead deer before it; and the old woman, by selling the flesh and skin, was able to purchase food. From that day this became a common event, and sometimes the tiger would even bring her money and valuables, so that she became quite rich, and was much better cared for than she had been even by her own son. Consequently, she became very well-disposed to the tiger, which often came and slept in the verandah, remaining for a whole day at a time, and giving no cause of fear either to man or beast. In a few years the old woman died, upon

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[4] Extended by the Chinese to certain cases of simple manslaughter.

which the tiger walked in and roared its lamentations in the hall. However, with all the money she had saved, she was able to have a splendid funeral; and while her relatives were standing round the grave, out rushed a tiger, and sent them all running away in fear. But the tiger merely went up to the mound, and, after roaring like a thunder-peal, disappeared again. Then the people of that place built a shrine in honour of the Faithful Tiger, and it remains there to this day.

XXXI.

A DWARF.

In the reign of K'ang Hsi, there was a magician who carried about with him a wooden box, in which he had a dwarf not much more than a foot in height. When people gave him money he would open the box and bid the little creature come out. The dwarf would then sing a song and go in again. Arriving one day at Yeh, the magistrate there seized the box, and taking it into his yamên asked the dwarf whence he came. At first he dared not reply, but on being pressed told the magistrate everything. He said he belonged to a respectable family, and that once when returning home from school he was stupified by the magician, who gave him some drug which made his limbs shrink, and then took him about to exhibit to people. The magistrate was very angry, and had the magician beheaded, himself taking charge of the dwarf. He was subsequently very anxious to get him cured, but unable to obtain the proper prescription.[1]

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[1] The Cantonese believe the following to be the usual process:—"Young children are bought or stolen at a tender age and placed in a *ch'ing*, or vase with a narrow neck, and having in this case a moveable bottom. In this receptacle the unfortunate little wretches are kept for years in a sitting posture, their heads outside, being all the while carefully tended and fed. . . . . When the child has reached the age of twenty or over, he or she is taken away to some distant place and 'discovered' in the woods as a wild man or woman."—*China Mail*, 15th May, 1878.

XXXII.

HSIANG-JU'S MISFORTUNES.

At Kuang-p'ing there lived an old man named Fêng, who had an only son called Hsiang-ju. Both of them were graduates; and the father was very particular and strict, though the family had long been poor. Mrs. Fêng and Hsiang-ju's wife had died, one shortly after the other, so that the father and son were obliged to do their household work for themselves.

One night Hsiang-ju was sitting out in the moonlight, when suddenly a young lady from next door got on the wall to have a look at him. He saw she was very pretty, and as he approached her she began to laugh. He then beckoned to her with his hand; but she did not move either to come or to go away. At length, however, she accepted his invitation, and descended the ladder that he had placed for her. In reply to Hsiang-ju's inquiries, the young lady said her name was Hung-yü, and that she lived next door; so Hsiang-ju, who was much taken with her beauty, begged her to come over frequently and have a chat. To this she readily assented, and continued to do so for several months, until one evening old Mr. Fêng, hearing sounds of talking and laughing in

his son's room, got up and looked in. Seeing Miss Hung-yü, he was exceedingly angry, and called his son out, saying, "You good-for-nothing fellow! poor as we are, why aren't you at your books, instead of wasting your time like this? A pretty thing for the neighbours to hear of!—and even if they don't hear of it, somebody else will, and shorten your life accordingly."[1] Hsiang-ju fell on his knees, and with tears implored forgiveness; whereupon his father turned to the young lady, and said, "A girl who behaves like this disgraces others as well as herself; and if people find this out, we shan't be the only ones to suffer." The old man then went back to bed in a rage, and Miss Hung-yü, weeping bitterly, said to Hsiang-ju, "Your father's reproaches have overwhelmed me with shame. Our friendship is now at an end." "I could say nothing," replied he, "as long as my father was here; but if you have any consideration for me, I pray you think nothing of his remarks." Miss Hung-yü protested, however, that they could meet no more, and then Hsiang-ju also burst into tears. "Do not weep," cried she, "our friendship was an impossible one, and time must sooner or later have put an end to these visits. Meanwhile, I hear there is a very good match to be made in the neighbourhood." Hsiang-ju replied that he was poor; but Miss Hung-yü told him to meet her again the following evening, when

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[1] Meaning that it would become known to the Arbiter of life and death in the world below, who would punish him by shortening his appointed term of years. See *The Wei-ch'i Devil*, No. CXXXI.

she would endeavour to do something for him. At the appointed time she arrived, and, producing forty ounces of silver, presented them to Hsiang-ju; telling him that at a village some distance off there was a Miss Wei, eighteen years of age, who was not yet married because of the exorbitant demands of her parents, but that a little extra outlay would secure for him the young lady's hand. Miss Hung-yü then bade him farewell, and Hsiang-ju went off to inform his father, expressing a desire to go and make inquiries, but saying nothing about the forty ounces. His father, thinking that they were not sufficiently well off, urged him not to go; however, by dint of argument, he finally persuaded the old man that, at any rate, there was no harm in trying. So he borrowed horses and attendants, and set off to the house of Mr. Wei, who was a man of considerable property; and when he got there he asked Mr. Wei to come outside and accord him a few minutes' conversation. Now the latter knew that Hsiang-ju belonged to a very good family; and when he saw all the retinue that Hsiang-ju had brought with him, he inwardly consented to the match, though he was afraid that perhaps his would-be son-in-law might not be as liberal as he would like. Hsiang-ju soon perceived what Mr. Wei's feelings were, and emptied his purse on the table, at which Mr. Wei was delighted, and begged a neighbour to allow the marriage contract to be drawn up in his house.[2] Hsiang-

[2] One important preliminary consists in the exchange of the four pairs of characters which denote the year, month, day, and hour of

ju then went in to pay his respects to Mrs. Wei, whom he found in a small, miserable room, with Miss Wei hiding behind her. Still he was pleased to see that, in spite of her homely toilette, the young lady herself was very nice-looking; and, while he was being entertained in the neighbour's house, the old lady said, "It will not be necessary for you, Sir, to come and fetch our daughter. As soon as we have made up a small trousseau for her, we will send her along to you."[3] Hsiang-ju then agreed with them upon a day for the wedding, and went home and informed his father, pretending that the Wei family only asked for respectability, and did not care about money. His father was overjoyed to hear this; and when the day came, the young lady herself arrived. She proved to be a thrifty housekeeper and an obedient wife, so that she and her husband got along capitally together. In two years she had a son, who was called Fu-êrh. And once, on the occasion of the great spring festival, she was on her way to the family tombs, with her boy in her arms, when she chanced to meet a man named Sung, who was one of the gentry of the neigh-

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the births of the contracting parties. It remains for a geomancer to determine whether these are in harmony or not; and a very simple expedient for backing out of a proposed alliance is to bribe him to declare that the nativities of the young couple could not be happily brought together.

[3] The bridegroom invariably fetches the bride from her father's house, conveying her to his home in a handsomely-gilt red sedan-chair, closed in on all sides, and accompanied by a band of music.

bourhood. This Mr. Sung had been a Censor,[4] but had purchased his retirement, and was now leading a private life, characterised by many overbearing and violent acts. He was returning from his visit to the graves of his ancestors when he saw Hsiang-ju's wife, and, attracted by her beauty, found out who she was; and imagining that, as her husband was a poor scholar, he might easily be induced for a consideration to part with the lady, sent one of his servants to find out how the land lay. When Hsiang-ju heard what was wanted, he was very angry; but, reflecting on the power of his adversary, controlled his passion, and passed the thing off with a laugh. His father, however, to whom he repeated what had occurred, got into a violent rage, and, rushing out, flung his arms about, and called Mr. Sung every name he could lay his tongue to. Mr. Sung's emissary slunk off and went home; and then a number of men were sent by the enraged Sung, and these burst into the house and gave old Feng and his son a most tremendous beating. In the middle of the hubbub Hsiang-ju's wife ran in, and, throwing her child down on the bed, tore her hair and shrieked for help. Sung's attendants im-

[4] The Censorate is a body of fifty-six officials, whose duty it is to bring matters to the notice of the Emperor which might otherwise have escaped attention; to take exception to any acts, including those of His Majesty himself, calculated to interfere with the welfare of the people; and to impeach, as occasion may require, the high provincial authorities, whose position, but for this wholesome check, would be almost unassailable. Censors are popularly termed the "ears and eyes" of the monarch.

mediately surrounded her and carried her off, while there lay her husband and his father, wounded on the ground and the baby squalling on the bed. The neighbours, pitying their wretched condition, helped them up on to the couches, and by the next day Hsiang-ju could walk with a stick; however, his father's anger was not to be appeased, and, after spitting a quantity of blood, he died. Hsiang-ju wept bitterly at this, and, taking his child in his arms, used every means to bring the offenders to justice, but without the slightest success. He then heard that his wife had put an end to her own existence, and with this his cup of misery was full. Unable to get his wrongs redressed, he often meditated assassinating Sung in the open street,[5] but was deterred

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[5] In the *Book of Rites* (I. Pt. i. v. 10), which dates, in its present form, only from the first century B.C., occurs this passage, "With the slayer of his father, a man may not live under the same heaven;" and in the *Family Sayings* (Bk. X. *ab init.*), a work which professes, though on quite insufficient authority, to record a number of the conversations and apophthegms of Confucius not given in the *Lun-yü*, or Confucian Gospels, we find the following course laid down for a man whose father has been murdered:—"He must sleep upon a grass mat, with his shield for his pillow; he must decline to take office; he must not live under the same heaven (with the murderer). When he meets him in the court or in the market-place, he must not return for a weapon, but engage him there and then;" being always careful, as the commentator observes, to carry a weapon about with him. Sir John Davis and Dr. Legge agree in stigmatizing this as "one of the objectionable principles of Confucius." It must, however, be admitted that (1) a patched-up work which appeared as we have it now from two to three centuries after Confucius's death, and (2) a confessedly apocryphal work such as the *Family Sayings*, are hardly

from attempting this by the number of his retainers and the fear of leaving his son with no one to protect him. Day and night he mourned over his lot, and his eyelids were never closed in sleep, when suddenly in walked a personage of striking appearance to condole with him on his losses. The stranger's face was covered with a huge curly beard; and Hsiang-ju, not knowing who he was, begged him to take a seat, and was about to ask whence he came, when all at once he began, "Sir! have you forgotten your father's death, your wife's disgrace?" Thereupon Hsiang-ju, suspecting him to be a spy from the Sung family, made some evasive reply, which so irritated the stranger that he roared out, "I thought you were a man; but now I know that you are a worthless, contemptible wretch." Hsiang-ju fell on his knees and implored the stranger to forgive him, saying, "I was afraid it was a trick of Sung's: I will speak frankly to you. For days I have lain, as it were, upon thorns, my mouth filled with gall, restrained only by pity for this little one and fear of breaking our ancestral line. Generous friend, will you take care of my child if I fall?" "That," replied the stranger, "is the business of women; I cannot undertake it. But what you wish others to do for you, do yourself; and that which you would do yourself, I will do for you." When Hsiang-ju

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sufficient grounds for affixing to the fair fame of China's great Sage the positive inculcation of a dangerous principle of blood-vengeance like that I have just quoted.

heard these words he knocked his head upon the ground; but the stranger took no more notice of him, and walked out. Following him to the door, Hsiang-ju asked his name, to which he replied, "If I cannot help you I shall not wish to have your reproaches; if I do help you, I shall not wish to have your gratitude." The stranger then disappeared, and Hsiang-ju, having a presentiment that some misfortune was about to happen, fled away with his child.

When night came, and the members of the Sung family were wrapped in sleep, some one found his way into their house and slew the ex-Censor and his two sons, besides a maid-servant and one of the ladies. Information was at once given to the authorities; and as the Sung family had no doubt that the murderer was Hsiang-ju, the magistrate, who was greatly alarmed,[6] sent out lictors to arrest him. Hsiang-ju, however, was nowhere to be found, a fact which tended to confirm the suspicions of the Sung family; and they, too, despatched a number of servants to aid the mandarin in effecting his capture. Towards evening the lictors and others reached a hill, and, hearing a child cry, made for the sound, and thus secured the object of their search, whom they bound and led away. As the child went on crying louder than ever, they took it from him and threw it

[6] The Chinese theory being that every official is responsible for the peace and well-being of the district committed to his charge, and even liable to punishment for occurrences over which he could not possibly have had any control.

down by the wayside, thereby nearly causing Hsiang-ju to die of grief and rage. On being brought before the magistrate he was asked why he had killed these people; to which he replied that he was falsely accused, "For," said he, "they died in the night, whereas I had gone away in the daytime. Besides," added he, "how, with a crying baby in my arms, could I scale walls and kill people?" "If you didn't kill people," cried the magistrate, "why did you run away?" Hsiang had no answer to make to this, and he was accordingly ordered to prison; whereupon he wept and said, "I can die without regret; but what has my child done that he, too, should be punished?" "You," replied the magistrate, "have slain the children of others; how can you complain if your child meets the same fate?" Hsiang-ju was then stripped of his degree[7] and subjected to all kinds of indignities, but they were unable to wring a confession from his lips;[8] and that very night, as the magistrate lay down, he heard a sharp noise of something striking the bed, and, jumping up in a fright, found, by the light of a candle, a small, keen blade sticking in the wood at the head of his couch so tightly that it could not be drawn out. Terribly alarmed at this, the magistrate walked round the room with a spear over his shoulder, but without finding anything; and then, reflecting that nothing more was to be feared from Sung, who was dead, as well as his two sons, he laid

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[7] See No. X., note 3.

[8] See No. X., note 6.

Hsiang-ju's case before the higher authorities, and obtained for him an acquittal. Hsiang-ju was released and went home. His cupboard, however, was empty, and there was nothing except his own shadow within the four walls of his house. Happily, his neighbours took pity on him and supplied him with food; and whenever he thought upon the vengeance that had been wreaked, his countenance assumed an expression of joy; but as often as his misfortunes and the extinction of his family came into his mind, his tears would begin to flow. And when he remembered the poverty of his life and the end of his ancestral line, he would seek out some solitary spot, and there burst into an ungovernable fit of grief. Thus things went on for about six months, when the search after the murderer began to be relaxed; and then Hsiang-ju petitioned for the recovery of his wife's bones, which he took home with him and buried. His sorrows made him wish to die, and he lay tossing about on the bed without any object in life, when suddenly he heard somebody knock at the door. Keeping quiet to listen, he distinguished the sound of a voice outside talking with a child; and, getting up to look, he perceived a young lady, who said to him, "Your great wrongs are all redressed, and now, luckily, you have nothing to ail you." The voice seemed familiar to him, but he could not at the moment recall where he had heard it; so he lighted a candle, and Miss Hung-yü stood before him. She was leading a small, happy-looking child by the hand; and after she and Hsiang-ju had expressed their mutual satisfaction at meeting once more, Miss Hung-yü

pushed the boy forward, saying, "Have you forgotten your father?" The boy clung to her dress, and looked shyly at Hsiang-ju, who, on examining him closely, found that he was Fu-êrh. "Where did he come from?" asked his father, in astonishment, not unmingled with tears. "I will tell you all," replied Miss Hung-yü. "I was only deceiving you when I said I belonged to a neighbouring family. I am really a fox, and, happening to go out one evening, I heard a child crying in a ditch. I took him home and brought him up; and, now that your troubles are over, I return him to you, that father and son may be together." Hsiang-ju wiped away his tears and thanked her heartily; but Fu-êrh kept close to Miss Hung-yü, whom he had come to regard as a mother, and did not seem to recognise his father again. Before day-break Miss Hung-yü said she must go away; but Hsiang-ju fell upon his knees and entreated her to stop, until at last she said she was only joking, adding that, in a new establishment like theirs, it would be a case of early to rise and late to bed. She then set to work cutting fuel and sweeping it up, toiling hard as if she had been a man, which made Hsiang-ju regret that he was too poor to have all this done for her. However, she bade him mind his books, and not trouble himself about the state of their affairs, as they were not likely to die of hunger. She also produced some money, and bought implements for spinning, besides renting a few acres of land and hiring labourers to till them. Day by day she would shoulder her hoe and work in the fields, or employ

herself in mending the roof, so that her fame as a good wife spread abroad, and the neighbours were more than ever pleased to help them. In half-a-year's time their home was like that of a well-to-do family, with plenty of servants about; but one day Hsiang-ju said to Miss Hung-yü, "With all that you have accomplished on my behalf, there is still one thing left undone." On her asking him what it was, he continued: "The examination for master's degree is at hand, and I have not yet recovered the bachelor's degree of which I was stripped." "Ah," replied she, "some time back I had your name replaced upon the list; had I waited for you to tell me, it would have been too late." Hsiang-ju marvelled very much at this, and accordingly took his master's degree. He was then thirty-six years of age, the master of broad lands and fine houses; and Miss Hung-yü, who looked delicate enough to be blown away by the wind, and yet worked harder than an ordinary labourer's wife, keeping her hands smooth and nice in spite of winter weather, gave herself out to be thirty-eight, though no one took her to be much more than twenty.

XXXIII.

CHANG'S TRANSFORMATION.

CHANG YÜ-TAN, of Chao-yuan, was a wild fellow, who pursued his studies at the Hsiao temple. Now it chanced that the magistrate of the district, Mr. Tsêng of San-han, had a daughter who was very fond of hunting, and that one day young Chang met her in the fields, and was much struck with her great beauty. She was dressed in an embroidered sable jacket, and rode about on a small palfrey, for all the world like a girl in a picture. Chang went home with the young lady still in his thoughts, his heart being deeply touched; but he soon after heard, to his infinite sorrow and dismay, that Miss Tsêng had died suddenly. Their own home being at a distance,[1] her father deposited the coffin in a temple;[2] the very temple, in fact, where her lover was residing. Accordingly Chang paid to her remains the same respect he would have offered to a

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[1] No man being allowed to hold office within a radius of 500 *li*, or nearly 200 miles, from his native place.

[2] This is a very common custom all over China.

god; he burnt incense every morning, and poured out libations at every meal, always accompanied by the following invocation:—"I had hardly seen you when your spirit became ever present to me in my dreams. But you passed suddenly away; and now, near as we are together, we are as far apart as if separated by hills and rivers. Alas! alas! In life you were under the control of your parents; now, however, there is nothing to restrain you, and with your supernatural power, I should be hearing the rustle of your robe as you approach to ease the sorrow of my heart." Day and night he prayed thus, and when some six months had passed away, and he was one night trimming his lamp to read, he raised his head and saw a young lady standing, all smiles, before him. Rising up, he inquired who she was; to which his visitor replied, "Grateful to you for your love of me, I was unable to resist the temptation of coming to thank you myself." Chang then offered her a seat, and they sat together chatting for some time. From this date the young lady used to come in every evening, and on one occasion said to Chang, "I was formerly very fond of riding and archery, shooting the musk and slaying the deer; it is a great sorrow to me to be deprived of these pleasures by death. If you have any friendly feelings towards me, I pray you recite for me the Diamond *sutra*[3] five

[3] Of all the Buddhist *sutras*, this is perhaps the favourite with the Chinese.

thousand and forty-eight times, and I will never forget your kindness." Chang did as he was asked, getting up every night and telling his beads before the coffin, until the occasion of a certain festival, when he wished to go home to his parents, and take the young lady with him. Miss Tsêng said she was afraid her feet were too tender to walk far; but Chang offered to carry her, to which she laughingly assented. It was just like carrying a child, she was so light;[4] and by degrees Chang got so accustomed to taking her about with him, that when he went up for his examination she went in too.[5] The only thing was she could not travel except at night. Later on, Chang would have gone up for his master's degree, but the young lady told him it was of no use to try, for it was not destined that he should pass; and accordingly he desisted from his intention. Four or five years afterwards, Miss Tsêng's father resigned his appointment, and so poor was he that he could not afford to pay for the removal of his daughter's coffin, but wanted to bury it economically where it was. Unfortunately, he had no ground of his own, and then Chang came forward and said that a friend of his had a piece of waste land near the temple, and that he might bury it

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[4] Contrary to the German notion that the spirit of the dead mother, coming back at night to suckle the child she has left behind, makes an impress on the bed alongside the baby.

[5] Being, of course, invisible to all except himself.

there. Mr. Tsêng was very glad to accept, and Chang kindly assisted him with the funeral,—for what reason the former was quite unable to guess. One night after this, as Miss Tsêng was sitting by Chang's side, her father having already returned home, she burst into a flood of tears, and said, "For five years we have been good friends; we must now part. I can never repay your goodness to me." Chang was alarmed, and asked her what she meant; to which she replied, "Your sympathy has told for me in the realms below. The sum of my *sutras* is complete, and to-day I am to be born again in the family of a high official, Mr. Lu, of Ho-pei. If you do not forget the present time, meet me there in fifteen years from now, on the 16th of the 8th moon." "Alas!" cried Chang, "I am already over thirty, and in fifteen years more I shall be drawing near the wood.[6] What good will our meeting do?" "I can be your servant," replied Miss Tsêng, "and so make some return to you. But come, escort me a few miles on my way; the road is beset with brambles, and I shall have some trouble with my dress." So Chang carried her as before, until they reached a high road, where they found a number of carriages and horses, the latter with one or two riders on the backs of each, and three or four, or even more persons, in every carriage. But there was one richly-decorated

[6] A very ancient expression, signifying "the grave," the word "wood" being used by synecdoche for "coffin."

carriage, with embroidered curtains and red awnings, in which sat only one old woman, who, when she saw Miss Tsêng, called out, "Ah, there you are." "Here I am," replied Miss Tsêng; and then she turned to Chang and said, "We must part here; do not forget what I told you." Chang promised he would remember; and then the old woman helped her up into the carriage, round went the wheels, off went the attendants, and they were gone. Sorrowfully Chang wended his way home, and there wrote upon the wall the date mentioned by Miss Tsêng; after which, bethinking himself of the efficacy of prayer, he took to reciting *sutras* more energetically than ever. By-and-by he dreamed that an angel appeared to him, and said, "The bent of your mind is excellent indeed, but you must visit the Southern Sea."[7] Asking how far off the Southern Sea was, the angel informed him it was close by; and then waking up, and understanding what was required of him, he fixed his sole thoughts on Buddha, and lived a purer life than before. In three years' time his two sons, Ming and Cheng, came out very high on the list at the examination for the second degree, in spite of which worldly successes Chang continued to lead his usual holy life. Then one night he dreamed that another angel led him among beautiful halls and palaces, where he saw a personage sitting down who

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[7] The supposed residence of Kuan-yin, the Chinese Goddess of Mercy, she who "hears prayers" and is the giver of children.

resembled Buddha himself. This personage said to him, "My son, your virtue is a matter of great joy; unhappily your term of life is short; and I have, therefore, made an appeal to God[8] on your behalf." Chang prostrated himself, and knocked his head upon the ground; upon which he was commanded to rise, and was served with tea, fragrant as the epidendrum. A boy was next instructed to take him to bathe in a pool, the water of which was so exquisitely clear that he could count the fishes swimming about therein. He found it warm as he walked in, and scented like the leaves of the lotus-flower; and gradually the water got deeper and deeper, until he went down altogether and passed through with his head under water. He then waked up in a fright; but from this moment he became more robust and his sight improved. As he stroked his beard the white hairs all came out, and by-and-by the black ones too; the wrinkles on his face were smoothed away, and in a few months he had the beardless face of a boy of fifteen or sixteen. He also grew very fond of playing about like other boys, and would sometimes tumble head over heels, and be picked up by his sons. Soon afterwards his wife died of old age, and his sons begged him to marry again into some good family; but he said he should be obliged to go to Ho-pei first; and then, calculating his dates, found that

[8] The great Supreme Ruler, who is supposed to have absolute sway over the various other deities of the Chinese Pantheon.

the appointed time had arrived. So he ordered his horses and servants, and set off for Ho-pei, where he discovered that there actually was a high official named Lu. Now Mr. Lu had a daughter, who when born was able to talk,[9] and became very clever and beautiful as she grew up. She was the idol of her parents, and had been asked in marriage by many suitors, but would not accept any of them; and when her father and mother inquired her motives for refusal, she told them the story of her engagement in her former life. "Silly child," said they, reckoning up the time, and laughing at her; "that Mr. Chang would now be about fifty years of age, a changed and feeble old man. Even if he is still alive, his hair will be white and his teeth gone." But their daughter would not listen to them; and, finding her so obstinate in her determination, they instructed the doorkeeper to admit no strangers until the appointed time should have passed, that thus her expectations might be brought to naught. Before long, Chang arrived, but the doorkeeper would not let him in, and he went back to his inn in great distress, not knowing what to do. He then took to walking about the fields, and secretly making inquiries concerning the family, Meanwhile Miss Tsêng thought that he had broken his engagement, and refused all food, giving herself up to tears alone. Her mother argued that he was probably dead,

[9] Generally spoken of as an inauspicious phenomenon.

or in any case that the breach of engagement was no fault of her daughter's; to none of which, however would Miss Tseng listen, lying where she was the live-long day. Mr. Lu now became anxious about her, and determined to see what manner of man this Chang might be; so, on the plea of taking a walk, he went out to meet him in the fields, and to his astonishment found quite a young man. They sat down together on some leaves, and after chatting awhile Mr. Lu was so charmed with his young friend's bearing that he invited him to his house. No sooner had they arrived, than Mr. Lu begged Chang to excuse him a moment, and ran in first to tell his daughter, who exerted herself to get up and take a peep at the stranger. Finding, however, that he was not the Chang she had formerly known, she burst into tears and crept back to bed, upbraiding her parents for trying to deceive her thus. Her father declared he was no other than Chang, but his daughter replied only with tears; and then he went back very much upset to his guest, whom he treated with great want of courtesy. Chang asked him if he was not the Mr. Lu, of such and such a position, to which he replied in a vacant kind of way that he was, looking the other way all the time and paying no attention to Chang. The latter did not approve of this behaviour, and accordingly took his leave; and in a few days Miss Tsêng had cried herself to death. Chang then dreamed that she appeared to him, and said, "Was it you after all that I saw? You were so changed in age and appearance that when I looked upon your face I

did not know you. I have already died from grief; but if you make haste to the little street shrine and summon my spirit back, I may still recover. Be not late!" Chang then waked, and immediately made inquiries at Mr. Lu's house, when he found that the young lady had been dead two days. Telling her father his dream, they went forth to summon the spirit back; and on opening the shrc , and throwing themselves with lamentations over the corpse, .. noise was heard in the young lady's throat, and her cherry lips parted. They moved her on to a bed, aud soon she began to moan, to the great joy of Mr. Lu, who took Chang out of the room and, over a bumper of wine, asked some questions about his family. He was glad to find that Chang was a suitable match for his daughter, and an auspicious day was fixed for the wedding. In a fortnight the event came off, the bride being escorted to Chang's house by her father, who remained with them six months before going home again. They were a youthful pair, and people who didn't know the story mistook Chang's son and daughter-in-law for his father and mother. A year later Mr. Lu died; and his son, a mere child, having been badly wounded by some scoundrels, and the family property being almost gone, Chang made him come and live with them, and be one of their own family.

XXXIV.

A TAOIST PRIEST.

ONCE upon a time there was a Mr. Han, who belonged to a wealthy family, and was fond of entertaining people. A man named Hsü, of the same town, frequently joined him over the bottle; and on one occasion when they were together a Taoist priest came to the door with his alm's-bowl[1] in his hand. The servants threw him some money and food, but the priest would not accept them, neither would he go away; and at length they would take no more notice of him. Mr. Han heard the noise of the priest knocking his bowl[2] going on for a long time, and asked his servants what was the matter; and they had hardly told him when the priest himself walked in.

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[1] This is the Buddhist *patra*, which modern writers have come to regard as an instrumental part of the Taoist religion. See No. IV., note 1.

[2] To call attention to his presence. Beggars in China accomplish their purpose more effectually by beating a gong in the shop where they ask for alms so loudly as to prevent the shopkeeper from hearing his customers speak; or they vary the performance by swinging about some dead animal tied to the end of a stick.

Mr. Han begged him to be seated; whereupon the priest bowed to both gentlemen and took his seat. On making the usual inquiries, they found that he lived at an old tumble-down temple to the east of the town, and Mr. Han expressed regret at not having heard sooner of his arrival, so that he might have shown him the proper hospitality of a resident. The priest said that he had only recently arrived, and had no friends in the place; but hearing that Mr. Han was a jovial fellow, he had been very anxious to take a glass with him. Mr. Han then ordered wine, and the priest soon distinguished himself as a hard drinker; Mr. Hsü treating him all the time with a certain amount of disrespect in consequence of his shabby appearance, while Mr. Han made allowances for him as being a traveller. When he had drunk over twenty large cups of wine, the priest took his leave, returning subsequently whenever any jollification was going on, no matter whether it was eating or drinking. Even Han began now to tire a little of him; and on one occasion Hsü said to him in raillery, "Good priest, you seem to like being a guest; why don't you play the

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Mendicity not being prohibited in China, there results a system of black mail payable by every householder to a beggars' guild, and this frees them from the visits of the beggars of their own particular district; many, however, do not subscribe, but take their chance in the struggle as to who will tire out the other first, the shopkeeper, who has all to lose, being careful to stop short of anything like manual violence, which would forthwith bring down upon him the myrmidons of the law, and subject him to innumerable "squeezes."

host sometimes for a change?" "Ah," replied the priest, "I am much the same as yourself—a mouth carried between a couple of shoulders."[3] This put Hsü to shame, and he had no answer to make; so the priest continued, "But although that is so, I have been revolving the question with myself for some time, and when we do meet I shall do my best to repay your kindness with a cup of my own poor wine." When they had finished drinking, the priest said he hoped he should have the pleasure of their company the following day at noon; and at the appointed time the two friends went together, not expecting, however, to find anything ready for them. But the priest was waiting for them in the street; and passing through a handsome court-yard, they beheld long suites of elegant apartments stretching away before them. In great astonishment, they remarked to the priest that they had not visited this temple for some time, and asked when it had been thus repaired; to which he replied that the work had been only lately completed. They then went inside, and there was a magnificently-decorated apartment, such as would not be found even in the houses of the wealthy. This made them begin to feel more respect for their host; and no sooner had they sat down than wine and food were served by a number of boys, all about sixteen years of age, and dressed in embroidered coats, with red shoes. The wine and the eatables

[3] *Sc.* a "sponge."

were delicious, and very nicely served; and when the dinner was taken away, a course of rare fruits was put on the table, the names of all of which it would be impossible to mention. They were arranged in dishes of crystal and jade, the brilliancy of which lighted up the surrounding furniture; and the goblets in which the wine was poured were of glass,[4] and more than a foot in circumference. The priest here cried out, "Call the Shih sisters," whereupon one of the boys went out, and in a few moments two elegant young ladies walked in. The first was tall and slim like a willow wand; the other was short and very young, both being exceedingly pretty girls. Being told to sing while the company were drinking, the younger beat time and sang a song, while the elder accompanied her on the flageolet. They acquitted themselves admirably; and, when the song was over, the priest holding his goblet bottom upwards in the air, challenged his guests to follow his example, bidding his servants pour out more wine all round. He then turned to the girls, and remarked that they had not danced for a long time, asking if they were still able to do so; upon which a carpet was spread by one of the boys, and the two young ladies proceeded to dance, their long robes waving about and perfuming the air around. The dance concluded, they leant against a painted screen, while the two guests gradually

[4] Said to have been introduced into China from the west by a eunuch named San-pao during the Ming dynasty.

became more and more confused, and were at last irrecoverably drunk. The priest took no notice of them; but when he had finished drinking, he got up and said, "Pray, go on with your wine; I am going to rest awhile, and will return by-and-by." He then went away, and lay down on a splendid couch at the other end of the room; at which Hsü was very angry, and shouted out, "Priest, you are a rude fellow," at the same time making towards him with a view of rousing him up. The priest then ran out, and Han and Hsü lay down to sleep, one at each end of the room, on elaborately-carved couches covered with beautiful mattresses. When they woke up, they found themselves lying in the road, Mr. Hsü with his head in a dirty drain. Hard by were a couple of rush huts; but everything else was gone.

XXXV.

THE FIGHT WITH THE FOXES.

In the province of Chih-li, there was a wealthy family in want of a tutor. One day a graduate presented himself at the door, and was asked by the master of the house to walk in; and he conversed so pleasantly that in a short time it was clear to both sides that they were mutually pleased with each other. The tutor said his name was Hu; and when the usual present had been made to him, he was forthwith provided with apartments, and entered very energetically upon his duties, proving himself a scholar of no mean order. He was, however, very fond of roaming, and generally came back in the middle of the night, not troubling himself to knock if the door was locked but suddenly appearing on the inside. It was therefore suspected that he was a fox, though as his intentions seemed to be harmless, he was treated extremely well, and not with any want of courtesy as if he had been something uncanny. By-and-by he discovered that his master

had a daughter,[1] and being desirous of securing the match was always dropping hints to that effect, which his master, on the other hand, invariably pretended not to understand. One day he went off for a holiday, and on the next day a stranger called; who, tying a black mule at the door, accepted the invitation of the master to take a seat within. He was about fifty years of age, very neat and clean in his dress, and gentlemanly in his manners. When they were seated, the stranger began by saying that he was come with proposals of marriage on behalf of Mr. Hu; to which his host, after some consideration, replied that he and Mr. Hu got along excellently well as friends, and there was no object in bringing about a closer connection. "Besides," added he, "my daughter is already betrothed, and I beg you, therefore, to ask Mr. Hu to excuse me." The stranger said he was quite sure the young lady was not engaged, and inquired what might be the objection to the match: but it was all of no avail, until at length he remarked, "Mr. Hu is of a good family; I see no reason why you should have such an aversion to him." "Well, then," replied the other, "I will tell you what it is. We don't like his *species*." The stranger here got very angry, and his host also lost his temper, so that they came to high words, and were already on the way to blows, when the latter bade his servants give the stranger a beating

[1] The women's apartments being quite separate from the rest of a Chinese house, male visitors consequently know nothing about their inhabitants.

and turn him out. The stranger then retired, leaving his mule behind him; and when they drew near to look at it they found a huge creature with black hair, drooping ears, and a long tail. They tried to lead it away, but it would not move; and on giving it a shove with the hand from behind, it toppled over and was discovered to be only of straw. In consequence of the angry words that had been said, the master of the house felt sure that there would be an attempt at revenge, and accordingly made all preparations; and sure enough the next day a whole host of fox-soldiers arrived, some on horseback, some on foot, some with spears, and others with cross-bows, men and horses trampling along with an indescribable din. The family were afraid to leave the house, and the foxes shouted out to set the place on fire, at which the inmates were dreadfully alarmed; but just then one of the bravest of them rushed forth with a number of the servants to engage the foxes. Stones and arrows flew about in all directions, and many on both sides were wounded; at length, however, the foxes drew off leaving their swords on the field. These glittered like frost or snow, but when picked up turned out to be only millet-stalks. "Is this all their cunning?" cried their adversary, laughing, at the same time making still more careful preparations in case the foxes should come again. Next day they were deliberating together, when suddenly a giant descended upon them from the sky. He was over ten feet in height by several feet in breadth, and brandished a sword as broad as half a

door; but they attacked him so vigorously with arrows and stones that he was soon stretched dead upon the ground, when they saw that he was made of grass. Our friends now began to make light of their fox-foes, and as they saw nothing more of them for three days their precautions were somewhat relaxed. The foxes, however, soon reappeared, armed with bows and arrows, and succeeded in shooting the master of the house in the back, disappearing when he summoned his servants and proceeded to attack them. Then, drawing the arrow from his back, he found it was a long thorn; and thus the foxes went on for a month or so, coming and going, and making it necessary to take precautions, though not really inflicting any serious injury. This annoyed the master of the family very much, until one day Mr. Hu[2] himself appeared with a troop of soldiers at his back, and he immediately went out to meet him. Mr. Hu withdrew among his men, but the master called to him to come forth, and then asked him what he had done that soldiers should be thus brought against his family. The foxes were now on the point of discharging their arrows; Mr. Hu, however, stopped them; whereupon he and his old master shook hands, and the latter invited him to walk into his old room. Wine being served, his host observed, "You, Mr. Hu, are a man of intelligence, and I trust you will make allowances for me. Friends

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[2] See No. XIII., note 1.

as we were, I should naturally have been glad to form a connection with you; your carriages, however, horses, houses, etc., are not those of ordinary mortals; and even had my daughter consented, you must know the thing would have been impossible, she being still a great deal too young." Mr. Hu was somewhat disconcerted at this, but his host continued, "It's of no consequence; we can still be friends as before, and if you do not despise us earthly creatures, there is my son whom you have taught; he is fifteen years old, and I should be proud to see him connected with you if such an arrangement should be feasible." Mr. Hu was delighted, and said, "I have a daughter one year younger than your son; she is neither ugly nor stupid. How would she do?" His host got up and made a low bow, which Mr. Hu forthwith returned, and they then became the best of friends, forgetting all about the former unpleasantness. Wine was given to Mr. Hu's attendants, and every one was made happy. The host now inquired where Mr. Hu lived, that the ceremony of pouring out a libation to the geese[3] might be performed; but Mr. Hu said this would not be necessary, and remained drinking till night, when he went away again. From this time there was no more trouble; and a year passed without any news of Mr. Hu, so that

[3] A very ancient custom in China, originating in a belief that these birds never mate a second time. The libation is made on the occasion of the bridegroom fetching his bride from her father's house.

it seemed as if he wished to get out of his bargain. The family, however, went on waiting, and in six months more Mr. Hu reappeared, when, after a few general remarks, he declared that his daughter was ready, and requested that an auspicious day might be fixed for her to come to her husband's home. This being arranged, the young lady arrived with a retinue of sedan-chairs, and horses, and a beautiful trousseau that nearly filled a room.[4] She was unusually respectful to her father and mother-in-law, and the former was much pleased with the match. Her father and a younger brother of his had escorted her to the house, and conversing away in a most refined style they sat drinking till daybreak before they went away. The bride herself had the gift of foreknowing whether the harvest would be good or bad, and her advice was always taken in such matters. Mr. Hu and his brother, and also their mother, often came to visit her in her new home, and were then very frequently seen by people.

[4] A Chinese trousseau, in addition to clothes and jewels, consists of tables and chairs, and all kinds of house furniture and ornaments.

XXXVI.

THE KING.

A CERTAIN Governor of Hu-nan despatched a magistrate to the capital in charge of treasure to the amount of six hundred thousand ounces of silver. On the road the magistrate encountered a violent storm of rain, which so delayed him that night came on before he was able to reach the next station. He therefore took refuge in an old temple; but, when morning came, he was horrified to find that the treasure had disappeared. Unable to fix the guilt on any one, he returned forthwith to the Governor and told him the whole story. The latter, however, refused to believe what the magistrate said, and would have had him severely punished, but that each and all of his attendants stoutly corroborated his statements; and accordingly he bade him return and endeavour to find the missing silver. When the magistrate got back to the temple, he met an extraordinary-looking blind man, who informed him that he could read people's thoughts, and further went on to say that the magistrate had come there on a matter of money. The latter replied that it was so, and recounted the misfortune that had overtaken him; whereupon the

blind man called for sedan-chairs, and told the magistrate to follow and see for himself, which he accordingly did, accompanied by all his retinue. If the blind man said east, they went east; or if north, north; journeying along for five days until far among the hills, where they beheld a large city with a great number of inhabitants. They entered the gates and proceeded on for a short distance, when suddenly the blind man cried, "Stop!" and, alighting from his chair, pointed to a lofty door facing the west, at which he told the magistrate to knock and make what inquiries were necessary. He then bowed and took his leave, and the magistrate obeyed his instructions, whereupon a man came out in reply to his summons. He was dressed in the fashion of the Han dynasty,[1] and did not say what his name was; but as soon as the magistrate informed him wherefore he had come, he replied that if the latter would wait a few days he himself would assist him in the matter. The man then conducted the magistrate within, and giving him a room to himself, provided him regularly with food and drink. One day he chanced to stroll away to the back of the building, and there found a beautiful garden with dense avenues of pine-trees and smooth lawns of fine grass. After wandering about for some time among the arbours and ornamental buildings, the magistrate came to a lofty kiosque, and mounted the steps, when he saw hanging on the wall before him a number of

[1] Which ended some sixteen hundred years ago.

human skins, each with its eyes, nose, ears, mouth, and heart.[2] Horrified at this, he beat a hasty retreat to his quarters, convinced that he was about to leave his own skin in this out-of-the-way place, and giving himself up for lost. He reflected, however, that he should probably gain nothing by trying to escape, and made up his mind to wait; and on the following day the same man came to fetch him, saying he could now have an audience. The magistrate replied that he was ready; and his conductor then mounted a fiery steed, leaving the other to follow on foot. By-and-by they reached a door like that leading into a Viceroy's *yamên*, where stood on either side crowds of official servants, preserving the utmost silence and decorum. The man here dismounted and led the magistrate inside; and after passing through another door they came into the presence of a king, who wore a cap decorated with pearls, and an embroidered sash, and sat facing the south. The magistrate rushed forward and prostrated himself on the ground; upon which the king asked him if he was the Hu-nan official who had been charged with the conveyance of treasure. On his answering in the affirmative, the king said, "The money is all here; it's a mere trifle, but I have no objection to receive it as a present from the Governor." The magistrate here burst into tears, and declared that

[2] Corresponding with our five "senses," the heart taking the place of the brain, and being regarded by Chinese doctors as the seat not only of intelligence and the passions, but also of all sensation.

his term of grace had already expired: that he would be punished if he went back thus, especially as he would have no evidence to adduce in substantiation of his story. "That is easy enough," replied the king, and put into his hands a thick letter, which he bade him give to the Governor, assuring him that this would prevent him from getting into any trouble. He also provided him with an escort; and the magistrate, who dared not argue the point further, sorrowfully accepted the letter and took his departure. The road he travelled along was not that by which he had come; and when the hills ended, his escort left him and went back. In a few days more he reached Ch'ang-sha, and respectfully informed the Governor of what had taken place; but the Governor thought he was telling more lies, and in a great rage bade the attendants bind him hand and foot. The magistrate then drew the letter forth from his coat; and when the Governor broke the seal and saw its contents, his face turned deadly pale. He gave orders for the magistrate to be unbound, remarking that the loss of the treasure was of no importance, and that the magistrate was free to go. Instructions were next issued that the amount was to be made up in some way or other and forwarded to the capital; and meanwhile the Governor fell sick and died.

Now this Governor had had a wife of whom he was dotingly fond; and one morning when they waked up, lo! all her hair was gone. The whole establishment was in dismay, no one knowing what to make of such an occurrence. But the letter above-mentioned contained

that hair, accompanied by the following words:—"Ever since you first entered into public life your career has been one of peculation and avarice. The six hundred thousand ounces of silver are safely stored in my treasury. Make good this sum from your own accumulated extortions. The officer you charged with the treasure is innocent; he must not be wrongly punished. On a former occasion I took your wife's hair as a gentle warning. If now you disobey my injunctions, it will not be long before I have your head. Herewith I return the hair as an evidence of what I say." When the Governor was dead, his family divulged the contents of the letter; and some of his subordinates sent men to search for the city, but they only found range upon range of inaccessible mountains, with nothing like a road or path.

XXXVII.

ENGAGED TO A NUN.

At I-ling, in Hupei, there lived a young man named Chên Yü, the son of a graduate. He was a good scholar and a handsome fellow, and had made a reputation for himself even before he arrived at manhood. When quite a boy, a physiognomist had predicted that he would marry a Taoist nun; but his parents regarded it only as a joke, and made several attempts to get him a different kind of wife. Their efforts, however, had not hitherto proved successful, the difficulty being to find a suitable match.

Now his maternal grandmother lived at Huang-kang; and on one occasion, when young Chên was paying her a visit, he heard some one say that of the four Yüns at Huang-chou the youngest had no peer. This remark referred to some very nice looking nuns who lived in a temple[1] a few miles from his grandmother's house; and

[1] These nunneries, of which there are plenty in China, are well worth visiting, and may be freely entered by both sexes. Sometimes there are as many as a hundred nuns living together in one temple, and to all appearances devoting their lives to religious exercises; report, however, tells many tales of broken vows, and makes sad havoc generally with the reputation of these fair vestals.

accordingly Chên secretly set off to see them, and, knocking at the door, was very cordially received by the four ladies, who were persons of considerable refinement. The youngest was a girl of incomparable beauty, and Chên could not keep his eyes off her, until at last she put her hand up to her face and looked the other way. Her companions now going out of the room to get tea for their visitor, Chên availed himself of the opportunity to ask the young lady's name; to which she replied that she was called Yün-ch'i, and that her surname was Ch'ên. "How extraordinary!" cried Chên; "and mine is P'an." [2] This made her blush very much, and she bent her head down and made no answer; by-and-by rising up and going away. The tea then came in, accompanied by some nice fruit, and the nuns began telling him their names. One was Pai Yün-shên, and thirty odd years of age; another was Shêng Yün-mien, just twenty; and the third was Liang Yün-tung, twenty-four or five years old, but the junior in point of religious standing.[3] Yün-ch'i did not re-appear, and at length Chên grew anxious to see her again, and asked where she was. Miss Pai told him her sister was afraid of strangers, and Chên then got up and took his leave in spite of their efforts to detain him. "If you want to see Yün-ch'i you had better come again to-morrow," said Miss Pai; and

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[2] In corresponding English, this would be:—The young lady said her name was Eloïsa. "How funny!" cried Chên, "and mine is Abelard."

[3] That is, she was the last to take the vows.

Chên, who went home thinking of nothing but Yün-ch'i, did return to the temple on the following day. All the nuns were there except Yün-ch'i, but he hardly liked to begin by inquiring after her; and then they pressed him to stay and take dinner with them, accepting no excuses, Miss Pai herself setting food and chop-sticks before him, and urging him to eat. When he asked where Yün-ch'i was, they said she would come directly; but evening gradually drew on and Chên rose to go home. Thereupon they all entreated him to stay, promising that if he did so they would make Yün-ch'i come in. Chên then agreed to remain; the lamps were lighted, and wine was freely served round, until at last he said he was so tipsy he couldn't take any more. "Three bumpers more," cried Miss Pai, "and then we will send for Yün-ch'i." So Chên drank off his three cups, whereupon Miss Liang said he must also drink three with her, which he did, turning his wine-cup down on the table[4] and declaring that he would have no more. "The gentleman won't condescend to drink with us," said Miss Pai to Miss Liang, "so you had better call in Yün-ch'i, and tell the fair Eloïsa that her Abelard is awaiting her." In a few moments Miss Liang came back and told Chên that Yün-ch'i would not appear; upon which he went off in a huff, without saying a word to either of them, and for several days did not go near the place again. He could

[4] The usual signal that a person does not wish to take any more wine.

not, however, forget Yün-ch'i, and was always hanging about on the watch, until one afternoon he observed Miss Pai go out, at which he was delighted, for he wasn't much afraid of Miss Liang, and at once ran up to the temple and knocked at the door. Yün-mien answered his knock, and from her he discovered that Miss Liang had also gone out on business. He then asked for Yün-ch'i, and Yün-mien led him into another court-yard, where she called out, "Yün-ch'i! here's a visitor." At this the door of the room was immediately slammed, and Yün-mien laughed and told Chên she had locked herself in. Chên was on the point of saying something, when Yün-mien moved away, and a voice was heard from the other side of the window, "They all declare I'm setting my cap at you, Sir; and if you come here again, I cannot answer for my safety. I do not wish to remain a nun, and if I could only meet with a gentleman like you, Mr. P'an, I would be a handmaid to him all the days of my life." Chên offered his hand and heart to the young lady on the spot; but she reminded him that her education for the priesthood had not been accomplished without expense, "and if you truly love me," added she, "bring twenty ounces of silver wherewith to purchase my freedom. I will wait for you three years with the utmost fidelity." Chên assented to this, and was about to tell her who he really was, when Yün-mien returned and they all went out together, Chên now bidding them farewell and going back to his grandmother's. After this he always had Yün-ch'i in his thoughts, and wanted very much to get another interview

with her and be near her once again, but at this juncture he heard that his father was dangerously ill, and promptly set off on his way home, travelling day and night. His father died, and his mother who then ruled the household was such a severe person that he dared not tell her what was nearest to his heart. Meanwhile he scraped together all the money he could; and refused all proposals of marriage on the score of being in mourning for his father.[5] His mother, however, insisted on his taking a wife; and he then told her that when he was with his grandmother at Huang-kang, an arrangement had been made that he was to marry a Miss Ch'ên, to which he himself was quite ready to accede; and that now, although his father's death had stopped all communications on the subject, he could hardly do better than pay a visit to his grandmother and see how matters stood, promising that if the affair was not actually settled he would obey his mother's commands. His mother consented to this, and off he started with the money he had saved; but when he reached Huang-kang and went off to the temple, he found the place desolate and no longer what it had been. Entering in, he saw only one old priestess employed in cooking her food; and on making inquiries of her, she told him that the Abbess had died in the previous year, and that the four nuns had gone away in different directions. According to

[5] This would carry him well on into the third of the years during which Yün-ch'i had promised to wait for him.

her, Yün-ch'i was living in the northern quarter of the city, and thither he proceeded forthwith; but after asking for her at all the temples in the neighbourhood, he could get no news of her, and returned sorrowfully home, pretending to his mother that his uncle had said Mr. Ch'ên had gone away, and that as soon as he came back they would send a servant to let him know.

Some months after these events, Chên's mother went on a visit to her own home, and mentioned this story in conversation with her old mother, who, to her astonishment, knew nothing at all about it, but suggested that Chên and his uncle must have concocted the thing together. Luckily, however, for Chên his uncle was away at that time, and they had no means of getting at the real truth. Meanwhile, Chên's mother went away to the Lily Hill to fulfil a vow she had made, and remained all night at an inn at the foot of the hill. That evening the landlord knocked at her door and ushered in a young priestess to share the room. The girl said her name was Yün-ch'i; and when she heard that Chên's mother lived at I-ling, she went and sat by her side, and poured out to her a long tale of tribulation, finishing up by saying that she had a cousin named P'an, at I-ling, and begging Chen's mother to send some one to tell him where she would be found. "Every day I suffer," added she, "and each day seems like a year. Tell him to come quickly, or I may be gone." Chên's mother inquired what his other name might be, but she said she did not know; to which the old lady replied that it was of no consequence, as, being a graduate, it would be

easy to find him out. Early in the morning Chên's mother bade the girl farewell, the latter again begging her not to forget; and when she reached home she told Chên what had occurred. Chên threw himself on his knees, and told his mother that he was the P'an to whom the young lady alluded; and after hearing how the engagement had come about, his mother was exceedingly angry, and said, "Undutiful boy! how will you face your relations with a nun for a wife?" Chên hung his head and made no reply; but shortly afterwards when he went up for his examination, he presented himself at the address given by Yün-ch'i—only, however, to find that the young lady had gone away a fortnight before. He then returned home and fell into a bad state of health, when his grandmother died and his mother set off to assist at her funeral. On her way back she missed the right road and reached the house of some people named Ching, who turned out to be cousins of hers. They invited her in, and there she saw a young girl of about eighteen sitting in the parlour, and as great a beauty as she had ever set eyes on. Now, as she was always thinking of making a good match for her son, and curing him of his settled melancholy, she asked who the young lady might be; and they told her that her name was Wang,—that she was a connection of their own, and that her father and mother being dead, she was staying temporarily with them. Chên's mother inquired the name of Miss Wang's betrothed, but they said she was not engaged; and then taking her hand, she entered into conversation, and was very much charmed with her. Passing the

night there, Chên's mother took her cousin into her confidence, and the latter agreed that it would be a capital match; "but," added she, "this young lady is somewhat ambitious, or she would hardly have remained single so long. We must think about it." Meanwhile, Chên's mother and Miss Wang got on so extremely well together that they were already on the terms of mother and daughter; and Miss Wang was invited to accompany her home. This invitation she readily accepted, and next day they went back; Chên's mother, who wished to see her son free from his present trouble, bidding one of the servants tell him that she had brought home a nice wife for him; Chên did not believe this; but on peeping through the window beheld a young lady much prettier even than Yün-ch'i herself. He now began to reflect that the three years agreed upon had already expired; that Yün-chi had gone no one knew whither, and had probably by this time found another husband; so he had no difficulty in entertaining the thought of marrying this young lady, and soon regained his health. His mother then caused the young people to meet, and be introduced to one another; saying to Miss Wang, when her son had left the room, "Did you guess why I invited you to come home with me?" "I did," replied the young lady, "but I don't think you guessed what was *my* object in coming. Some years ago I was betrothed to a Mr. P'an, of I-ling. I have heard nothing of him for a long time. If he has found another wife I will be your daughter-in-law; if not, I will ever regard you as my own mother, and endeavour to repay you for your

kindness to me." "As there is an actual engagement," replied Chên's mother, "I will say no more; but when I was at the Lily Hill there was a Taoist nun inquiring after this Mr. P'an, and now you again, though, as a matter of fact, there is no Mr. P'an in I-ling at all." "What!" cried Miss Wang, "are you that lady I met? I am the person who inquired for Mr. P'an." "If that is so," replied Chên's mother with a smile, "then your Mr. P'an is not far off." "Where is he?" said she; and then Chên's mother bade a maid-servant lead her out to her son and ask him. "Is your name Yün-ch'i?" said Chên, in great astonishment; and when the young lady asked him how he knew it, he told her the whole story of his pretending to be a Mr. P'an. But when Yün-ch'i found out to whom she was talking, she was abashed, and went back and told his mother, who inquired how she came to have two names. "My real name is Wang," replied the young lady; "but the old Abbess, being very fond of me, made me take her own name." Chên's mother was overjoyed at all this, and an auspicious day was immediately fixed for the celebration of their marriage.

XXXVIII.

THE YOUNG LADY OF THE TUNG-T'ING LAKE.

The spirits of the Tung-t'ing lake[1] are very much in the habit of borrowing boats. Sometimes the cable of an empty junk will cast itself off, and away goes the vessel over the waves to the sound of music in the air above. The boatmen crouch down in one corner and hide their faces, not daring to look up until the trip is over and they are once more at their old anchorage.

Now a certain Mr. Lin, returning home after having failed at the examination for Master's degree, was lying down very tipsy on the deck of his boat, when suddenly strains of music and singing began to be heard. The boatmen shook Mr. Lin, but failing to rouse him, ran down and hid themselves in the hold below. Then some one came and lifted him up, letting him drop again on to the deck, where he was allowed to remain in the same drunken sleep as before. By-and-by the

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[1] The celebrated lake in Hu-nan, round which has gathered so much of the folk-lore of China.

noise of the various instruments became almost deafening, and Lin, partially waking up, smelt a delicious odour of perfumes filling the air around him. Opening his eyes, he saw that the boat was crowded with a number of beautiful girls; and knowing that something strange was going on, he pretended to be fast asleep. There was then a call for Chih-ch'êng, upon which a young waiting-maid came forward and stood quite close to Mr. Lin's head. Her stockings were the colour of the kingfisher's wing, and her feet encased in tiny purple shoes, no bigger than one's finger. Much smitten with this young lady, he took hold of her stocking with his teeth, causing her, the next time she moved, to fall forward flat on her face. Some one, evidently in authority, asked what was the matter; and when he heard the explanation, was very angry, and gave orders to take off Mr. Lin's head. Soldiers now came and bound Lin, and on getting up he beheld a man sitting with his face to the south, and dressed in the garments of a king. "Sire," cried Lin, as he was being led away, "the king of the Tung-t'ing lake was a mortal named Lin; your servant's name is Lin also. His Majesty was a disappointed candidate; your servant is one too. His Majesty met the Dragon Lady, and was made immortal; your servant has played a trick upon this girl, and he is to die. Why this inequality of fortunes?" When the king heard this, he bade them bring him back, and asked him, saying, "Are you, then, a disappointed candidate?" Lin said he was; whereupon the king handed him writing materials, and or-

dered him to compose an ode upon a lady's head-dress. Some time passed before Lin, who was a scholar of some repute in his own neighbourhood, had done more than sit thinking about what he should write; and at length the king upbraided him, saying, "Come, come, a man of your reputation should not take so long." "Sire," replied Lin, laying down his pen, "it took ten years to complete the Songs of the Three Kingdoms; whereby it may be known that the value of compositions depends more upon the labour given to them than the speed with which they are written." The king laughed, and waited patiently from early morning till noon, when a copy of the verses was put into his hand, with which he declared himself very pleased. He now commanded that Lin should be served with wine; and shortly after there followed a collation of all kinds of curious dishes, in the middle of which an officer came in and reported that the register of people to be drowned had been made up. "How many in all?" asked the king. "Two hundred and twenty-eight," was the reply; and then the king inquired who had been deputed to carry it out; whereupon he was informed that the generals Mao and Nan had been appointed to do the work. Lin here rose to take leave, and the king presented him with ten ounces of pure gold and a crystal square,[2] telling him that it would preserve him from any danger he might encounter

[2] The instrument used by masons is here meant.

on the lake. At this moment the king's retinue and horses ranged themselves in proper order upon the surface of the lake; and His Majesty, stepping from the boat into his sedan-chair, disappeared from view.

When everything had been quiet for a long time, the boatmen emerged from the hold, and proceeded to shape their course northwards. The wind, however, was against them, and they were unable to make any headway; when all of a sudden an iron cat appeared floating on the top of the water. "General Mao has come," cried the boatmen, in great alarm; and they and all the passengers on board fell down on their faces. Immediately afterwards a great wooden beam stood up from the lake, nodding itself backwards and forwards, which the boatmen, more frightened than ever, said was General Nan. Before long a tremendous sea was raging, the sun was darkened in the heavens, and every vessel in sight was capsized. But Mr. Lin sat in the middle of the boat, with the crystal square in his hand, and the mighty waves broke around without doing them any harm. Thus were they saved, and Lin returned home; and whenever he told his wonderful story, he would assert that, although unable to speak positively as to the facial beauty of the young lady he had seen, he dared say that she had the most exquisite pair of feet in the world.

Subsequently, having occasion to visit the city of Wu-ch'ang, he heard of an old woman who wished to sell her daughter, but was unwilling to accept money, giving out that any one who had the fellow of a certain

crystal square in her possession should be at liberty to take the girl. Lin thought this very strange; and taking his square with him sought out the old woman, who was delighted to see him, and told her daughter to come in. The young lady was about fifteen years of age, and possessed of surpassing beauty; and after saying a few words of greeting, she turned round and went within again. Lin's reason had almost fled at the sight of this peerless girl, and he straightway informed the old woman that he had such an article as she required, but could not say whether it would match hers or not. So they compared their squares together, and there was not a fraction of difference between them, either in length or breadth. The old woman was overjoyed, and inquiring where Lin lived, bade him go home and get a bridal chair, leaving his square behind him as a pledge of his good faith. This he refused to do; but the old woman laughed, and said, "You are too cautious, Sir; do you think I should run away for a square?" Lin was thus constrained to leave it behind him, and hurrying away for a chair, made the best of his way back. When, however, he got there, the old woman was gone. In great alarm he inquired of the people who lived near as to her whereabouts; no one, however, knew; and it being already late he returned disconsolately to his boat. On the way, he met a chair coming towards him, and immediately the screen was drawn aside, and a voice cried out, "Mr. Lin! why so late?" Looking closely, he saw that it was the old woman, who, after asking him if he hadn't suspected

her of playing him false, told him that just after he left she had had the offer of a chair; and knowing that he, being only a stranger in the place, would have some trouble in obtaining one, she had sent her daughter on to his boat. Lin then begged she would return with him, to which she would not consent; and accordingly, not fully trusting what she said, he hurried on himself as fast as he could, and, jumping into the boat, found the young lady already there. She rose to meet him with a smile, and then he was astonished to see that her stockings were the colour of a kingfisher's wing, her shoes purple, and her appearance generally like that of the girl he had met on the Tung-t'ing lake. While he was still confused, the young lady remarked, "You stare, Sir, as if you had never seen me before!" but just then Lin noticed the tear in her stocking made by his own teeth, and cried out in amazement, "What! are you Chih-Ch'eng?" The young lady laughed at this; whereupon Lin rose, and, making her a profound bow, said, "If you are that divine creature, I pray you tell me at once, and set my anxiety at rest." "Sir," replied she, "I will tell you all. That personage you met on the boat was actually the king of the Tung-t'ing lake. He was so pleased with your talent that he wished to bestow me upon you; but, because I was a great favourite with Her Majesty the Queen, he went back to consult with her. I have now come at the Queen's own command." Lin was highly pleased; and washing his hands, burnt incense, with his face towards the lake, as if it were the Imperial Court, and then they went home together.

Subsequently, when Lin had occasion to go to Wu-ch'ang, his wife asked to be allowed to avail herself of the opportunity to visit her parents; and when they reached the lake, she drew a hair-pin from her hair, and threw it into the water. Immediately a boat rose from the lake, and Lin's wife, stepping into it, vanished from sight like a bird on the wing. Lin remained waiting for her on the prow of his vessel, at the spot where she had disappeared; and by-and-by, he beheld a house-boat approach, from the window of which there flew a beautiful bird which was no other than Chih-ch'eng. Then some one handed out from the same window gold and silk, and precious things in great abundance, all presents to them from the Queen. After this, Chih-ch'eng went home regularly twice every year, and Lin soon became a very rich man, the things he had being such as no one had ever before seen or heard of.

XXXIX.

THE MAN WHO WAS CHANGED INTO A CROW.

MR. YÜ JUNG was a Hu-nan man. The person who told me his story did not recollect from what department or district he came. His family was very poor; and once, when returning home after failure at the examination, he ran quite out of funds. Being ashamed to beg, and feeling uncomfortably hungry, he turned to rest awhile in the Wu Wang[1] temple, where he poured out all his sorrows at the feet of the God. His prayers over, he was about to lie down in the outer porch, when suddenly a man took him and led him into the presence of Wu Wang; and then, falling on his knees, said, "Your Majesty, there is a vacancy among the black-robes; the appointment might be bestowed on this man." The King assented, and Yü received a suit of black clothes; and when he had put these on he was changed into a crow, and flew away. Outside he saw a number of fellow-crows collected together, and immediately joined them, settling with them on the masts of the boats, and imitating them in catching and eating the

[1] The guardian angel of crows.

meat or cakes which the passengers and boatmen on board threw up to them in the air.[2] In a little while he was no longer hungry, and, soaring aloft, alighted on the top of a tree, quite satisfied with his change of condition. Two or three days passed, and the King, now pitying his solitary state, provided him with a very elegant mate, whose name was Chu-ch'ing, and who took every opportunity of warning him when he exposed himself too much in search of food. However, he did not pay much attention to this, and one day a soldier shot him in the breast with a cross-bow; but luckily Chu-ch'ing got away with him in her beak, and he was not captured. This enraged the other crows very much, and with their wings they flapped the water into such big waves that all the boats were upset. Chu-ch'ing now procured food and fed her husband; but his wound was a severe one, and by the end of the day he was dead—at which moment he waked, as it were, from a dream, and found himself lying in the temple.

The people of the place had found Mr. Yü to all appearance dead; and not knowing how he had come by his death, and finding that his body was not quite cold, had set some one to watch him. They now learnt what had happened to him, and, making up a purse between them, sent him away home. Three years afterwards he

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[2] In order to secure a favourable passage. The custom here mentioned was actually practised at more than one temple on the river Yang-tsze, and allusions to it will be found in more than one serious work.

was passing by the same spot, and went in to worship at the temple; also preparing a quantity of food, and inviting the crows to come down and eat it. He then prayed, saying, "If Chu-ch'ing is among you, let her remain." When the crows had eaten the food they all flew away; and by-and-by Yü returned, having succeeded in obtaining his master's degree. Again he visited Wu Wang's temple, and sacrificed a calf as a feast for the crows; and again he prayed as on the previous occasion. That night he slept on the lake, and, just as the candles were lighted and he had sat down, suddenly there was a noise as of birds settling, and lo! some twenty beautiful young ladies stood before him. "Have you been quite well since we parted?" asked one of them; to which Yü replied that he should like to know whom he had the honour of addressing. "Don't you remember Chu-ch'ing?" said the young lady; and then Yü was overjoyed, and inquired how she had come. "I am now," replied Chu-ch'ing, "a spirit of the Han river, and seldom go back to my old home; but in consequence of what you did on two occasions, I have come to see you once more." They then sat talking together like husband and wife reunited after long absence, and Yü proposed that she should return with him on his way south. Chu-ch'ing, however, said she must go west again, and upon this point they could not come to any agreement. Next morning, when Yü waked up, he found himself in a lofty room with two large candles burning brightly, and no longer in his own boat. In utter amazement he arose and asked where he was. "At

Han-yang," replied Chu-ch'ing; "my home is your home; why need you go south?" By-and-by, when it got lighter, in came a number of serving-women with wine, which they placed on a low table on the top of a broad couch; and then husband and wife sat down to drink together. "Where are all my servants?" asked Yü; and when he heard they were still on the boat, he said he was afraid the boat people would not be able to wait. "Never mind," replied Chu-ch'ing; "I have plenty of money, and I'll help you to make it up to them." Yü therefore remained with her, feasting and enjoying himself, and forgetting all about going home. As for the boatmen, when they waked up and found themselves at Han-yang, they were greatly astonished; and, seeing that the servants could find no trace of their missing master, they wished to go about their own business. They were unable, however, to undo the cable, and so they all remained there together for more than a couple of months, by the end of which time Mr. Yü became anxious to return home, and said to Chu-ch'ing, "If I stay here, my family connections will be completely severed. Besides, as we are husband and wife, it is only right that you should pay a visit to my home." "That," replied Chu-ch'ing, "I cannot do; and even were I able to go, you have a wife there already, and where would you put me? It is better for me to stop where I am, and thus you will have a second family." Yü said she would be so far off that he could not always be dropping in; whereupon Chu-ch'ing produced a black suit, and replied, "Here are your old clothes. Whenever

you want to see me, put these on and come, and on your arrival I will take them off for you." She then prepared a parting feast for her husband, at which he got very tipsy; and when he waked up he was on board his boat again, and at his old anchorage on the lake. The boatmen and his servants were all there, and they looked at one another in mutual amazement; and when they asked Yü where he had been, he hardly knew what to say. By the side of his pillow he discovered a bundle in which were some new clothes Chu-ch'ing had given him, shoes, stockings, &c.; and folded up with them was the suit of black. In addition to these he found an embroidered belt for tying round the waist, which was stuffed full of gold. He now started on his way south, and, when he reached the end of his journey, dismissed the boatmen with a handsome present.

After being at home for some months, his thoughts reverted to Han-yang; and, taking out the black clothes, he put them on, when wings immediately grew from his ribs, and with a flap he was gone. In about four hours he arrived at Han-yang, and, wheeling round and round in the air, espied below him a solitary islet, on which stood a house, and there he proceeded to alight. A maid-servant had already seen him coming, and cried out, "Here's master!" and in a few moments out came Chu-ch'ing, and bade the attendants take off Mr. Yü's feathers. They were not long in setting him free, and then, hand in hand, he and Chu-ch'ing went into the house together. "You have come at a happy moment," said his wife, as they sat down to tell each other all the

news; and in three days' time she gave birth to a boy, whom they called Han-ch'an, which means "born on the Han river." Three days after the event all the river-nymphs came to congratulate them, and brought many handsome presents. They were a charming band, not one being over thirty years of age; and, going into the bedroom and approaching the bed, each one pressed her thumb on the baby's nose, saying, "Long life to thee, little one!" Yü asked who they all were, and Chu-ch'ing told him they belonged to the same family of spirits as herself; "And the two last of all," said she, "dressed in white like the lily, are the nymphs who gave away their girdles at Hankow."[3]

A few months passed away, and then Chu-ch'ing sent her husband back in a boat to his old home. No sails or oars were used, but the boat sped along of itself; and at the end of the river journey there were men waiting with horses to convey him to his own door. After this he went backwards and forwards very frequently; and in time Han-ch'an grew up to be a fine boy, the apple of his father's eye. Unhappily his first wife had no children, and she was extremely anxious to see Han-ch'an; so Yü communicated this to Chu-ch'ing, who at once packed up a box and sent him back with his father, on the understanding that he was to return in three months.

[3] Alluding to a legend of a young man meeting two young ladies at Hankow, each of whom wore a girdle adorned with a pearl as big as a hen's egg. The young man begged them to give him these girdles, and they did so; but the next moment they had vanished, and the girdles too.

However, the other wife became quite as fond of him as if he had been her own child, and ten months passed without her being able to bear the thought of parting with him. But one day Han-ch'an was taken violently ill, and died; upon which Yü's wife was overwhelmed with grief, and wished to die too. Yü then set off for Han-yang, to carry the tidings to Chu-ch'ing; and when he arrived, lo! there was Han-ch'an, with his shoes and socks off, lying on the bed. He was greatly rejoiced at this, and asked Chu-ch'ing what it all meant. "Why," replied she, "the term agreed upon by us had long expired, and, as I wanted my boy, I sent for him." Yü then told her how much his other wife loved Han-ch'an, but Chu-ch'ing said she must wait until there was another child, and then she should have him. Later on Chu-ch'ing had twins, a boy and a girl, the former named Han-shêng and the latter Yü-p'ei; whereupon Han-ch'an went back again with his father, who, finding it inconvenient to be travelling backwards and forwards three or four times in a year, removed with his family to the city of Han-yang. At twelve years of age Han-ch'an took his bachelor's degree; and his mother, thinking there was no girl among mortals good enough for her son, sent for him to come home, that she herself might find a wife for him, which she did in the person of a Miss Chih-niang, who was the daughter of a spirit like herself. Yü's first wife then died, and the three children all went to mourn her loss, Han-ch'an remaining in Hu-nan after the funeral, but the other two returning with their father, and not leaving their mother again.

XL.

THE FLOWER NYMPHS.

At the lower temple on Mount Lao the camellias[1] are twenty feet in height, and many spans in circumference. The peonies are more than ten feet high; and when the flowers are in bloom the effect is that of gorgeous tapestry.

There was a Mr. Huang, of Chiao-chow, who built himself a house at that spot, for the purposes of study; and one day he saw from his window a young lady dressed in white wandering about amongst the flowers. Reflecting that she could not possibly belong to the monastery,[2] he went out to meet her, but she had already disappeared. After this he frequently observed her, and once hid himself in a thick-foliaged bush, waiting for her to come. By-and-by she appeared, bringing with her another young lady dressed in red, who, as he noticed from his distant point of obser-

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[1] The text has *nai-tung* ("endure the winter"), for the identification of which I am indebted to Mr. L. C. Hopkins, of H.M.'s Consular service.

[2] Women, of course, being excluded.

vation, was an exceedingly good-looking girl. When they approached nearer, the young lady in the red dress ran back, saying, "There is a man here!" whereupon Mr. Huang jumped out upon them, and away they went in a scare, with their skirts and long sleeves fluttering in the breeze, and perfuming the air around. Huang pursued them as far as a low wall, where they suddenly vanished from his gaze. In great distress at thus losing the fair creatures, he took a pencil and wrote upon a tree the following lines:—

"The pangs of love my heart enthrall
As I stand opposite this wall.
I dread some hateful tyrant's power,
With none to save you in that hour."

Returning home he was absorbed in his own thoughts, when all at once the young lady walked in, and he rose up joyfully to meet her. "I thought you were a brigand," said his visitor, smiling; "you nearly frightened me to death. I did not know you were a great scholar whose acquaintance I now hope to have the honour of making." Mr. Huang asked the young lady her name, &c., to which she replied, "My name is Hsiang-yü, and I belong to P'ing-k'ang-hsiang; but a magician has condemned me to remain on this hill much against my own inclination." "Tell me his name," cried Huang, "and I'll soon set you free." "There is no need for that," answered the young lady; "I suffer no injury from him, and the place is not an inconvenient one for making the acquaintance of such

worthy gentlemen as yourself." Huang then inquired who was the young lady in red, and she told him that her name was Chiang-hsüeh, and that they were half-sisters; "and now," added she, "I will sing you a song; but please don't laugh at me." She then began as follows:—

"In pleasant company the hours fly fast,
And through the window daybreak peeps at last.
Ah, would that, like the swallow and his mate,
To live together were our happy fate."

Huang here grasped her hand[3] and said, "Beauty without and intellect within—enough to make a man love you and forget all about death, regarding one day's absence like the separation of a thousand years. I pray you come again whenever an opportunity may present itself." From this time the young lady would

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[3] Although the Chinese do not "shake hands" in our sense of the term, it is a sign of affection to seize the hand of a parting or returning friend. "The Book of Rites," however, lays down the rule that persons of opposite sexes should not, in passing things from one to the other, *let their hands touch;* and the question was gravely put to Mencius (Book IV.) as to whether a man might even pull his drowning sister-in-law out of the water. Mencius replied that it was indeed a general principle that a man should avoid touching a woman's hand, but that he who could not make an exception in such a case would be no better than a wolf. Neither, according to the Chinese rule, should men and women hang their clothes on the same rack, which reminds one of the French prude who would not allow male and female authors to be ranged upon the same bookshelf.

frequently walk in to have a chat, but would never bring her sister with her in spite of all Mr. Huang's entreaties. Huang thought they weren't friends, but Hsiang said her sister did not care for society in the same way that she herself did, promising at the same time to try and persuade her to come at some future day. One evening Hsiang-yü arrived in a melancholy frame of mind, and told Huang that he was wanting more when he couldn't even keep what he had got; "for to-morrow," said she, "we part." Huang asked what she meant; and then wiping away her tears with her sleeve, Hsiang-yü declared it was destiny, and that she couldn't well tell him. "Your former prophecy," continued she, "has come too true; and now it may well be said of me—

> 'Fallen into the tyrant's power,
> With none to save me in that hour.'"

Huang again tried to question her, but she would tell him nothing; and by-and-by she rose and took her leave. This seemed very strange; however, next day a visitor came, who, after wandering round the garden, was much taken with a white peony,[4] which he dug up and carried away with him. Huang now awaked to the fact that Hsiang-yü was a flower nymph, and became very disconsolate in consequence of what had happened; but when he subsequently heard that the peony only

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[4] The *Pæonia albiflora*.

lived a few days after being taken away, he wept bitterly, and composed an elegy in fifty stanzas, besides going daily to the hole from which it had been taken, and watering the ground with his tears. One day, as he was returning thence, he espied the young lady of the red clothes also wiping away her tears alongside the hole, and immediately walked back gently towards her. She did not run away, and Huang, grasping her sleeve, joined with her in her lamentations. When these were concluded he invited her to his house, and then she burst out with a sigh, saying, "Alas! that the sister of my early years should be thus suddenly taken from me. Hearing you, Sir, mourn as you did, I have also been moved to tears. Those you shed have sunk down deep to the realms below, and may perhaps succeed in restoring her to us; but the sympathies of the dead are destroyed for ever, and how then can she laugh and talk with us again?" "My luck is bad," said Huang, "that I should injure those I love, neither can I have the good fortune to draw towards me another such a beauty. But tell me, when I often sent messages by Hsiang-yü to you, why did you not come?" "I knew," replied she, "what nine young fellows out of ten are; but I did not know what you were." She then took leave, Huang telling her how dull he felt without Hsiang-yü, and begging her to come again. For some days she did not appear; and Huang remained in a state of great melancholy, tossing and turning on his bed and wetting the pillow with his tears, until one night he got up, put on his clothes, and trimmed the lamp; and having

called for pen and ink, he composed the following lines :—

"On my cottage roof the evening rain-drops beat;
I draw the blind and near the window take my seat.
To my longing gaze no loved one appears;
Drip, drip, drip, drip: fast flow my tears."

This he read aloud; and when he had finished, a voice outside said, "You want some one to cap your verses there!" Listening attentively, he knew it was Chiang-hsüeh; and opening the door he let her in. She looked at his stanza, and added impromptu—

"She is no longer in the room;
A single lamp relieves the gloom;
One solitary man is there;
He and his shadow make a pair."

As Huang read these words his tears fell fast; and then, turning to Chiang-hsüeh, he upbraided her for not having been to see him. "I can't come so often as Hsiang-yü did," replied she, "but only now and then when you are very dull." After this she used to drop in occasionally, and Huang said Hsiang-yü was his beloved wife, and she his dear friend, always trying to find out every time she came which flower in the garden she was, that he might bring her home with him, and save her from the fate of Hsiang-yü. "The old earth should not be disturbed," said she, "and it would not do any good to tell you. If you couldn't keep your wife always with you, how will you be sure of keeping a friend?"

Huang, however, paid no heed to this, and seizing her arm, led her out into the garden, where he stopped at every peony and asked if this was the one; to which Chiang-hsüeh made no reply, but only put her hand to her mouth and laughed.

At New Year's time Huang went home, and a couple of months afterwards he dreamt that Chiang-hsüeh came to tell him she was in great trouble, begging him to hurry off as soon as possible to her rescue. When he woke up, he thought his dream a very strange one; and ordering his servant and horses to be ready, started at once for the hills. There he found that the priests were about to build a new room; and finding a camellia in the way, the contractor had given orders that it should be cut down. Huang now understood his dream, and immediately took steps to prevent the destruction of the flower. That night Chiang-hsüeh came to thank him, and Huang laughed and said, "It serves you right for not telling me which you were. Now I know you, and if you don't come and see me, I'll get a firebrand and make it hot for you." "That's just why I didn't tell you before," replied she. "The presence of my dear friend," said Huang, after a pause, "makes me think more of my lost wife. It is long since I have mourned for her. Shall we go and bemoan her loss together?" So they went off and shed many a tear on the spot where formerly Hsiang-yü had stood, until at last Chiang-hsüeh wiped her eyes and said it was time to go. A few evenings later Huang was sitting alone when suddenly Chiang-hsüeh entered, her face radiant with smiles.

"Good news!" cried she, "the Flower-God,[4] moved by your tears, has granted Hsiang-yü a return to life. Huang was overjoyed, and asked when she would come; to which Chiang-hsüeh replied, that she could not say for certain, but that it would not be long. "I came here on your account," said Huang; "don't let me be duller than you can help." "All right," answered she, and then went away, not returning for the next two evenings. Huang then went into the garden and threw his arms around her plant, entreating her to come and see him, though without eliciting any response. He accordingly went back, and began twisting up a torch, when all at once in she came, and snatching the torch out of his hand, threw it away, saying, "You're a bad fellow, and I don't like you, and I shan't have any more to do with you." However, Huang soon succeeded in pacifying her, and by-and-by in walked Hsiang-yü herself. Huang now wept tears of joy as he seized her hand, and drawing Chiang-hsüeh towards them, the three friends mingled their tears together. They then sat down and talked over the miseries of separation, Huang meanwhile noticing that Hsiang-yü seemed to be unsubstantial, and that when he grasped her hand his fingers seemed to close

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[4] The various subdivisions of the animal and vegetable kingdoms are each believed by the Chinese to be under the sway of a ruler holding his commission from and responsible to the one Supreme Power or God, fully in accordance with the general scheme of supernatural government accepted in other and less civilized communities.

only on themselves, and not as in the days gone by. This Hsiang-yü explained, saying, "When I was a flower-nymph I had a body; but now I am only the disembodied spirit of that flower. Do not regard me as a reality, but rather as an apparition seen in a dream." "You have come at the nick of time," cried Chiang-hsüeh; "your husband there was just getting troublesome." Hsiang-yü now instructed Huang to take a little powdered white-berry, and mixing it with some sulphur, to pour out a libation to her, adding, "This day next year I will return your kindness." The young ladies then went away, and next day Huang observed the shoots of a young peony growing up where Hsiang-yü had once stood. So he made the libation as she had told him, and had the plant very carefully tended, even building a fence all round to protect it. Hsiang-yü came to thank him for this, and he proposed that the plant should be removed to his own home; but to this she would not agree, "for," said she, "I am not very strong, and could not stand being transplanted. Besides, all things have their appointed place; and as I was not originally intended for your home, it might shorten my life to be sent there. We can love each other very well here." Huang then asked why Chiang-hsüeh did not come; to which Hsiang-yü replied that they must make her, and proceeded with him into the garden, where, after picking a blade of grass, she measured upwards from the roots of Chiang-hsüeh's plant to a distance of four feet six inches, at which point she stopped, and Huang began to scratch a mark

on the place with his nails. At that moment Chiang-hsüeh came from behind the plant, and in mock anger cried out, "You hussy you! what do you aid that wretch for?" "Don't be angry, my dear," said Hsiang-yü; "help me to amuse him for a year only, and then you shan't be bothered any more." So they went on, Huang watching the plant thrive, until by the spring it was over two feet in height. He then went home, giving the priests a handsome present, and bidding them take great care of it. Next year, in the fourth moon, he returned and found upon the plant a bud just ready to break; and as he was walking round, the stem shook violently as if it would snap, and suddenly the bud opened into a flower as large as a plate, disclosing a beautiful maiden within, sitting upon one of the pistils, and only a few inches in height. In the twinkling of an eye she had jumped out, and lo! it was Hsiang-yü. "Through the wind and the rain I have waited for you," cried she; "why have you come so late?" They then went into the house, where they found Chiang-hsüeh already arrived, and sat down to enjoy themselves as they had done in former times. Shortly afterwards Huang's wife died, and he took up his abode at Mount Lao for good and all. The peonies were at that time as large round as one's arm; and whenever Huang went to look at them, he always said, "Some day my spirit will be there by your side;" to which the two girls used to reply with a laugh, and say, "Mind you don't forget." Ten years after these events, Huang became dangerously ill, and his son,

who had come to see him, was very much distressed about him. "I am about to be born," cried his father; "I am not going to die. Why do you weep?" He also told the priests that if later on they should see a red shoot, with five leaves, thrusting itself forth alongside of the peony, that would be himself. This was all he said, and his son proceeded to convey him home, where he died immediately on arrival. Next year a shoot did come up exactly as he had mentioned; and the priests, struck by the coincidence, watered it and supplied it with earth. In three years it was a tall plant, and a good span in circumference, but without flowers. When the old priest died, the others took no care of it; and as it did not flower they cut it down. The white peony then faded and died; and before long the camellia was dead too.

XLI.

TA-NAN IN SEARCH OF HIS FATHER.

Hsi Ch'ÊNG-LIEH was a Ch'êng-tu man. He had a wife and a concubine, the latter named Ho Chao-jung. His wife dying, he took a second by name Shên, who bullied the concubine dreadfully, and by her constant wrangling made his life perfectly unbearable, so that one day in a fit of anger he ran away and left them. Shortly afterwards Ho gave birth to a son, and called him Ta-nan; but as Hsi did not return, the wife Shên turned them out of the house, making them a daily allowance of food. By degrees Ta-nan became a big boy; and his mother, not daring to ask for an increase of victuals, was obliged to earn a little money by spinning. Meanwhile, Ta-nan, seeing all his companions go to school and learn to read, told his mother he should like to go too; and accordingly, as he was still very young, she sent him for a few days' probation. He turned out to be so clever that he soon beat the other boys; at which the master of the school was much pleased, and offered to teach him for nothing.[1] His mother, therefore, sent him regularly,

[1] This is by no means uncommon. The debt of gratitude between pupil and teacher is second only to that existing between child and parent; and a successful student soon has it in his power to more than repay any such act of kindness as that here mentioned.

making what trifling presents she could to the master; and by the end of two or three years he had a first-rate knowledge of the Sacred Books.[2] One day he came home and asked his mother, saying, "All the fellows at our school get money from their fathers to buy cakes. Why don't I?" "Wait till you are grown up," replied

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[2] Which form the unvarying curriculum of a Chinese education. These are (1) the *Four Books*, consisting of the teachings of Confucius and Mencius; and (2) the *Five Canons* (in the ecclesiastical sense of the word) or the Canons of Changes, History, Poetry, the Record of Rites, and Spring and Autumn. The *Four Books* consist of:—

(1) The Book of Wisdom, attributed by Chu Hi to Confucius. It is a disquisition upon virtue and the moral elevation of the people.

(2) The *Chung Yung*, or Gospel of Tzŭ Ssŭ (the grandson of Confucius) wherein the ruling motives of human conduct are traced from their psychological source.

(3) The Confucian Gospels, being discourses of the Sage with his disciples on miscellaneous topics.

(4) The Gospels of Mencius.

The Canon of Changes contains a fanciful system of philosophy based upon the combinations of eight diagrams said to have been copied from the lines on the back of a tortoise. Ascribed to B.C. 1150.

The Canon of History embraces a period extending from the middle of the 24th century B.C. to B.C. 721. Was edited by Confucius from then existing documents.

The Canon of Poetry is a collection of irregular lyrics in vogue among the people many centuries before the Christian era. Collected and arranged by Confucius.

The Record of Rites contains a number of rules for the performance of ceremonies and guidance of individual conduct.

Spring and Autumn consists of the annals of the petty kingdom of Lu from 722 to 484 B.C. Is the work of Confucius himself.

his mother, "and I will explain it to you." "Why, mother," cried he, "I'm only seven or eight years old. What a time it will be before I'm grown up." "Whenever you pass the temple of the God of War on your way to school," said his mother, "you should go in and pray awhile; that would make you grow faster." Ta-nan believed she was serious; and every day, going and coming, he went in and worshipped at that temple. When his mother found this out, she asked him how soon he was praying to be grown up; to which he replied that he only prayed that by the following year he might be as big as if he were fifteen or sixteen years old. His mother laughed; but Ta-nan went on, increasing in wisdom and stature alike, until by the time he was ten, he looked quite thirteen or fourteen, and his master was no longer able to correct his essays. Then he said to his mother, "You promised me that when I grew up you would tell me where my father is. Tell me now." "By-and-by, by-and-by," replied his mother; so he waited another year, and then pressed her so eagerly to tell him that she could no longer refuse, and related to him the whole story. He heard her recital with tears and lamentations, and expressed a wish to go in search of his father; but his mother objected that he was too young, and also that no one knew where his father was. Ta-nan said nothing; however, in the middle of the day he did not come home as usual, and his mother at once sent off to the school, where she found he had not shewn himself since breakfast. In great alarm, and thinking that he had been playing truant, she paid some people to go and

hunt for him everywhere, but was unable to obtain the slightest clue to his whereabouts. As to Ta-nan himself, when he left the house he followed the road without knowing whither he was going, until at length he met a man who was on his way to K'uei-chou, and said his name was Ch'ien. Ta-nan begged of him something to eat, and went along with him; Mr. Ch'ien even procuring an animal for him to ride because he walked too slowly. The expenses of the journey were all defrayed by Ch'ien; and when they arrived at K'uei-chou they dined together, Ch'ien secretly putting some drug in Ta-nan's food which soon reduced him to a state of unconsciousness. Ch'ien then carried him off to a temple, and, pretending that Ta-nan was his son, offered him to the priests [3] on the plea that he had no money to continue his journey. The priests, seeing what a nice-looking boy he was, were only too ready to buy him; and when Ch'ien had got his money he went away. They then gave Ta-nan a draught which brought him round; but as soon as the abbot heard of the affair and saw Ta-nan himself, he would not allow them to keep him, sending him away with a purse of money in his pocket. Ta-nan next met a gentleman named Chiang, from Lu-chou, who was returning home after having failed at the examination; and this Mr. Chiang was so pleased with the story of his filial piety that he took him to his own home at Lu-chou. There he remained for a month and more, asking every-

[3] See No. XXIII., note 10.

body he saw for news of his father, until one day he was told that there was a man named Hsi among the Fokien traders. So he bade good-by to Mr. Chiang, and set off for Fokien, his patron providing him with clothes and shoes, and the people of the place making up a subscription for him. On the road he met two traders in cotton cloth who were going to Fu-ch'ing, and he joined their party; but they had not travelled many stages before these men found out that he had money, and taking him to a lonely spot, bound him hand and foot and made off with all he had. Before long a Mr. Ch'ên, of Yung-fu, happened to pass by, and at once unbound him, and giving him a seat in one of his own vehicles, carried him off home. This Mr. Ch'ên was a wealthy man, and in his house Ta-nan had opportunities of meeting with traders from all quarters. He therefore begged them to aid him by making inquiries about his father, himself remaining as a fellow student with Mr. Ch'ên's sons, and roaming the country no more, neither hearing any news of his former and now distant home.

Meanwhile, his mother, Ho, had lived alone for three or four years, until the wife, Shên, wishing to reduce the expenses, tried to persuade her to find another husband. As Ho was now supporting herself, she steadfastly refused to do this; and then Shên sold her to a Chung-ch'ing trader, who took her away with him. However, she so frightened this man by hacking herself about with a knife, that when the wounds were healed he was only too happy to get rid of her to a trader from Yen-t'ing, who in his turn, after Ho had nearly disembowelled

herself, readily listened to her repeated cries that she wished to become a nun. However, he persuaded her to hire herself out as housekeeper to a friend of his, as a means of reimbursing himself for his outlay in purchasing her; but no sooner had she set eyes on the gentleman in question than she found it was her own husband. For Hsi had given up the career of a scholar, and gone into business; and as he had no wife, he was consequently in want of a housekeeper. They were very glad to see each other again; and on relating their several adventures, Hsi knew for the first time that he had a son who had gone forth in search of his father. Hsi then asked all the traders and commercial travellers to keep a look out for Ta-nan, at the same time raising Ho from the status of concubine to that of wife. In consequence, however, of the many hardships Ho had gone through, her health was anything but good, and she was unable to do the work of the house; so she advised her husband to buy a concubine. This he was most unwilling to do, remembering too well the former squabbling he had to endure; but ultimately he yielded, asked a friend to buy for him an oldish woman—at any rate more than thirty years of age. A few months afterwards his friend arrived, bringing with him a person of about that age; and, on looking closely at her, Hsi saw that she was no other than his own wife Shên!

Now this lady had lived by herself for a year and more when her brother Pao advised her to marry again, which she accordingly agreed to do. She was prevented, however, by the younger branches of the family from selling

the landed property; but she disposed of everything else, and the proceeds passed into her brother's hands. About that time a Pao-ning trader, hearing that she had plenty of money, bribed her brother to marry her to himself; and afterwards, finding that she was a disagreeable woman, took possession of everything she had, and advertised her for sale. No one caring to buy a woman of her age, and her master being on the eve of starting for K'uei-chou, took her with him, finally getting rid of her to Hsi, who was in the same line of business as himself. When she stood before her former husband, she was overwhelmed with shame and fear, and had not a word to say; but Hsi gathered an outline of what had happened from the trader, and then said to her, "Your second marriage with this Pao-ning gentleman was doubtless contracted after you had given up all hope of seeing me again. It doesn't matter in the least, as now I am not in search of a wife but only of a concubine. So you had better begin by paying your respects to your mistress here, my wife Ho Chao-jung." Shên was ashamed to do this: but Hsi reminded her of the time when she had been in the wife's place, and in spite of all Ho's intercession insisted that she should do so, stimulating her to obedience by the smart application of a stick. Shên was therefore compelled to yield, but at the same time she never tried to gain Ho's favour, and kept away from her as much as possible. Ho, on the other hand, treated her with great consideration, and never took her to task on the performance of her duties; whilst Hsi himself, whenever he had a dinner-party,

made her wait at table, though Ho often entreated him to hire a maid.

Now the magistrate at Yen-t'ing was named Ch'ên Tsung-ssŭ, and once when Hsi had some trifling difficulty with one of the neighbours he was further accused to this official of having forced his wife to assume the position of concubine. The magistrate, however, refused to take up the case, to the great satisfaction of Hsi and his wife, who lauded him to the skies as a virtuous mandarin. A few nights after, at rather a late hour, the servant knocked at their door, and called out, "The magistrate has come!" Hsi jumped up in a hurry, and began looking for his clothes and shoes; but the magistrate was already in their bedroom without either of them understanding what it all meant: when suddenly Ho, examining him closely, cried out, "It is my son!" She then burst into tears, and the magistrate, throwing himself on the ground, wept with his mother. It seemed he had taken the name of the gentleman with whom he had lived, and had since entered upon an official career. That on his way to the capital[4] he had made a *détour* and visited his old home, where he heard to his infinite sorrow that both his mothers had married again; and that his relatives, finding him already a man of position, had restored to him the family property, of which he had left some one in charge in the hope that his father might return. That then he had been appointed to Yen-t'ing,

[4] To be presented to the Emperor before taking up his post.

but had wished to throw up the post and travel in search of his father, from which design he had been dissuaded by Mr. Ch'ên. Also that he had met a fortune-teller from whom he had obtained the following response to his inquiries:—"The lesser is the greater; the younger is the elder. Seeking the cock, you find the hen; seeking one, you get two. Your official life will be successful." Ch'ên then took up his appointment, but not finding his father he confined himself entirely to a vegetable diet, and gave up the use of wine.[5] The above-mentioned case had subsequently come under his notice, and seeing the name Hsi, he quietly sent his private servant to find out, and thus discovered that this Hsi was his father. At nightfall he set off himself, and when he saw his mother he knew that the fortune-teller had told him true. Bidding them all say nothing to anybody about what had occurred, he provided money for the journey, and sent them back home. On arriving there, they found the place newly painted, and with their increased retinue of servants and horses, they were quite a wealthy family. As to Shên, when she found what a great man Ta-nan had become, she put still more restraint upon herself; but her brother Pao brought an action for the purpose of reinstating her as wife. The presiding official happened to be a man of probity, and delivered the following judgment:—"Greedy of gain you urged your sister to re-marry. After she had driven

[5] Hoping thus to interest Buddha in his behalf.

Hsi away, she took two fresh husbands. How have you the face to talk about reinstating her as wife?" He thereupon ordered Pao to be severely bambooed, and from this time there was no longer any doubt about Shên's *status*. She was the lesser and Ho the greater; and yet in the matter of clothes and food Ho shewed herself by no means grasping. Shên was at first afraid that Ho would pay her out, and was consequently more than ever repentant; and Hsi himself, letting by-gones be by-gones, gave orders that Shên should be called *madam* by all alike, though of course she was excluded from any titles that might be gained for them by Ta-nan.[6]

[6] In accordance with Chinese usage, by which titles of nobility are often conferred upon the *dead* parents of a distinguished son.

XLII.

THE WONDERFUL STONE.

In the prefecture of Shun-t'ien[1] there lived a man named Hsing Yün-fei, who was an amateur mineralogist and would pay any price for a good specimen. One day as he was fishing in the river, something caught his net, and diving down he brought up a stone about a foot in diameter, beautifully carved on all sides to resemble clustering hills and peaks. He was quite as pleased with this as if he had found some precious stone; and having had an elegant sandal-wood stand made for it, he set his prize upon the table. Whenever it was about to rain, clouds, which from a distance looked like new cotton wool, would come forth from each of the holes or grottos on the stone, and appear to close them up. By-and-by an influential personage called at the house and begged to see the stone, immediately seizing it and handing it over to a lusty servant, at the same time whipping his horse and riding away. Hsing was in despair; but all he could do was to mourn the loss of his stone, and indulge his anger against

[1] In which Peking is situated.

the thief. Meanwhile, the servant, who had carried off the stone on his back, stopped to rest at a bridge; when all of a sudden his hand slipped and the stone fell into the water. His master was extremely put out at this, and gave him a sound beating; subsequently hiring several divers, who tried every means in their power to recover the stone, but were quite unable to find it. He then went away, having first published a notice of reward, and by these means many were tempted to seek for the stone. Soon after, Hsing himself came to the spot, and as he mournfully approached the bank, lo! the water became clear, and he could see the stone lying at the bottom. Taking off his clothes he quickly jumped in and brought it out, together with the sandal-wood stand which was still with it. He carried it off home, but being no longer desirous of shewing it to people, he had an inner room cleaned and put it in there. Some time afterwards an old man knocked at the door and asked to be allowed to see the stone; whereupon Hsing replied that he had lost it a long time ago. "Isn't that it in the inner room?" said the old man, smiling. "Oh, walk in and see for yourself if you don't believe me," answered Hsing; and the old man did walk in, and there was the stone on the table. This took Hsing very much aback; and the old man then laid his hand upon the stone and said, "This is an old family relic of mine: I lost it many months since. How does it come to be here? I pray you now restore it to me." Hsing didn't know what to say, but declared he was the owner

of the stone; upon which the old man remarked, "If it is really yours, what evidence can you bring to prove it?" Hsing made no reply; and the old man continued, "To show you that I know this stone, I may mention that it has altogether ninety-two grottoes, and that in the largest of these are five words:—

'A stone from Heaven above.'"

Hsing looked and found that there were actually some small characters, no larger than grains of rice, which by straining his eyes a little he managed to read; also, that the number of grottoes was as the old man had said. However, he would not give him the stone; and the old man laughed, and asked, "Pray, what right have you to keep other people's things?" He then bowed and went away, Hsing escorting him as far as the door; but when he returned to the room, the stone had disappeared. In a great fright, he ran after the old man, who had walked slowly and was not far off, and seizing his sleeve entreated him to give back the stone. "Do you think," said the latter, "that I could conceal a stone a foot in diameter in my sleeve?" But Hsing knew that he must be superhuman, and led him back to the house, where he threw himself on his knees and begged that he might have the stone. "Is it yours or mine?" asked the old man. "Of course it is yours," replied Hsing, "though I hope you will consent to deny yourself the pleasure of keeping it." "In that case," said the old man, "it is back again;" and going into the inner room, they found the stone in its old place.

"The jewels of this world," observed Hsing's visitor, "should be given to those who know how to take care of them. This stone can choose its own master, and I am very pleased that it should remain with you; at the same time I must inform you that it was in too great a hurry to come into the world of mortals, and has not yet been freed from all contingent calamities. I had better take it away with me, and three years hence you shall have it again. If, however, you insist on keeping it, then your span of life will be shortened by three years, that your terms of existence may harmonize together. Are you willing?" Hsing said he was; whereupon the old man with his fingers closed up three of the stone's grottoes, which yielded to his touch like mud. When this was done, he turned to Hsing and told him that the grottoes on that stone represented the years of his life; and then he took his leave, firmly refusing to remain any longer, and not disclosing his name.

More than a year after this, Hsing had occasion to go away on business, and in the night a thief broke in and carried off the stone, taking nothing else at all. When Hsing came home, he was dreadfully grieved, as if his whole object in life was gone; and made all possible inquiries and efforts to get it back, but without the slightest result. Some time passed away, when one day going into a temple Hsing noticed a man selling stones, and amongst the rest he saw his old friend. Of course he immediately wanted to regain possession of it; but as the stone-seller would not

consent, he shouldered the stone and went off to the nearest mandarin. The stone-seller was then asked what proof he could give that the stone was his; and he replied that the number of grottoes was eighty-nine. Hsing inquired if that was all he had to say, and when the other acknowledged that it was, he himself told the magistrate what were the characters inscribed within, also calling attention to the finger marks at the closed-up grottoes. He therefore gained his case, and the mandarin would have bambooed the stone-seller, had he not declared that he bought it in the market for twenty ounces of silver,—whereupon he was dismissed.

A high official next offered Hsing one hundred ounces of silver for it; but he refused to sell it even for ten thousand, which so enraged the would-be purchaser that he worked up a case against Hsing,[2] and got him put in prison. Hsing was thereby compelled to pawn a great deal of his property; and then the official sent some one to try if the affair could not be managed through his son, to which Hsing, on hearing of the attempt, steadily refused to consent, saying that he and the stone could not be parted even in death. His wife, however, and his son, laid their heads together, and sent the stone to the high official, and Hsing only heard of it when he arrived home from the prison. He cursed his wife and beat his son, and frequently tried to make away with

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[2] A common form of revenge in China, and one which is easily carried through when the prosecutor is a man of wealth and influence.

himself, though luckily his servants always managed to prevent him from succeeding.[3] At night he dreamt that a noble-looking personage appeared to him, and said, "My name is Shih Ch'ing-hsü—(Stone from Heaven). Do not grieve. I purposely quitted you for a year and more; but next year on the 20th of the eighth moon, at dawn, come to the Hai-tai Gate and buy me back for two strings of cash." Hsing was overjoyed at this dream, and carefully took down the day mentioned. Meanwhile the stone was at the official's private house; but as the cloud manifestations ceased, the stone was less and less prized; and the following year when the official was disgraced for maladministration and subsequently died, Hsing met some of his servants at the Hai-tai Gate going off to sell the stone, and purchased it back from them for two strings of cash.

Hsing lived till he was eighty-nine; and then having prepared the necessaries for his interment, bade his son bury the stone with him,[4] which was accordingly

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[3] Another favourite method of revenging oneself upon an enemy, who is in many cases held responsible for the death thus occasioned. Mr. Alabaster told me an amusing story of a Chinese woman who deliberately walked into a pond until the water reached her knees, and remained there alternately putting her lips below the surface and threatening in a loud voice to drown herself on the spot, as life had been made unbearable by the presence of foreign barbarians. This was during the Taiping rebellion.

[4] Valuables of some kind or other are often placed in the coffins of wealthy Chinese; and women are almost always provided with a certain quantity of jewels with which to adorn themselves in the realms below.

done. Six months later robbers broke into the vault[5] and made off with the stone, and his son tried in vain to secure their capture; however, a few days afterwards, he was travelling with his servants, when suddenly two men rushed forth dripping with perspiration, and looking up into the air, acknowledged their crime, saying, "Mr. Hsing, please don't torment us thus! We took the stone, and sold it for only four ounces of silver." Hsing's son and his servants then seized these men, and took them before the magistrate, where they at once acknowledged their guilt. Asking what had become of the stone, they said they had sold it to a member of the magistrate's family; and when it was produced, that official took such a fancy to it that he gave it to one of his servants and bade him place it in the treasury. Thereupon the stone slipped out of the servant's hand and broke into a hundred pieces, to the great astonishment of all present. The magistrate now had the thieves bambooed and sent them away; but Hsing's son picked up the broken pieces of the stone, and buried them in his father's grave.

[5] One of the most heinous offences in the Chinese Penal Code.

XLIII.

THE QUARRELSOME BROTHERS.

At K'un-yang there lived a wealthy man named Tsêng. When he died, and before he was put in the coffin, tears were seen to gush forth from both eyes of the corpse, to the infinite amazement of his six sons. His second son, T'i, otherwise called Yu-yü, who had gained for himself the reputation of being a scholar, said it was a bad omen, and warned his brothers to be careful and not give cause for sorrow to the dead,—at which the others only laughed at him as an idiot.

Tsêng's first wife and eldest son having been carried off by the rebels when the latter was only seven or eight years old, he married a second wife, by whom he had three sons, Hsiao, Chung, and Hsin; besides three other sons by a concubine—namely, the above-mentioned T'i, or Yu-yü, Jen, and Yi. Now the three by the second wife banded themselves together against the three by the concubine, saying that the latter were a base-born lot; and whenever a guest was present and either of them happened to be in the room, Hsiao and his two brothers would not take the slightest notice of them. This en-

raged Jen and Yi very much, and they went to consult with Yu-yü as to how they should avenge themselves for such slights. Yu-yü, however, tried every means in his power to pacify them, and would not take part in any plot; and, as they were much younger than he, they took his advice,[1] and did nothing.

Hsiao had a daughter, who died shortly after her marriage to a Mr. Chou; and her father begged Yu-yü and his other brothers to go with him and give his late daughter's mother-in-law a sound beating.[2] Yu-yü would not hear of it for a moment; so Hsiao in a rage got his brothers Chung and Hsin, with a lot of rowdies from the neighbourhood, and went off and did it themselves, scattering the goods and chattels of the family about, and smashing everything they could lay their hands on. An action was immediately brought by the Chou family, and Hsiao and his two brothers were thrown into prison by the angry mandarin, who purposed sending the case before a

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[1] Deference to elder brothers is held by the Chinese to be second only in importance to filial piety.

[2] In a volume of *Chinese Sketches*, published by me in 1876, occur (p. 129) the following words:—"Occasionally a young wife is driven to commit suicide by the harshness of her mother-in-law, but this is of rare occurrence, as the consequences are terrible to the family of the guilty woman. The blood-relatives of the deceased repair to the chamber of death, and in the injured victim's hand they place a broom. They then support the corpse round the room, making its dead arm move the broom from side to side, and thus sweep away wealth, happiness, and longevity, from the accursed place for ever."

higher tribunal. Yu-yü, however, whose high character was well known to that official, interceded for them, and himself went to the Chou family and tendered the most humble apologies for what had occurred. The Chou family, out of respect for Yu-yü, suffered the case to drop, and Hsiao regained his liberty, though he did not evince the slightest gratitude for his brother's exertions. Shortly after, Yu-yü's mother died; but Hsiao and the other two refused to put on mourning for her, going on with their usual feasting and drinking as if nothing had happened. Jen and Yi were furious at this; but Yu-yü only observed, "What they do is their own indecorous behaviour; it does not injure us." Then, again, when the funeral was about to take place, Hsiao, Chung, and Hsin stood before the door of the vault, and would not allow the others to bury their mother there. So Yu-yü buried her alongside the principal grave. Before long Hsiao's wife died, and Yu-yü told Jen and Yi to accompany him to the house and condole with the widower; to which they both objected, saying, "He would not wear mourning for our mother; shall we do so for his wife?"[3] Ultimately Yu-yü had to go alone; and while he was pouring forth his lamentations beside the bier, he heard Jen and Yi playing drums and trumpets outside the door. Hsiao flew into a tremendous passion, and went after them with his own two brothers to give them a good

[3] A wife being an infinitely less important personage than a mother in the Chinese social scale.

thrashing. Yu-yü, too, seized a big stick and accompanied them to the house where Jen and Yi were; whereupon Jen made his escape; but as Yi was clambering over the wall, Yu-yü hit him from behind and knocked him down. Hsiao and the others then set upon him with their fists and sticks, and would never have stopped but that Yu-yü interposed his body between them and made them desist. Hsiao was very angry at this, and began to abuse Yu-yü, who said, "The punishment was for want of decorum, for which death would be too severe. I can neither connive at their bad behaviour, nor at your cruelty. If your anger is not appeased, strike me." Hsiao now turned his fury against Yu-yü, and being well seconded by his two brothers, they beat Yu-yü until the neighbours separated them and put an end to the row. Yu-yü at once proceeded to Hsiao's house to apologize for what had occurred; but Hsiao drove him away, and would not let him take part in the funeral ceremonies. Meanwhile, as Yi's wounds were very severe, and he could neither eat nor drink, his brother Jen went on his behalf to the magistrate, stating in the petition that the accused had not worn mourning for their father's concubine. The magistrate issued a warrant; and, besides causing the arrest of Hsiao, Chung, and Hsin, he ordered Yu-yü to prosecute them as well. Yu-yü, however, was so much cut about the head and face that he could not appear in court, but he wrote out a petition, in which he begged that the case might be quashed; and this the magistrate consented to do. Yi soon got better, the feeling of hatred and re-

sentment increasing in the family day by day; while Jen and Yi, who were younger than the others, complained to Yu-yü of their recent punishment, saying, "The relationship of elder and younger brothers exists for others, why not for us?" "Ah," replied Yu-yü, "that is what I might well say; not you." Yu-yü then tried to persuade them to forget the past; but, not succeeding in his attempt, he shut up his house, and went off with his wife to live somewhere else, about twenty miles away. Now, although when Yu-yü was among them he did not help the two younger ones, yet his presence acted as some restraint upon Hsiao and the other two; but now that he was gone their conduct was beyond all bounds. They sought out Jen and Yi in their own houses, and not only reviled them, but abused the memory of their dead mother, against which Jen and Yi could only retaliate by keeping the door shut against them. However, they determined to do them some injury, and carried knives about with them wherever they went for that purpose.

One day the eldest brother, Ch'êng, who had been carried off by the rebels, returned with his wife; and, after three days' deliberation, Hsiao and the other two determined that, as he had been so long separated from the family, he had no further claims upon them for house-room, &c. Jen and Yi were secretly delighted at this result, and at once inviting Ch'êng to stay with them, sent news of his arrival to Yu-yü, who came back directly, and agreed with the others to hand over a share of the property to their elder brother. Hsiao and his clique were much enraged at this purchase of Ch'êng's

good will, and, hurrying to their brothers' houses, assailed them with every possible kind of abuse. Ch'êng, who had long been accustomed to scenes of violence among the rebels, now got into a great passion, and cried out, "When I came home none of you would give me a place to live in. Only these younger ones recognised the ties of blood,[4] and you would punish them for so doing. Do you think to drive me away?" Thereupon he threw a stone at Hsiao and knocked him down; and Jen and Yi rushed out with clubs and gave the three of them a severe thrashing. Ch'êng did not wait for them to lay a plaint, but set off to the magistrate on the spot, and preferred a charge against his three brothers. The magistrate, as before, sent for Yu-yü to ask his opinion, and Yu-yü had no alternative but to go, entering the yamên with downcast head, his tears flowing in silence all the while. The magistrate inquired of him how the matter stood; to which he replied only by begging His Honour to hear the case; which the magistrate accordingly did, deciding that the whole of the property was to be divided equally among the seven brothers. Thenceforth Jen and Yi became more and more attached to Ch'êng; and one day, in conversation, they happened to tell him the story of their mother's funeral. Ch'êng was exceedingly angry, and declared that such behaviour was that of brute beasts,

[4] Literally, of hand and foot, to the mutual dependence of which that of brothers is frequently likened by the Chinese.

proposing at the same time that the vault should be opened and that she should be re-buried in the proper place. Jen and Yi went off and told this to Yu-yü, who immediately came and begged Ch'êng to desist from his scheme; to which, however, he paid no attention, and fixed a day for her interment in the family vault. He then built a hut near by, and, with a knife lopping the branches off the trees, informed the brothers that any of them who did not appear at the funeral in the usual mourning would be treated by him in a manner similar to the trees. So they were all obliged to go, and the obsequies were conducted in a fitting manner. The brothers were now at peace together, Ch'êng keeping them in first-rate order, and always treating Hsiao, Chung, and Hsin with much more severity than the others. To Yu-yü he shewed a marked deference, and, whenever he was in a rage, would always be appeased by a word from him. Hsiao, too, was always going to Yu-yü to complain of the treatment he received at Ch'êng's hands when he did anything that Ch'êng disapproved of; and then, if Yu-yü quietly reproved him, he would be dissatisfied, so that at last Yu-yü could stand it no longer, and again went away and took a house at a considerable distance, where he remained almost entirely cut off from the others. By the time two years had passed away Ch'êng had completely succeeded in establishing harmony amongst them, and quarrels were of rare occurrence. Hsiao was then forty-six years old, and had five sons; Chi-yeh and Chi-tê, the first and third, by his wife; Chi-kung and Chi-Chi, the

second and fourth, by a concubine; and Chi-tsu, by a slave. They were all grown up, and exactly imitated their father's former behaviour, banding themselves together one against the other, and so on, without their father being able to make them behave better. Chi-tsu had no brothers of his own, and, being the youngest, the others bullied him dreadfully; until at length, being on a visit to his wife's family, who lived not far from Yu-yü's house, he went slightly out of his way to call and see his uncle. There he found his three cousins living peaceably together and pursuing their studies, and was so pleased that he remained with them some time, and said not a word as to returning home. His uncle urged him to go back, but he entreated to be allowed to stay; and then his uncle told him it was not that he grudged his daily food: it was because his father and mother did not know where he was. Chi-tsu accordingly went home, and a few months afterwards, when he and his wife were on the point of starting to congratulate his wife's mother on the anniversary of her birthday, he explained to his father that he should not come home again. When his father asked him why not, he partly divulged his reasons for going; whereupon his father said he was afraid his uncle would bear malice for what happened in the past, and that he would not be able to remain there long. "Father," replied Chi-tsu, "uncle Yu-yü is a good and virtuous man." He set out with his wife, and when they arrived Yu-yü gave them separate quarters, and made Chi-tsu rank as one of his own sons, making him join the eldest, Chi-san, in his studies. Chi-tsu was a clever

fellow, and now enrolled himself as a resident of the place where his uncle lived.[5]

Meanwhile, his brothers went on quarrelling among themselves as usual; and one day Chi-kung, enraged at an insult offered to his mother, killed Chi-yeh. He was immediately thrown into prison, where he was severely bambooed, and in a few days he died. Chi-yeh's wife, whose maiden name was Fêng, now spent the days of mourning in cursing her husband's murderer; and when Chi-kung's wife heard this, she flew into a towering passion, and said to her, "If your husband is dead, mine isn't alive." She then drew a knife and killed her, completing the tragedy by herself committing suicide in a well.

Mr. Fêng, the father of the murdered woman, was very much distressed at his daughter's untimely end; and, taking with him several members of the family with arms concealed under their clothes, they proceeded to Hsiao's house, and there gave his wife a most terrific beating. It was now Ch'êng's turn to be angry. "The members of my family are dying like sheep," cried he; "what do you mean by this, Mr. Fêng?" He then rushed out upon them with a roar, accompanied by all his own brothers and their sons; and the Fêng family was utterly routed. Seizing old Fêng himself, Ch'êng cut off both his ears; and when his son

[5] Any permanent change of residence must be notified to the District Magistrate, who keeps a running census of all persons within his jurisdiction.

tried to rescue him, Chi-chi ran up and broke both his legs with an iron crowbar. Every one of the Fêng family was badly wounded, and thus dispersed, leaving old Fêng's son lying in the middle of the road. The others not knowing what to do with him, Ch'êng took him under his arm, and, having thrown him down in the Fêng village, returned home, giving orders to Chi-chi to go immediately to the authorities and enter their plaint the first.[6]

The Fêng family had, however, anticipated them, and all the Tsêngs were accordingly thrown into prison, except Chung, who managed to escape. He ran away to the place where Yu-yü lived, and was pacing backwards and forwards before the door, afraid lest his brother should not have forgiven past offences, when suddenly Yu-yü, with his son and nephew, arrived on their return from the examination. "What do you want, my brother?" asked Yu-yü; whereupon Chung prostrated himself at the roadside, and then Yu-yü, seizing his hand, led him within to make further inquiries. "Alas! alas!" cried Yu-yü, when he had heard the story, "I knew that some dreadful calamity would be the result of all this wicked behaviour. But why have you come hither? I have been absent so long that I am no more acquainted with the local authorities; and if I now went to ask a favour of them, I should probably only be insulted for my pains. However, if none of the

[6] To be thus beforehand with one's adversary is regarded as *primâ facie* evidence of being in the right.

Fêng family die of their wounds, and if we three may chance to be successful in our examination, something may perhaps be done to mitigate this calamity."[7] Yu-yü then kept Chung to dinner, and at night he shared their room, which kind treatment made him at once grateful and repentant. By the end of ten days he was so struck with the behaviour of the father, sons, uncle, nephew, and cousins, one towards the other, that he burst into tears, and said, "Now I know how badly I behaved in days gone by." His uncle was overjoyed at his repentance, and sympathised with his feelings, when suddenly it was announced that Yu-yü and his son had both passed the examination for master's degree, and that Chi-tsu was *proximé accessit*. This delighted them all very much. They did not, however, attend the Fu-t'ai's congratulatory feast,[8] but went off first to worship at the tombs of their ancestors.

Now, at the time of the Ming dynasty a man who had taken his master's degree was a very considerable personage,[9] and the Fêngs accordingly began to draw in their

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[7] By means of the *status* which a graduate of the second degree would necessarily have.

[8] A sham entertainment given by the Fu-t'ai, or governor, to all the successful candidates. I say *sham*, because the whole thing is merely nominal; a certain amount of food is contracted for, but there is never anything fit to eat, most of the money being embezzled by the underlings to whose management the banquet is entrusted.

[9] Much more so than at present.

horns. Yu-yü, too, met them half-way. He got a friend to convey to them presents of food and money to help them in recovering from their injuries, and thus the prosecution was withdrawn. Then all his brothers implored him with tears in their eyes to return home, and, after burning incense with them,[10] and making them enter into a bond with him that by-gones should be by-gones, he acceded to their request. Chi-tsu, however, would not leave his uncle; and Hsiao himself said to Yu-yü, "I don't deserve such a son as that. Keep him, and teach him as you have done hitherto, and let him be as one of your own children; but if at some future time he succeeds in his examination, then I will beg you to return him to me." Yu-yü consented to this; and three years afterwards Chi-tsu did take his master's degree, upon which he sent him back to his own family.

Both husband and wife were very loth to leave their uncle's house, and they had hardly been at home three days before one of their children, only three years old, ran away and went back, returning to his great-uncle's as often as he was recaptured. This induced Hsiao to remove to the next house to Yu-yü's, and, by opening a door between the two, they made one

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[10] Thereby invoking the Gods as witnesses. A common method of making up a quarrel in China is to send the aggrieved party an olive and a piece of red paper in token that peace is restored. Why the *olive* should be specially employed I have in vain tried to ascertain.

establishment of the whole. Ch'êng was now getting old, and the family affairs devolved entirely upon Yu-yü, who managed things so well that their reputation for filial piety and fraternal love was soon spread far and wide.

XLIV.

THE YOUNG GENTLEMAN WHO COULDN'T SPELL.[1]

At Chia-p'ing there lived a certain young gentleman of considerable talent and very prepossessing appearance. When seventeen years of age he went up for his bachelor's degree; and as he was passing the door of a house, he saw within a pretty-looking girl, who not only riveted his gaze, but also smiled and nodded her head at him. Quite pleased at this, he approached the young lady and began to talk, she, meanwhile, inquiring of him where he lived, and if alone or otherwise. He assured her he was quite by himself; and then she said, "Well, I will come and see you, but you mustn't let any one know." The young gentleman agreed, and when he got home he sent all the servants to another part of the house, and by-and-by the young lady arrived.

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[1] Of course there is no such thing as spelling, in our sense of the term, in Chinese. But characters are frequently written with too many or too few strokes, and may thus be said to be incorrectly spelt.

She said her name was Wên-chi, and that her admiration for her host's noble bearing had made her visit him, unknown to her mistress. "And gladly," added she, "would I be your handmaid for life." Our hero was delighted, and proposed to purchase her from the mistress she mentioned; and from this time she was in the habit of coming in every other day or so. On one occasion it was raining hard, and, after hanging up her wet cloak upon a peg, she took off her shoes, and bade the young gentleman clean them for her. He noticed that they were newly embroidered with all the colours of the rainbow, but utterly spoilt by the soaking rain; and was just saying what a pity it was, when the young lady cried out, "I should never have asked you to do such menial work except to show my love for you." All this time the rain was falling fast outside, and Wên-chi now repeated the following line:—

"A nipping wind and chilly rain fill the river and the city."

There," said she, "cap that." The young gentleman replied that he could not, as he did not even understand what it meant. "Oh, really," retorted the young lady, "if you're not more of a scholar than that, I shall begin to think very little of you." She then told him he had better practice making verses, and he promised he would do so.

By degrees Miss Wên-chi's frequent visits attracted the notice of the servants, as also of a brother-in-law named Sung, who was likewise a gentleman of position;

and the latter begged our hero to be allowed so have a peep at her. He was told in reply that the young lady had strictly forbidden that any one should see her; however, he concealed himself in the servants' quarters, and when she arrived he looked at her through the window. Almost beside himself, he now opened the door; whereupon Wên-chi jumping up, vaulted over the wall and disappeared. Sung was really smitten with her, and went off to her mistress to try and arrange for her purchase; but when he mentioned Wên-chi's name, he was informed that they had once had such a girl, who had died several years previously. In great amazement Sung went back and told his brother-in-law, and he now knew that his beloved Wên-chi was a disembodied spirit. So when she came again he asked her if it was so; to which she replied, "It is; but as you wanted a nice wife and I a handsome husband, I thought we should be a suitable pair. What matters it that one is a mortal and the other a spirit," The young gentleman thoroughly coincided in her view of the case; and when his examination was over, and he was homeward bound, Wên-chi accompanied him, invisible to others and visible to him alone. Arriving at his parents' house, he installed her in the library; and the day she went to pay the customary bride's visit to her father and mother,[2] he told his own mother the whole story. She and his father were greatly alarmed, and ordered him

[2] A ceremonial visit made on the third day after marriage.

to have no more to do with her; but he would not listen to this, and then his parents tried by all kinds of devices to get rid of the girl, none of which met with any success.

One day our hero had left upon the table some written instructions for one of the servants, wherein he had made a number of mistakes in spelling, such as *paper* for *pepper*, *jinjer* for *ginger*, and so on; and when Wên-chi saw this, she wrote at the foot:—

> "Paper for pepper do I see?
> Jinger for ginger—can it be?
> Of such a husband I'm afraid;
> I'd rather be a servant-maid."

She then said to the young gentleman, "Imagining you to be a man of culture, I hid my blushes and sought you out the first.[3] Alas, your qualifications are on the outside; should I not thus be a laughing-stock to all?" She then disappeared, at which the young gentleman was much hurt; but not knowing to what she alluded, he gave the instructions to his servant, and so made himself the butt of all who heard the story.

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[3] Contrary to all Chinese notions of modesty and etiquette.

XLV.

THE TIGER GUEST.

A YOUNG man named Kung, a native of Min-chou, on his way to the examination at Hsi-ngan, rested awhile in an inn, and ordered some wine to drink. Just then a very tall and noble-looking stranger walked in, and, seating himself by the side of Kung, entered into conversation with him. Kung offered him a cup of wine, which the stranger did not refuse; saying, at the same time, that his name was Miao. But he was a rough, coarse fellow; and Kung, therefore, when the wine was finished, did not call for any more. Miao then rose, and observing that Kung did not appreciate a man of his capacity, went out into the market to buy some, returning shortly with a huge bowl full. Kung declined the proffered wine; but Miao, seizing his arm to persuade him, gripped it so painfully that Kung was forced to drink a few more cups, Miao himself swilling away as hard as he could go out of a soup-plate. "I am not good at entertaining people," cried Miao, at length; "pray go on or stop just as you please." Kung accordingly put together his things and went off; but he had not gone more than a few miles when his horse was taken ill, and lay down in the road. While he was waiting

there with all his heavy baggage, revolving in his mind what he should do, up came Mr. Miao; who, when he heard what was the matter, took off his coat and handed it to the servant, and lifting up the horse, carried it off on his back to the nearest inn, which was about six or seven miles distant. Arriving there he put the animal in the stable, and before long Kung and his servants arrived too. Kung was much astonished at Mr. Miao's feat; and, believing him to be superhuman, began to treat him with the utmost deference, ordering both wine and food to be procured for their refreshment. "My appetite," remarked Miao, "is one that you could not easily satisfy. Let us stick to wine." So they finished another stoup together, and then Miao got up and took his leave, saying, "It will be some time before your horse is well; I cannot wait for you." He then went away.

After the examination several friends of Kung's invited him to join them in a picnic to the Flowery Hill; and just as they were all feasting and laughing together, lo! Mr. Miao walked up. In one hand he held a large flagon, and in the other a ham, both of which he laid down on the ground before them. "Hearing," said he, "that you gentlemen were coming here, I have tacked myself on to you, like a fly to a horse's tail."[1] Kung and his friends then rose and received him with

[1] Alluding to a well-known expression which occurs in the *Historical Record*, and is often used in the sense of deriving advantage from connection with some influential person.

the usual ceremonies, after which they all sat down promiscuously.[2] By-and-by, when the wine had gone round pretty freely, some one proposed capping verses; whereupon Miao cried out, "Oh, we're very jolly drinking like this; what's the use of making oneself uncomfortable?" The others, however, would not listen to him, and agreed that as a forfeit a huge goblet of wine should be drunk by any defaulter. "Let us rather make death the penalty," said Miao; to which they replied, laughing, that such a punishment was a trifle too severe; and then Miao retorted that if it was not to be death, even a rough fellow like himself might be able to join. A Mr. Chin, who was sitting at the top of the line, then began:—

"From the hill-top high, wide extends the gaze—"

upon which Miao immediately carried on with

"Redly gleams the sword o'er the shattered vase."[3]

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[2] Without any regard to precedence, which plays quite as important a part at a Chinese as at a western dinner-party. In China, however, the most honoured guest sits at (what may be called) the head of the table, the host at the foot. I say "what may be called," as Chinese dining-tables are almost invariably square, and position alone determines which is the head and which the foot. They are usually made to accommodate eight persons; hence the fancy name "eight-angel table," in allusion to the eight famous angels, or Immortals, of the Taoist religion. (See No. V., note 1.) Occasionally, round tables are used; especially in cases where the party consists of some such number as ten.

[3] It is almost impossible to give in translation the true spirit of a Chinese antithetical couplet. There are so many points to be

The next gentleman thought for a long time, during which Miao was helping himself to wine; and by-and-by they had all capped the verse, but so wretchedly that Miao called out, "Oh, come! if we aren't to be fined for these,[4] we had better abstain from making any more." As none of them would agree to this, Miao could stand it no longer, and roared like a dragon till the hills and valleys echoed again. He then went down on his hands and knees, and jumped about like a lion, which utterly confused the poets, and put an end to their lucubrations. The wine had now been round a good many times, and being half tipsy each began to repeat to the other the verses he had handed in at the recent examination,[5] all at the same time indulging in any amount of mutual flattery. This so disgusted Miao that he drew Kung aside to have a game at "guess-fingers;"[6] but as they

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brought out, each word of the second line being in opposition both in tone and sense to a corresponding word in the first, that anything beyond a rough rendering of the idea conveyed would be superfluous in a work like this. Suffice it to say that Miao has here successfully capped the verse given; and the more so because he has introduced, through the medium of "sword" and "shattered vase," an allusion to a classical story in which a certain Wang Tun, when drunk with wine, beat time on a vase with his sword, and smashed the lip.

[4] This is the *vel ego vel Cluvienus* style of satire, his own verse having been particularly good.

[5] Many candidates, successful or otherwise, have their verses and essays printed, and circulate them among an admiring circle of friends.

[6] Accurately described in Tylor's *Primitive Culture*, Vol. I., p. 75:—"Each player throws out a hand, and the sum of all the

went on droning away all the same, he at length cried out, "Do stop your rubbish, fit only for your own wives,[7] and not for general company." The others were much abashed at this, and so angry were they at Miao's rudeness that they went on repeating all the louder. Miao then threw himself on the ground in a passion, and with a roar changed into a tiger, immediately springing upon the company, and killing them all except Kung and Mr. Chin. He then ran off roaring loudly. Now this Mr. Chin succeeded in taking his master's degree; and three years afterwards, happening to revisit the Flowery Hill, he beheld a Mr. Chi, one of those very gentlemen who had previously been killed by the tiger. In great alarm he was making off, when Chi seized his bridle and would not let him proceed. So he got down from his horse, and inquired what was the matter; to which Chi replied, "I am now the slave of Miao, and have to endure bitter toil for him. He must kill some one else before I can be set free.[8] Three

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fingers shown has to be called, the successful caller scoring a point; practically each calls the total before he sees his adversary's hand." The insertion of the word "simultaneously" after "called" would improve this description. This game is so noisy that the Hong-kong authorities have forbidden it, except within certain authorised limits, between the hours of 11 p.m. and 6 a.m.—Ordinance No. 2 of 1872.

[7] This delicate stroke is of itself sufficient to prove the truth of the oft-quoted Chinese saying, that all between the Four Seas are brothers.

[8] The "substitution" theory, by which disembodied spirits are

days hence a man, arrayed in the robes and cap of a scholar, should be eaten by the tiger at the foot of the Ts'ang-lung Hill. Do you on that day take some gentleman thither, and thus help your old friend." Chin was too frightened to say much, but promising that he would do so, rode away home. He then began to consider the matter over with himself, and, regarding it as a plot, he determined to break his engagement, and let his friend remain the tiger's devil. He chanced, however, to repeat the story to a Mr. Chiang who was a relative of his, and one of the local scholars; and as this gentleman had a grudge against another scholar, named Yu, who had come out equal with him at the examination, he made up his mind to destroy him. So he invited Yu to accompany him on that day to the place in question, mentioning that he himself should appear in undress only. Yu could not make out the reason for this; but when he reached the spot there he found all kinds of wine and food ready for his entertainment. Now that very day the Prefect had come to the hill; and being a friend of the Chiang family, and hearing that Chiang was below, sent for him to come up. Chiang did not dare to appear before him in undress, and borrowed Yu's clothes and hat; but he had no sooner got them on than out rushed the tiger and carried him away in its mouth.

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enabled to find their way back to the world of mortals. A very interesting and important example of this belief occurs in a later story (No. CVI), for which place I reserve further comments.

XLVI.

THE SISTERS.

His Excellency the Grand Secretary Mao came from an obscure family in the district of Yeh, his father being only a poor cow-herd. At the same place there resided a wealthy gentleman, named Chang, who owned a burial-ground in the neighbourhood; and some one informed him that while passing by he had heard sounds of wrangling from within the grave, and voices saying, "Make haste and go away; do not disturb His Excellency's home." Chang did not much believe this; but subsequently he had several dreams in which he was told that the burial-ground in question really belonged to the Mao family, and that he had no right whatever to it. From this moment the affairs of his house began to go wrong;[1] and at length he listened

[1] Such is the dominant belief regarding the due selection of an auspicious site, whether for a house or grave; and with this superstition deeply ingrained in the minds of the people, it is easy to understand the hold on the public mind possessed by the pseudo-scientific professors of Fêng-Shui, or the geomantic art.

to the remonstrances of friends and removed his dead elsewhere.

One day Mao's father, the cow-herd, was out near this burial-ground, when, a storm of rain coming on, he took refuge in the now empty grave, while the rain came down harder than ever, and by-and-by flooded the whole place and drowned the old man. The Grand Secretary was then a mere boy, and his mother went off to Chang to beg a piece of ground wherein to bury her dead husband. When Chang heard her name he was greatly astonished; and on going to look at the spot where the old man was drowned, found that it was exactly at the proper place for the coffin. More than ever amazed, he gave orders that the body should be buried there in the old grave, and also bade Mao's mother bring her son to see him. When the funeral was over, she went with Mao to Mr. Chang's house, to thank him for his kindness; and so pleased was he with the boy that he kept him to be educated, ranking him as one of his own sons. He also said he would give him his eldest daughter as a wife, an offer which Mao's mother hardly dared accept; but Mrs. Chang said that the thing was settled and couldn't be altered, so then she was obliged to consent. The young lady, however, had a great contempt for Mao, and made no effort to disguise her feelings; and if any one spoke to her of him, she would put her fingers in her ears, declaring she would die sooner than marry the cow-boy. On the day appointed for the wedding, the bridegroom arrived, and was feasted within, while outside the door a

handsome chair was in waiting to convey away the bride, who all this time was standing crying in a corner, wiping her eyes with her sleeve, and absolutely refusing to dress. Just then the bridegroom sent in to say he was going,[2] and the drums and trumpets struck up the wedding march, at which the bride's tears only fell the faster as her hair hung dishevelled down her back. Her father managed to detain Mao awhile, and went in to urge his daughter to make haste, she weeping bitterly as if she did not hear what he was saying. He now got into a rage, which only made her cry the louder; and in the middle of it all a servant came to say the bridegroom wished to take his leave. The father ran out and said his daughter wasn't quite ready, begging Mao to wait a little longer; and then hurried back again to the bride. Thus they went on for some time, backwards and forwards, until at last things began to look serious, for the young lady obstinately refused to yield; and Mr. Chang was ready to commit suicide for want of anything better. Just then his second daughter was standing by upbraiding her elder sister for her disobedience, when suddenly the latter turned round in a rage, and cried out, "So you are imitating the rest of them, you little minx; why don't you go and marry him yourself?" "My father did not betroth me to Mr.

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[2] The bridegroom leads off the procession, and the bride follows shortly afterwards in an elaborately-gilt sedan-chair, closed in on all sides so that the occupant cannot be seen.

Mao," answered she, "but if he had I should not require you to persuade me to accept him." Her father was delighted with this reply, and at once went off and consulted with his wife as to whether they could venture to substitute the second for the elder; and then her mother came and said to her, "That bad girl there won't obey her parent's commands; we wish, therefore, to put you in her place: will you consent to this arrangement?" The younger sister readily agreed, saying that had they told her to marry a beggar she would not have dared to refuse, and that she had not such a low opinion of Mr. Mao as all that. Her father and mother rejoiced exceedingly at receiving this reply; and dressing her up in her sister's clothes, put her in the bridal chair and sent her off. She proved an excellent wife, and lived in harmony with her husband; but she was troubled with a disease of the hair, which caused Mr. Mao some annoyance. Later on, she told him how she had changed places with her sister, and this made him think more highly of her than before. Soon after Mao took his bachelor's degree, and then set off to present himself as a candidate for the master's degree. On the way he passed by an inn, the landlord of which had dreamt the night before that a spirit appeared to him and said, "To-morrow Mr. Mao, first on the list, will come. Some day he will extricate you from a difficulty." Accordingly the landlord got up early, and took especial note of all guests who came from the eastward, until at last Mao himself arrived. The landlord was very glad to see him, and provided him with the

best of everything, refusing to take any payment for it all, but telling what he had dreamt the night before. Mao now began to give himself airs; and, reflecting that his wife's want of hair would make him look ridiculous, he determined that so soon as he attained to rank and power he would find another spouse. But alas! when the list of successful candidates was published, Mao's name was not among them; and he retraced his steps with a heavy heart, and by another road, so as to avoid meeting the innkeeper. Three years afterwards he went up again, and the landlord received him with precisely the same attentions as on the previous occasion; upon which Mao said to him, "Your former words did not come true; I am now ashamed to put you to so much trouble." Ah," replied the landlord, "you meant to get rid of your wife, and the Ruler of the world below struck out your name.[3] My dream couldn't have been false." In great astonishment, Mao asked what he meant by these words; and then he learnt that after his departure the landlord had had a second dream informing him of the above facts. Mao was much alarmed at what he heard, and remained as motionless as a wooden image, until the landlord said to him, "You, Sir, as a scholar, should have more self-respect, and you will certainly take the highest place."

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[3] Here again we have the common Chinese belief that fate is fate only within certain limits, and is always liable to be altered at the will of heaven.

By-and-by when the list came out, Mao was the first of all; and almost simultaneously his wife's hair began to grow quite thick, making her much better-looking than she had hitherto been.

Now her elder sister had married a rich young fellow of good family, who lived in the neighbourhood, which made the young lady more contemptuous than ever; but he was so extravagant and so idle that their property was soon gone, and they were positively in want of food. Hearing, too, of Mr. Mao's success at the examination, she was overwhelmed with shame and vexation, and avoided even meeting her sister in the street. Just then her husband died and left her destitute; and about the same time Mao took his doctor's degree, which so aggravated her feelings that, in a passion, she became a nun. Subsequently, when Mao rose to be a high officer of state, she sent a novice to his yamên to try and get a subscription out of him for the temple; and Mao's wife, who gave several pieces of silk and other things, secretly inserted a sum of money among them. The novice, not knowing this, reported what she had received to the elder sister, who cried out in a passion, "I wanted money to buy food with; of what use are these things to me?" So she bade the novice take them back; and when Mao and his wife saw her return, they suspected what had happened, and opening the parcel found the money still there. They now understood why the presents had been refused; and taking the money, Mao said to the novice, "If one hundred ounces of silver is too much luck for your mistress to

secure, of course she could never have secured a high official, such as I am now, for her husband." He then took fifty ounces, and giving them to the novice, sent her away, adding, "Hand this to your mistress, I'm afraid more would be too much for her."[4] The novice returned and repeated all that had been said; and then the elder sister sighed to think what a failure her life had been, and how she had rejected the worthy to accept the worthless. After this, the innkeeper got into trouble about a case of murder, and was imprisoned; but Mao exerted his influence, and obtained the man's pardon.

[4] This is another curious phase of Chinese superstition, namely, that each individual is so constituted by nature as to be able to absorb only a given quantity of good fortune and no more, any superfluity of luck doing actual harm to the person on whom it falls.

XLVII.

FOREIGN[1] PRIESTS.

THE Buddhist priest, T'i-k'ung, relates that when he was at Ch'ing-chou he saw two foreign priests of very extraordinary appearance. They wore rings in their ears, were dressed in yellow cloth, and had curly hair and beards. They said they had come from the countries of the west; and hearing that the Governor of the district was a devoted follower of Buddha, they went to visit him. The Governor sent a couple of servants to escort them to the monastery of the place, where the abbot, Ling-p'ei, did not receive them very cordially; but the secular manager, seeing that they were not ordinary individuals, entertained them and kept them there for the night. Some one asked if there were many strange men in the west, and what magical arts were practised by the Lohans;[2] whereupon one of them laughed, and putting forth his hand from his sleeve, showed a small pagoda, fully a foot in height, and beauti-

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[1] The word here used is *fan*, generally translated "barbarian."

[2] The disciples of Shâkyamuni Buddha. Same as *Arhans*.

fully carved, standing upon the palm. Now very high up in the wall there was a niche; and the priest threw the pagoda up to it, when lo! it stood there firm and straight. After a few moments the pagoda began to incline to one side, and a glory, as from a relic of some saint, was diffused throughout the room. The other priest then bared his arms, and stretched out his left until it was five or six feet in length, at the same time shortening his right arm until it dwindled to nothing. He then stretched out the latter until it was as long as his left arm.

XLVIII.

THE SELF-PUNISHED MURDERER.

MR. LI took his doctor's degree late in life.[1] On the 28th of the 9th moon of the 4th year of K'ang Hsi,[2] he killed his wife. The neighbours reported the murder to the officials, and the high authorities instructed the district magistrate to investigate the case. At this juncture Mr. Li was standing at the door of his residence; and snatching a butcher's knife from a stall hard by, he rushed into the Ch'êng-huang[3] temple, where, mounting the theatrical stage,[4] he threw himself on his knees, and spoke as follows:—"The spirit here will punish me. I am not to be prosecuted by evil men who, from party motives, confuse right and wrong. The spirit moves me to cut off an ear." Thereupon he cut

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[1] There is no limit as to age in the competitive examinations of China. The *San-tzŭ-Ching* records the case of a man who graduated at the mature age of eighty-two.

[2] In 1665, that is between fourteen and fifteen years previous to the completion of the *Liao Chai*.

[3] See No. I., note 1.

[4] Religion and the drama work hand in hand in China.

off his left ear and threw it down from the stage. He then said the spirit was going to fine him a hand for cheating people out of their money; and he forthwith chopped off his left hand. Lastly, he cried out that he was to be punished severely for all his many crimes; and immediately cut his own throat. The Viceroy subsequently received the Imperial permission to deprive him of his rank[5] and bring him to trial; but he was then being punished by a higher power in the realms of darkness below. See the *Peking Gazette*.[6]

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[5] Always the first step in the prosecution of a graduate. In this case, the accused was also an official.

[6] Of what date, our author does not say, or it would be curious to try and hunt up the official record of this case as it appeared in the government organ of the day. The unfortunate man was in all probability insane.

XLIX.

THE MASTER THIEF.

BEFORE his rebellion,[1] Prince Wu frequently told his soldiers that if any one of them could catch a tiger unaided he would give him a handsome pension and the title of the Tiger Daunter. In his camp there was a man named Pao-chu, as strong and agile as a monkey; and once when a new tower was being built, the wooden framework having only just been set up, Pao-chu walked along the eaves, and finally got up on to the very tip-top beam, where he ran backwards and forwards several times. He then jumped down, alighting safely on his feet.

Now Prince Wu had a favourite concubine, who was a skilful player on the guitar; and the nuts of the instrument she used were of warm jade,[2] so that when played upon there was a general feeling of warmth throughout the room. The young lady was extremely careful of this

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[1] A.D. 1675. His full name was Wu San-kuei.

[2] Such is the literal translation of a term which I presume to be the name of some particular kind of jade, which is ordinarily distinguished from the imitation article by its comparative *coldness*.

treasure, and never produced it for any one to see unless on receipt of the Prince's written order. One night, in the middle of a banquet, a guest begged to be allowed to see this wonderful guitar; but the Prince, being in a lazy mood, said it should be exhibited to him on the following day. Pao-chu, who was standing by, then observed that he could get it without troubling the Prince to write an order. Some one was therefore sent off beforehand to instruct all the officials to be on the watch, and then the Prince told Pao-chu he might go; and after scaling numerous walls the latter found himself near the lady's room. Lamps were burning brightly within; the doors were bolted and barred, and it was impossible to effect an entrance. Under the verandah, however, was a cockatoo fast asleep on its perch; and Pao-chu first mewing several times like a cat, followed it up by imitating the voice of the bird, and cried out as though in distress, "The cat! the cat!" He then heard the concubine call to one of the slave girls, and bid her go rescue the cockatoo which was being killed; and, hiding himself in a dark corner, he saw a girl come forth with a light in her hand. She had barely got outside the door when he rushed in, and there he saw the lady sitting with the guitar on a table before her. Seizing the instrument he turned and fled; upon which the concubine shrieked out "Thieves! thieves!" And the guard, seeing a man making off with the guitar, at once started in pursuit. Arrows fell round Pao-chu like drops of rain, but he climbed up one of a number of huge ash trees growing there, and from its top leaped on to the top of the

next, and so on, until he had reached the furthermost tree, when he jumped on to the roof of a house, and from that to another, more as if he were flying than anything else. In a few minutes he had disappeared, and before long presented himself suddenly at the banquet-table with the guitar in his hand, the entrance-gate having been securely barred all the time, and not a dog or a cock aroused.

L.

A FLOOD.

In the twenty-first year of K'ang Hsi[1] there was a severe drought, not a green blade appearing in the parched ground all through the spring and well into the summer. On the 13th of the 6th moon a little rain fell, and people began to plant their rice. On the 18th there was a heavy fall, and beans were sown.

Now at a certain village there was an old man, who, noticing two bullocks fighting on the hills, told the villagers that a great flood was at hand, and forthwith removed with his family to another part of the country. The villagers all laughed at him; but before very long rain began to fall in torrents, lasting all through the night, until the water was several feet deep, and carrying away the houses. Among the others was a man who, neglecting to save his two children, with his wife assisted his aged mother to reach a place of safety, from which they looked down at their old home, now only an

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[1] A.D. 1682; that is, three years after the date of our author's preface. See *Introduction*.

expanse of water, without hope of ever seeing the children again. When the flood had subsided, they went back, to find the whole place a complete ruin; but in their own house they discovered the two boys playing and laughing on the bed as if nothing had happened. Some one remarked that this was a reward for the filial piety of the parents. It happened on the 20th of the 6th moon.[2]

[2] A curious note here follows in the original, not however from the pen of the great commentator, I Shih-shih:—"In 1696 a severe earthquake occurred at P'ing-yang, and out of seventeen or eighteen cities destroyed, only one room remained uninjured—a room inhabited by a certain filial son. And thus, when in the crash of a collapsing universe, filial piety is specially marked out for protection, who shall say that God Almighty does not know black from white?"

LI.

DEATH BY LAUGHING.

A Mr. Sun Ching-hsia, a marshal of undergraduates,[1] told me that in his village there was a certain man who had been killed by the rebels when they passed through the place. The man's head was left hanging down on his chest; and as soon as the rebels had gone, his servants secured the body and were about to bury it. Hearing, however, a sound of breathing, they looked more closely, and found that the windpipe was not wholly severed; and, setting his head in its proper place, they carried him back home. In twenty-four hours he began to moan; and by dint of carefully feeding him with a spoon, within six months he had quite recovered.

Some ten years afterwards he was chatting with a few friends, when one of them made a joke which called forth loud applause from the others. Our hero, too, clapped his hands; but, as he was bending backwards and forwards with laughter, the seam on his neck split open, and down fell his head with a gush of blood.

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[1] Or "Director of Studies."

His friends now found that he was quite dead, and his father immediately commenced an action against the joker;[2] but a sum of money was subscribed by those present and given to the father, who buried his son and stopped further proceedings.

[2] The Chinese distinguish five degrees of homicide, of which accidental homicide is one (see *Penal Code*, Book VI.) Thus, if a gun goes off of itself in a man's hand and kills a bystander, the holder of the gun is guilty of homicide; but were the same gun lying on a table, it would be regarded as the will of Heaven. Similarly, a man is held responsible for any death caused by an animal belonging to him; though in such cases the affair can usually be hushed up by a money payment, no notice being taken of crimes in general unless at the instigation of a prosecutor, at whose will the case may be subsequently withdrawn. Where the circumstances are purely accidental, the law admits of a money compensation.

LII.

PLAYING AT HANGING.

A number of wild young fellows were one day out walking when they saw a young lady approach, riding on a pony.[1] One of them said to the others, "I'll back myself to make that girl laugh," and a supper was at once staked by both sides on the result. Our hero then ran out in front of the pony, and kept on shouting "I'm going to die! I'm going to die!" at the same time pulling out from over the top of a wall a stalk of millet, to which he attached his own waistband, and tying the latter round his neck, made a pretence of hanging himself. The young lady did laugh as she passed by, to the great amusement of the assembled company; but as when she was already some distance off their friend did not move, the others laughed louder than ever. However, on going up to him they saw that his tongue protruded, and that his eyes were glazed; he was, in fact, quite dead. Was it not strange that a man should be able to hang himself on a millet stalk?[2] It is a good warning against practical joking.

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[1] Women in China ride *à califourchon*.

[2] Which, although tolerably stout and strong, is hardly capable of sustaining a man's weight.

LIII.

THE RAT WIFE.

HSI SHAN was a native of Kao-mi, and a trader by occupation. He frequently slept at a place called Mêng-i. One day he was delayed on the road by rain, and when he arrived at his usual quarters it was already late in the night. He knocked at all the doors, but no one answered; and he was walking backwards and forwards in the piazza when suddenly a door flew open and an old man came out. He invited the traveller to enter, an invitation to which Hsi Shan gladly responded; and, tying up his mule, he went in. The place was totally unfurnished; and the old man began by saying that it was only out of compassion that he had asked him in, as his house was not an inn. "There are only three or four of us," added he; "and my wife and daughter are fast asleep. We have some of yesterday's food, which I will get ready for you; you must not object to its being cold." He then went within, and shortly afterwards returned with a low couch, which he placed on the ground, begging his guest to be seated, at the same time hurrying back for a low table, and soon for a number of other things, until at last Hsi Shan was quite uncomfortable,

and entreated his host to rest himself awhile. By-and-by a young lady came out, bringing some wine; upon which the old man said, "Oh, our A-ch'ien has got up." She was about sixteen or seventeen, a slender and pretty-looking girl; and as Hsi Shan had an unmarried brother, he began to think directly that she would do for him. So he inquired of the old man his name and address, to which the latter replied that his name was Ku, and that his children had all died save this one daughter. "I didn't like to wake her just now, but I suppose my wife told her to get up." Hsi Shan then asked the name of his son-in-law, and was informed that the young lady was not yet engaged,—at which he was secretly very much pleased. A tray of food was now brought in, evidently the remains from the day before; and when he had finished eating, Hsi Shan began respectfully to address the old man as follows:—"I am only a poor wayfarer, but I shall never forget the kindness with which you have treated me. Let me presume upon it, and submit to your consideration a plan I have in my head. My younger brother, San-lang, is seventeen years old. He is a student, and by no means unsteady or dull. May I hope that you will unite our families together, and not think it presumption on my part?" "I, too, am but a temporary sojourner," replied the old man, rejoicing; "and if you will only let me have a part of your house, I shall be very glad to come and live with you." Hsi Shan consented to this, and got up and thanked him for the promise of his daughter; upon which the old man set to work to make him comfortable for the night, and

then went away. At cock-crow he was outside, calling his guest to come and have a wash; and when Hsi Shan had packed up ready to go, he offered to pay for his night's entertainment. This, however, the old man refused, saying, "I could hardly charge a stranger anything for a single meal; how much less could I take money from my intended son-in-law?" They then separated, and in about a month Hsi Shan returned; but when he was a short distance from the village he met an old woman with a young lady, both dressed in deep mourning. As they approached he began to suspect it was A-ch'ien; and the young lady, after turning round to look at him, pulled the old woman's sleeeve, and whispered something in her ear, which Hsi Shan himself did not hear. The old woman stopped immediately, and asked if she was addressing Mr. Hsi; and when informed that she was, she said mournfully, "Alas! my husband has been killed by the falling of a wall. We are going to bury him to-day. There is no one at home; but please wait here, and we will be back by-and-by." They then disappeared among the trees; and, returning after a short absence, they walked along together in the dusk of the evening. The old woman complained bitterly of their lonely and helpless state, and Hsi Shan himself was moved to compassion by the sight of her tears. She told him that the people of the neighbourhood were a bad lot, and that if he thought of marrying the poor widow's daughter, he had better lose no time in doing so. Hsi Shan said he was willing; and when they reached the house the old woman, after light-

ing the lamp and setting food before him, proceeded to speak as follows:—"Knowing, Sir, that you would shortly arrive, we sold all our grain except about twenty piculs. We cannot take this with us so far; but a mile or so to the north of the village, at the first house you come to, there lives a man named T'an Erh-ch'üan, who often buys grain from me. Don't think it too much trouble to oblige me by taking a sack with you on your mule and proceeding thither at once. Tell Mr. T'an that the old lady of the southern village has several piculs of grain which she wishes to sell in order to get money for a journey, and beg him to send some animals to carry it." The old woman then gave him a sack of grain; and Hsi Shan, whipping up his mule, was soon at the place; and, knocking at the door, a great fat fellow came out, to whom he told his errand. Emptying the sack he had brought, he went back himself first; and before long a couple of men arrived leading five mules. The old woman took them into the granary, which was a cellar below ground, and Hsi Shan, going down himself, handed up the bags to the mother and daughter, who passed them on from one to the other. In a little while the men had got a load, with which they went off, returning altogether four times before all the grain was exhausted. They then paid the old woman, who kept one man and two mules, and, packing up her things, set off towards the east. After travelling some seven miles day began to break; and by-and-by they reached a market town, where the old woman hired animals and sent back T'an's servant. When they arrived at Hsi

Shan's home he related the whole story to his parents, who were very pleased at what had happened, and provided separate apartments for the old lady, at the same time engaging a fortune-teller to fix on a lucky day for A-ch'ien's marriage with their son San-lang. The old woman prepared a handsome trousseau; and as for A-ch'ien herself, she spoke but little, seldom losing her temper, and if any one addressed her she would only reply with a smile. She employed all her time in spinning, and thus became a general favourite with all alike. "Tell your brother," said she to San-lang, "that when he happens to pass our old residence he will do well not to make any mention of my mother and myself."

In three or four years' time the Hsi family had made plenty of money, and San-lang had taken his bachelor's degree, when one day Hsi Shan happened to pass a night with the people who lived next door to the house where he had met A-ch'ien. After telling them the story of his having had nowhere to sleep, and taking refuge with the old man and woman, his host said to him, "You must make a mistake, Sir; the house you allude to belongs to my uncle, but was abandoned three years ago in consequence of its being haunted. It has now been uninhabited for a long time. What old man and woman can have entertained you there?" Hsi Shan was very much astonished at this, but did not put much faith in what he heard; meanwhile his host continued, "For ten years no one dared enter the house; however, one day the back wall fell down, and my uncle, going to look at it, found, half-buried underneath the ruins, a large

rat, almost as big as a cat. It was still moving, and my uncle went off to call for assistance, but when he got back the rat had disappeared. Everyone suspected some supernatural agency to be at work, though on returning to the spot ten days afterwards nothing was to be either heard or seen; and about a year subsequently the place was inhabited once more." Hsi Shan was more than ever amazed at what he now heard, and on reaching home told the family what had occurred; for he feared that his brother's wife was not a human being, and became rather anxious about him. San-lang himself continued to be much attached to A-ch'ien; but by-and-by the other members of the family let A-ch'ien perceive that they had suspicions about her. So one night she complained to San-lang, saying, "I have been a good wife to you for some years: now I have become an object of contempt. I pray you give me my divorce,[1] and seek for yourself some worthier mate." She then burst into a flood of tears; whereupon San-lang said, "You should know my feelings by this time. Ever since you

[1] The Chinese acknowledge seven just causes for putting away a wife. (1) Bad behaviour towards the husband's father and mother. (2) Adultery. (3) Jealousy. (4) Garrulity. (5) Theft. (6) Disease. (7) Barrenness. The right of divorce may not, however, be enforced if the husband's father and mother have died since the marriage, as thus it would be inferred that the wife had served them well up to the time of their death; or if the husband has recently risen to wealth and power (hence the saying, "The wife of my poverty shall not go down from my hall"); or thirdly, if the wife's parents and brothers are dead, and she has no home in which she can seek shelter.

entered the house the family has prospered; and that prosperity is entirely due to you. Who can say it is not so?" "I know full well," replied A-ch'ien, "what you feel; still there are the others, and I do not wish to share the fate of an autumn fan."[2] At length San-lang succeeded in pacifying her; but Hsi Shan could not dismiss the subject from his thoughts, and gave out that he was going to get a first-rate mouser, with a view to testing A-ch'ien. She did not seem very frightened at this, though evidently ill at ease; and one night she told San-lang that her mother was not very well, and that he needn't come to bid her good night as usual. In the morning mother and daughter had disappeared; at which San-lang was greatly alarmed, and sent out to look for them in every direction. No traces of the fugitives could be discovered, and San-lang was overwhelmed with grief, unable either to eat or to sleep. His father and brother thought it was a lucky thing for him, and advised him to

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[2] This elegant simile is taken from a song ascribed to Pan Chieh-yü, a favourite of the Emperor Ch'êng Ti of the Han dynasty, written when her influence with the Son of Heaven began to wane. I venture to reproduce it here.

"O fair white silk, fresh from the weaver's loom;
Clear as the frost, bright as the winter's snow!
See! friendship fashions out of thee a fan,
Round as the round moon shines in heaven above.
At home, abroad, a close companion thou,
Stirring at every move the grateful gale.
And yet I fear, ah, me! that autumn chills
Will see thee laid neglected on the shelf,
All thought of by-gone days, like them, by-gone."

console himself with another wife. This, however, he refused to do; until, about a year afterwards, nothing more having been heard of A-ch'ien, he could not resist their importunities any longer, and bought himself a concubine. But he never ceased to think of A-ch'ien; and some years later, when the prosperity of the family was on the wane, they all began to regret her loss.

Now San-lang had a step-brother, named Lan, who, when travelling to Chiao-chou on business, passed a night at the house of a relative named Lu. He noticed that during the night sounds of weeping and lamentation proceeded from their next-door neighbours, but he did not inquire the reason of it; however, on his way back he heard the same sounds, and then asked what was the cause of such demonstrations. Mr. Lu told him that a few years ago an old widow and her daughter had come there to live, and that the mother had died about a month previously, leaving her child quite alone in the world. Lan inquired what her name was, and Mr. Lu said it was Ku; "But," added he, "the door is closely barred, and as they never had any communication with the village, I know nothing of their antecedents." "It's my sister-in-law," cried Lan, in amazement, and at once proceeded to knock at the door of the house. Some one came to the front door, and said, in a voice that betokened recent weeping, "Who's there? There are no men in this house."[3] Lan looked through a

[3] Signifying that it would be impossible for him to enter.

crack, and saw that the young lady really was his sister-in-law; so he called out, "Sister, open the door. I am your step-brother A-sui." A-ch'ien immediately opened the door and asked him in, and recounted to him the whole story of her troubles. "Your husband," said Lan, "is always thinking of you. For a trifling difference you need hardly have run away so far from him." He then proposed to hire a vehicle and take her home; but A-ch'ien replied, "I came hither with my mother to hide because I was held in contempt, and should make myself ridiculous by now returning thus. If I am to go back, my elder brother Hsi Shan must no longer live with us; otherwise, I will assuredly poison myself." Lan then went home and told San-lang, who set off and travelled all night until he reached the place where A-ch'ien was. Husband and wife were overjoyed to meet again, and the following day San-lang notified the landlord of the house where A-ch'ien had been living. Now this landlord had long desired to secure A-ch'ien as a concubine for himself; and, after making no claim for rent for several years, he began to hint as much to her mother. The old lady, however, refused flatly; but shortly afterwards she died, and then the landlord thought that he might be able to succeed. At this juncture San-lang arrived, and the landlord sought to hamper him by putting in his claim for rent; and, as San-lang was anything but well off at the moment, it really did annoy him very much. A-ch'ien here came to the rescue, showing San-lang a large quantity of grain she had in the house, and bidding him use it to settle

accounts with the landlord. The latter declared he could not accept grain, but must be paid in silver; whereupon A-ch'ien sighed and said it was all her unfortunate self that had brought this upon them, at the same time telling San-lang of the landlord's former proposition. San-lang was very angry, and was about to take out a summons against him, when Mr. Lu interposed, and, by selling the grain in the neighbourhood, managed to collect sufficient money to pay off the rent. San-lang and his wife then returned home; and the former, having explained the circumstances to his parents, separated his household from that of his brother. A-ch'ien now proceeded to build, with her own money, a granary, which was a matter of some astonishment to the family, there not being a hundredweight of grain in the place. But in about a year the granary was full,[4] and before very long San-lang was a rich man, Hsi Shan remaining as poor as before. Accordingly, A-ch'ien persuaded her husband's parents to come and live with them, and made frequent presents of money to the elder brother; so that her husband said, "Well, at any rate, you bear no malice." "Your brother's behaviour," replied she, "was from his regard for you. Had it not been for him, you and I would never have met." After this there were no more supernatural manifestations.

[4] The result of A-ch'ien's depredations as a rat.

LIV.

THE MAN WHO WAS THROWN DOWN A WELL.

MR. TAI, of An-ch'ing, was a wild fellow when young. One day as he was returning home tipsy,[1] he met by the way a dead cousin of his named Chi; and having, in his drunken state, quite forgotten that his cousin was dead, he asked him where he was going. "I am already a disembodied spirit," replied Chi; "don't you remember?" Tai was a little disturbed at this; but, being

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[1] I have already discussed the subject of drunkenness in China (*Chinese Sketches*, pp. 113, 114), and shall not return to it here, further than to quote a single sentence, to which I adhere as firmly now as when the book in question was published:—"Who ever sees in China a tipsy man reeling about a crowded thoroughfare, or lying with his head in a ditch by the side of some country road?"

It is not, however, generally known that the Chinese, with their usual quaintness, distinguish between five kinds of drunkenness, different people being differently affected, according to the physical constitution of each. Wine may fly (1) to the heart, and produce maudlin emotions; or (2) to the liver, and incite to pugnacity; or (3) to the stomach, and cause drowsiness, accompanied by a flushing of the face; or (4) to the lungs, and induce hilarity; or (5) to the kidneys, and excite desire.

under the influence of liquor, he was not frightened, and inquired, of his cousin what he was doing in the realms below. "I am employed as scribe," said Chi, "in the court of the Great King." "Then you must know all about our happiness and misfortunes to come," cried Tai. "It is my business," answered his cousin, "so of course I know. But I see such an enormous mass that, unless of special reference to myself or family, I take no notice of any of it. Three days ago, by the way, I saw your name in the register." Tai immediately asked what there was about himself, and his cousin replied, "I will not deceive you; your name was put down for a dark and dismal hell." Tai was dreadfully alarmed, and at the same time sobered, and entreated his cousin to assist him in some way. "You may try," said Chi, "what merit will do for you as a means of mitigating your punishment; but the register of your sins is as thick as my finger, and nothing short of the most deserving acts will be of any avail. What can a poor fellow like myself do for you? Were you to perform one good act every day, you would not complete the necessary total under a year and more, and it is now too late for that. But henceforth amend your ways, and there may still be a chance of escape for you." When Tai heard these words he prostrated himself on the ground, imploring his cousin to help him; but, on raising his head, Chi had disappeared; he therefore returned sorrowfully home, and set to work to cleanse his heart and order his behaviour.

Now Tai's next door neighbour had long suspected

him of paying too much attention to his wife; and one day meeting Tai in the fields shortly after the events narrated above, he inveigled him into inspecting a dry well, and then pushed him down. The well was many feet deep, and the man felt certain that Tai was killed; however, in the middle of the night he came round, and sitting up at the bottom, he began to shout for assistance, but could not make any one hear him. On the following day, the neighbour, fearing that Tai might possibly have recovered consciousness, went to listen at the mouth of the well; and hearing him cry out for help, began to throw down a quantity of stones. Tai took refuge in a cave at the side, and did not dare utter another sound; but his enemy knew he was not dead, and forthwith filled the well almost up to the top with earth. In the cave it was as dark as pitch, exactly like the Infernal Regions; and not being able to get anything to eat or drink, Tai gave up all hopes of life. He crawled on his hands and knees further into the cave, but was prevented by water from going further than a few paces, and returned to take up his position at the old spot. At first he felt hungry; by-and-by, however, this sensation passed away; and then reflecting that there, at the bottom of a well, he could hardly perform any good action, he passed his time in calling loudly on the name of Buddha.[2]

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[2] "The very name of Buddha, if pronounced with a devout heart 1,000 or 5,000 times, will effectually dispel all harassing thoughts, all fightings within and fears without."—*Eitel.*

Before long he saw a number of Will-o'-the-Wisps flitting over the water and illuminating the gloom of the cave; and immediately prayed to them, saying, "O Will-o'-the-Wisps, I have heard that ye are the shades of wronged and injured people. I have not long to live, and am without hope of escape; still I would gladly relieve the monotony of my situation by exchanging a few words with you." Thereupon, all the Wills came flitting across the water to him; and among them was a man of about half the ordinary size. Tai asked him whence he came; to which he replied, "This is an old coal-mine. The proprietor, in working the coal, disturbed the position of some graves;[3] and Mr. Lung-fei flooded the mine and drowned forty-three workmen. We are the shades of those men." He further said he did not know who Mr. Lung-fei was, except that he was secretary to the City God, and that in compassion for the misfortunes of the innocent workmen, he was in the habit of sending them a quantity of gruel every three or four days. "But the cold water," added he, "soaks into our bones, and there is but small chance of ever getting them removed. If, Sir, you some day return to the world above, I pray you fish up our decaying bones and bury them in some public burying-ground. You will thus earn for yourself boundless gratitude in the

[3] A religious and social offence of the deepest dye, sure to entail punishment in the world to come, even if the perpetrator escapes detection in this life.

realms below." Tai promised that if he had the luck to escape he would do as they wished; "but how," cried he, "situated as I am, can I ever hope to look again upon the light of day." He then began to teach the Wills to say their prayers, making for them beads[4] out of bits of mud, and repeating to them the liturgies of Buddha. He could not tell night from morning; he slept when he felt tired, and when he waked he sat up. Suddenly, he perceived in the distance the light of lamps, at which the shades all rejoiced, and said, "It is Mr. Lung-fei with our food." They then invited Tai to go with them; and when he said he couldn't because of the water, they bore him along over it so that he hardly seemed to walk. After twisting and turning about for nearly a quarter of a mile, he reached a place at which the Wills bade him walk by himself; and then he appeared to mount a flight of steps, at the top of which he found himself in an apartment lighted by a candle as thick round as one's arm. Not having seen the light of fire for some time, he was overjoyed and walked in; but observing an old man in a scholar's dress and cap seated in the post of honour, he stopped, not liking to advance further. But the old man had already caught sight of him, and asked him how he, a living man, had come there. Tai threw himself on the ground at his feet, and

[4] The Buddhist rosary consists of 108 beads, which number is the same as that of the compartments in the *Phrabat* or sacred foot-print of Buddha.

told him all; whereupon the old man cried out, "My great-grandson!" He then bade him get up; and offering him a seat, explained that his own name was Tai Ch'ien, and that he was otherwise known as Lung-fei. He said, moreover, that in days gone by a worthless grandson of his named T'ang, had associated himself with a lot of scoundrels and sunk a well near his grave, disturbing the peace of his everlasting night; and that therefore he had flooded the place with salt water and drowned them. He then inquired as to the general condition of the family at that time.

Now Tai was a descendant of one of five brothers, from the eldest of whom T'ang himself was also descended; and an influential man of the place had bribed T'ang to open a mine[5] alongside the family grave. His brothers were afraid to interfere; and by-and-by the water rose and drowned all the workmen; whereupon actions for damages were commenced by the relatives of the deceased,[6] and T'ang and his friend were reduced to poverty, and T'ang's descendants to absolute destitution. Tai was a son of one of T'ang's brothers, and having heard this story from his seniors, now repeated it to the old man. "How could they be otherwise than unfor-

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[5] It here occurred to me that the word hitherto translated "well" should have been "shaft;" but the commentator refers expressly to the *Tso Chuan*, where the phrase for "a dry well," as first used, is so explained. We must accordingly fall back on the supposition that our author has committed a trifling slip.

[6] See No. LI., note 2.

tunate," cried the latter, "with such an unfilial progenitor? But since you have come hither, you must on no account neglect your studies." The old man then provided him with food and wine, and spreading a volume of essays according to the old style before him, bade him study it most carefully. He also gave him themes for composition, and corrected his essays as if he had been his tutor. The candle remained always burning in the room, never needing to be snuffed and never decreasing. When he was tired he went to sleep, but he never knew day from night. The old man occasionally went out, leaving a boy to attend to his great grandson's wants. It seemed that several years passed away thus, but Tai had no troubles of any kind to annoy him. He had no other book except the volume of essays, one hundred in all, which he read through more than four thousand times. One day the old man said to him, "Your term of expiation is nearly completed, and you will be able to return to the world above. My grave is near the coal-mine, and the grosser breeze plays upon my bones. Remember to remove them to Tung-yüan." Tai promised he would see to this; and then the old man summoned all the shades together and instructed them to escort Tai back to the place where they had found him. The shades now bowed one after the other, and begged Tai to think of them as well, while Tai himself was quite at a loss to guess how he was going to get out.

Meanwhile, Tai's family had searched for him everywhere, and his mother had brought his case to the

notice of the officials, thereby implicating a large number of persons, but without getting any trace of the missing man. Three or four years passed away and there was a change of magistrate; in consequence of which the search was relaxed, and Tai's wife, not being happy where she was, married another husband. Just then an inhabitant of the place set about repairing the old well and found Tai's body in the cave at the bottom. Touching it, he found it was not dead, and at once gave information to the family. Tai was promptly conveyed home, and within a day he could tell his own story.

Since he had been down the well, the neighbour who pushed him in had beaten his own wife to death; and his father-in-law having brought an action against him, he had been in confinement for more than a year while the case was being investigated.[7] When released he was a mere bag of bones;[8] and then hearing that Tai had come back to life, he was terribly alarmed and fled away. The family tried to persuade Tai to take proceedings against him, but this he would not do, alleging that what had befallen him was a proper punishment for his own bad behaviour, and had nothing to do with the neighbour. Upon this, the said neighbour ventured to return; and when the water in the well had dried up, Tai hired men to go down and collect the bones, which

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[7] That is, as to whether or not there were extenuating circumstances, in which case no punishment would be inflicted.

[8] Such is the invariable result of confinement in a Chinese prison, unless the prisoner has the wherewithal to purchase food.

he put in coffins and buried all together in one place. He next hunted up Mr. Lung-fei's name in the family tables of genealogy, and proceeded to sacrifice all kinds of nice things at his tomb. By-and-by the Literary Chancellor[9] heard this strange story, and was also very pleased with Tai's compositions; accordingly, Tai passed successfully through his examinations, and, having taken his master's degree, returned home and reburied Mr. Lung-fei at Tung-yüan, repairing thither regularly every spring without fail.[10]

[9] The provincial examiner for the degree of bachelor.

[10] To worship at his tomb.

LV.

THE VIRTUOUS DAUGHTER-IN-LAW.

An Ta-ch'ÉNG was a Chung-ch'ing man. His father, who had gained the master's degree, died early; and his brother Erh-ch'êng was a mere boy. He himself had married a wife from the Ch'ên family, whose name was Shan-hu; and this young lady had much to put up with from the violent and malicious disposition of her husband's mother.[1] However, she never complained; and every morning dressed herself up smart, and went in to pay her respects to the old lady. Once when Ta-ch'êng was ill, his mother abused Shan-hu for dressing so nicely; whereupon Shan-hu went back and changed her clothes; but even then Mrs. An was not satisfied, and began to tear her own hair with rage. Ta-ch'êng, who was a very filial son, at once gave his wife a beating, and this put an end to the scene. From that moment his mother hated her more than ever, and although she was everything that a daughter-in-law could be, would

[1] See No. XLIII., note 2.

never exchange a word with her. Ta-ch'êng then treated her in much the same way, that his mother might see he would have nothing to do with her; still the old lady wasn't pleased, and was always blaming Shan-hu for every trifle that occurred. "A wife," cried Ta-ch'êng "is taken to wait upon her mother-in-law. This state of things hardly looks like the wife doing her duty." So he bade Shan-hu begone,[2] and sent an old maid-servant to see her home: but when Shan-hu got outside the village-gate, she burst into tears, and said, "How can a girl who has failed in her duties as a wife ever dare to look her parents in the face? I had better die." Thereupon she drew a pair of scissors and stabbed herself in the throat, covering herself immediately with blood. The servant prevented any further mischief, and supported her to the house of her husband's aunt, who was a widow living by herself, and who made Shan-hu stay with her. The servant went back and told Ta-ch'êng, and he bade her say nothing to any one, for fear his mother should hear of it. In a few days Shan-hu's wound was healed, and Ta-ch'êng went off to ask his aunt to send her away. His aunt invited him in, but he declined, demanding loudly that Shan-hu should be turned out; and in a few moments Shan-hu herself came forth, and inquired what she had done. Ta-ch'êng said she had failed in her duty towards his mother; whereupon Shan-hu hung her head

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[2] See No. LIII., note 1.

and made no answer, while tears of blood[3] trickled from her eyes and stained her dress all over. Ta-ch'êng was much touched by this spectacle, and went away without saying any more; but before long his mother heard all about it, and, hurrying off to the aunt's, began abusing her roundly. This the aunt would not stand, and said it was all the fault of her own bad temper, adding, "The girl has already left you, and has nothing more to do with the family. Miss Ch'ên is staying with me, not your daughter-in-law; so you had better mind your own business." This made Mrs. An furious; but she was at a loss for an answer, and, seeing that the aunt was firm, she went off home abashed and in tears.

Shan-hu herself was very much upset, and determined to seek shelter elsewhere, finally taking up her abode with Mrs. An's elder sister, a lady of sixty odd years of age, whose son had died, leaving his wife and child to his mother's care. This Mrs. Yü was extremely fond of Shan-hu; and when she heard the facts of the case, said it was all her sister's horrid disposition, and proposed to send Shan-hu back. The latter, however, would not hear of this, and they continued to live together like mother and daughter; neither would Shan-hu accept the invitation of her two brothers to return home and marry some one else, but remained there with

[3] Such is the Chinese idiom for what we should call "bitter" tears. This phrase is constantly employed in the notices of the death of a parent sent round to friends and relatives.

Mrs. Yü, earning enough to live upon by spinning and such work.

Ever since Shan-hu had been sent away, Ta-ch'êng's mother had been endeavouring to get him another wife; but the fame of her temper had spread far and wide, and no one would entertain her proposals. In three or four years Erh-ch'êng had grown up, and he was married first to a young lady named Tsang-ku, whose temper turned out to be something fearful, and far more ungovernable even than her mother-in-law's. When the latter only looked angry, Tsang-ku was already at the shrieking stage; and Erh-ch'êng, being of a very meek disposition, dared not side with either. Thus it came about that Mrs. An began to be in mortal fear of Tsang-ku; and whenever her daughter-in-law was in a rage she would try and turn off her anger with a smile. She seemed never to be able to please Tsang-ku, who in her turn worked her mother-in-law like a slave, Ta-ch'êng himself not venturing to interfere, but only assisting his mother in washing the dishes and sweeping the floor. Mother and son would often go to some secluded spot, and there in secret tell their griefs to one another; but before long Mrs. An was stretched upon a sick bed with nobody to attend to her except Ta-ch'êng. He watched her day and night without sleeping, until both eyes were red and inflamed; and then when he went to summon the younger son to take his place, Tsang-ku told him to leave the house. Ta-ch'êng now went off to inform Mrs. Yü, hoping that she would come and assist; and he had hardly finished his tale of woe before Shan-hu

walked in. In great confusion at seeing her, he would have left immediately had not Shan held out her arms across the door; whereupon he bolted underneath them and escaped. He did not dare tell his mother, and shortly afterwards Mrs. Yü arrived, to the great joy of Ta-ch'êng's mother, who made her stay in the house. Every day something nice was sent for Mrs. Yü, and even when she told the servants that there was no occasion for it, she having all she wanted at her sister's, the things still came as usual. However, she kept none of them for herself, but gave what came to the invalid, who gradually began to improve. Mrs. Yü's grandson also used to come by his mother's orders, and inquire after the sick lady's health, besides bringing a packet of cakes and so on for her. "Ah, me!" cried Mrs. An, "what a good daughter-in-law you have got, to be sure. What have you done to her?" "What sort of a person was the one you sent away?" asked her sister in reply. "She wasn't as bad as some one I know of," said Mrs. An, "though not so good as yours." "When she was here you had but little to do," replied Mrs Yü; "and when you were angry she took no notice of it. How was she not as good?" Mrs. An then burst into tears, and saying how sorry she was, asked if Shan-hu had married again; to which Mrs. Yü replied that she did not know, but would make inquiries. In a few more days the patient was quite well, and Mrs. Yü proposed to return; her sister, however, begged her to stay, and declared she should die if she didn't. Mrs. Yü then advised that Erh-ch'êng and his wife should

live in a separate house, and Erh-ch'êng spoke about it to his wife; but she would not agree, and abused both Ta-ch'êng and his mother alike. It ended by Ta-ch'êng giving up a large share of the property, and ultimately Tsang-ku consented, and a deed of separation was drawn up. Mrs. Yü then went away, returning next day with a sedan-chair to carry her sister back; and no sooner had the latter put her foot inside Mrs. Yü's door, than she asked to see the daughter-in-law, whom she immediately began to praise very highly. "Ah," said Mrs. Yü, "she's a good girl, with her little faults like the rest of us; but your daughter-in-law is just as good, though you are not aware of it." "Alas!" replied her sister, "I must have been as senseless as a statue not to have seen what she was." "I wonder what Shan-hu, whom you turned out of doors, says of you," rejoined Mrs. Yü. "Why, swears at me, of course," answered Mrs. An. "If you examine yourself honestly and find nothing which should make people swear at you, is it at all likely you would be sworn at?" asked Mrs. Yü. "Well, all people are fallible," replied the other, "and as I know she is not perfect, I conclude she would naturally swear at me." "If a person has just cause for resentment, and yet does not indulge that resentment, such behaviour should meet with a grateful acknowledgment; or if any one has just cause for leaving another and yet does not do so, such behaviour should entitle them to kind treatment. Now, all the things that were sent when you were ill, and all the various little attentions, did not

come from my daughter-in-law but from yours." Mrs. An was amazed at hearing this, and asked for some explanation; whereupon Mrs. Yü continued, "Shan-hu has been living here for a long time. Everything she sent to you was bought with money earned by her spinning, and that, too, continued late into the night." Mrs. An here burst into tears, and begged to be allowed to see Shan-hu, who came in at Mrs. Yü's summons, and threw herself on the ground at her mother-in-law's feet. Mrs. An was much abashed, and beat her head with shame; but Mrs. Yü made it all up between them, and they became mother and daughter as at first. In about ten days they went home, and, as their property was not enough to support them, Ta-ch'êng had to work with his pen while his wife did the same with her needle. Erh-ch'êng was quite well off, but his brother would not apply to him, neither did he himself offer to help them. Tsang-ku, too, would have nothing to do with her sister-in-law, because she had been divorced; and Shan-hu in her turn, knowing what Tsang-ku's temper was, made no great efforts to be friendly. So the two brothers lived apart;[4] and when Tsang-ku was in one of her outrageous moods, all the others would stop their ears, till at length there was only her husband and the servants upon whom to vent her spleen. One day a maid-servant of hers committed

[4] A disgraceful state of things, in the eyes of the Chinese. See the paraphrase of the *Sacred Edict*, Maxim 1.

suicide, and the father of the girl brought an action against Tsang-ku for having caused her death. Erh-ch'êng went off to the mandarin's to take her place as defendant, but only got a good beating for his pains, as the magistrate insisted that Tsang-ku herself should appear, and answer to the charge, in spite of all her friends could do. The consequence was she had her fingers squeezed[5] until the flesh was entirely taken off; and the magistrate, being a grasping man, a very severe fine was inflicted as well. Erh-ch'êng had now to mortgage his property before he could raise enough money to get Tsang-ku released; but before long the mortgagee threatened to foreclose, and he was obliged to enter into negotiations for the sale of it to an old gentleman of the village named Jen. Now Mr. Jen, knowing that half the property had belonged to Ta-ch'êng, said the deed of sale must be signed by the elder brother as well; however, when Ta-ch'êng reached his house, the old man cried out, "I am Mr. An, M.A., who is this Jen that he should buy my property?" Then, looking at Ta-ch'êng, he added, "The filial piety

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[5] An illegal form of punishment, under the present dynasty, which authorizes only *bambooing* of two kinds, each of five degrees of severity; *banishment*, of three degrees of duration; *transportation* for life, of three degrees of distance; and *death*, of two kinds, namely, by strangulation and decapitation. That torture is occasionally resorted to by the officers of the Chinese Empire is an indisputable fact; that it is commonly employed by the whole body of mandarins could only be averred by those who have not had the opportunities or the desire to discover the actual truth.

of you and your wife has obtained for me in the realms below this interview;" upon which Ta-ch'êng said, "O father, since you have this power, help my younger brother." "The unfilial son and the vixenish daughter-in-law," said the old man, "deserve no pity. Go home and quickly buy back our ancestral property." "We have barely enough to live upon," replied Ta-ch'êng; "where, then, shall we find the necessary money?" "Beneath the crape myrtle-tree,"[6] answered his father, "you will find a store of silver, which you may take and use for this purpose." Ta-ch'êng would have questioned him further, but the old gentleman said no more, recovering consciousness shortly afterwards[7] without knowing a word of what had happened. Ta-ch'êng went back and told his brother, who did not altogether believe the story; Tsang-ku, however, hurried off with a number of men, and had soon dug a hole four or five feet deep, at the bottom of which they found a quantity of bricks and stones, but no gold. She then gave up the idea and returned home, Ta-ch'êng having meanwhile warned his mother and wife not to go near the place while she was digging. When Tsang-ku left, Mrs. An went herself to have a look, and seeing only bricks and earth mingled together, she, too, retraced her steps. Shan-hu was the next to go, and she found the

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[6] *Lagerstræmia indica.*

[7] That is, old Mr. Jen's body had been possessed by the disembodied spirit of Ta-ch'êng's father.

hole full of silver bullion; and then Ta-ch'êng repaired to the spot and saw that there was no mistake about it. Not thinking it right to apply this heir-loom to his own private use, he now summoned Erh-ch'êng to share it; and having obtained twice as much as was necessary to redeem the estate, the brothers returned to their homes. Erh-ch'êng and Tsang-ku opened their half together, when lo! the bag was full of tiles and rubbish. They at once suspected Ta-ch'êng of deceiving them, and Erh-ch'êng ran off to see how things were going at his brother's. He arrived just as Ta-ch'êng was spreading the silver on the table, and with his mother and wife rejoicing over their acquisition; and when he had told them what had occurred, Ta-ch'êng expressed much sympathy for him, and at once presented him with his own half of the treasure. Erh-ch'êng was delighted, and paid off the mortgage on the land, feeling very grateful to his brother for such kindness. Tsang-ku, however, declared it was a proof that Ta-ch'êng had been cheating him; "for how, otherwise," argued she, "can you understand a man sharing anything with another, and then resigning his own half?"

Erh-ch'êng himself did not know what to think of it; but next day the mortgagee sent to say that the money paid in was all imitation silver, and that he was about to lay the case before the authorities. Husband and wife were greatly alarmed at this, and Tsang-ku exclaimed, "Well, I never thought your brother was as bad as this. He's simply trying to take your life." Erh-

ch'êng himself was in a terrible fright, and hurried off to the mortgagee to entreat for mercy; but as the latter was extremely angry and would hear of no compromise, Erh-ch'êng was obliged to make over the property to him to dispose of himself. The money was then returned, and when he got home he found that two lumps had been cut through, shewing merely an outside layer of silver, about as thick as an onion-leaf, covering nothing but copper within. Tsang-ku and Erh-ch'eng then agreed to keep the broken pieces themselves, but send the rest back to Ta-ch'êng, with a message, saying that they were deeply indebted to him for all his kindness, and that they had ventured to retain two of the lumps of silver out of compliment to the giver; also that Ta-ch'êng might consider himself the owner of the mortgaged land, which he could redeem or not as he pleased. Ta-ch'êng, who did not perceive the intention in all this, refused to accept the land; however, Erh-ch'êng entreated him to do so, and at last he consented. When he came to weigh the money, he found it was five ounces short, and therefore bade Shan-hu pawn something from her jewel-box to make up the amount, with which he proceeded to pay off the mortgage. The mortgagee, suspecting it was the same money that had been offered him by Erh-ch'êng, cut the pieces in halves, and saw that it was all silver of the purest quality. Accordingly he accepted it in liquidation of his claim, and handed the mortgage back to Ta-ch'êng. Meanwhile, Ehr-ch'êng had been expecting some catastrophe; but when he found that the mort-

gaged land had been redeemed, he did not know what to make of it. Tsang-ku thought that at the time of the digging Ta-ch'êng had concealed the genuine silver, and immediately rushed off to his house, and began to revile them all round. Ta-ch'êng now understood why they had sent him back the money; and Shan-hu laughed and said, "The property is safe; why, then, this anger?" Thereupon she made Ta-ch'êng hand over the deeds to Tsang-ku.

One night after this Erh-ch'êng's father appeared to him in a dream, and reproached him, saying, "Unfilial son, unfraternal brother, your hour is at hand. Wherefore usurp rights that do not belong to you?" In the morning Erh-ch'êng told Tsang-ku of his dream, and proposed to return the property to his brother; but she only laughed at him for a fool. Just then the eldest of his two sons, a boy of seven, died of small-pox, and this frightened Tsang-ku so that she agreed to restore the deeds. Ta-ch'êng would not accept them; and now the second child, a boy of three, died also; whereupon Tsang-ku seized the deeds, and threw them into her brother-in-law's house, Spring was over, but the land was in a terribly neglected state; so Ta-ch'êng set to work and put it in order again. From this moment Tsang-ku was a changed woman towards her mother- and sister-in-law; and when, six months later, Mrs. An died, she was so grieved that she refused to take any nourishment. "Alas!" cried she, "that my mother-in-law has died thus early, and prevented me from waiting upon her. Heaven will not allow me to retrieve my

past errors." Tsang-ku had thirteen children,[8] but as none of them lived, they were obliged to adopt one of Ta-ch'êng's,[9] who, with his wife, lived to a good old age, and had three sons, two of whom took their doctor's degree. People said this was a reward for filial piety and brotherly love.

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[8] Five is considered a large number for an ordinary Chinese woman.

[9] In order to leave some one behind to look after their graves and perform the duties of ancestral worship. No one can well refuse to give a son to be adopted by a childless brother.

LVI.

DR. TSÊNG'S DREAM.

THERE was a Fohkien gentleman named Tsêng, who had just taken his doctor's degree. One day he was out walking with several other recently-elected doctors, when they heard that at a temple hard by there lived an astrologer, and accordingly the party proceeded thither to get their fortunes told. They went in and sat down, and the astrologer made some very complimentary remarks to Tsêng, at which he fanned himself and smiled, saying, "Have I any chance of ever wearing the dragon robes and the jade girdle?"[1] The astrologer[2] immediately put on a serious face, and replied that he would be a Secretary of State during twenty years of national tranquillity. Thereupon Tsêng was much pleased, and began to give himself greater airs than ever. A slight rain coming on, they sought shelter in the priest's quarters, where they found an old bonze, with sunken eyes and a big nose,

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[1] That is, of rising to the highest offices of State.

[2] The Chinese term used throughout is "star-man."

sitting upon a mat. He took no notice of the strangers, who, after having bowed to him, stretched themselves upon the couches to chat, not forgetting to congratulate Tsêng upon the destiny which had been foretold him. Tsêng, too, seemed to think the thing was a matter of certainty, and mentioned the names of several friends he intended to advance, amongst others the old family butler. Roars of laughter greeted this announcement, mingled with the patter-patter of the increasing rain outside. Tsêng then curled himself up for a nap, when suddenly in walked two officials bearing a commission under the Great Seal appointing Tsêng to the Grand Secretariat. As soon as Tsêng understood their errand, he rushed off at once to pay his respects to the Emperor, who graciously detained him some time in conversation, and then issued instructions that the promotion and dismissal of all officers below the third grade[3] should be vested in Tsêng alone. He was next presented with the dragon robes, the jade girdle, and a horse from the imperial stables, after which he performed the *ko-t'ow*[4] before His Majesty and took his leave. He then went home, but it was no longer the old home of his youth. Painted beams, carved pillars, and a general profusion of luxury and elegance, made him wonder where on earth he was; until, nervously stroking

[3] Chinese official life is divided into nine grades.

[4] Prostrating himself three times, and knocking his head on the ground thrice at each prostration.

his beard, he ventured to call out in a low tone. Immediately the responses of numberless attendants echoed through the place like thunder. Presents of costly food were sent to him by all the grandees, and his gate was absolutely blocked up by the crowds of retainers who were constantly coming and going. When Privy Councillors came to see him, he would rush out in haste to receive them; when Under-Secretaries of State visited him, he made them a polite bow; but to all below these he would hardly vouchsafe a word. The Governor of Shansi sent him twelve singing-girls, two of whom, Ni-ni and Fairy, he made his favourites. All day long he had nothing to do but find amusement as best he could, until he bethought himself that formerly a man named Wang had often assisted him with money. Thereupon he memorialized the Throne and obtained official employment for him. Then he recollected that there was another man to whom he owed a long-standing grudge. He at once caused this man, who was in the Government service, to be impeached and stripped of his rank and dignities. Thus he squared accounts with both. One day when out in his chair a drunken man bumped against one of his tablet-bearers.[5] Tsêng had him

[5] The *retinue* of a high mandarin is composed as follows:— First, gong-bearers, then banner-men, tablet-bearers (on which tablets are inscribed the titles of the official), a large red umbrella, mounted attendants, a box containing a change of clothes, bearers of regalia, a second gong, a small umbrella or sunshade, a large wooden fan, executioners, lictors from hell, who wear tall hats; a

seized and sent in to the mayor's yamên, where he died under the bamboo. Owners of land adjoining his would make him a present of the richest portions, fearing the consequences if they did not do so; and thus he became very wealthy, almost on a par with the State itself. By-and-by, Ni-ni and Fairy died, and Tsêng was overwhelmed with grief. Suddenly he remembered that in former years he had seen a beautiful girl whom he wished to purchase as a concubine, but want of money had then prevented him from carrying out his intention. Now there was no longer that difficulty; and accordingly he sent off two trusty servants to get the girl by force. In a short time she arrived, when he found that she had grown more beautiful than ever; and so his cup of happiness was full. But years rolled on, and gradually his fellow-officials became estranged, Tsêng taking no notice of their behaviour, until at last one of them impeached him to the Throne in a long and bitter memorial. Happily, however, the Emperor still regarded him with favour, and for some time kept the memorial by him

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mace (called a "golden melon"), bamboos for "bambooing," incense-bearers, more attendants, and now the great man himself, followed by a body-guard of soldiers and a few personal attendants, amounting in all to nearly one hundred persons, many of whom are mere street-rowdies or beggars, hired at a trifling outlay when required to join what might otherwise be an imposing procession. The scanty *retinues* of foreign officials in China still continue to excite the scorn of the populace, who love to compare the rag-tag and bob-tail magnificence of their own functionaries with the modest show even of H.B.M.'s Minister at Pekin.

unanswered. Then followed a joint memorial from the whole of the Privy Council, including those who had once thronged his doors, and had falsely called him their dear father. The Imperial rescript to this document was "Banishment to Yunnan,"[6] his son, who was Governor of P'ing-yang, being also implicated in his guilt. When Tsêng heard the news, he was overcome with fear; but an armed guard was already at his gate, and the lictors were forcing their way into his innermost apartments. They tore off his robe and official hat, and bound him and his wife with cords. Then they collected together in the hall his gold, his silver, and bank-notes,[7] to the value of many hundred thousands of taels. His pearls, and jade, and precious stones filled many bushel baskets. His curtains, and screens, and beds, and other articles of furniture were brought out by thousands; while the swaddling-clothes of his infant boy and the shoes of his little girl were lying littered about the steps. It was a sad sight for Tsêng; but a worse blow was that of his concubine carried off almost lifeless before his eyes, himself not daring to utter a word. Then all the apartments, store-rooms, and treasuries were sealed up; and, with a volley of curses, the soldiers bade Tsêng begone, and proceeded to leave the place, dragging Tsêng with them. The

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[6] A land journey of about three months, ending in a region which the Chinese have always regarded as semi-barbarous.

[7] This use of paper money in China is said to date from A.D. 1236; that is, during the reign of the Mongol Emperor, Ogdai Khan.

husband and wife prayed that they might be allowed some old cart, but this favour was denied them. After about ten *li*, Tsêng's wife could barely walk, her feet being swollen and sore. Tsêng helped her along as best he could, but another ten *li* reduced him to a state of abject fatigue. By-and-by they saw before them a great mountain, the summit of which was lost in the clouds; and, fearing they should be made to ascend it, Tsêng and his wife stood still and began to weep. The lictors, however, clamoured round them, and would permit of no rest. The sun was rapidly sinking, and there was no place at hand where they could obtain shelter for the night. So they continued on their weary way until about half-way up the hill, when his wife's strength was quite exhausted, and she sat down by the roadside. Tsêng, too, halted to rest in spite of the soldiers and their abuse; but they had hardly stopped a moment before down came a band of robbers upon them, each with a sharp knife in his hand. The soldiers immediately took to their heels, and Tsêng fell on his knees before the robbers, saying, "I am a poor criminal going into banishment, and have nothing to give you. I pray you spare my life." But the robbers sternly replied, "We are all the victims of your crimes, and now we want your wicked head." Then Tsêng began to revile them, saying, "Dogs! though I am under sentence of banishment, I am still an officer of the State." But the robbers cursed him again, flourishing a sword over his neck, and the next thing he heard was the noise of his own head as it fell with a thud to the ground. At

the same instant two devils stepped forward and seized him each by one hand, compelling him to go with them. After a little while they arrived at a great city where there was a hideously ugly king sitting upon a throne judging between good and evil. Tsêng crawled before him on his hands and knees to receive sentence, and the king, after turning over a few pages of his register, thundered out "The punishment of a traitor who has brought misfortune on his country: the cauldron of boiling oil!" To this ten thousand devils responded with a cry like a clap of thunder, and one huge monster led Tsêng down alongside the cauldron, which was seven feet in height, and surrounded on all sides by blazing fuel, so that it was of a glowing red heat. Tsêng shrieked for mercy, but it was all up with him, for the devil seized him by the hair and the small of his back and pitched him headlong in. Down he fell with a splash, and rose and sank with the bubbling of the oil, which ate through his flesh into his very vitals. He longed to die, but death would not come to him. After about half-an-hour's boiling, a devil took him out on a pitchfork and threw him down before the Infernal King, who again consulted his note-book, and said, "You relied on your position to treat others with contumely and injustice, for which you must suffer on the Sword-Hill." Again he was led away by devils to a large hill thickly studded with sharp swords, their points upwards like the shoots of bamboo, with here and there the remains of many miserable wretches who had suffered before him. Tsêng again cried for mercy and crouched upon the ground;

but a devil bored into him with a poisoned awl until he screamed with pain. He was then seized and flung up high into the air, falling down right on the sword-points, to his most frightful agony. This was repeated several times until he was almost hacked to pieces. He was then brought once more before the king, who asked what was the amount of his peculations while on earth. Immediately an accountant came forward with an abacus, and said that the whole sum was 3,210,000 taels, whereupon the king replied, "Let him drink that amount." Forthwith the devils piled up a great heap of gold and silver, and, when they had melted it in a huge crucible, began pouring it into Tsêng's mouth. The pain was excruciating as the molten metal ran down his throat into his vitals; but since in life he had never been able to get enough of the dross, it was determined he should feel no lack of it then. He was half-a-day drinking it, and then the king ordered him away to be born again as a woman[8] in Kan-chou. A few steps brought them to a huge frame, where on an iron axle revolved a mighty wheel many hundred *yojanas*[9] in circumference, and shining with a brilliant light. The devils flogged Tsêng on to the wheel, and he shut his eyes as he stepped up. Then whiz—and away he went, feet foremost, round with the wheel, until he felt himself tumble off and a

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[8] This contingency is much dreaded by the Chinese.

[9] A *yojana* has been variously estimated at from five to nine English miles.

cold thrill ran through him, when he opened his eyes and found he was changed into a girl. He saw his father and mother in rags and tatters, and in one corner a beggar's bowl and a staff,[10] and understood the calamity that had befallen him. Day after day he begged about the streets, and his inside rumbled for want of food; he had no clothes to his back. At fourteen years of age he was sold to a gentleman as concubine; and then, though food and clothes were not wanting, he had to put up with the scoldings and floggings of the wife, who one day burnt him with a hot iron.[11] Luckily the gentleman took a fancy to him and treated him well, which kindness Tsêng repaid by an irreproachable fidelity. It happened, however, that on one occasion when they were chatting together, burglars broke into the house and killed the gentleman, Tsêng having escaped by hiding himself under the bed. Thereupon he was immediately charged by the wife with murder, and on being taken before the authorities was sentenced

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[10] The *patra* and *kakkharam* of the *bikshu* or Buddhist mendicant.

[11] It is not considered quite correct to take a concubine unless the wife is childless, in which case it is held that the proposition to do so, and thus secure the much-desired posterity, should emanate from the wife herself. On page 41 of Vol. XIII. of this author, we read, "and if at thirty years of age you have no children, then sell your hair-pins and other ornaments, and buy a concubine for your husband. For the childless state is a hard one to bear;" or, as Victor Hugo puts it in his *Légende des Siècles*, there is nothing so sad as "la maison sans enfants."

to die the "lingering death."[12] This sentence was at once carried out with tortures more horrible than any in all the Courts of Purgatory, in the middle of which Tsêng heard one of his companions call out "Hullo, there! you've got the night-mare." Tsêng got up and rubbed his eyes, and his friends said, "It's quite late in the day, and we're all very hungry." But the old priest smiled, and asked him if the prophecy as to his future rank was true or not. Tsêng bowed and begged him to explain; whereupon the old priest said, "For those who cultivate virtue, a lily will grow up even in the fiery pit."[13] Tsêng had gone thither full of pride and vainglory; he went home an altered man. From that day he thought no more of becoming a Secretary of State, but retired into the hills, and I know not what became of him after that.

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[12] This is the celebrated form of death, reserved for parricide and similar awful crimes, about which so much has been written. Strictly speaking, the malefactor should be literally chopped to pieces in order to prolong his agonies; but the sentence is now rarely, if ever, carried out in its extreme sense. A few gashes are made upon the wretched victim's body, and he is soon put out of his misery by decapitation. As a matter of fact, this death is not enumerated among the *Five Punishments* authorized by the Penal Code of the present dynasty. See No. LV., note 5.

[13] Alluding to a well-known Buddhist miracle in which a *bikshu* was to be thrown into a cauldron of boiling water in a fiery pit, when suddenly a lotus-flower came forth, the fire was extinguished, and the water became cold.

LVII.

THE COUNTRY OF THE CAVE-MEN.[1]

At Chiao-chou[2] there lived a man named Hsü, who gained his living by trading across the sea. On one occasion he was carried far out of his course by a violent tempest, and reached a country of high hills and dense jungle,[3] where, after making fast his boat and taking provisions with him, he landed, hoping to meet with some of the inhabitants. He then saw that the rocks were covered with large holes, like the cells of bees; and, hearing the sound of voices from within, he stopped in front of one of them and peeped in. To his infinite horror he beheld two hideous beings, with thick rows of horrid fangs, and eyes that glared like lamps, engaged in tearing to pieces and devouring some raw deer's flesh; and, turning round, he would have fled instantly from

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[1] Or savages.

[2] Hué, the capital of Cochin-China.

[3] The island of Hainan, inhabited as it was in earlier times by a race of savages, is the most likely source of the following marvellous adventures.

the spot, had not the cave-men already espied him; and, leaving their food, they seized him and dragged him in. Thereupon ensued a chattering between them, resembling the noise of birds or beasts,[4] and they proceeded to pull off Hsü's clothes as if about to eat him; but Hsü, who was frightened almost to death, offered them the food he had in his wallet, which they ate up with great relish, and looked inside for more. Hsü waved his hand to shew it was all finished, and then they angrily seized him again; at which he cried out, "I have a saucepan in my boat, and can cook you some." The cave-men did not understand what he said; but, by dint of gesticulating freely, they at length seemed to have an idea of what he meant; and, having taken him down to the shore to fetch the saucepan, they returned with him to the cave, where he lighted a fire and cooked the remainder of the deer, with the flavour of which they appeared to be mightily pleased. At night they rolled a big stone to the mouth of the cave,[5] fearing lest he should try to escape; and Hsü himself lay down at a distance from them in doubt as to whether his life would be spared. At daybreak the cave-men went out, leaving

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[4] To which sounds the languages of the west have been more than once likened by the Chinese. It is only fair, however, to the lettered classes to state that they have a similar contempt for their own local dialects; regarding *Mandarin* as the only form of speech worthy to be employed by men.

[5] The occasional analogies to the story of the Cyclops must be evident to all readers.

the entrance blocked, and by-and-by came back with a deer, which they gave to Hsü to cook. Hsü flayed the carcase, and from a remote corner of the cave took some water and prepared a large quantity, which was no sooner ready than several other cave-men arrived to join in the feast. When they had finished all there was, they made signs that Hsü's saucepan was too small; and three or four days afterwards they brought him a large one, of the same shape as those in common use amongst men, subsequently furnishing him with constant supplies of wolf and deer,[6] of which they always invited him to partake. By degrees they began to treat him kindly, and not to shut him up when they went out; and Hsü, too, gradually learnt to understand, and even to speak, a little of their language, which pleased them so much that they finally gave him a cave-woman for his wife. Hsü was horribly afraid of her; but, as she treated him with great consideration, always reserving tit-bits of food for him, they lived very happily together. One day all the cave-people got up early in the morning, and, having adorned themselves with strings of fine pearls, they went forth as if to meet some honoured guest, giving orders to Hsü to cook an extra quantity of meat that day. "It is the birthday of our King," said Hsü's wife to him; and then, running out, she informed the other cave-

[6] The animal here mentioned is the plain brown deer, or *Rusa Swinhoii*, of Formosa, in which island I should prefer to believe, but for the great distance from Hué, that the scenes here narrated took place.

people that her husband had no pearls. So each gave five from his own string, and Hsü's wife added ten to these, making in all fifty, which she threaded on a hempen fibre and hung around his neck, each pearl being worth over a hundred ounces of silver. Then they went away, and as soon as Hsü had finished his cooking his wife appeared and invited him to come and receive the King. So off they went to a huge cavern, covering about a mow[7] of ground, in which was a huge stone, smoothed away at the top like a table, with stone seats at the four sides. At the upper end was a dais, over which was spread a leopard's skin, the other seats having only deer-skins; and within the cavern some twenty or thirty cave-men ranged themselves on the seats. After a short interval a great wind began to stir up the dust, and they all rushed out to a creature very much resembling themselves, which hurried into the cave, and, squatting down cross-legged, cocked its head and looked about like a cormorant. The other cave-men then filed in and took up their positions right and left of the dais, where they stood gazing up at the King with their arms folded before them in the form of a cross. The King counted them one by one, and asked if they were all present; and when they replied in the affirmative, he looked at Hsü and inquired who he was. Thereupon Hsü's wife

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[7] About one-sixth of an acre. On old title-deeds of landed property in China may still be seen measurements calculated according to the amount of grain that could be sown thereon.

stepped forward and said he was her husband, and the others all loudly extolled his skill in cookery, two of them running out and bringing back some cooked meat, which they set before the King. His Majesty swallowed it by handfuls, and found it so nice that he gave orders to be supplied regularly; and then, turning to Hsü, he asked him why his string of beads[8] was so short. "He has but recently arrived among us," replied the cave-men, "and hasn't got a complete set;" upon which the King drew ten pearls from the string round his own neck and bestowed them upon Hsü. Each was as big as the top of one's finger, and as round as a bullet; and Hsü's wife threaded them for him and hung them round his neck. Hsü himself crossed his arms and thanked the King in the language of the country, after which His Majesty went off in a gust of wind as rapidly as a bird can fly, and the cave-men sat down and finished what was left of the banquet. Four years afterwards Hsü's wife gave birth to a triplet of two boys and one girl, all of whom were ordinary human beings, and not at all like the mother; at which the other cave-people were delighted, and would often play with them and caress them.[9] Three years passed away, and the chil-

[8] The king here uses the words "ku-t'u-tzŭ," which are probably intended by the author to be an imitation of a term in the savage tongue.

[9] Fondness for children is specially a trait of Chinese character; and a single baby would do far more to ensure the safety of a foreign traveller in China than all the usual paraphernalia of pocket-pistols and revolvers.

dren could walk about, after which their father taught them to speak his own tongue; and in their early babblings their human origin was manifested. The boys, as mere children, could climb about on the mountains as easily as though walking upon a level road; and between them and their father there grew up a mutual feeling of attachment. One day the mother had gone out with the girl and one of the boys, and was absent for a long time. A strong north wind was blowing, and Hsü, filled with thoughts of his old home, led his other son down with him to the beach, where lay the boat in which he had formerly reached this country. He then proposed to the boy that they should go away together; and, having explained to him that they could not inform his mother, father and son stepped on board, and, after a voyage of only twenty-four hours, arrived safely at Chiao-chou. On reaching home Hsü found that his wife had married again; so he sold two of his pearls for an enormous sum of money,[10] and set up a splendid establishment. His son was called Piao, and at fourteen or fifteen years of age the boy could lift a weight of three thousand catties[11] (4,000lbs.). He was extremely fond of athletics of all kinds, and thus attracted the notice of the Commander-

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[10] Literally, "a million of taels," the word used being the Buddhist term *chao.*

[11] Here again we have 100 *chün*, one *chün* being equal to about 40 *lbs.* Chinese weights, measures, distances, numbers, &c., are often very loosely employed; and it is probable that not more than 100 *catties*, say 133 *lbs.*, is here meant.

in-Chief, who gave him a commission as sub-lieutenant. Just at that time there happened to be some trouble on the frontier, and young Piao, having covered himself with glory, was made a colonel at the age of eighteen.

About that time another merchant was driven by stress of weather to the country of the cave-men, and had hardly stepped ashore before he observed a young man whom he knew at once to be of Chinese origin. The young man asked him whence he came, and finally took him into a cave hid away in a dark valley and concealed by the dense jungle. There he bade him remain, and in a little while he returned with some deer's flesh, which he gave the merchant to eat, saying at the same time that his own father was a Chiao-chou man. The merchant now knew that the young man was Hsü's son, he himself being acquainted with Hsü as a trader in the same line of business. "Why, he's an old friend of mine," cried the latter; "his other son is now a colonel." The young man did not know what was meant by a *colonel*, so the merchant told him it was the title of a Chinese mandarin. "And what is a *mandarin?*" asked the youth. "A mandarin," replied the merchant, "is one who goes out with a chair and horses; who at home sits upon a dais in the hall; whose summons is answered by a hundred voices; who is looked at only with side-long eyes, and in whose presence all people stand aslant;—this is to be a mandarin." The young man was deeply touched at this recital, and at length the merchant said to him, "Since your honoured father is at Chiao-chou, why do you remain here?" "Indeed,"

replied the youth, "I have often indulged the same feeling; but my mother is not a Chinese woman, and, apart from the difference of her language and appearance, I fear that if the other cave-people found it out they would do us some mischief." He then took his leave, being in rather a disturbed state of mind, and bade the merchant wait until the wind should prove favourable,[12] when he promised to come and see him off, and charge him with a letter to his father and brother. Six months the merchant remained in that cave, occasionally taking a peep at the cave-people passing backwards and forwards, but not daring to leave his retreat. As soon as the monsoon set in the young man arrived and urged him to hurry away, begging him, also, not to forget the letter to his father. So the merchant sailed away and soon reached Chiao-chou, where he visited the colonel and told him the whole story. Piao was much affected, and wished to go in search of those members of the family; but his father feared the dangers he would encounter, and advised him not to think of such a thing. However, Piao was not to be deterred; and having imparted his scheme to the commander-in-chief, he took with him two soldiers and set off. Adverse winds prevailed at that time, and they beat about for half a moon, until they were out of sight of all land, could not see a foot before them, and had completely lost their reckoning. Just then a mighty sea arose and capsized

[12] That is, until the change of the monsoon from S.W. to N.E.

their boat, tossing Piao into the water, where he floated about for some time at the will of the waves, until suddenly somebody dragged him out and carried him into a house. Then he saw that his rescuer was to all appearances a cave-man, and accordingly he addressed him in the cave-people's language, and told him whither he himself was bound. "It is my native place," replied the cave-man, in astonishment; "but you will excuse my saying that you are now 8,000 *li* out of your course. This is the way to the country of the Poisonous Dragons, and not your route at all." He then went off to find a boat for Piao, and, himself swimming in the water behind, pushed it along like an arrow from a bow, so quickly that by the next day they had traversed the whole distance. On the shore Piao observed a young man walking up and down and evidently watching him; and, knowing that no human beings dwelt there, he guessed at once that he was his brother. Approaching more closely, he saw that he was right; and, seizing the young man's hand, he asked after his mother and sister. On hearing that they were well, he would have gone directly to see them; but the younger one begged him not to do so, and ran away himself to fetch them. Meanwhile, Piao turned to thank the cave-man who had brought him there, but he, too, had disappeared. In a few minutes his mother and sister arrived, and, on seeing Piao, they could not restrain their tears. Piao then laid his scheme before them, and when they said they feared people would ill-treat them, he replied, "In China I hold a high position, and people will not dare to shew

you disrespect." Thus they determined to go. The wind, however, was against them, and mother and son were at a loss what to do, when suddenly the sail bellied out towards the south, and a rustling sound was heard. "Heaven helps us, my mother!" cried Piao, full of joy; and, hurrying on board at once, in three days they had reached their destination. As they landed the people fled right and left in fear, Piao having divided his own clothes amongst the party; and when they arrived at the house, and his mother saw Hsü, she began to rate him soundly for running away without her. Hsü hastened to acknowledge his error, and then all the family and servants were introduced to her, each one being in mortal dread of such a singular personage. Piao now bade his mother learn to talk Chinese, and gave her any quantity of fine clothes and rich meats, to the infinite delight of the old lady. She and her daughter both dressed in man's clothes, and by the end of a few months were able to understand what was said to them. The brother, named Pao [Leopard], and the sister, Yeh [Night], were both clever enough, and immensely strong into the bargain. Piao was ashamed that Pao could not read, and set to work to teach him; and the youngster was so quick that he learnt the sacred books[12] and histories by merely reading them once over. However, he would not enter upon a literary career, loving better to draw a strong bow or ride a spirited horse, and finally

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[13] See No. XLI., note 2.

taking the highest military degree. He married the daughter of a post-captain; but his sister had some trouble in getting a husband, because of her being the child of a cave-woman. At length a serjeant, named Yüan, who was under her brother's command, was forced to take her as his wife. She could draw a hundred-catty bow, and shoot birds at a hundred paces without ever missing. Whenever Yüan went to battle she went with him; and his subsequent rise to high rank was chiefly due to her. At thirty-four years of age Pao got a command; and in his great battles his mother, clad in armour and grasping a spear, would fight by his side, to the terror of all their adversaries; and when he himself received the dignity of an hereditary title, he memorialized the Throne to grant his mother the title of "lady."

LVIII.

FOOT-BALL ON THE TUNG-T'ING LAKE.

WANG SHIH-HSIU was a native of Lu-chou, and such a lusty fellow that he could pick up a stone mortar.[1] Father and son were both good foot-ball players; but when the former was about forty years of age he was drowned while crossing the Money Pool.[2] Some eight or nine years later our hero happened to be on his way to Hunan; and anchoring in the Tung-t'ing lake, watched the moon rising in the east and illuminating the water into a bright sheet of light. While he was thus engaged, lo! from out of the lake emerged five men, bringing with them a large mat which they spread on the surface of the water so as to cover about six yards square. Wine and food were then arranged upon it, and Wang heard the sound of the dishes knocking together, but it was a dull, soft sound, not at all like that of

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[1] Used for pounding rice.

[2] A fancy name for the Tung-t'ing lake. See No. XXXVIII., note 1.

ordinary crockery. Three of the men sat down on the mat and the other two waited upon them. One of the former was dressed in yellow, the other two in white, and each wore a black turban. Their demeanour as they sat there side by side was grave and dignified; in appearance they resembled three of the ancients, but by the fitful beams of the moon Wang was unable to see very clearly what they were like. The attendants wore black serge dresses, and one of them seemed to be a boy, while the other was many years older. Wang now heard the man in the yellow dress say, "This is truly a fine moonlight night for a drinking-bout;" to which one of his companions replied, "It quite reminds me of the night when Prince Kuang-li feasted at Pear-blossom Island."[3] The three then pledged each other in bumping goblets, talking all the time in such a low tone that Wang could not hear what they were saying. The boatmen kept themselves concealed, crouching down at the bottom of the boat; but Wang looked hard at the attendants, the elder of whom bore a striking resemblance to his father, though he spoke in quite a different tone of voice. When it was drawing towards midnight, one of them proposed a game at ball; and in a moment the boy disappeared in the water, to return immediately with a huge ball—quite an armful in fact—apparently full of quicksilver, and lustrous within and without. All now rose up, and the man in the yellow dress bade the old

[3] The commentator declares himself unable to trace this allusion.

attendant join them in the game. The ball was kicked up some ten or fifteen feet in the air, and was quite dazzling in its brilliancy; but once, when it had gone up with a whish-h-h-h, it fell at some distance off, right in the very middle of Wang's boat. The occasion was irresistible, and Wang, exerting all his strength, kicked the ball with all his might. It seemed unusually light and soft to the touch, and his foot broke right through. Away went the ball to a good height, pouring forth a stream of light like a rainbow from the hole Wang had made, and making as it fell a curve like that of a comet rushing across the sky. Down it glided into the water, where it fizzed a moment and then went out. "Ho, there!" cried out the players in anger, "what living creature is that who dares thus to interrupt our sport?" "Well kicked—indeed!" said the old man, "that's a favourite drop-kick of my own." At this, one of the two in white clothes began to abuse him saying, "What! you old baggage, when we are all so annoyed in this manner, are you to come forward and make a joke of it? Go at once with the boy and bring back to us this practical joker, or your own back will have a taste of the stick." Wang was of course unable to flee; however, he was not a bit afraid, and grasping a sword stood there in the middle of the boat. In a moment, the old man and boy arrived, also armed, and then Wang knew that the former was really his father, and called out to him at once, "Father, I am your son." The old man was greatly alarmed, but father and son forgot their troubles in the joy of meeting once again. Meanwhile, the boy

went back, and Wang's father bid him hide, or they would all be lost. The words were hardly out of his mouth when the three men jumped on board the boat. Their faces were black as pitch, their eyes as big as pomegranates, and they at once proceeded to seize the old man. Wang struggled hard with them, and managing to get the boat free from her moorings, he seized his sword and cut off one of his adversaries' arms. The arm dropped down and the man in the yellow dress ran away; whereupon one of those in white rushed at Wang who immediately cut off his head, and he fell into the water with a splash, at which the third disappeared. Wang and his father were now anxious to get away, when suddenly a great mouth arose from the lake, as big and as deep as a well, and against which they could hear the noise of the water when it struck. This mouth blew forth a violent gust of wind, and in a moment the waves were mountains high and all the boats on the lake were tossing about. The boatmen were terrified, but Wang seized one of two huge stones there were on board for use as anchors,[4] about 130 lbs. in weight, and threw it into the water, which immediately began to subside; and then he threw in the other one, upon which the wind dropped, and the lake became calm again. Wang thought his father was a disembodied spirit, but the old man said, "I never died. There

[4] These are bound in between several sharp-pointed stakes and serve their purpose very well in the inland waters of China.

were nineteen of us drowned in the river, all of whom were eaten by the fish-goblins except myself: I was saved because I could play foot-ball. Those you saw got into trouble with the Dragon King, and were sent here. They were all marine creatures, and the ball they were playing with was a fish-bladder." Father and son were overjoyed at meeting again, and at once proceeded on their way. In the morning they found in the boat a huge fin—the arm that Wang had cut off the night before.

LIX.

THE THUNDER GOD.

Lé Yün-hao and Hsia P'ing-tzŭ lived as boys in the same village, and when they grew up read with the same tutor, becoming the firmest of friends. Hsia was a clever fellow, and had acquired some reputation even at the early age of ten. Lê was not a bit envious, but rather looked up to him, and Hsia in return helped his friend very much with his studies, so that he, too, made considerable progress. This increased Hsia's fame, though try as he would he could never succeed at the public examinations, and by-and-by he sickened and died. His family was so poor they could not find money for his burial, whereupon Lê came forward and paid all expenses, besides taking care of his widow and children.

Every peck or bushel he would share with them, the widow trusting entirely to his support; and thus he acquired a good name in the village, though not being a rich man himself he soon ran through all his own property. "Alas!" cried he, "where talents like Hsia's failed, can I expect to succeed? Wealth and rank are matters of destiny, and my present career will only end by my dying like a dog in a ditch. I must try some-

thing else." So he gave up book-learning and went into trade, and in six months he had a trifle of money in hand.

One day when he was resting at an inn in Nanking, he saw a great big fellow walk in and seat himself at no great distance in a very melancholy mood. Lê asked him if he was hungry, and on receiving no answer, pushed some food over towards him. The stranger immediately set to feeding himself by handfuls, and in no time the whole had disappeared. Lê ordered another supply, but that was quickly disposed of in like manner; and then he told the landlord to bring a shoulder of pork and a quantity of boiled dumplings. Thus, after eating enough for half a dozen, his appetite was appeased and he turned to thank his benefactor, saying, "For three years I haven't had such a meal." "And why should a fine fellow like you be in such a state of destitution?" inquired Lê; to which the other only replied, "The judgments of heaven may not be discussed." Being asked where he lived, the stranger replied, "On land I have no home, on the water no boat; at dawn in the village, at night in the city." Lê then prepared to depart; but his friend would not leave him, declaring that he was in imminent danger, and that he could not forget the late kindness Lê had shewn him. So they went along together, and on the way Lê invited the other to eat with him; but this he refused, saying that he only took food occasionally. Lê marvelled more than ever at this; and next day when they were on the river a great storm arose and capsized all their boats,

Lê himself being thrown into the water with the others. Suddenly the gale abated and the stranger bore Lê on his back to another boat, plunging at once into the water and bringing back the lost vessel, upon which he placed Lê and bade him remain quietly there. He then returned once more, this time carrying in his arms a part of the cargo, which he replaced in the vessel, and and so he went on until it was all restored. Lê thanked him, saying, "It was enough to save my life; but you have added to this the restoration of my goods." Nothing, in fact, had been lost, and now Lê began to regard the stranger as something more than human. The latter here wished to take his leave, but Lê pressed him so much to stay that at last he consented to remain. Then Lê remarked that after all he had lost a gold pin, and immediately the stranger plunged into the water again, rising at length to the surface with the missing article in his mouth, and presenting it to Lê with the remark that he was delighted to be able to fulfil his commands. The people on the river were all much astonished at what they saw; meanwhile Lê went home with his friend, and there they lived together, the big man only eating once in ten or twelve days, but then displaying an enormous appetite. One day he spoke of going away, to which Lê would by no means consent; and as it was just then about to rain and thunder, he asked him to tell him what the clouds were like, and what thunder was, also how he could get up to the sky and have a look, so as to set his mind at rest on the subject. "Would you like to have a ramble among the

clouds?" asked the stranger, as Lê was lying down to take a nap; on awaking from which he felt himself spinning along through the air, and not at all as if he was lying on a bed. Opening his eyes he saw he was among the clouds, and around him was a fleecy atmosphere. Jumping up in great alarm, he felt giddy as if he had been at sea, and underneath his feet he found a soft, yielding substance, unlike the earth. Above him were the stars, and this made him think he was dreaming; but looking up he saw that they were set in the sky like seeds in the cup of a lily, varying from the size of the biggest bowl to that of a small basin. On raising his hand he discovered that the large stars were all tightly fixed; but he managed to pick a small one, which he concealed in his sleeve; and then, parting the clouds beneath him, he looked through and saw the sea glittering like silver below. Large cities appeared no bigger than beans—just at this moment, however, he bethought himself that if his foot were to slip, what a tremendous fall he would have. He now beheld two dragons writhing their way along, and drawing a cart with a huge vat in it, each movement of their tails sounding like the crack of a bullock-driver's whip. The vat was full of water, and numbers of men were employed in ladling it out and sprinkling it on the clouds. These men were astonished at seeing Lê; however, a big fellow among them called out, "All right, he's my friend," and then they gave him a ladle to help them throw the water out. Now it happened to be a very dry season, and when Lê got hold of the ladle he took good care to throw the

water so that it should all fall on and around his own home. The stranger then told him that he was the God of Thunder,[1] and that he had just returned from a three years' punishment inflicted on him in consequence of some neglect of his in the matter of rain. He added that they must now part; and taking the long rope which had been used as reins for the cart, bade Lê grip it tightly, that he might be let down to earth. Lê was afraid of this, but on being told there was no danger he did so, and in a moment whish-h-h-h-h— away he went and found himself safe and sound on *terra firma*. He discovered that he had descended outside his native village, and then the rope was drawn up into the clouds and he saw it no more. The drought had been excessive; for three or four miles round very little rain had fallen, though in Lê's own village the water-courses were all full. On reaching home he took the star out of his sleeve, and put it on the table. It was dull-looking like an ordinary stone; but at night it became very brilliant and lighted up the whole house. This made him value it highly, and he stored it carefully away, bringing it out only when he had guests, to light them at their wine. It was always thus dazzlingly bright, until one evening when his wife was sitting with him doing her hair, the star

[1] This deity is believed to be constantly on the look-out for wicked people, aided by the Goddess of Lightning, who flashes a mirror on to whomsoever the God wishes to strike. "*The thief eats thunderbolts*," means that he will bring down vengeance from Heaven on himself. Tylor's *Primitive Culture*, Vol. I., p. 88.

began to diminish in brilliancy, and to flit about like a fire-fly. Mrs. Lê sat gaping with astonishment, when all of a sudden it flitted into her mouth and ran down her throat. She tried to cough it up but couldn't, to the very great amazement of her husband. That night Lê dreamt that his old friend Hsia appeared before him and said, "I am the Shao-wei star. Your friendship is still cherished by me, and now you have brought me back from the sky. Truly our destinies are knitted together, and I will repay your kindness by becoming your son." Now Lê was thirty years of age but without sons; however, after this dream his wife bore him a male child, and they called his name Star. He was extraordinarily clever, and at sixteen years of age took his master's degree.

LX.

THE GAMBLER'S TALISMAN.

A TAOIST PRIEST, called Han, lived at the T'ien-ch'i temple, in our district city. His knowledge of the black art was very extensive, and the neighbours all regarded him as an Immortal.[1] My late father was on intimate terms with him, and whenever he went into the city invariably paid him a visit. One day, on such an occasion, he was proceeding thither in company with my late uncle, when suddenly they met Han on the road. Handing them the key of the door, he begged them to go on and wait awhile for him, promising to be there shortly himself. Following out these instructions they repaired to the temple, but on unlocking the door there was Han sitting inside—a feat which he subsequently performed several times.

Now a relative of mine, who was terribly given to gambling, also knew this priest, having been introduced to him by my father. And once this relative, meeting with a Buddhist priest from the T'ien-fo temple, ad-

[1] See No. V., note 1.

dicted like himself to the vice of gambling, played with him until he had lost everything, even going so far as to pledge the whole of his property, which he lost in a single night. Happening to call in upon Han as he was going back, the latter noticed his exceedingly dejected appearance, and the rambling answers he gave, and asked him what was the matter. On hearing the story of his losses, Han only laughed, and said, "That's what always overtakes the gambler, sooner or later; if, however, you will break yourself of the habit, I will get your money back for you." "Ah," cried the other, "if you will only do that, you may break my head with a pestle when you catch me gambling again." So Han gave him a talismanic formula, written out on a piece of paper, to put in his girdle, bidding him only win back what he had lost, and not attempt to get a fraction more. He also handed him 1000 *cash*, on condition that this sum should be repaid from his winnings, and off went my relative delighted. The Buddhist, however, turned up his nose at the smallness of his means, and said it wasn't worth his while to stake so little; but at last he was persuaded into having one throw for the whole lot. They then began, the priest leading off with a fair throw, to which his opponent replied by a better; whereupon the priest doubled his stake, and my relative won again, going on and on until the latter's good luck had brought him back all that he had previously lost. He thought, however, that he couldn't do better than just win a few more strings of cash, and accordingly went on;

but gradually his luck turned, and on looking into his girdle he found that the talisman was gone. In a great fright he jumped up, and went off with his winnings to the temple, where he reckoned up that after deducting Han's loan, and adding what he had lost towards the end, he had exactly the amount originally his. With shame in his face he turned to thank Han, mentioning at the same time the loss of the talisman; at which Han only laughed, and said, "That has got back before you. I told you not to be over-greedy, and as you didn't heed me, I took the talisman away."[2]

[2] Gambling is the great Chinese vice, far exceeding in its ill effects all that opium has ever done to demoralize the country. Public gaming-houses are strictly forbidden by law, but their existence is winked at by a too venal executive. *Fantan* is the favourite game. It consists in staking on the remainder of an unknown number of cash, after the heap has been divided by four, namely whether it will be three, two, one, or nothing; with other variations of a more complicated nature.

LXI.

THE HUSBAND PUNISHED.

CHING HSING, of Wên-têng, was a young fellow of some literary reputation, who lived next door to a Mr. Ch'ên, their studios being separated only by a low wall. One evening Ch'ên was crossing a piece of waste ground when he heard a young girl crying among some pine-trees hard by. He approached, and saw a girdle hanging from one of the branches, as if its owner was just on the point of hanging herself. Ch'ên asked her what was the matter, and then she brushed away her tears, and said, "My mother has gone away and left me in charge of my brother-in-law; but he's a scamp, and won't continue to take care of me; and now there is nothing left for me but to die." Hereupon the girl began crying again, and Ch'ên untied the girdle and bade her go and find herself a husband; to which she said there was very little chance of that; and then Ch'ên offered to take her to his own home—an offer which she very gladly accepted. Soon after they arrived, his neighbour Ching thought he heard a noise, and jumped over the wall to have a peep, when lo and behold! at the door of Ch'ên's house stood

this young lady, who immediately ran away into the garden on seeing Ching. The two young men pursued her, but without success, and were obliged to return each to his own room, Ching being greatly astonished to find the same girl now standing at his door. On addressing the young lady, she told him that his neighbour's destiny was too poor a one for her,[1] and that she came from Shantung, and that her name was Ch'i A-hsia. She finally agreed to take up her residence with Ching; but after a few days, finding that a great number of his friends were constantly calling, she declared it was too noisy a place for her, and that she would only visit him in the evening. This she continued to do for a few days, telling him in reply to his inquiries that her home was not very far off. One evening, however, she remarked that their present *liaison* was not very creditable to either; that her father was a mandarin on the western frontier, and that she was about to set out with her mother to join him; begging him meanwhile to make a formal request for the celebration of their nuptials, in order to prevent them from being thus separated. She further said that they started in ten days or so, and then Ching began to reflect that if he married her she would have to take her place in the family, and that would make his first wife jealous; so he determined to get rid of the latter, and when she came in he began to abuse her right and left. His wife

[1] See No. XLVI., note 4.

bore it as long as she could, but at length cried out it were better she should die; upon which Ching advised her not to bring trouble on them all like that, but to go back to her own home. He then drove her away, his wife asking all the time what she had done to be sent away like this after ten years of blameless life with him.[2] Ching, however, paid no heed to her entreaties, and when he had got rid of her he set to work at once to get the house whitewashed and made generally clean, himself being on the tip-toe of expectation for the arrival of Miss A-hsia. But he waited and waited, and no A-hsia came; she seemed gone like a stone dropped into the sea. Meanwhile emissaries came from his late wife's family begging him to take her back; and when he flatly refused, she married a gentleman of position named Hsia, whose property adjoined Ching's, and who had long been at feud with him in consequence, as is usual in such cases. This made Ching furious, but he still hoped that A-hsia would come, and tried to console himself in this way. Yet more than a year passed away and still no signs of her, until one day, at the festival of the Sea Spirits, he saw among the crowds of girls passing in and out one who very much resembled A-hsia. Ching moved towards her, following her as she threaded her way through the crowd as far as the temple gate, where he lost sight of her altogether, to his great mortification and regret. Another six months passed

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[2] See No. LIII., note 1.

away, when one day he met a young lady dressed in red, accompanied by an old man-servant, and riding on a black mule. It was A-hsia. So he asked the old man the name of his young mistress, and learnt from him that she was the second wife of a gentleman named Chêng, having been married to him about a fortnight previously. Ching now thought she could not be A-hsia, but just then the young lady, hearing them talking, turned her head, and Ching saw that he was right. And now, finding that she had actually married another man, he was overwhelmed with rage, and cried out in a loud voice, "A-hsia! A-hsia! why did you break faith?" The servant here objected to his mistress being thus addressed by a stranger, and was squaring up to Ching, when A-hsia bade him desist; and, raising her veil, replied, "And you, faithless one, how do you dare meet my gaze?" "You are the faithless one," said Ching, "not I." "To be faithless to your wife is worse than being faithless to me," rejoined A-hsia; "if you behaved like that to her, how should I have been treated at your hands? Because of the fair fame of your ancestors, and the honours gained by them, I was willing to ally myself with you; but now that you have discarded your wife, your thread of official advancement has been cut short in the realms below, and Mr. Ch'ên is to take the place that should have been yours at the head of the examination list. As for myself, I am now part of the Chêng family; think no more of me." Ching hung his head and could make no reply; and A-hsia whipped up her mule and disappeared from his sight, leaving him

to return home disconsolate. At the forthcoming examination, everything turned out as she had predicted; Mr. Ch'ên was at the top of the list, and he himself was thrown out. It was clear that his luck was gone. At forty he had no wife, and was so poor that he was glad to pick up a meal where he could. One day he called on Mr. Chêng, who treated him well and kept him there for the night; and while there Chêng's second wife saw him, and asked her husband if his guest's name wasn't Ching. "It is," said he, "how could you guess that?" "Well," replied she, "before I married you, I took refuge in his house, and he was then very kind to me. Although he has now sunk low, yet his ancestors' influence on the family fortunes is not yet exhausted;[3] besides he is an old acquaintance of yours, and you should try and do something for him." Chêng consented, and having first given him a new suit of clothes, kept him in the house several days. At night a slave-girl came to him with twenty ounces of silver for him, and Mrs. Chêng, who was outside the window, said, "This is a trifling return for your past kindness to me. Go and get yourself a good wife. The family luck is not yet exhausted, but will descend to your sons and

[3] The virtuous conduct of any individual will result not only in happiness and prosperity to himself, but a certain quantity of these will descend to his posterity, unless, as in the present case, there is one among them whose personal wickedness neutralizes any benefits that would otherwise accrue therefrom. Here we have an instance where the crimes of a descendant still left a balance of good fortune surviving from the accumulated virtue of generations.

grandchildren. Do not behave like this again, and so shorten your term of life." Ching thanked her and went home, using ten ounces of silver to procure a concubine from a neighbouring family, who was very ugly and ill-tempered. However, she bore him a son, and he by-and-by graduated as doctor. Mr. Chêng became Vice-President of the Board of Civil Office,[4] and at his death A-hsia attended the funeral; but when they opened her chair on its return home, she was gone, and then people knew for the first time that she was not mortal flesh and blood. Alas! for the perversity of mankind, rejecting the old and craving for the new?[5] And then when they come back to the familiar nest, the birds have all flown. Thus does heaven punish such people.

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[4] One of the six departments of State administration.

[5] This seems a curious charge to bring against a people who for a stolid and bigoted conservatism have rarely, if ever, been equalled. Mencius, however, uttered one golden sentence which might be brought to bear upon the occasionally foolish opposition of the Chinese to measures of proved advantage to the commonwealth. "Live," said the Sage, "in harmony with the age in which you are born."

LXII.

THE MARRIAGE LOTTERY.

A CERTAIN labourer's son, named Ma T'ien-jung, lost his wife when he was only about twenty years of age, and was too poor to take another. One day when out hoeing in the fields, he beheld a nice-looking young lady leave the path and come tripping across the furrows towards him. Her face was well painted,[1] and she had altogether such a refined look that Ma concluded she must have lost her way, and began to make some playful remarks in consequence. "You go along home," cried the young lady, "and I'll be with you by-and-by." Ma doubted this rather extraordinary promise, but she vowed and declared she would not break her word; and then Ma went off, telling her that his front door faced the north, etc., etc. In the evening the young lady arrived, and then Ma saw that her hands and face were covered with fine hair, which made him suspect at once she was a fox. She did not deny the accusation;

[1] Only slave-girls and women of the poorer classes, and old women, omit this very important part of a Chinese lady's toilet.

and accordingly Ma said to her, "If you really are one of those wonderful creatures you will be able to get me anything I want; and I should be much obliged if you would begin by giving me some money to relieve my poverty." The young lady said she would; and next evening when she came again, Ma asked her where the money was. "Dear me!" replied she, "I quite forgot it." When she was going away, Ma reminded her of what he wanted, but on the following evening she made precisely the same excuse, promising to bring it another day. A few nights afterwards Ma asked her once more for the money, and then she drew from her sleeve two pieces of silver, each weighing about five or six ounces. They were both of fine quality, with turned-up edges,[2] and Ma was very pleased and stored them away in a cupboard. Some months after this, he happened to require some money for use, and took out these pieces; but the person to whom he showed them said they were only pewter, and easily bit off a portion of one of them with his teeth. Ma was much alarmed, and put the pieces away directly; taking the opportunity when evening came of abusing the young lady roundly. "It's all your bad luck," retorted she; "real gold would be too much for your inferior destiny."[3] There was an end of that; but Ma went on to say, "I

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[2] Alluding probably to the shape of the "shoe" or ingot of silver.

[3] See No. XLVI., note 4.

always heard that fox-girls were of surpassing beauty; how is it you are not?" "Oh," replied the young lady, "we always adapt ourselves to our company. Now you haven't the luck of an ounce of silver to call your own; and what would you do, for instance, with a beautiful princess?[4] My beauty may not be good enough for the aristocracy; but among your big-footed, burden-carrying, rustics,[5] why it may safely be called 'surpassing.'"

A few months passed away, and then one day the young lady came and gave Ma three ounces of silver, saying, "You have often asked me for money, but in consequence of your weak luck I have always refrained from giving you any. Now, however, your marriage is at hand, and I here give you the cost of a wife, which you may also regard as a parting gift from me." Ma replied that he wasn't engaged, to which the young lady answered that in a few days a go-between would visit him to arrange the affair. "And what will she be like?" asked Ma. "Why, as your aspirations are for 'surpassing' beauty," replied the young lady, "of course she will be possessed of surpassing beauty." "I hardly expect that," said Ma; "at any rate three ounces of silver will not be enough to get a wife."

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[4] Literally, "One who would make wild geese alight and fish dive down for shame;" or, as the next line from the same poem has it, "a beauty which would obscure the moon and put flowers to the blush."

[5] Slave-girls do not have their feet compressed.

"Marriages," explained the young lady, "are made in the moon;[6] mortals have nothing to do with them." "And why must you be going away like this?" inquired Ma. "Because," answered she, "we go on shilly-shallying from day to day, and month to month, and nothing ever comes of it. I had better get you another wife and have done with you." Then when morning came, she departed, giving Ma a pinch of yellow powder, saying, "In case you are ill after we are separated, this will cure you." Next day, sure enough, a go-between did come, and Ma at once asked what the proposed bride was like; to which the former replied that she was very passable-looking. Four or five ounces of silver was fixed as the marriage present, Ma making no difficulty on that score, but declaring he must have a peep at the young lady.[7] The go-between said she was a respectable girl, and would

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[6] Wherein resides an old gentleman who ties together with a red cord the feet of those destined to become man and wife. From this bond there is escape, no matter what distance may separate the affianced pair. The first go-between, Ku Ts'ê, was originally seen on ice, arranging matches with some one below:—

"Marriage is not a trifling thing—
The Book and the Vermilion String!
On ice by moonlight may be seen
The wedded couples' go-between."

—*A Thousand Character Essay for Girls.*

Hence the common phrase "to do the ice (business)," *i.e.*, to arrange a marriage.

[7] This proceeding is highly improper, but is winked at in a large majority of Chinese betrothals.

never allow herself to be seen; however it was arranged that they should go to the house together, and await a good opportunity. So off they went, Ma remaining outside while the go-between went in, returning in a little while to tell him it was all right. "A relative of mine lives in the same court, and just now I saw the young lady sitting in the hall. We have only got to pretend we are going to see my relative, and you will be able to get a glimpse of her." Ma consented, and they accordingly passed through the hall, where he saw the young lady sitting down with her head bent forward while some one was scratching her back. She seemed to be all that the go-between had said; but when they came to discuss the money, it appeared the young lady only wanted one or two ounces of silver, just to buy herself a few clothes, etc., at which Ma was delighted, and gave the go-between a present for her trouble, which just finished up the three ounces his fox-friend had provided. An auspicious day was chosen, and the young lady came over to his house; when lo! she was hump-backed and pigeon-breasted, with a short neck like a tortoise, and boat-shaped feet, full ten inches long. The meaning of his fox-friend's remarks then flashed upon him.

END OF VOL. I.

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