

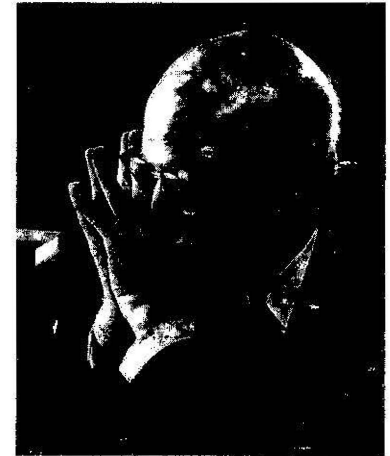
*Sage of the  
Sacred  
Mountain*

by

STANWOOD COBB

A GOSPEL OF TRANQUILITY

## THE AUTHOR



**A**FTER graduating from Dartmouth and taking an A.M. in philosophy and comparative religion at Harvard, Stanwood Cobb spent three years abroad as instructor at Robert College, Constantinople, an experience which bore fruit in his first published book "*The Real Turk.*"

This life in the Near East with summer trips to Europe, rubbing shoulders with all kinds of people of varied races, religions and cultures, gave Cobb a cosmopolitan outlook and world vision subsequently reflected in his literary work.

In 1919, Stanwood Cobb founded the Progressive Education Association, of which he was later president. That same year he also founded the Chevy Chase Country Day School in Washington, of which he is director. He is a member of the Cosmos, The Torch, The Harvard Clubs of Washington—and is founder and president of the Washington Author's Club.

Cobb's most popular book is *Discovering the Genius Within You*. His poetical works include *Simla—A Tale in Verse*, *Symbols of America*, *The Donkey or the Elephant—A Political Satire*, and three books of brief philosophical poems in the Chinese vein—*The Wisdom of Wu Ming Fu*, *Patterns in Jade of Wu Ming Fu*, and *The Way of Life of Wu Ming Fu*.

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*Sage of the Sacred Mountain*

BY

STANWOOD COBB

*Best wishes*

*Stanwood Cobb*

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THE ESSENTIAL MYSTICISM  
AYESHA OF THE BOSPHORUS  
THE REAL TURK

Pamphlet •

THE MEANING OF LIFE

*Sage of the Sacred Mountain*

By STANWOOD COBB

~  
A GOSPEL OF TRANQUILITY  
~

THE AVALON PRESS

*Washington 15, D. C.*

*Dedicated to Lao-tze*

*Ancient Chinese Sage — one of the world's  
greatest spiritual teachers — whose wisdom  
has inspired this book. May his celestial  
spirit accept and favor this  
humble effort to extend his  
benign influence.*



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## Introduction

LET US SUPPOSE that you have been driven to exhaustion along life's dusty highway. You crave release from this fatigue of body and of mind. Then, suddenly, you light upon a restful inn, nestling in a grove of pines and overlooking a vista of vernal beauty. This is your glad opportunity to break the chains of your compulsions, to free your mind of anxieties and worries, and to bathe your soul in peace. You have found your "Inn of Rest"—far from the world of care. Here you can get refreshment—of body, mind and soul.

Such an Inn of Rest we may find imaginatively in the simple Pavilion and Garden of the Sage of the Sacred Mountain. It is our hope that these spiritual discourses may contain elements of value for daily living. The teachings here expressed are those deeply underlying the culture of a great historic people, called by many who have studied them the happiest people in the world. The spiritual philosophy derived from their ancient sages is largely responsible for the equanimity and joyousness of this peculiar people.

The dramatization of these teachings add, we think, to their flavor and appeal. Also, each episode is short, so that the "Sage of the Sacred Mountain" may be dipped into from time to time for momentary inspiration.

May the spirit of the ancient sages illumine this book and impregnate with gracious magnanimity its proffered wisdom.



## The Sage at Home

*The Wise by their wisdom are confounded,  
The Simple, by simplicity.  
But thou—be as a child, be ever young,  
And in the Tao find felicity.*

THE ABOVE POEM adorned the entrance to a humble pavilion on the lower slope of the Sacred Mountain. Here true wisdom dwelt—not the spurious wisdom adulterated by pride of intellect. Here the Master could sit for hours long under his favorite pine tree and meditate. Before him lay a broad expanse of river-valley with the Town nestling at the foot of the mountain-slope. Behind him and above was a magnificent stretch of mountain-side culminating in that august peak which clouds so often adorned; and which, as it seemed to soar into the very heavens, suggested celestial peace and altitude of soul.

The Master loved both views. The vista of the Town was dear to him, for he loved his fellow-men; and all their ways were dear to him, even those erring ways that needed the correction of his philosophy. But, when the weight of the world was too much on him he could shift his gaze to the Sacred Mountain, a magnificence which lifted him quite out of himself into a world where peace dwelt, and celestial wisdom tinged with cosmic power.

Many a citizen of the plain had found his way to the Sage's Pavilion of Wisdom, as it later came to be called. And without money and without price the Master imparted to them what wisdom he had gleaned from existence. The songs of birds; the diurnal tide of light and darkness, symbolizing life's joys and sorrows; the fragrance of vernal flowers, and the

richness of summer harvests and autumnal fruitage; the way reeds yielded to strong winds and so avoided harm; the way birds and men mated and reared their progeny,—all this was as seeds to his harvest of wisdom.

△

Let us say, summing it all up, that the Master found in the ways of Nature the solution to most of men's problems. Found a finality of perception and of faith. Found a vision and a guidance which he was able in some degree to impart to his fellow men—at least to such of them as sought him out.

His followers were of every class—some illiterate, some at the height of learning; some poor, some rich; some of humble origin, some even from the official governing class. All that the Master asked of his disciples was receptivity. The majority of men were too full of their own conceits to seek his wisdom; and the Master's simple habits of life spared him the necessity of soliciting their appraisal and support.

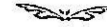
One of his wealthy followers had wanted to erect in the heart of the Town a "Temple of Learning" over which the Master would preside, thus distributing his wisdom over a wider range. But the Master smilingly and persistently refused. "Just where I am is the spot Destiny has selected for me. I would change it for no other."

Nor did he wish to palliate his truths for the veiled vision of the multitude, who first—through experience rather than through inculcation—must become aware of the paradoxes of existence and desire some explanation thereof.

Thanks to the devotion of some of his disciples, fragments of his conversations and his discourses have come down through the centuries, fresh as the day upon which they were uttered, so it seems. But whether these are actual transcriptions—or represent a dramatizing of the Master

similar to the Platonic rendering of Socrates, we may never know.

Nor need we know. For as Plato's Dialogues spell their charm to us regardless of which is the more authentic source, so these discourses of the Master are presented to a modern audience for what they are worth. The message of the Sage will be found redolent of that quaint calm and inward felicity which has from time immemorial characterized the higher levels of Oriental life. It is this spirit of tranquillity and serenity which is today the most crying need of the Occident. And so we trust that here and there may be found receptive readers of *The Sage of the Sacred Mountain*.





## The Superior Man and The Perfect Man

THE SAGE had a distinguished younger rival in the person of Wu Kiang, who taught a practical kind of philosophy which appealed to the man-of-the-street. While the Sage taught the way of perfection, Wu Kiang was content to preach a gospel less demanding. His pattern was that of "the superior man" rather than that of "the perfect man."

"The perfect man?" he is said to have remarked one day—"Where is such a man? Can you ever hope to become such? I prefer to teach that which is within the reach of all. Then all who strive are able to reach the mark and they do not become discouraged. Though they often fail they know the mark is within their reach, and they continue their endeavors and are always making improvement.

"Moreover they see others reaching this mark of the superior man, and these examples encourage and inspire them. So they never cease to exert themselves that they too may become superior men. This, I think, is better than striving to be a perfect man, which we can never be."

This difference of opinion was reported to the Sage, who magnanimously invited his rival to visit their little group and present to them his doctrine of "the superior man."

On the day set every disciple of the Sage was present. Wu Kiang was warmly welcomed and given the seat of honor.

"I am glad you all are present today," said the Sage, "for I know that Wu Kiang has something of great value to give us. Please proceed, dear friend, and give to our eager ears your doctrine of 'the superior man'."

Wu Kiang was pleased to have such an eager, intelligent and well trained audience.

"Very well," he said, "it shall be as you wish." He folded

his hands in superior quiescence and with due modesty gave the following dissertation:—

"The superior man does not injure others. He does not even hurt the feelings of others. He avoids not only injustice, but also the disturbance of social tranquillity. He is courteous to all, both high and low. He never violates that most sacred possession of a human being, the sense of dignity and worth.

"The superior man is at ease. Therefore, he makes others at ease. He is serene. Therefore, he spreads serenity around him. He wishes to serve others. Therefore, all wish to serve him. He is a brother to all men. Therefore, all men are brothers to him.

"The superior man does not stop at national boundaries. He pervades with friendly thought all four quarters of the world. To him all men are brothers, over the seven seas.

"The superior man wishes to see the world at peace. Therefore, he begins at home. He never lends himself to angry disputes, but practices non-violence and non-friction. He knows that disputes produce quarrels and quarrels produce violence. This can be avoided. He never destroys the face, or dignity, of another human being.

"When the superior man becomes ruler, he practices the same procedure. He settles difficulties among his people so as to keep them at peace. He settles difficulties with neighboring peoples so as to maintain universal peace. For he knows that peace makes prosperity and war destroys it. Therefore he wishes peace to reign over the whole world.

"The superior man is not the warrior, but he who patiently and skilfully raises food, or creates objects of need and value to men, or administers affairs peacefully and for human welfare and progress.

"This, my friends, is the superior man. He always

practices courtesy, generosity of soul, sincerity, earnestness and kindness.”

“Well said, Wu Kiang!” cried the Sage. “And I cannot perceive much difference between your ‘superior man’ and the ‘perfect man’ of my teaching. How can one be more perfect than this man that you describe?”

Wu Kiang smiled gratefully, pleased to receive this praise from his renowned rival. “I am glad you like the picture that I draw. And may I say in turn that there is no harm, perhaps, in striving for perfection, provided we realize that we shall never attain it. But it is best, I believe, not to set our goal on too distant a horizon. We must set our goals at the possible, not the impossible, and achieve character little by little. Do not be discouraged by your failures. These are natural. But rejoice at every step of progress that you make. Press on. Always strive toward the mark of the superior man. We are all common in our origin. But our destiny is noble. Let us all strive, without ceasing, to fulfill this noble destiny.

“We agree, honorable Sage, in this, I am sure: that our weaknesses, our imperfections are natural and that we should never become discouraged by them; but should press on, always striving to improve ourselves. We are all common in our origin; we can all become noble in our destiny.”

“Well said!” remarked the Sage earnestly. “And I see that our teachings do not really contradict, but fairly supplement each other. I am happy at your success, and wish with all my heart that you may convert many ‘common’ men into ‘superior’ men, and even into ‘noble’ men.”

“Thank you, Master,” replied Wu Kiang reverently. “I depart from this noble little group, and from you, Master, as a sincere friend and shall always remain so.”

And such was the case. Wu Kiang and the Sage remained

In the state of utmost friendship, and thereafter had many fruitful conferences and discussions together. After all, how could they be hostile to each other? For both were engaged in the same noble work, that of trying to improve human nature. The pity was, not that there were two, but that there were not a hundred able teachers in this noble field of effort!



## On Retaliation

THE SAGE once found his little group of disciples in brisk and agitated conversation. Upon one of them, Lin Shu, had been perpetrated a rank injustice, and he was smarting from the blow and talked of revenge. But his fellow disciples were trying to dissuade him from this.

"What is the cause of all this rumpus?" asked the Master, smiling soothingly at his little flock.

"Lin Shu has just received a dirty deal," he was informed—"and he wants to pay back his foe in kind."

"Well, what have the rest of you to say to this?" queried the Sage.

"We are trying to convince him that this is not the way of the Tao."

"And what have you to say, Lin Shu?"

"If a man does me injury, have I not the right to retaliate?" eagerly queried the injured one.

"What is the purpose of this retaliation?"

"To even the score. Is this not justice?"

"Apparently it is," said the Master, calmly. "And as such, retaliation, or revenge as some call it, is permitted in the affairs of the world.

"But there is a higher justice, the justice of the Tao."

"What is that?" Lin Shu inquired, dubiously. And the other disciples awaited eagerly the answer of the Master.

"The Tao never seeks revenge," replied the Master. "The Tao seeks reform."

"And how does the Tao act, in seeking reform?"

"The Tao, like the Sun, benefits both the just and the unjust. It woos us to improvement; it gently leads us; it opens

our eyes to our faults; it makes us ashamed of our lower natures."

Lin Shu remained silent for awhile, meditating this reply. The loving wisdom of the Master seemed to penetrate his very soul.

"How then should I act in this case?" he at last queried.

"If you are able to bring yourself to do so, requite evil with good."

"Is this feasible?" asked another disciple.

"The way of the Tao is always feasible," replied the Sage, "because it is the way the Universe works."

Then turning to Lin Shu, he smilingly said, "I think you are sufficiently trained in the Tao to pursue the following course. Render good to your enemy, give him only love. Do this for one month. Then report to me."

△

At the end of the month Lin Shu rejoined the conference with beaming face. With him was a stranger to the group whom he introduced as follows: "This, fellow disciples, is my former enemy. He is now my friend. And he wishes, like us, to learn the way of the Tao."

The Master took the stranger's hand and led him to the center of the group. "We wish to do you honor," he said, "because you bring to us a striking example of how the Tao can reform man's heart."



## The Taming of a Fop

A TOWNSMAN OF FASHION once sauntered into the midst of the Master's little group. "May I join your company, Sir?" he asked, somewhat condescendingly.

"Certainly," replied the Sage. "And what would you like me to discuss?"

"O, anything!" replied the fop, nonchalantly concealing a yawn. "I should like to have a sample of your wares."

The Master reflected for a moment, perceiving the man's artificiality and lack of sincerity. "Well, I will speak about sincerity," he said.

"And what have you to say about sincerity?" further pursued the fop.

"The perfect man is natural. He lets Nature flow into and through him. He flows with the current. He is simple as a child. He therefore is always contented."

Something in this statement seemed to get under the skin of the interlocutor. After a short silence, he asked, "And what have you to say about the 'unnatural' man, then?"

"The unnatural man is not sincere. He is not simple. His behavior is always an affectation, a pose, a form of acting. Therefore, it wearies him. Life becomes a boresome thing. It becomes tiresome.

"Look at yonder mountain." The Sage pointed to a majestic peak dominating the landscape. "It is natural. It is simple. It makes no effort to be what it is not. It does not gyrate in order to attract attention. It is itself. And therefore, it commands respect. It is motionless; and therefore, it suggests peace. It has the power of quiescence; and therefore, it is majestic."

All now turned to look at the mountain for a moment, caught and uplifted by the Master's commentary. They gazed

in silence at the glory, the peaceful power of the peak upon which a white cloud hung like a diadem. It was an inspiring sight. The fop gazed in silent admiration of the scene—his latent sense of beauty awakened by the Master's deft touch.

Just then some urchins passed, playing with tops which they whipped to keep upright and spinning.

"See those tops!" exclaimed the Master. "They have to keep in perpetual motion in order to maintain their upright position. This is not natural. Who would wish to be as the top, whipped and constantly excited by life in order to maintain an appearance of stability?"

His disciples were amused at this apt figure. They looked at the fop and smiled. As for the latter, he hung his head. He had come out of mere inquisitiveness and with the intention of quizzing the great teacher. He had entered the group with the appearance of superiority. But now, somehow, he felt inferior and he felt abashed. His true nature as a man was becoming uppermost.

The Master, perceiving this, smiled at his protagonist with the disarming smile of a little child. Pointing again at the mountain, he said, "See that mountain. Why does it suggest greatness? Because it is itself. It asks nothing of us. It does not seek our attention. It wishes to serve. It gives of its beauty, its mountainous torrents, nay, of its very substance to the plains and to the people of the plains. It is serene, it is admired, it is inspiring."

△

The Master stopped at this. He made no attempt to complete the symbolism by going on and explaining in what ways a man should resemble a mountain. But this was not necessary. All present were silently meditating on this very subject. And the Master, who believed silence to be even more precious than much talk, remained silent himself.

Finally the man-of-the-town broke the silence, as if

regretfully. He rose and remarked with more sincerity than he had shown at the beginning, "Thank you, Master. You have given me a great message. May I come again?"

"You will be always welcome," said the Sage, taking one of his hands in his and patting it. "For you have a heart of gold, even if you do not know it."

The man-of-the-town was startled by this. Such a statement had never been made to him before. His face changed, and his artificiality dropped off from him for the moment, entirely. He bowed humbly to the Master and thanked him, adding, "I should deem it a great privilege to come often."

"I should deem it a great honor and a joy to have you," replied the Master humbly.

The townman bowed reverently. He was deeply moved. He backed away, as one would do in retiring from the presence of an emperor. "I will surely come again," he said, "and often."

He kept his word. And he finally became one of the Master's most sincere and earnest disciples.



## Hurry

IT WAS AN EXTRA HOT DAY in spring. San Kwei, somewhat detained by family duties, arrived late at the Master's discourse. His face was red and perspiring as he hurriedly took a seat and mopped his heated brow.

"Why all this hurry and strain, San Kwei?" asked the Sage, smiling.

"Why, I couldn't bear to miss any of your discourse," replied San Kwei anxiously.

"It is very worthy of you, San Kwei, to regret missing any of my discourse. But it would be worthier still to practise what I teach. Is all this hurry and strain and perspiration the way of the Tao, as I teach it?"

The other disciples could not help smiling as they scanned the heated rotund countenance of San Kwei, on which drops of perspiration still stood out.

San Kwei remained silent for a moment as he mopped his perspiring face. Then he replied, "I cannot fail to see your point, Master. My very effort and hurry to arrive here oppose in practise one of the chief doctrines of the Tao, tranquillity."

"You have acquired wisdom by means of trial and error, San Kwei. And that is the best way to grow wise, because such wisdom never departs from us. It remains an eternal part of the soul, here and hereafter. Whereas doctrines learned by hearsay may in reality fail to penetrate those inner recesses of the spirit from which action ripens and bursts forth.

"I do not think you will again unduly hurry. And this little incident inclines me to discourse to you all today on this vital, never exhausted theme of tranquillity.

"Tranquillity is the sign of wisdom. Even the most important works of life must be accomplished with tranquillity, or they will be poorly accomplished. Indeed, there are few

occasions in life when it is necessary to violate tranquillity. And after such disturbing occasions it is the part of wisdom to return to tranquillity as soon as possible."

The Sage sat in silent meditation for a moment, and was about to resume his theme when a drop of rain fell.

"Nature intervenes in order that we may prove the truth of my previous statement," The Sage continued tranquilly. "For if, as the unwise so often do, we linger until the drop becomes a downpour, then we shall all have to rush for shelter. But if, as the wise do, we look ahead and anticipate circumstance, we shall proceed tranquilly to the shelter of my humble abode."

And leading the way indoors the Sage there prepared and served tea to his disciples. And as they comfortably sipped of this exhilarating beverage the Sage took occasion to enlarge on the theme which he never failed to exemplify in his own life.



## Harmony

ONE DAY the Master came upon his little group as they were engaged in a rather too earnest discussion which seemed to be on the verge of altercation. At the approach of their teacher the group became silent and respectfully arose while he seated himself.

"Are you all happy?" were his first words, as he beamed lovingly upon his little flock of loyal followers.

"Yes!" was the answer from a dozen throats. And Ling Po added, "We are happy, because you are here."

The Master smiled: "And are you all tranquil?" No answer came forth in response to this query. For the Master had trained his pupils to be honest with themselves—and not one could honestly say that he had been tranquil on the occasion of the Master's approach.

"I am glad you are honest. That pleases me greatly. As for tranquillity, I realized as I approached that this Bird of Heaven was not in your midst. I hope you may all learn how to be tranquil, even in the most earnest of discussions."

The disciples, feeling that they had been guilty of a slight breach of decorum, remained silent. And so did the Master, for the moment. Then he said. "I will discourse to you today on the important subject of harmony—harmony within oneself, harmony with others in the world around us.

"One must remain always harmonious within oneself. One must cultivate tranquillity.

"Let us study nature. See how tranquil it is, in general. That is because it seeks only to fulfill the Will of Heaven—and Heaven is always tranquil.

"As we sit here now, quietly in the speckled sunshine, we can hardly feel otherwise than harmonious."

The Master paused for a moment, to let the quiet deepen. Indeed, all of his group now were experiencing the utmost

harmony, the utmost tranquillity. Perhaps the Master's presence had something to do with this, as well as the serene calmness of Nature around them.

Ling Po finally broke the silence with a courageous question. "Yes, Master, it is possible, it is even easy to feel harmonious in the midst of this peaceful setting. But how can we remain harmonious in the midst of our daily work?"

"That is a good question," rejoined the Master, looking serious, "and I am glad you asked it. For you have propounded one of man's greatest problems.

"To answer you, I will first give you an example of a man who eminently succeeds in remaining always happy and harmonious in his work—the artist Wu. Recently he was commissioned to make an important wood-carving for the Emperor. He spent days in selecting the proper material, and still more days in meditating upon his subject. Then he went to work and in a few days produced a carving which delighted the Emperor and all who beheld it."

"Ah, how delicious!" exclaimed Ling Po, with a sigh. "That is a splendid example—But is it not above our heads? Artists can be happy in their work because they create. But we cannot all be artists. The work of most of us is very humdrum."

"Yes, I know that to be true. But the answer to that is; we must all do our work, whatever it is, as the artist does his work, with a full heart.

"No matter how lowly our task, we must approach it gladly and put our best effort into it. If we work in this way, with joy, the quality of our work will be better. And what is even more important for ourselves, we shall remain always harmonious, even in the most menial of tasks."

"May I ask one more question of you, Master?" said Ling

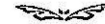
Po, with bashful eagerness. "The key to it all is to find joy in one's work. But is that always possible?"

"Yes, it is always possible," answered the Master, gravely. "But to do so requires great training of the mind and spirit. And this is what I am trying to inculcate in you.

"The perfect man does his work reverently and with joy, because he knows that he is, by so doing, serving not only man but also the Universal. And in such service he has learned how to attract to himself joyousness from the Universal."

No one made answer to this. Ling Po would have liked, had he not been too modest to hold forth again, to inquire as to how one might "draw joyousness from the Universal." But he had no need to inquire. For the Master read his thoughts and answered with a humorous glint in his eye, "You look puzzled, dear Ling Po. And I do not blame you. *How to draw joyousness from the Universal!* Yes, that is a great art and a great need of man. But I cannot teach you this by mere words. Nevertheless, you have, all of you, the capacity to acquire this art. And it is my earnest aim day by day to set you further on this path."

The Master smiled and looked lovingly and encouragingly into each face in turn. Then he arose, thus ending the session for the day.



## Humility

THE DISCIPLES were all gathered together and the Master sat in their midst. But he said nothing. He remained in contemplative silence, as was his wont at times. Perhaps he was waiting for one of his followers to introduce a topic for discussion. This at last Shin Li did when the Master looked up and smiled at him.

"Master," he said, "how is it that though you are a great personage and renowned throughout the Kingdom, you can yet remain so truly humble?"

"Ah, you have introduced a worthy theme," responded the Master—"a theme which I have discussed with you many times, and can discuss many times again."

The disciples relaxed their expectant posture and assumed a condition of ease and tranquillity, as the Master liked to have them do when he discoursed to them.

"Humility is indeed a great theme," he continued. "For to be humble is to be great, and to be truly great is to be humble.

"But please do not ascribe the term 'great' to me," he added, looking seriously at Shin Li. "I wish to be conscious only of my littleness, of my unworthiness in the service of the Tao. And I feel myself always as a child in wisdom. But what little I have, I am always glad to share with you."

The Master sat in silent meditation for a moment. This was a symptom which always preceded his deepest and most significant discourses.

"Look at the earth under our feet," he at length remarked, gesturing downward toward the sward which spread out beneath and around them. "This is the mighty Earth, which contains all things—inexhaustible richness and wealth and power. Yet it submits without complaint to the impress of our clumsy feet. It submits to the plowshare and the mattock.

It gives to us of its wealth and asks nothing in return, except our careful and wise management of its rich gifts.

"The earth lies low for us, it bares its bosom to sustain us, it brings to us the greatest blessings. Is not this common to earth, the blessings of which we accept so often without due appreciation, a miraculous and outstanding example of humility?"

Oh consider drops of water. Do they vie with each other, seek greatness, vaunt themselves over their neighbors?

No. Each drop of water is content to be itself. It does not seek grandeur. It does not strive. Therefore, it is perfect. Therefore, there is no friction between the individual drops.

"See with what facility water flows! See how easily it yields ground when this becomes necessary, yet re-establishes itself as soon as the opposing force has ceased.

"You may think of water as weak. In reality it is strong. *And the great ocean itself, by lying low, receives all things into it.*"

△

The Master paused for this last statement to sink in. He prolonged the silence. His mind and soul seemed far away, floating in philosophical space as buoyant lofty clouds float in the empyrian.

At last he came back to earth.

"Yes, humility is a great quality. Until we acquire habitual humility, we cannot go on in the way of the Tao. Can you imagine that the Tao would confer the power of its grace upon those who would use it in pride and vanity for purposes of the self?"

After a pause the Master's favorite disciple, San Kwei, remarked with beaming pride and satisfaction, "How happy and blessed we are, dear Master, to be able to imbibe this



wisdom from your lips. I begin to feel as if I had acquired the wisdom of the ages."

The Master smiled, but his smile was not all approval.

"Have a care, San Kwei. Don't be too elated in your pride of acquired wisdom, or you soon will be out of my reach. As for me, I am each year becoming more like a little child. I am conscious of my unworthiness, my lack of wisdom in the face of all that the Universal Life, the Tao, expresses. Each year I think I know less. I open my soul to supernal wisdom and beseech the Tao for guidance on the spiritual Path of Knowledge. We must hold to the simplicity and humility of the little child and bring our empty cups to be filled with the water of wisdom. If we bring cups full of dregs, we can receive nothing from the Tao.



## The Poet and His Audience

Li Po essayed to be a poet. One day as he approached the little gathering of disciples his face shone so that the Master perceived the reason.

"Ah, Li Po," he said affably, "I see by your joyous countenance that you have composed a masterpiece."

Li Po smiled bashfully. "It is not a masterpiece, dear Master. But it is the best this humble servant could produce."

"Well, you shall presently recite it to us and let *us* judge whether or not it is a masterpiece. Sit down, dear friend, and wait patiently for that moment all poets love—that moment when they find an audience. For poetry without an audience would be like a bird without wings. As it is upon wings that a bird soars, so it is with expectation of an audience that the poet composes."

Li Po blushed at this. And Lin Tang, his friend, ventured gently to remonstrate with the Master. "Don't you think, dear Master, that a poet would compose anyway, from sheer love of beauty, even if he had no audience?"

"Perhaps," responded the Master, smilingly. "But he would not compose if he had no audience at all in mind.

"It is like speech. Speech presupposes a listener. Would a solitary individual, grown up, let us imagine, alone on a desert isle, ever resort to speech? No. Speech is an art which presupposes a listener. And so poetry is an art which presupposes an audience.

"And this is nothing to be ashamed of, on the part of a poet. It is not mere egotism or personal vanity. The poet is, in a way, a singer; and it is natural for him to take keen enjoyment from declaiming his verse to an appreciative audience. This is a well-deserved pleasure. And it is, to the poet, a triple joy as it were. For first he has the joy of

creation; and then he has the joy of expressing his creation to an audience; which itself takes joy from the creation."

△

The Master paused, looking around at his little group as if awaiting something. No one spoke for a moment. Then Lin Tang said eagerly, "Well, can we hear now this new production of our dear poet? I am impatient to hear it."

"Yes," echoed a dozen voices. "Let us hear it!"

The Master smiled. "That is what I was waiting for," he replied. "I was waiting for a sincere request from the audience. For it is the spirit of the audience—the atmosphere which it creates and furnishes the poet—which constitutes the tone, as it were, of the whole affair. It is like Heaven and Earth. If Earth were not receptive to the sunshine, did not drink in eagerly the rain, what would become of the balance of things? What would become of existence itself?"

"Yes, we must joyfully and eagerly receive the creations of the poet, and in that way aid and inspire him to further create for us. We cannot all be poets. But we can all play our part as an audience; and in that way, too, worthily serve the cause of poetry.

"And this is an important matter. For poetry is an art of extreme value. The poet's vocation is of importance to humanity. For he condenses life, as it were, into moments of beauty. And in meaningful and musical language expresses the truths of existence in a way which moves the heart.

"He who moves the heart affects conduct. Therefore, I put in value the poet even above the philosopher."

"Oh no," cried several, deprecatingly. And Li Po exclaimed earnestly: "Your work, dear Master, is of much greater importance than mine! And the proof of that is, that it is your teaching which inspires my verse!"

All looked at the Master and smiled, as if to say: "Don't

you see how true that is? Where would Li Po's beautiful poetry be without the inspiration of your celestial teachings?"

Such were the unuttered thoughts which pervaded the group. The Master remained silent. He evidently considered it too opportune to carry further a discussion of the relative merits of poetry and philosophy.

"Well," he remarked after a moment of tranquillity, "the moment has come of which I first spoke. Let us compose ourselves and become a kindly and appreciative audience."

And handing Li Po a lute he said kindly, "Come, Li Po, to play. We are all-expectant."

Li Po waited for no further urging. Taking the lute lovingly to his hands, he gently stroked its strings and chanted the following poem:

*Life struggles, forges ahead somehow.  
Earth is sore-furrowed with the plough;  
Harvests are yielded up only to delve and toil;  
What we would gain, we scatter all to win;  
We strive, we sweat in daily work and toil,—  
And when we seek to bring our harvests in,  
The joy they give is never sweet enow.  
But in a moment, on a sunset hill  
By thrush-choraled thicket crowned,  
Life discovers how it can stand still—  
All cares, all sorrows drowned—  
While Earth and Heaven the charmed senses fill,  
And Eternity stands close around.*

With a few gentle chords on the lute Li Po ended his performance. His audience remained silent, as if still entranced by the sonority of his sounds and the tranquil suggestiveness of his words.

Finally the Master broke the silence. "You see, Li Po, how poet and audience are as inseparable as the lute and the fingers that play it. You have struck many responsive chords in us. I congratulate you on the beauty, the philosophical

depth of your poem. If, as you claim, my teachings have a slight part to play in your composition, I rejoice that my humble ideas can bear such poetic fruit.

"You must bring us many more such poems, fixing the essence of my teachings in words that sing like the thrushes you mention on the sunset-hill."

The Master arose, and approaching Li Po took him in his arms and tenderly embraced him. This was an occurrence which struck chords of happiness in the heart of the poet—more intense even, than the evident appreciation of his little audience had occasioned during the rendering of his poem.



## On Intuition

Han Shih once requested the Master to elucidate one of his most puzzling paradoxes. "It has been reported, Master, that you have said: 'In order to comprehend all knowledge, one must renounce the mind.' Would you kindly elucidate to us this hard saying? Since it is the mind through which we obtain knowledge, how can we be asked to renounce the mind in order to gain an understanding of all things?"

The Master slowly smiled: "That is a good question, Han Shih, and I will try my best to answer it in a manner satisfactory to you all."

As usual before beginning a discourse the Master became silent, his disciples reverently awaiting his further speech. Had this time several minutes passed before a word was spoken. Then the Sage let a smile dispel the fixity of his countenance.

"The Master has something wonderful to give us," now thought the disciples. And they were not mistaken.

"While I was silently meditating on this cryptic truth," began the Sage, "you were also meditating. That, at least, was my wish for you. For you must learn how, in silent meditation, to draw truth from the Tao as I do. The time will come when I can be no longer with you. But the Truth of the Tao must still march on. . . ."

"Well, what ideas have come to you, my friends?"

None had courage to speak, save Han Shih. "One idea came to me strongly, Master. I note that you do not say, 'in order to *obtain all knowledge*'—but 'in order to *comprehend all knowledge*?' Perhaps this is the clue."

"You are right, Han Shih," replied the Master. "And there is a great difference here. The mind is employed to obtain knowledge, and it is a marvelous instrument for this purpose. *But it is the soul which comprehends knowledge.* Mind deals with facts. Soul deals with values and realities. Through the

mind we memorize. Through the intuitive powers of the soul we comprehend."

A

The Master fell into a prolonged silence. At last, when his disciples were beginning to think he had ended the session for the day, his lips moved again.

"How do you think I have received my understanding of the Tao? Not through the mind alone, but through the power also of the soul's intuition. And when one comprehends the Tao, one comprehends all knowledge."

"That is true," exclaimed Han Shih, and all the others joined in hearty acclamation.

But the Master held up his hand humbly to silence this applause.

"I did not say that I as yet comprehend thoroughly the Tao. No, I feel deeply my insufficiency. I am as a little child gathering pebbles on the shore of the Ocean of Existence, marveling at the infinite billowy expanse spread out before me. When a wave becomes too powerful, I retreat. But when the wave gently makes way for me, I eagerly advance to retrieve some fragment, some gem of truth, which it has cast at my feet."

Again a silence fell upon the group. The Master's eyes were shut. His spirit seemed to be soaring far away in search of Truth. The silence was prolonged.

"We had better go," finally whispered Han Shih. "The Master has given us all that he thinks we can absorb today. Let us depart in silence and meditate upon this matter. Surely he will teach us further on some other occasion."

So the disciples softly stole away, leaving his little courtyard to the Master and to silence.

The next day the Master himself brought up the subject of intuition, continuing his discourse of the previous day.

"Knowledge is of great value to man," he said. "But too great an accumulation of mere knowledge is apt to choke the channels of inspiration. For knowledge, like physical power, can breed vanity and self-conceit. And this is fatal to the pursuit of wisdom.

"As I said yesterday, the inner values of existence are perceived by the soul rather than by the mind.

"Therefore, if we let the conceit of knowledge block and barade us against Truth—then that very knowledge may lead us into error and become non-knowledge."

"How true!" exclaimed Han Shih. "I have already begun to realize this through my own experience. I feel that it is more important to digest, as it were, what knowledge I have, than to accumulate a body of knowledge which might become a tyrant rather than a servant."

"Well said!" remarked the Master. "And that is why I often say we must maintain, in our search for truth, always the attitude of the little child. Once we lose that open-eyed wonder at existence, we cease to be pure and ardent searchers after Truth. The little child is ready to believe anything. And so must we be."

"But would that not be dangerous?" anxiously inquired a new disciple, who was not yet accustomed to the Master's paradoxes.

"Yes, it is dangerous," the Master acknowledged—"but not as dangerous as to acquire the habit-of-mind of not believing anything!"

He waited for this to sink in. The other disciples smiled. They loved these challenging aphorisms of the Master—so intriguing and stimulating to deep thought.

"Unless we keep pure in us the quality of openmindedness and faith, we cannot progress far on the road to Truth," the

Master continued. "Once we stop to erect a Temple to knowledge and roof it in, we become impervious to the occult rays which emanate from the Universal. These rays stimulate us to creative thought. From the light which they bestow upon us are engendered new ideas such as can never result from mere knowledge."

The Master paused. He sighed, as if he wearied of trying to convey, by means of words, those celestial truths which after all must be experienced in order to be understood.

Raising his hands in a gesture of finality, he closed his discourse with the following words:

"Knowledge is the way of man. Wisdom is the way of Heaven."



## War and Peace

THE DAY the young Emperor himself drove in state to the entrance of the Master's humble abode. The Master, summoned to the gate, gave due obeisance to the August Personage and invited him into his garden.

"Pray pardon me for not having a residence worthy of receiving your worship. But my garden is a universal abode. And here, under the limitless canopy of Heaven, I have no regrets at entertaining you. Even your own gardens have no higher sky, no broader horizons, no brighter sun."

The Emperor somehow felt abashed before the simplicity of the Master, who by irreproachable logic had demonstrated that even emperors are no nearer the Celestial Abodes than are kings.

"And now, will you deign to acquaint me with the purpose of your visit?"

The Emperor looked around the peaceful garden of the Sage, relaxing his severity of countenance as he breathed in the tranquillity exhaled by this serene environment. He remained silent for a moment—then leaned forward and earnestly spoke:

"Hearing of your wisdom, your perspicacity, and your control of Cosmic forces—I have come to ask your aid in a colossal project which I am about to undertake."

"What is that?" asked the Master. "Can it be that having well managed the territory which you recently inherited, you now wish to extend your empire?"

The Emperor sat back, startled. "How is it that you read my secret thoughts?" he asked.

The Master smiled. "It is simple. Do not marvel at that. But tell me of your project and I will gladly give what counsel I can. But suppose my counsel does not please your Majesty?"

"A Sage is an inviolate Plenipotentiary in his own world of wisdom. I do not in any way restrict you, my Counselor! Whatever you have to say will be cherished by me."

The Master bowed low. "Your spirit is magnanimous—may your destiny be great. Please proceed."

△

The Emperor himself bowed to the Sage—a gracious gesture in one of such superior position. Then he spoke as follows:—

"As you know, our empire is surrounded by wild and warlike tribes. And beyond these tribes, to the westward, are still other peoples unfriendly to us who are apt to foment trouble. I have now a mighty army and loyal subjects. Why is this not the perfect occasion to subdue these tribes; and penetrating to the west, extend greatly the boundaries of our glorious empire?"

The Master regarded his Liege Lord soberly. Instead of answering the question put to him he remained silent, sunk deep in thought.

The Emperor, somewhat taken aback by this, continued his talk as if to defend himself from unspoken criticism.

"Knowing that you are pacific in your philosophy," the Emperor continued, "is it possible that this idea of war does not please you?"

"Please tell me more about your plans and motives," was the cryptic reply of the Sage.

"Well, you must understand in the first place, that this is really a war of defense. It is a war that will secure our position in the world and so bring peace.

"And think of the benefits to humanity of extending our benign rule over a wider domain. Of spreading our eminent and humane culture over a greater part of the world!"

The Sage again made no answer. He seemed to be deeply

pondering this paradox of establishing peace by means of war, of putting foreign peoples through a baptism of fire and sword in order to give them the blessings of civilization.

The Emperor fixed an earnest, even anxious regard upon his subject, as if to read his thoughts. For a moment neither spoke.

"And why do you come to me? What specific counsel do you seek from me?" at last asked the Sage.

The Emperor looked relieved. "Ah, now we are coming to the point," he said. "What I want from you, highly respected friend, is to know whether I shall succeed in this enterprise."

"You are fully resolved on the warlike expedition? Then you do not seek from me advice as whether to undertake it. You seek only from me some omen of success."

△

The Emperor's face fell like that of a school boy detected in a fault. "Well," he hemmed and hawed, "it is true that the decision has been made by our August Council. After careful deliberation the die has been cast and the time set for the departure of our armies. You will understand, of course," he went on, half apologetically, "that such decisions rest upon our Counsel of State."

"Yes, of course," remarked the Sage gravely, putting the Emperor at his ease. "Of course."

"Well," said the Emperor, relaxing a little in his posture and looking relieved. "Well—I now come to *you* for final counsel. To you, reputed to be our greatest sage. I have heard that your powers are truly magical. I beg of you to peer candidly into the future, as to whether you see for me success or failure."

The Sage bowed deferentially—"I am no magician," he said, "but if this request is the purpose of your august visit, I will do my best to fulfill it."

The Emperor hung upon the Sage's words with eager expectancy.

"But I cannot fulfill your request at this interview. In fact, I cannot guarantee at any time to look successfully into the future. For Heaven rightly veils the future from us, and Destiny conceals its plans. But if you will deign to visit again tomorrow this unworthy servant, I will present to you then whatever premonition of the future may have occurred to me. Such premonitions require both tranquillity and time. I will give you your answer tomorrow."

"Thank you, dear Sage. Tomorrow, then!" cried the Emperor arising. "Tomorrow! Do not fail me! I shall await with extreme eagerness the verdict of your occult vision!"

"I shall do my best, my dear Emperor. Do not doubt that!" And with these last words the Sage escorted his Imperial Guest to the gate. After watching him depart the Master turned back to his little garden and sat there with sad mien. It was a repugnant task thrust upon him—that of seeking for his Emperor good fortune for an enterprise which in his heart he disapproved of.

On the morrow, as appointed, the Emperor returned to hear the eagerly awaited verdict. As he was received and courteously led again into the Sage's garden he could hardly restrain in his manners the impatience which seethed within him. As soon as both were seated in the modest tea-house crowning a slight knoll of the garden the Emperor gazed fervently at his companion and asked, "Well, have you got a definite answer for me?"

"Yes," replied the Sage slowly, and it seemed, a little sadly: "I have."

"And what is it?" impetuously urged the Emperor.

"I am bound to tell you that if you make your expedition it will succeed."

"Ah!" cried the youthful Emperor, relaxing the strain of his expectant posture. "Thank you for these words! I am truly grateful." And taking from the recesses of his garment a heavy purse of gold he added—"Please accept from me this humble token of my gratitude."

The Master made a gentle gesture of refusal. "No, Sire—I cannot accept payment or reward for this. It is both a duty and a privilege to serve Your Majesty. All that I need for my modest living has been furnished me by Destiny. Kindly use this gold for the aid of widows of soldiers who will expire in this warfare."

The Emperor's face fell. Evidently he did not like this refusal, nor the reference to certain and violent deaths which would be occasioned by his war. But he put the purse reluctantly back into his bosom and was about to leave when a sudden thought struck him. "By the way," he said, "why did you say that you were bound to give a favorable answer to my quest?"

The Sage fixed upon his interlocuter a long sad gaze. At last he gave this answer: "Because I would not, of my own will, do anything to promote a warlike expedition. The violence of war and the hatreds engendered by such violence are entirely contrary to my philosophy; and also, I believe, to the Wisdom of Heaven. But your Imperial Majesty entrusted to me a specific commission. You did not ask me what I thought of war. Nor whether I would advise this warfare in particular. You asked me only one question: 'Will it succeed?' And I was bound—by sheer loyalty and devotion to my Emperor—to seek, if possible, an answer. In my seeking, the answer clearly came and it was 'Yes!'"

The young Emperor was deeply touched by this devotion—the reluctant parting of the curtains for future vision of an enterprise of which the Sage did not approve. Also his curiosity was aroused. "Will you not tell me, then, your

thoughts about this subject? Why do you disfavor war, which has always been the road leading to imperial greatness?"

"It is not the place of this unworthy subject to discourse to your Majesty upon so important a subject."

"But if I wish and request it?"

"Very well," replied the Master soberly. "Since you so insist, I will share with you my ideas concerning war and peace. In our humble opinion war is seldom a necessity. On the other hand peace is the constant need of man—for the sake of prosperity, of happiness, and stability."

"But if warring and savage tribes harass our borders?" interrupted the Emperor.

"This may need to be restrained by force. But even these tribes might be peacefully restrained."

"What do you mean? In what way?" asked the Emperor.

The Master thought for a moment. "By a great wall, for instance."

"That is an idea!" exclaimed the Emperor, striking his knees with open palm. "I had never thought of that! It might be done!"

"But go on. How about our westward expedition? If, as you predict, we shall succeed, think how glorious it will be to spread the blessings of our culture on these distant lands!"

"But have these distant lands provoked you?"

"Not yet. But they might, at any time. Is it not safer for us to conquer them, thus rendering them harmless? And at the same time incorporate them into all the blessings of our glorious empire?"

"Rather I would say," replied the Sage, "let the virtues of your rule spread peacefully by the example of contagion rather than by force. War is never aught but a cruel thing. How much suffering, how many deaths it occasions—not only among the enemy but also among ourselves."

"Man was made to till the soil in peace. To build fair

cities, to beget a family, and to bequeath to posterity a more prosperous and happier earth than that which he inherited."

△

The Emperor, plunged deep in thought, made no answer to the Sage. The Sage continued:

"You say—'Is it not safer to attack first?' The immediate result may be safety, yes. But this safety is precarious. Since the situation thus created is unnatural, it is therefore unstable. What one wins by force one must forever hold by force."

"And what guarantees that you will always have enough force at your disposal to control such an extended empire? Force begets force. Some day a component part of this empire may break away. Or some rival, humbled by your might, may gather forces in a distant province and descend upon your Capital, seeking to recoup his loss of greatness."

"No. War never brings security, nor promotes stability."

The Master folded his hands in his lap, thus signifying that his discourse was ended.

But the Emperor could not forbear an eager question: "What, then, does promote stability?"

The Master slightly frowned. It was not the place or time for a discourse on the nature of government.

"I cannot venture, at the moment, to discourse on this. But since you urge it, I will give you the answer in one word."

"What is that word?"

"Justice," answered the Master, fixing his deep and luminous eyes upon the Royal Youth, who now manifested a humility foreign to his regal habits, his gaze held by a mystic power which seemed to flow from the eyes of the Sage and penetrate his very soul.

"Justice?" he stammered.

"Yes, justice," repeated the Master. "Justice honestly, patiently and kindly applied in all its diverse phases. Justice



within the family. Justice within the village. Justice within the nation. And justice to all other nations. Meditate on this! And if you care, some future day I will further discourse to you on this cosmically important subject."

The Emperor, taking this as a dismissal, arose and bowed deferentially. "You have given me much to think about. I will come again to counsel with you."

And from then on the Master, until his death, was the close confidant of the young Emperor—guiding him in many of his ways and deeds.

The war, as prophesied, was successful. And the Emperor, helped and inspired by the guidance of the Master, established tranquillity and prosperity throughout his vast empire.

But later in his life, as the Master had perhaps foreseen, the outlying portions of his empire broke away from his rule. And when the weakness of old age fell upon him a rival claimant to the throne—gathering all the malcontents of the empire around his banner and recouping his forces from distant provinces—descended upon the Capital and conquered it. As for the aged Emperor, he died valiantly in the midst of battle. Did the spirit of his beloved Sage then float before him, welcoming him to the Celestial Abode?



## Poetry and Love

"MASTER," said the poet Li Po one beautiful spring day as they assembled under an arbor trellised with wisteria, the blossoms of which gave out a heady and intoxicatingly joyous aroma. "Master, our newest disciple, Lin Chu, has recently fallen under such poetic inspiration as to have produced a galaxy of highly meritorious verses. But he is ashamed to read them to you because they are on the subject of love."

All eyes turned toward Lin Chu, who blushing remained in silence.

"Is this true, Lin Chu?" gently queried the Master.

"Yes, Master, it is true."

"Well, you do not need to be so reticent about your poems, simply because the subject matter is that of love."

"But it is not the custom to parade this subject before the world, Master. Love is a private matter and concerns one's own heart only."

The Master met this answer with a prolonged silence during which he remained in deep thought. "It is true," he at last answered, "that love is an intimate and private affair. But is there not such a thing as poetic license?"

"What do you mean by that, Master?"

"The poet is licensed to express and proclaim to the world all his emotional experiences, even the most intimate. In fact, it is the very nature of poetry to convey to the world not only vivid pictures of nature and of man's response to it, but also those deep emotions of the soul which all men experience but which most men conceal. And it is because most men conceal their emotions that poetry is so highly esteemed. It opens a window to the soul. Those who hear poetry recited recognize immediately that they, too, have experienced such emotions or have the capacity thereto. Thus their own natures become involved with the nature of the poet. They feel at one with

him and share his most intimate experiences. And this is both a stimulating and a wholesome process. For that which they have buried under deep restraints now reaches the light of day. They are no longer ashamed of these experiences, now that the poet publicly proclaims them. Is that not so, Li Po?"

△

The poet Li Po, flattered at being so drawn into consultation, answered, "Yes, Master, I can now see that this is so. But I had never thought of this before. I had never analyzed the poet's art as you have done. But here, as in all other subjects, you have shown us the very essence of things. And now, don't you think you can persuade Lin Chu to read us his poems?"

The Master turned toward Lin Chu, his hands laid palm up on his knees in receptive attitude, and said: "We are waiting, Lin Chu. Please do not be so bashful. Take the manuscript from your bosom and read it to us."

Lin Chu started up in surprise. "But how did you know I had the manuscript in my bosom, Master?"

"For one reason, because I realize that a poet loves to keep near him the recent creations of his imagination, just as a mother loves to have her infant near her."

"And for another reason," suggested Sin Li, "because you are somewhat clairvoyant, Master."

The Master frowned, as if a little annoyed at this suggestion, to which he made no answer. "Well, we are ready," he said to Lin Chu. "Please proceed."

The poet withdrew from his robe a scroll which he opened.

"In these verses," he said, "I attempt to describe the love of an officer of the imperial army for his young wife, who ardently reciprocates his love. These verses I am about to read picture the early stages of this love. I hope to continue the theme if Destiny favors me."

Then, after a short pause, as if envisioning his theme, he recited the following verses:

#### AUTUMN AND SPRING

*There was an autumn in my sober heart,  
Until you kindled it to a new fire.  
And now a miracle of life occurs—  
There is Spring—soft and fragrant with desire.*

#### LOVE'S LIGHT

*When love began to dawn, love's golden light  
Illumed our world with a transcendent spell.  
We looked into each other's eyes and smiled—  
What we saw shining there, no words can tell!*

#### THE LOVERS' WORLD

*There is a special world where lovers dwell,  
A world to which their happiness they bring;  
A magic place where harshness is debarred  
And the air is perfumed by eternal spring.*

#### KISSES

*When our lips met and held in tenderness,  
There was a magic passed from soul to soul.  
From separate parts of life, we seemed  
That moment to grow nothing less than whole.*

#### A GAME

*Let us make up a game, and play at empire.  
You are my queen, and I your lord of lords;  
Let us imagine that we rule in glory;—  
Then trade it all for joy one kiss affords.*

#### THEME FOR A POET

*The ocean of your love cannot be plumbed,  
Its depths beyond a poet's reckoning.*

*Then in what coinage can I pay you back?  
Only my own poor love, and poet's song.*

## A QUARREL

*We quarreled. I spoke harshly. Why, I know not---  
Then it grieved my heart that you were grieved.  
Love bridged again the way to love. We smiled.  
Against my bosom your warm bosom heaved.*

## MY GUIDE

*You led me to the garden-court of love,  
A faery kingdom ruled by faery lore.  
I did not know I could so loose earth-moorings,  
And dreaming, drift to such a languorous shore!*

## MYSTIC UNION

*There is no "me" and "thee." There is no flesh  
To separate us. What seemed twain is one,—  
One love that flows in bright transcendent flood,  
No more corporeal than rays from the sun.*

## SWEETNESS

*Sweet are the flowers of spring, their beauty rare,  
Their heady perfume makes my senses swoon.  
But you are rarer than any blossom pale  
Whispering in the breeze, dancing to the moon.*

## SPELLBOUND

*You stand in silvery grace beneath the sheen  
Of a spring moon, like white crysanthemum.  
I fear to embrace you, lest I break the spell;  
Transfixed with love I stand, all senses numb.*

## IS LOVE A UNIVERSE?

*Is love a universe, the world shut out?  
Or love a universe itself? No doubt*

*It is, for in its gravitation lies  
The spell of stars, the majesty of skies!*

The poet, ending his recital with this final and transcendent praise of love, sat as if entranced by the emotions and visions he had evoked. The audience sat entranced also, which is the greatest praise an audience can give a poet.

Finally the Master broke the silence. "Well done, Lin Chu. You have with the utmost delicacy expressed the cosmic quality of love—that subtle balance which regulates the spheres themselves. Yin and Yang, the feminine and the masculine elements of existence; the force that activates the dance of life; the invisible rhythm which insures the harmony and vitality of all creation,—yes, you have rendered all this quite aptly, in your poet's language. A sage could hardly express us well, in the language of philosophers, that which you express in the language of the heart. Such are the uses of poetry, which, as you know, I highly esteem.

"Go on, my dear Lin Chu, and add to these verses. Carry your starry lovers through the voyage of life. Make of your poem a pageant of love and life in all its phases."

"I will!" exclaimed the poet, excitedly. Then calming himself, he added bashfully, "That is, if Destiny so favors me."

"Destiny favors those who greatly endeavor," the Master answered. "Strive greatly, conceive greatly, aspire greatly, and dare greatly. May your soul and all its workings prosper!"

△

As the disciples started to depart the Master beckoned the poet to him. "Stay awhile, Lin Chu. I have something to say to you."

After all the others had departed the Master seated Lin Chu by his side and said: "Lin Chu, one does not write so

realistically of love without having experienced it. Such poems do not grow out of thin air."

Lin Chu hung his head and a shadow of sadness overcast his countenance.

"You are deeply in love. But there is some obstacle to your love?"

"How did you know that?" asked the surprised poet.

"Because I know that when emotions are the most dammed up, they produce the most power. But tell me of your love and its exigencies. Perhaps I can help you, or can aid you in finding help from the Tao."

"My humble affairs are not worthy of your august attention," modestly replied the poet.

"Do not say that. All that concerns humanity concerns me—and especially the affairs of my disciples. So speak frankly and unburden your heart."

Lin Chu, thus encouraged, told his tale of a gentle yet ardent love apparently impossible of fulfillment. He had fallen desperately in love with the beautiful daughter of a wealthy merchant. She was not only beautiful, but she was gifted also. She could play the lute and compose poetry. Her devoted love was a great inspiration to Lin Chu. Under its beneficent spell he was aware of a new power of creation. But of course, marriage was impossible. The humble young poet was poor and unknown. Petal-of-Rose—for that was her poetic name—was already designated for a high official of the government, although not yet formally betrothed. Lin Chu and his beloved were able to meet secretly from time to time. But this intermittent and joyous realization of their love was precarious and liable to be terminated at any time by the marriage of Petal-of-Rose to her official suitor.

Such was the tale that Lin Chu unfolded step by step under the sympathetic gaze of the Master.

"Do not despair, Lin Chu," the Master said, as the poet brought to a conclusion his youthful romance. "There may be a way you never dream of that will lead you and Petal-of-Rose to complete happiness and wedded bliss."

The poet sadly shook his head. "I cannot believe that!" Then, abashed at so contradicting the Master, he abruptly added, "But pardon me, dear Master, for contravening your words, which so often have proved true."

"Yes, and even in your case, which looks so desperate, I trust my words of hope may again prove true.

My counsel to you is this. Be cautious. Do not run undue risks in order to secretly meet with your beloved. But meanwhile, create as you have never created before. Pour out your profuse strains of love in verse of rare poetic beauty. Complete this sequence of verses that you have in mind. The very obstacles to love, the pent-up ardors of your soul, and the knowledge of the true love that Petal-of-Rose bears for you will inspire you to noble creations. And in all this, trust in the Tao."

Lin Chu departed from the Master strangely comforted and exhilarated by his words. He followed the Master's counsel and wrote assiduously and with deep inspiration.

△

A few weeks later the Master announced to his group: "I desire to inform you that our gracious Emperor has decided to open a contest for the position of court poet—a new position which he is now for the first time creating. The winner of the contest will receive a purse of gold, a summer cottage on the slopes of the Sacred Mountain, and the august position of Court Poet. To those of you who wish to compete I would advise that you seek the aid and inspiration of the Tao. And may a fair Destiny prosper you."

In saying this he looked deeply at Lin Chu, who felt these words penetrate his soul as if they composed a message

peculiarly for him. At any rate he followed to the full the Master's sage advice. Before starting to compose again he spent three days in retirement, giving up his mind and soul to deep meditation and to prayers to a kind Heaven.

When he then started to complete his poem-sequence, he felt a new and added power. His ideas flowed clearly and vividly and his poetic words shone with a new beauty.

Finally the long poem was completed and dedicated in his heart to Petal-of-Rose, although he did not dare yet to proclaim this fact.

The time at last arrived for the Imperial Poetry Contest. A Poetry Festival was proclaimed for the whole week of April's full moon. And in the Spring Pavilion of the Emperor each evening gathered a brilliant assembly, headed by the Emperor himself, to hear the declamations of the poets. What an inspiring occasion this was:—the chanting of poetry to the sweet strains of the lute, under the pale silver glimmer of a friendly moon, in an atmosphere ambient with spring and soft as love itself!

Lin Chu was among the last of the contestants. Many who preceded him had won full favor with the audience. Many—nay, most of them—had more renown than he did. And if he had not been aware of the presence of his beloved in this Imperial audience he would have faltered in speech and done himself and his poems ill justice. But as it was he felt doubly inspired—both by the great opportunity which lay before him, and by the presence of Petal-of-Rose and the knowledge that she was lending her whole heart and soul to him in support for the unfoldment and expression of all his powers.

As he read these poems in a clear and winning voice he became newly aware of their beauty and poetic value. And this was well. For if a poet does not love his own creation and adore its values, who else can be expected to?

And fortunately the young and unknown poet—so apt in his verse as if declaiming it from some higher sphere of being—greatly won the audience, as well by the grace of his personality as by the power of his poetry.

The termination of his poetry-sequence—which happened to be the longest piece of verse yet presented to the audience—was greeted with prolonged applause. And the Emperor himself beamed so heartily and so kindly upon him, that those in the know felt that of all the competitors yet heard Lin Chu stood foremost. For while the prize was to be awarded by the weighty decision of the Imperial Cabinet, it was generally felt that whatever poet most pleased the Emperor would be adjudged the victor.

A few weeks later a public festival was held to announce the winner of the Poetry Contest and to award the prize. All of the contestants were there, together with their friends and many others.

The Emperor himself made the announcement:

"Friends," he said, "after careful deliberation we have decided that the best poetry offered—considering the subject, the beauty of the verse and the appeal to the audience—is that of Lin Chu.

"Step forward, Lin Chu, Official Poet of our Court, and receive your award."

Before all the august assemblage—amongst which Petal of Rose sat, her heart dilated with pride and joy—the Emperor awarded to Lin Chu a large purse of gold, the deed of a charming summer pavilion on the slope of the Sacred Mountain, and a scroll beautifully embossed and ideographed:

"Lin Chu is hereby appointed Court Poet, in recognition of his poetic genius and creativeness."

Great was the applause. And although many hearts were

chilled with the bitterness of failure and the envy of success on the part of one so young, these rivals decorously screened their inner thoughts and offered only the most friendly congratulations to the poet.

The Emperor also announced that this Poetry Festival would be repeated annually, for the encouragement of poets and for the cultural enjoyment of the public. The Emperor himself, it turned out, had lately taken to writing poetry. Poetry which, of course, could never be submitted to a public contest; for from such a rival, who else could win the prize?

With what joy and exaltation Lin Chu descended from the Imperial Platform! All his friends were there to greet him. Especially did he prize the presence of the Master, whose praise and congratulations were profound. To him the poet privately remarked: "Master, an idea suddenly occurs to me. How did the Emperor happen to decide—so propitiously, it seems, for my own humble fortunes—to establish this Poetry Contest? Did you not have a hand in it?"

The Master smiled. "The Tao," he said, "accomplishes all things. But it does not speak of them."

△

So ended a perfect day! Almost perfect—for there was, shall we say—one cloud which, as he departed, veiled the radiance of this memorable day. Petal-of-Rose, though one of the audience, could not be greeted by him; could not publicly share with him the ardor of his triumph; could not then or later on that day be taken into his tempestuous embrace and told again and again how much the poet's victory was due to the faithfulness and inspiring glory of her love.

So Lin Chu, in spite of all his triumph, returned home sad and forlorn. "What use are all these prizes to me?" he thought. "What value is all this praise and adulation if Petal-of-Rose be not permitted by the winds of Destiny to share it with me?"

Yet the poet finally managed to fall asleep, none what worn as he was by all this excitement. In the middle of the night he awoke from a roseate dream in which Petal-of-Rose was beside him and shared his bed. So vivid was the dream that when he awoke he turned to look again for her clear smile of love, as he had seen it in his dream. The pillow was empty, yet he felt rejoiced. "It is at least a happy omen!" he thought.

The next day a messenger came to the humble residence of the poet summoning him to the Imperial Presence.

"What can this mean!" he thought. "Is the Emperor displeased with me? Is he, perhaps, going to revoke my laureateship and take back the pavilion and the gold?"

With feelings of some alarm Lin Chu approached the Imperial Presence. But the kindly young Emperor immediately put him at his ease.

"Come here, Lin Chu," he said, smiling. "There is one more benefit we should like to confer upon you, if it accords with your desires."

"What can that be, my Liege? You have already rewarded me beyond my utmost expectations and my heart is filled with gratitude."

"Then you desire nothing else?" inquired the Emperor, looking at him searchingly.

△

The poet blushed. How could he answer this question with sincerity? Of course, there was something else which he desired—desired more ardently even than all these prizes and Court glory. But he could not properly confide to the Emperor this secret desire of his heart.

"Speak up, Lin Chu. Let your heart be bold."

This encouragement almost dissolved the invisible barriers to the poet's speech. He opened his mouth—but still he could not speak.

The Emperor smiled indulgently. "You cannot speak? Let me ask my question, then, in another way. How would you like Petal-of-Rose for your wife? Some one to share with you your little pavilion on the Sacred Mountain which the approaching warmth of summer will soon make an ideal spot as regards wholesomeness of air and breadth of view; and also, let us say, as regards that romantic love to which youth is prone, especially a youth endowed with the gift of poetry."

The sky nearly fell upon Lin Chu as he heard these words of destiny pronounced from the lips of one who had all power to make them come true. "How did you know of my secret love!" he cried.

"Oh, a little bird told me. But I am waiting for your answer."

Lin Chu fell down upon his knees. "This would be, indeed, the greatest prize you could give me, the greatest joy life could confer upon me!"

The Emperor clapped his hands. The curtains at the side of the room parted at this signal. And then to the bewildered sight of Lin Chu, Petal-of-Rose appeared conducted by two maids-of-honor. How beautiful she looked in her robe of silver, her eyes shining like stars as she approached Lin Chu!

"Ling Po, the father of your beloved, is pleased to accept as son-in-law the Court Poet, Lin Chu," pronounced the Emperor gravely. No doubt the canny merchant perceived that the young poet had suddenly become a great favorite with the Emperor, who would be certain to advance his fortunes and award him, from year to year, public posts of honor and of worthy emolument.

"Take her hands, Lin Chu. Nay, do not hesitate for decorum's sake—for I hereby pronounce your betrothal!"

Overjoyed, the two lovers approached each other and

eagerly joined hands. At this juncture the Emperor, whose maids-in-waiting had already discretely withdrawn, announced: "And now, excuse me. For I have business elsewhere to conduct. For the once, enjoy the beauty of this trysting-place. I doubt if lovers ever held a tryst in a more auspicious environment."

And with that, smiling kindly upon them, the young Emperor withdrew.

Of their intimate joys and loving life together—following indeed the pattern set forth with such fervent imagination in Lin Chu's prize poem—this present writing does not concern itself. Let us, like the Emperor, discretely leave the lovers to themselves—lost in each other's gaze, held spellbound by the radiant power of a joyous and all-consuming love!



## Water

ON AN AFTERNOON in April as the disciples were waiting for the Master to join them in his garden, one of them cast a stone into the pool that in its diminutive fashion simulated a pine-girt lake. That the pines were as diminutive as the lake did not disturb the Master's enjoyment of this classic garden scene. "Size," he used to say, "is relative. I am content with the size of my garden, of my pool, of my pines." And if the Master was content with this, who among his followers would suggest the opposite? In fact, many a soul had found relaxation and contentment in the atmosphere and vibrations of this diminutive landscape. Had the landscape been larger, it might have failed to convey such a potential atmosphere.

Just as the stone fell with a heavy splash into the unoffending pool, the Master appeared upon the scene. Saying nothing he stood and watched the ripples spread in an ever-widening ring until they reached the edges of the pool. The disciples, knowing that some philosophical observation would ensue, refrained from speech. All watched in silence the ripples until they ceased and the pool reflected one more the pure serenity of Heaven.

"I am glad you cast that stone into the pool, Lin Kwei," said the Master as the group became seated. "And don't be abashed at being caught in a boyish act"—he continued, as he saw a blush suffuse the face of the guilty party. "He who remains childlike is more open to wisdom than he who builds fences around his soul."

This observation comforted Lin Kwei, who had begun to repent of violating the staid sobriety of the Sage's peaceful little garden.

"Besides, your act has furnished us with a visible demonstration of a remarkable truth. See how sensitively the surface of the pool broke into a thousand ripples when in-

vaded by that unforeseen force. Yet behold, now, the serenity of the pool. It met the strange occurrence with sensitivity; and again with sensitivity it readjusted itself to tranquillity. Water is the most sensitive thing in Nature—it is also the most tranquil."

"Do you mean to imply," queried Lin Kwei, "that man should be similarly sensitive?"

"Yes, that is my meaning," gravely responded the Master. "The general idea is to the contrary: that man should school himself until he has become insensitive. But this is a mistake. What is the purpose of making man the most sensitive of all creatures, if the Tao intends that man should train out and abnegate this sensitivity?"

"But to be sensitive is to suffer!" exclaimed Li Po, the poet, who was a sensitive soul.

"On the contrary, not to be sensitive is to suffer!"

Li Po, and others of the group, sat up in amazement at this strange paradox.

"Will you please explain this saying, Master?" asked Li Po.

"Certainly, I will explain it if you feel you need an explanation. But if you will all cast back your memories to a few moments ago, in connection with the surface of my pool, you will yourselves perceive my meaning."

△

There were a few moments of silence. Then Shen Li, the most philosophical of the group, ventured a remark. "Do you refer, Master, to the way in which the water regained its tranquillity?"

"Exactly!" said the Master. "Because water is extremely mobile and sensitive, it can quickly recover when thrown off its balance. But bend down yonder shrub to the ground, and it will slowly if ever resume its former shape. Cast a



sharp rock with violence against that pine tree and it will leave a deep injury in the trunk. Or if cast with violence against the ground, the rock will leave a gash there. Of all these things, water, because it is most sensitive and yielding, suffers the least permanent damage from an outside occurrence. So man, through intuitive sensitivity, can always and under all circumstances fall back upon the Universal and find serenity there."

It took some time for the disciples to adjust themselves to the meaning and full implications of this cryptic analogy. Indeed, the Master could perceive by their faces that some of his pupils were still unable to digest this truth. He smiled. "Don't believe what I say just because I say it. I like to have you find doubts in the inner recesses of your minds concerning my sayings. Then I know you are really thinking.

"I do not expect you to perceive, in an instant, all the strange qualities and analogies of water, which is the most magical of all earthly forms and potencies. But since we have entered upon this theme, I will make some further observations about this fluent form of Nature, so familiar to all of us yet in a way so inexplicable.

"Water is the weakest thing in the world—therefore it is the strongest. It is the least resistant—therefore it is never vanquished. It is formless—therefore it can assume any or all forms. It has no particular desires but flows anywhere with equal consent—therefore it is universal. It never attempts to resist change—therefore it is immortal."

▲

The Sage paused for all this to sink in. The minds of his disciples were busily employed—as was his intention—first in divining the meaning of these cryptic sayings and secondly in applying them to human life. For they knew that the Sage never made a statement about Nature without intending an analogy in the art of human living.

"Master," at last inquired Lin Chu, "If you want us to apply the admirable things you say about water to our own lives, may I please make an observation?"

"Certainly you may, Lin Chu. I shall be interested to hear your observation."

"Well, in regard to water being the weakest thing in the world and therefore the strongest, I can't help thinking how this applies also to woman, who wins by apparently yielding."

"Ah, you are fast learning the ways of woman-kind," said the Master, smiling.

Lin Chu, who had been married to his sweetheart Petal-of-Rose for only a few months, blushed and remained in silence, while smiles spread over the faces of the other disciples.

"Nay, do not blush, Lin Chu. You have made a deep philosophical discovery, which if you know how to make use of, can greatly bless your married life."

"Make use of in what way, Master? Please explain," begged Lin Chu. And others joined in this request. For what man is there who would not prize a formula that could greatly bless his married life?

"The way to use your discovery, Lin Chu, is to meet gentleness with gentleness, and not with bluster. If woman is gentle, it is the Tao's purpose thereby to teach man how to become gentle. If woman is indirect, let man also by indirection learn to find his way. If woman is intuitive, man may also become intuitive. Let your mutual love and your mutual purposes, Lin Chu, be as fluid and as non-resistant as water. Then your married life will always be blest."

▲

Now another disciple, San Kwei, had an observation to make.

"You say water has no particular desires, and therefore

it is universal. But how can man exist and make a life for himself in this world if he have no particular desires?"

"Well queried, San Kwei," replied the Sage. "In the case of man, let us urge only that he have no opposing or obstructive desires."

"What do you mean? Please explain further, Master."

"Well, it is not true that water has *no* desire—for in a way its power and success comes from having one great desire."

"And what is this one great desire?"

"To fulfill its destiny." The Master paused for this to sink in. "What makes water the most universal thing in the world is its willingness—nay, its eagerness—to flow into whatever part of the earth its destiny leads it."

"I see," replied San Kwei, slowly savoring this morsel of truth. "Then you would have man do similarly—flow into whatever lines his destiny leads him? But please explain how this should be done, Master?"

"What is man's destiny? To fulfill his abilities. But what are his abilities? Does he know them all? Is he conscious of them all in his childhood? No, he is not. And were he to bluster like a caged tiger, he would never attain to the freedom of destiny. But if, like water, he flows wherever the course may lead him—hardly conscious of his progress and not even consciously, at times, seeking his way—he will, with the guidance of destiny, inevitably, as water does, arrive at the Universal Ocean which is his goal, as it is the goal of all things."

"But must he make no effort, Master?"

"Yes, he must make effort. But his efforts must always yield to circumstance and be guided by the lay of the land."

"And if he meets with obstructions?"

"He must do as water does—flow around them, or wait until his spiritual resources have augmented sufficiently to

overflow his obstacles in a rich current which destiny itself speeds on and blesses."

△

The Master arose now to end the session. "Let me leave with you these final words about water," he said.

*The Noblest men are like water,*

*For water benefits all things*

*And asks nothing in return.*

*It is not self-seeking;*

*It is humble;*

*It is content to dwell in places which all disdain.*

*No matter how it is muddied,*

*It attains to clarity again as soon as it is undisturbed.*

*It does not overwork,*

*Nor strain itself for impossible objectives.*

*Yet in due time it accomplishes everything.*

*Be ye, therefore, as fluid and limpid as water.*

*Be like water pure and transparent—*

*And like water, reflect the glories of the Heavens.*

All the disciples, standing, listened in rapt attention to this impressive summing up.

"Why, Master," cried out Li Po, enthusiastically. "That is poetry?"

The Master smiled indulgently. "I care not what you call it, so you perceive its truths. And I hope you will all put them into practice. Some other time we will continue this subject." And with that he lovingly dismissed them.



## The Tao

LING PO, the poet Lin Chu's new father-in-law, was a very practical man. His success as a tea-merchant was evidenced by his fat belly, such as only wealth could produce. He was inordinately proud of his son-in-law, now court poet and on the sure road to imperial advancement. At Lin Chu's urgent invitation he even condescended to attend a philosophical session of the Master's. Especially was he eager to do so because his son-in-law had suggested that the Master was not so impractical as philosophers are supposed to be; and that the poetry contest and victory of Lin Chu and his happy marriage could be traced to the Master's strange and occult influence.

Ling Po attended several sessions in company with his son-in-law before he ventured to make any remarks himself. Then he asked, one day, a question which no other pupil would have ventured to ask.

"Master," he said, "this Tao you speak of—this Essence of life and existence—can we ever see it? Can we feel it?"

"No, we cannot."

"How then do we know that it exists?"

"I will give you the answer to that question," answered the Master affably, "if you will frankly and honestly answer me this question. Why do you continue to frequent my humble abode?"

Ling Po was taken aback by such a query. It occasioned him some deep consideration. At last he answered, quite serious of mien: "Master, I had never asked myself this question. And until this moment I would not have known the answer. But now that you have put the question to me and caused me honestly to consider the matter, I think I know why I come."

"Why, then, do you come?" again asked the Master, smiling.

"Yes!" echoed a dozen voices. "Why do you come?" All awaited eagerly the answer of the wealthy and important merchant.

"Well, I come because I cannot stay away! I find here a calm, a peace which I have never known before."

"Thank you. And now, in answering my question, you have answered your own."

Ling Po was puzzled by this. "How is that, Master? In what way have I answered my own question regarding the Tao?"

"Can you *see* this peace, this calm you speak of?"

"Certainly not."

"Can you perceive it with any other of your senses?"

"No."

"Yet it exists?"

"Yes, assuredly it exists!"

"And so the Tao exists," gravely replied the Master. "It cannot be seen, it cannot be perceived by the senses. Yet the heart perceives it and welcomes it! Could it be seen or felt or heard, it would not be the Tao. It is the nature of phenomenal existence to be seen and felt and heard. But it is the nature of the Tao not to be seen or felt or heard, but only to be perceived by other senses."

Ling Po meditated on this for a moment while a general silence fell upon the group. Then he humbly asked, "What other senses, Master?"

"Senses which I cannot name, but which I am trying to unfold in you. If you will continue in my classes, you will eventually—by means of these inner senses—perceive the

Tao as clearly as you now perceive the sun. And you will know how to bathe yourself in its Essence, as easily as you now bask in the welcome and invigorating glow of the sun's rays.

"The Tao is an eternal abstraction, beyond the reach of words or definitions. But he who is possessed of it knows its power and beauty. It is the supreme secret of existence."

"Yes," gravely adjured Han Shih, the Master's oldest disciple. "Yes, we assure you that this is so!"

Ling Po looked earnestly at the noble countenance of the Master; then swept his gaze around the group—convincing himself that there was here some inner secret of happiness which he was now privileged to share.

"I thank you, dear Master—from the bottom of my heart. I will assuredly continue to come. For I perceive here new values such as, in all my merchant's life of bargaining, I have never perceived before. And to think that you offer me, without money and without price, this thing of so great value!"

"Yes, the greatest things in existence are gained without money and without price," said the Master, smiling at the amiable merchant, of whom he had become quite fond. "But not without grave effort!" he added, seriously.

"I will make this effort—under your guidance, Master."

"Then I am happy. This pledge is the greatest reward you could give me for my brief preachment on the Tao." And smiling on all he arose, thus ending the session.



## The Merchant's Dilemma

LING PO arrived late at the meeting. He was panting and perspiring.

"What is the matter?" asked the Master, perceiving that the merchant was out-of-sorts.

"Business has gone badly," he said. "Everything went wrong today. But a merchant's life is a hard one, anyway," he added—with a sigh. "It is a life full of trouble. Trouble with my clerks, trouble with my clients, trouble with my goods!"

The Master had to laugh at this. In fact, his disciples had never seen him laugh so heartily.

Ling Po flushed. He was on the point of getting a little angry when the Master put out his hand to calm the situation.

"Pardon me, Ling Po, but I find your declaration very incongruous."

"What do you mean?" asked Ling Po, his voice betraying still a slight irritation.

"Tell me truly, Ling Po. Would you like to give up your vocation for some other?"

The merchant needed no time for reflection in order to answer this question. "Oh no!" he replied. "I would not wish to change!"

"Just as I thought," replied the Master. "In reality, you love your work."

"Why, yes—I suppose I do—I had never thought of that before,"—stammered the merchant.

"You wouldn't exchange it for the world! Well then, how would you like me to teach you how to conduct it without having any sense of trouble whatsoever?"

"How can that be?" asked Ling Po, in amazement. "Are you a magician?"

"No, only a humble Sage, seeking to follow the Tao and to show others how to follow it. Not I, but the Tao, can demonstrate for you the path of tranquillity even in the affairs of the mart."

At this Ling Po dropped his bustling pompous mien and eagerly beseeched in all humbleness, "Pray do so teach me, Master, if that be possible!"

"Let us reflect on the Tao. See how tranquilly Nature works. It never strives to do anything, yet it accomplishes everything in due place and time."

"Yes, I grant that Nature is usually tranquil. But I am not the Tao. I am a man, with a man's desires and ways of doing things. I have to exert myself. I have to strain daily, or my business would not prosper. How can I apply the Tao—the way of Nature—to myself and my business?"

"Your question is a sound one, Ling Po, and shows your intelligence." Ling Po beamed at this praise from the Master and settled back in a very receptive mood for the Master's further advices.

"Yes, your question is a sound one and goes to the very root of my philosophy," continued the Master. "How indeed can we apply our knowledge of the Tao to our daily lives?"

"Well, it is the way of the Tao not to act from personal motives. To conduct affairs without feeling the trouble of them. To account the great as small and the small as great. And to recompense injury with kindness."

The Master paused, waiting for the expression of intellectual resistance which he expected to follow these extraordinary assertions. And sure enough the merchant—knitting his brows and reflecting deeply—at last broke the pause.

"You say the Tao does not act from any personal motive.

That may be true—and for that we may well reverence the Tao. But how can man act without personal motives? How can I do business that way?"

"Do you conduct your business in order to make money?"

"Of course!" replied the merchant. The Master could not refrain from smiling at his vehemence.

"Yes, of course you do. And there is nothing wrong in that. It is legitimate to acquire means and to spend them for our own welfare and that of our family. But there is another matter of great importance. In selling your goods, do you also desire to benefit your customer?"

This question was a hard one for Ling Po to answer. After some reflection, he stammeringly replied: "Well, I cannot say that I have ever been conscious of such a motive."

"If you act in all business affairs with the welfare of the opposite party to the deal also in mind, you will find the best road to serenity in the midst of your business day and also the best guarantee of a tranquil and secure prosperity."

Ling Po reflected deeply on this statement, making full use of that pause which was an integral part of the Master's technique. Then he said humbly, "Would you please elucidate this matter further, Master? It is quite a new thought to me."

"Yes, you are right. This matter does need more elucidation. I will show you how to apply this principle in detail to your daily business. You must realize, as a merchant, that a business transaction is not a one-way street. There are two parties to be satisfied: you, and your client. Is that not so?"

"Yes, Master, certainly."

"If your customer is not satisfied, will he come to you again?"

"Probably not."

"But if you show your customer, by your actions as well as by your words, that you sincerely wish to serve him; if you always deal with him in an intelligent and honest and kindly manner—will he ever wish to leave you?"

"No, Master, I am sure he would not."

"You would be able, then, to attach such a customer to you throughout the years?"

"Yes, Master."

"And he would probably send his friends to your shop?"

"No doubt."

"Would you ever have to strain, to threaten, to quarrel in order to keep his trade?"

"No, certainly not!"

"Well, then, do you now perceive how the way of the Tao can enable you to do business serenely and without undue strain?"

"Yes—I think I do," replied the merchant slowly.

"This way of the Tao is called Mutuality—or the fair and kindly exchange of mutual advantages. When each member of a transaction profits by it, will either want to change?"

"No, Master."

"No, they will certainly not. Therefore, we see that mutuality is the surest foundation for peace and security and stability in any dealings, either between men or between nations. Any situation which guarantees a mutual advantage will tend to remain stable, will it not?"

"Yes, such a situation will assuredly remain stable."

"And any situation in which the advantage is one-sided will tend to be unstable and full of strain?"

"Yes, Master."

"Well, let us now apply this universal principle of mutuality

to your clerks. If you treat them in an honest and kindly manner, showing true concern for their welfare as well as for your own, will they ever want to leave you?"

"Not unless they can get higher wages elsewhere."

The Master smiled. "Yes, of course. You are very logical, Ling Po. I like to deal with such a mind. But even if such a clerk did leave you in order to advance himself, if you have his welfare sincerely at heart will you not rejoice with him at his new prosperity? And will not the situation between you two still remain tranquil?"

"Well, Master, I confess, I begin now to see how the way of the Tao can be an influence in my daily work."

"And you had never thought of this before?"

"No. But in all these years of business I have been partly practicing what you preach, but in an unconscious way. Now I see clearly how the complete and wholehearted practice of these principles would be of great value to my business."

"Yes, and also to your heart," added the Master, gravely. "It will bring you serenity and happiness."

"Yes, I believe it will. I really believe it! And I shall proceed immediately to put it into practice."

"Then have I fulfilled my promise, of showing you how to conduct your business without trouble or strain?"

"Yes, you have, Master, and I am truly grateful!"

△

The Master arose to end the interview. "Come to me at any time and bring your problems. With the aid of the Tao, we can surely find a way out."

"You have bestowed upon me a great boon, Master—you have given me now a firm faith in the Tao. I shall proceed to deepen that faith by daily action."

"Please do so," said the Master in smiling farewell.

Ling Po, who had attended this session as a merchant, retired from it a philosopher of a minor sort. And he applied this philosophy of the Tao so sincerely and so profoundly in his business that he became one of the Kingdom's most prosperous and best loved merchants.



## On Keeping Ever Young

THE DISCIPLES became aware that during years of association with the august Sage, he showed no signs or symptoms of old age. One day they were discussing this phenomenon when the Sage appeared and joined the group.

"What were you so eagerly discussing?" he asked. "It must be something of philosophical import, since you were all so engrossed in it that you did not even notice my approach."

There was silence. No one felt privileged to question the Master on such a personal issue.

"Nay, do not hesitate to speak, my friends. Perhaps I can throw light on a problem that perplexes you."

At this encouragement the oldest disciple, Han Shih, plucked up courage to speak.

"Master," he said, "we were wondering how it is you never grow old. I have been with you for ten years, yet in all this time you have retained the same youthfulness. How is that, pray? Have you discovered some secret formula or elixer?"

△

The Sage smiled mysteriously. "Yes," he said. "I drink daily of the Elixer of Life which the Tao proffers."

The little group were thrilled at this. "But what is this Elixer? May we ask?" they inquired modestly.

"Certainly, you may ask. And I should like to tell you. I am glad this subject has come up for discussion."

"Well, please tell us, then, of this magic brew. Is it something we, too, can use?"

"Yes," replied the Master. "It is something everyone can use."

The little group were strangely stirred by this statement.

They hung with baited breath upon the Master's elucidation of the secret of perpetual youth.

As was customary with the great teacher, he allowed a slight pause to intervene before he spoke—knowing that words of golden wisdom deserve a frame of silver silence.

The disciples sat with folded hands, waiting in patient silence for the promised discourse.

"I have perhaps misled you into thinking there is something mysterious about my formula. There is not. It is all very simple—an open secret, so to speak. What I do to maintain youthfulness is to drink deeply of Nature."

The Master smiled benignly upon his little band of pupils.

"Continue, please," cried out San Kwei. "Tell us what you mean by that. How can one drink deeply of Nature? Please teach us, Master!"

"We should not only take enjoyment in Nature, as indeed you all do, I am sure—bask in its beauty, tranquillize ourselves in its tranquillity—but we should be cognizant of what Nature is and what Nature expresses. When we are in complete harmony and oneness with Nature, we feel the Life Force of the Universe flowing around us, permeating our very being, enriching our own natures and revitalizing us."

△

Shin Li gently interrupted at this point. "Master, would you please elucidate how we can become one with Nature, as you say?"

"I am glad you ask this, Shin Li," said the Master, smiling benignly upon his favorite disciple, "for it is an important step in the process. To become one with Nature we must forget ourselves, empty the mind of all corroding thoughts and cares, sit in tranquillity, and let the Universal Mind impinge upon us. The Universal Tao will fill an empty cup—but it will turn away from a cup that is full of dregs.

"When we realize the Universal in this way, it becomes one with us. Our minds are refreshed. Our bodies cannot help but be refreshed also.

"That is what I mean by drinking deeply of Nature."

The Master ceased speaking and a deep silence fell upon the group. The Master's words had inspired them with a new appreciation of Nature. They looked around at the trees the leaves of which were stirring in the gentle breeze, animated as it were by this Life Force of Nature. They looked at the distant majestic mountains. They saw overhead the white billowy clouds sailing through space like ships laden with blessings.

"Yes," said the Master, at length. "Drink deeply. This is the Tao. This is the way to perpetual juvenescence. Why deprive oneself of such a Cosmic blessing?"





## A Military Poet

THE BARBARIANS on the outskirts of the Kingdom had been restless of late; and some of the military had been dispatched to these distant marches to help protect these boundaries and also to report on any unusual activity on the part of these roving nomads.

This was a duty far from agreeable to those so chosen. Exile from their loved ones and from the comforts of home, the loneliness and constant danger at these outposts, and the greater severity of climate and bareness of the landscape—all of these things made such military duty distasteful; and especially to sensitive souls such as Wu Chang, officer of the guard.

To him the exile seemed long and almost unendurable. When at last the end of his assignment approached and he was able to entertain thoughts of home, of love satisfied, of those daily joys of home which, simple as they are, serve to furnish life with glints of true gold—all these emotions together with those engendered by the gladness of reunion with a young and much adored wife—Wu Chang had poured forth from time to time in simple yet heartfelt verse. For it must not be thought that soldiers are as insensitive as the machinery of warfare by which, upon the call of duty, they must deal out death to foes.

Wu Chang upon his return to the capital by chance became acquainted with our friend Lin Chu, the young poet who had won the favor of the Emperor. Wu Chang, in moments of leisure, was fond of hearing his friend chant to the soft strains of the lute his poetic rhapsodies. One day, at the close of such a poetic exercise, Wu Chang as if beside himself seized the lute and began to chant some of his own poems. His friend listened with pleasure and amazement. In all these months of friendship Lin Chu had no idea that

this severe-looking military person was at heart a poet. How true that the Muse may strike fire in the most unusual places!

A

Wu Chang, at the invitation of his friend, began to attend some of the Master's discourses. He was overwhelmed with embarrassment one day when Lin Chu, upon the occasion of a lull in the discussions of the Master, spoke up as follows:

"Master, you have been so kind to me as a poet and so appreciative of my humble verses that I beg to make you acquainted with the fact that our new friend, Wu Chang, in spite of his military career is a poet of high merit."

Wu Chang blushed and felt as if he wished the ground would swallow him up. For unlike most poets he was very bashful about his poetic creations and had never revealed them hitherto—except on that one occasion when a momentary impulse had impelled him to declaim some of his verses to Lin Chu.

"Well," said the Master—"we are happy to add another poet to our group. As I have told you before, I consider poetry as the highest expression of the human soul. Will you not be so kind as to chant for us some of your poems, Wu Chang?"

"Pardon me, Master, but this I could never bring myself to do," exclaimed the officer, with that decisive manner which the military affect. "Lin Chu should never have mentioned my poetry here," he added, looking severely at his friend who blushed and remained silent.

But the Master came to Lin Chu's assistance. "No, do not blame your young friend, Wu Chang. It is but natural that if he loves your poetry he should wish to have it more publicly presented. For poems that never see the light of day might as well never be born. As it is the function of flowers to delight the eye with their beauty and the nostrils with their fragrance, so it is the function of poetry to delight

the ear with its melodic and harmonious expressions. And I will warrant that because of the very disparity between your vocation and your inner longings, your poems are unusually ardent, Wu Chang."

Wu Chang did not reply to this insinuation. And the Master, perceiving that now was not the time to pry this militarist into poetic declamation, smilingly added, "But we will not urge you further, Wu Chang. Perhaps upon some other occasion you will be willing to pleasure our ears with the euphonics of your creative and poetic lines." And with this, the Master turned the discussion to another subject.

But the Master did not despair of hearing Wu Chang's verses. He had hinted that upon some other occasion Wu Chang's poetic force might flow more freely. And this matter was not left to chance. For a few weeks later Wu Chang found himself invited, together with Lin Chu, to an intimate gathering at the Emperor's Pavilion of Spring. This was a beloved retreat of the Emperor's, especially used in moonlit nights of spring such as this was.

Here—surrounded with the silver radiance of moonlight, in the midst of a balmy and fragrant atmosphere such as only April with its warmth of blossoms can impart—a group of young poets and musicians now found themselves gathered together. And among them, as the guest of honor, sat the Master himself.

Verse after verse was sung to the tinkling tones of the lute as the evening flowed by. Wine joined with song and moonlight to make the joyousness complete. Finally the Emperor himself took up his own precious jewel-studded lute and chanted some verses which he had composed. The verses, though not of the best, were distinctly good and deserved the praise that followed.

Now sitting back, the Emperor turned to Wu Chang and

said, "My friend, I am told that you have written some excellent poetry regarding a love that illumined months of exile and made joyous the return of the hero. Pray sing us these verses!" and with that the Emperor handed his own lute to Wu Chang.

How could the warrior-poet refuse this request on the part of his Liege Lord? Especially after the Emperor had deigned to recite some of his own poetic compositions. Furthermore, all eyes were turned expectantly toward Wu Chang and a dozen voices urged him on: "Yes, it is your turn now, Wu Chang."

Well, after all, this is not a hardship, thought Wu Chang. I have been through many worse ordeals. And so, fortifying himself with another sip of the heady wine, Wu Chang strummed a few delicate notes on the Emperor's lute and recited the following verses composing a poetic narrative:

#### THE DEPARTURE

*The horses neigh. The warriors are leaving—  
Wives, mothers, children weeping at the reins;  
The wailing of the crowd drowns martial music.  
Our destiny, to march and hide our pains.*

#### THAT LAST NIGHT!

*Do you recall that too-sweet farewell night?  
For the last time we sat as man and wife,  
Sharing our wine. We were brave, we did not weep.  
But for us, in tears, the candles shed their life.*

#### MILITARY SERVICE

*I sit, I stand, I watch for enemies—  
This is a tedious life! But even worse,  
There is a vacancy that naught can fill,  
A pang for memory faintly to rehearse.*

## LONELINESS

*You in the homeland, visiting with friends;  
I guarding the Jade Pass, lonely and worn.  
Could I by magic be a moment with you,  
It might help mend my heart with grief so torn.*

△

## NEW YEAR'S DAY

*Tomorrow is "New Year's," and I apart  
From you some thousand leagues! You, while I rove,  
Burn incense at Fo's altar. Thanks! But also, dear,  
Burn in your heart, for me, the incense of your love!*

△

## DREAMS?

*Dear, if I fall amidst the fleeing Huns  
Giving my life in vows to crush the foe,  
My yearning soul would rise from crumbling bones  
And on dream-wings, where you lie sleeping, go.*

△

## TILL MEMORY SWOONS

*Memory is crepuscular. It loves  
To dwell on sunset peaks, and lonely moons  
That glow and set. So memory, for me,  
Dwells on your glowing love, till memory swoons.*

△

## WHY SO MUTE!

*Harp of my heart, your strings are strangely mute.  
You used to play sweet melancholy themes,  
But now you stand inept against the wall.  
Where is that poignant music, and those dreams!*

△

## DESOLATE

*I lean on Love, and limp my way to bed.  
I lie awake and make up words that rhyme.  
I try to fancy you beside me here,  
But find no warmth to pass so cold a time.*

## WHAT IS THIS LOVE

*What is this love, that fain would banish sleep?  
I lie awake all night and dream of thee;  
And when the dawn breaks in the rosy east,  
My heart is sad because it lacks love's feel!*

△

## SWEET ILLUSION

*I went to sleep sad and depressed. I dreamed—  
O glorious illusion! You lay  
Beside me, filled my soul with joy;  
We dwelt in Paradise till break of day!*

△

## WITHOUT THEE!

*I watch the geese fly south; and desolate,  
The autumn leaves fall one by one. I see  
No joy in nature, no sunshine in the sky.  
There are no autumn beauties without thee.*

△

## LONELINESS IN SPRING

*Do you remember how we watched the snow  
Give place to blossoms of the peach and pear,  
And saw the breath of spring rejoice the willows?  
The thought of these is more than I can bear!*

△

## BEREFT

*Soon the frail leaves will bud upon the trees,  
Spring symphony of pastel shades; again  
The pulse of Nature's heart will be renewed.  
But you will sing, alone, love's old refrain.*

△

## I HEAR YOU CALL

*At last a struggling Spring warms the bleak North.  
The pear is white with blossoms; which, as they fall,  
A fragrant breeze wafts southward and towards thee.  
Even in the thrushes' song I seem to hear you call.*

## PEACHBLOSSOM

*Peachblossom petals fall within the pool;  
This means that spring is on its verdant way.  
But what to me is beauty of the spring  
With you not here to share each precious day!*

△

## SPRING GOES AMISS

*Your eyes on me, your hand in mine—I dream,  
In border-loneliness, of such a bliss.  
In the third moon we used to sit beneath  
Plum blossoms. Now my Spring goes all amiss.*

△

## REMEMBRANCE

*Back in Ch'ang An perhaps a crescent moon is showing  
Its delicate beauty athwart the western sky;  
And mulberries are ripening beneath their leaves,  
Nature is happy, all responds to joy, save you and I.*

△

## THE SPRING MOON

*I'm free from duty for the nonce. I sit  
Beneath the fragrant rays of the fourth moon,  
And play my lute and sing, and dream of thee.  
Ah, dearest, pray that my return be soon!*

△

## HOME AGAIN

*The appointed Twelfth Month happily arrived,  
The long journey ended, and my service done.  
Spring were more fitting for our rejoined love,  
But what are seasons if far hearts be one?*

△

## BODY OR SPIRIT

*Again we lie together as of yore,  
Wrapped in the fragrant sentiency of flesh.  
Such delights the body from the soul inherits;  
For body still the spirit must enmesh.*

## AT LAST!

*In this reunion there's a bliss supremel  
Our spirits seem to mingle into one,  
And bestow upon our love a radiation,  
A glory and a softness, like the sun.*

△

## ISLES OF THE BLEST

*Love must be greater than this world, must last  
Beyond. Is there some Island of the Blest  
To which true lovers go—those who have known  
Fidelity and joy, on every plane expressed?*

△

## O HAPPY MOON!

*How rare the scenel The full moon rides the sky,  
Gleaming through green spray of yon pine;  
The breeze and stream make music in the air.  
With you beside me, what a joy is mine!*

△

## THE HOMING HOUR

*What to me are a hundred matters of state?  
I leave them all, each paper and dusty tome;  
And in the dewey coolness of the dusk,  
Rejoice as I wend my way to you and home.*

△

## MOTION

*To live is love. For without love, life stays  
A stagnant pool unstirred within its depth.  
The springs of life are fed from lofty skies;  
And the air of heaven is our very breath.*

△

## ILLIMITABLENESS

*You implore the Starry Lovers to keep firm,  
Sincere, and everlasting this bright love of ours—  
Destiny's fair gift. Then I need only pray  
That my love match the illimitableness of yours.*

## LOVE'S PRAYER

*Lord Fo, exalt our love and lift it up  
To ever greater heights of joy and faith!  
May its warmth the fogs of life dispel,  
Its magic power vitalize each breath.*

Long as was the recital of this poetry sequence, it seemed but a moment to the audience that lent ears to it. Wu Chang had a rich baritone voice and his declamation of his verses was as beautiful as the verses themselves. The Emperor and all the others were enraptured.

"What a discovery!" exclaimed the Emperor, as Wu Chang chanted his last verse and gently set down his lute, as reluctant now to cease from his poetic flow as he had at first been reluctant to commence it. He could not help but feel the high success of his recital. Inwardly there had been the dawning consciousness of a new power, and outwardly the rapt attention of the little audience which had hung breathless upon every word.

"Yes, we have made a great discovery!" repeated the Emperor. "It is like a new star rising and glowing over the horizon!"

It was fortunate that Wu Chang was at heart a modest man, or he might have become too elated at the high praise which the Emperor continued to pour forth, a praise in which the others joined.

"We shall have no more poetry tonight," said the Emperor, finally rising. "We shall let Wu Chang be the climax of the evening. But we shall promise ourselves many future evenings of such pleasure."

And as Wu Chang was making his ceremonial farewell the Emperor added a remark which brought an amazed and amazing joy to the soldier-poet.

"Wu Chang," he said, placing a hand upon his shoulder, "the Imperial Court desires to show its gratitude to you. And

this shall be your reward—that you will never again be dispatched for duty to the lonely marches. We pledge our imperial word never again to separate you from your beloved, whom you have so immortalized in your poetry."

Wu Chang could hardly believe his ears, nor could he contain himself for joy. Restraining his exuberance and making his acknowledgment of unbounded gratitude to the Emperor, he managed to make his departure with all due propriety.

All the way home Wu Chang's heart was almost bursting with joy. And when he at last arrived in the presence of his beloved, he broke through the usual bounds of mature decorum and with the eagerness of a little boy told her all that had occurred. It was a glorious moment for them both.

"And the Master," said his wife finally, when all the events of the evening had been joyously narrated. "Did you thank him, too?"

"For what?" asked Wu Chang, a little surprised.

"Why, my slow-witted husband, who do you suppose engineered all this? How did it happen that the Emperor gave such a party, that you were there as a guest, and that you were invited to declaim your poems?"

A light suddenly dawned upon Wu Chang. Now he saw it all. "Yes, you are right!" he exclaimed. "Now I recall with what significance the Master looked at me a month ago—when I was too bashful to recite my poetry—and said, 'Well, perhaps on some other occasion you will be willing to do so.'"

"You see? And this was the occasion which he undoubtedly had in mind and which he has now brought to pass. We owe all our new-found felicity to him."

"What a man! This Master!" exclaimed Wu Chang. "I am held in bonds of eternal gratitude to him."

"Yes, we both are!" echoed his beloved. And as with these words she pressed her lips to his, we may assume that herewith the conversation ended.



## Meditation

ON ONE OCCASION Shin Li, favorite disciple of the Master, had a rare boon. He came upon the Master by chance as he was meditating under a peach tree in the blossom time of Spring. Other trees besides the peach were in blossom, white petals melting into pink; and here and there that tree of brilliant crimson blossoms later to be called in Christian lands the Judas tree. Only the willows had leaved out, and their gentle drooping foliage harmonized softly with the delicate bloom of the fruit trees.

Shin Li, perceiving his Master to be in deep meditation, was about to withdraw when the Master suddenly turned his eyes toward him and beckoned to him.

"Come here, Shin Li, and sit down. I became aware you were here. This is a good opportunity for me to communicate to your understanding heart some of the secrets of my relationship with the Tao which I have never yet seen fit to discuss with my followers as a group. I have not long to live . . ."

At these last words Shin Li held up his hands in deprecation. "Master, that last statement I cannot believe! Your countenance is ruddy, your health perfect. Surely the Tao will spare you for many more years in order that you may impart to us your wisdom!"

The Master, turning a smile of loving indulgence toward his favorite disciple, remarked quietly: "Nevertheless, it is true that I feel my earthly end approaching. As for imparting more wisdom to you all, life is too short to impart all the wisdom of the Tao. Nor could humanity at present receive it. Moreover there are many truths which mere words as yet fail to impart.

"Yes. I must, in the plan of Destiny, soon leave you. But you will go on, I hope, acquiring truth—which the Tao can

impart to you as to me if you will open your mind and heart to Its behest and gentle urgings.

"That is why I am glad you are here with me now. I wish to leave with you, if possible, the understanding of Tao and the close relationship with the Tao which can come to one only by means of meditation in the midst of Nature's glowing life and beauty.

"Look around you. Drink in the beauty of Nature. Feel the life-force throbbing in every tree and shrub, in the songs of the birds, in the glint of sunshine on the grass.

"It is the Tao which is this life-force. The Tao is the Essence of all things—the background of existence from which all life-forms have sprung.

"But the Tao is more even than this life-force. The Tao is a Purpose. And this Purpose is Perfection. When we are endeavoring to act rightly, when we are striving after perfection, we are fulfilling the Purpose of the Tao for us. If we let the Tao envelope us, flow through us, it will aid us in our striving for Perfection. For the Tao wants us to be perfect. And in striving to be perfect we are therefore fulfilling the will of Heaven. And in all this, the Tao is our guide and sustainer."

The Master ceased speaking for the moment. Nor did Shin Li break the silence. Both sat in rapt thought of the Tao. The humming of bees, the soft fragrance of the spring, the caressing warmth of the sun seemed to hold more power over the mind and heart of each than any words could do.

The Master was the first to break the silence. "It is well, my son. You have, I see, learned the first lesson of communion with the Tao. Such communion begins in silence and ends in silence. What thoughts fill your mind in this studied silence will be the flowing-to-you of the Tao. I had rather your mind and soul would be filled with these fragrant,

these vitalizing and creative ideas, than that they should be filled with my mere words.

"I have now accomplished what I desired to do. I have shown you how to commune with the Tao. And you must keep on practising this communion until you are prepared to teach it to your fellow disciples. And realize this, Shin Li, that you cannot through mere words teach them this Cosmic art. You must be able to communicate to them somehow the deep experiences of your soul. And there are times when silence does this better than speech."

"Thank you, dear Master. I have just learned the truth of what you say—that silence can teach even better than words. And I shall try to put into practise what you have taught me."

The Master arose and Shin Li hastened also to his feet. The Master, taking his disciple in his arms, embraced him tenderly. Then he said:

"It is well. I am prepared to go. The Tao will still be among you. Its Universal Spirit will instruct you all, provided you empty yourselves of those trivialities and useless conventions which fill to the brim the minds of most men. Be as a little child. Look, listen, learn. And above all, love!"



## The Departure of The Master

ONE AFTERNOON late in autumn the little group assembled as usual. The Master was not occupying his accustomed seat in the garden, nor did he appear from his cottage even after all the guests had assembled. And this was strange, because it was his custom to be on hand to give a kindly greeting to each guest.

There arose some discussion about the situation, tinged with a bit of apprehension. "Perhaps the Master is ill!" said Ling Po. "Why not delegate someone to go to his pavilion and find out?"

Shin Li, disciple of long standing and a favorite of the Master's, was thus delegated. He went to the entrance of the pavilion and knocked upon the door. Receiving no answer he went inside. Soon he appeared again and returned to the group with puzzled and anxious expression. "The Master is not there!" he exclaimed.

A hush fell upon the group. What could this mean? A babble of voices began to arise. And in the discussion that followed Shin Li suddenly recalled that recent statement of the Master (which Shin Li at the time had refused to believe), "I have not long to live."

Shin Li had mentioned to no one, hitherto, this foreboding on the part of the Master. But now the time had come when he must report it to the group.

"A few days ago I happened to be alone with the Master," he said. "In the talk that arose between us he remarked that he had not long to live. I could not give credence to his statement, for at that moment he looked as young and hearty as ever. But is it possible that this culmination of a great and glorious career has at last taken place?"

"But if the Master is deceased, where is his august body?" queried Li Po.

"Why not make inquiry in the neighborhood?" suggested the ever-practical Ling Po.

This idea seemed reasonable. Two of the disciples were delegated to proceed in opposite directions in the neighborhood to make inquiries about the Master. The other disciples remained plunged in gloom, too anxious to even talk.

A

The first disciple returned after an absence of half an hour to report that he had found no clue. The second returned a few moments later with news both valuable and disconcerting.

"The Master," he reported, "was seen early this morning, at about sunrise, to be making his way staff in hand along the route leading to the summit of the Sacred Mountain."

"That's fine!" said Ling Po. "It is a simple matter. The Master, this fine day, became seized with inclination to make a holiday excursion on the Sacred Mountain which he loves so well. He will probably return by dusk."

"No," said Shin Li, who knew the Master's ways. "It is not like the Master to neglect his class. There is something of deeper import than this in his actions."

"Well, what is it then?" asked Ling Po, a little impatiently. "We must not make a mountain out of a mole-hill."

"This is no mole-hill!" said Shin Li, seriously.

"Well, what can we do about it?"

Shin Li thought a moment. "We can do nothing about it just now," he at last replied. "It is getting dark and we had best each return home. But let us gather together here on the morrow. And if the Master is still absent we had better search the mountain path for him."

This plan was approved by the group, who then separated for the night. Early the next morning all were present in the Master's garden, but the Master was neither there nor in his pavilion. Nor had he been seen by any neighbor.



The whole group then started up the mountain side. No one would remain behind when the Master might be in danger—fallen over some rough ledge, lost and wandering, or perhaps a prey to some wild animal.

But though they searched the mountainside clear up to its august summit—seldom visited by aught but clouds or mist—they could find no trace of the Master, either then or afterwhile. He had gone out of their lives as mysteriously as he had come in, leaving no trace save in their hearts.

“This little group must not become separated,” exclaimed the merchant Ling Po, when it finally was apparent that they would not see the Master again. “Let us meet here regularly. And let us choose some one of the group to be our leader.”

This plan appealed to all, and Shin Li was the one selected to continue in the footsteps of the Master—a task which he worthily performed. For with due humility—knowing his incapacity to actually fill the place of the Master—he hit upon the scheme of opening these philosophical subjects to a general discussion. And these symposiums were so well conducted by him that they were continued throughout his life-time; and, as some say, for generations later.

And the Emperor—who was not to be outdone by the loyalty and generosity of Ling Po the merchant-prince—himself erected later, around and inclosing the humble pavilion of the Master, a magnificent pavilion of regal beauty to enshrine his memory. And this the Emperor named: “The Pavilion of Wisdom.”

And whether or not the Master had attained immortality by being translated from this earth—as some of his followers came to believe—it is certain that he attained an immortal influence over the hearts of his followers and of their descendants. And his teachings continued to exert for many centuries a benign influence over the whole Kingdom.