A GALLERY OF CHINESE IMMORTALS

WISDOM OF THE EAST SERIES

THE WISDOM OF THE EAST SERIES

EDITED BY J.L. CRANMER-BYNG, M.C.

CHINESE IMMORTALS

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A Gallery of Chinese Immortals

Selected Biographies
Translated from Chinese Sources by
LIONEL GILES, M.A., D.Litt.

Lu Tung-pin, one of the Eight Immortals

Several centuries before the Christian era Chinese mountain hermits, called *hsien*, are said to have succeeded, by means of dieting, bodily exercises, regulation of the breath, and mental cultivation, in prolonging life far beyond the ordinary span. Later on, Taoist adepts devoted themselves to the task of compounding an elixir of immortality, incidentally achieving a mastery over the forces of nature that enabled them to perform all sorts of miraculous feats. A book containing short accounts of prominent figures among the earlier *hsien* appeared towards the end of the former Han dynasty and this was followed by longer biographical notices of numerous other "immortals." It is from these sources that this volume has been selected and translated.—JOHN MURRAY

EDITORIAL NOTE

THE object of the editor of this series is a very definite one. He desires above all things that, in their humble way, these books shall be the ambassadors of good-will and understanding between East and West, the old world of Thought, and the new of Action. He is confident that a deeper knowledge of the great ideals and lofty philosophy of Oriental thought may help to a revival of that true spirit of Charity which neither despises nor fears the nations of another creed and colour.

L. CRANMER-BYNG.

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INTRODUCTION

READERS of *Gulliver's Travels* may remember that on his way to Japan the hero of that work came to the Kingdom of Luggnagg, where he first heard of the existence of certain remarkable individuals called struldbrugs. They formed but a small part of the population, and were distinguished at birth by a red circular spot on the forehead which was an infallible sign that they would never die. Struck with wonder and delight, Gulliver began to dilate on the happiness which he felt sure must be the lot of such fortunate creatures, delivered by the continual apprehension of death. But he was soon disillusioned on discovering that the struldbrug's immortality was not accompanied by that perpetuity of youth, health, and vigour which alone could make life tolerable. Indeed, when he was brought into the presence of a few struldbrugs, his reaction was one of extreme disgust at the ghastliness of their appearance. Still, he was naturally interested in such an unexampled phenomenon, and hoped to learn more on the subject from the accounts given by Japanese authors. However, the shortness of his stay in Japan and his ignorance of the language prevented him from pursuing his inquiries.

That was a great pity; for the Japanese, having been in touch with the civilisation of China for many centuries, could really have told him things about the "immortals" of that country which would have reawakened all his enthusiasm. These immortals were indeed vastly superior to the struldbrugs in that they could remain for ever exempt from both physical and mental decay. By the Chinese they were called *hsien*, a word which in its written form is a character composed of two pictographic elements, "man" and "mountain"; thus it appears that the name was originally applied to men who had retired from the world in order to live a hermit's life in the mountains. Their activities were mostly confined to the gathering of certain herbs and roots which, when eaten, would not only cure disease but also rejuvenate the body and lengthen life far beyond its normal span. Chief among such plants was the *ling-chih* or "magic fungus", believed to contain vitalizing elements of marvellous efficacy. We are told that an aged man once dug up something like a human hand, very plump and pink. He boiled and then ate it,

whereupon his teeth and hair sprouted anew; his strength returned, and his complexion became like that of a youth. A Taoist who met him said: "The thing you ate was a fleshy *chih*. Your longevity will equal that of the tortoise and crane." We also hear much about cassia or Chinese cinnamon; *shu*, a species of Atractylis with a root resembling ginger; pine resin, which according to the standard Chinese pharmacopoeia "renders the body light and prevents the onset of old age"; and peaches, the fruit of immortality, which grew in the garden of Hsi Wang Mu, the Western Queen Mother, who dwelt in the K'un-lun mountains.

The eccentric behaviour of the typical hsien, and the seclusion in which he lived, led to the weaving of many legends round him. He was often credited with all kinds of supernatural powers besides the indefinite prolongation of life: thus, he might be able to evoke rain, wind, thunder and lightning, have spirits at his beck and call, pass unharmed through solid matter or fire, effect a transformation of his bodily shape, move with incredible speed, or even appear in several places at once. It is not surprising, therefore, that the hsien cult is soon found in close association with the amorphous system of Taoism, which seems to have existed in some form before the time of Confucius, and was always ready to assimilate any new movement dealing with what was strange or miraculous. No precise date, however, as to the origin of the cult can be extracted from the Taoist writings of the Chou dynasty. Lao Tzu in the *Tao Te Ching* speaks of the man possessed of Tao as enduring forever: "By maintaining the unity of body and soul, can you not escape dissolution?" And in another mystic passage: "He who has grasped the secret of life will be safe from the attack of buffalo or tiger… And why? Because he has no spot where death can enter." Such sayings, vague though they are, may have opened the way to a belief in the possibility of attaining actual immortality. Chuang Tzu goes a little further when he describes "a spiritual being dwelling on a mountain, whose flesh was smooth as ice and skin as white as snow; he was gentle and submissive as a young girl, ate none of the five cereals but inhaled the wind and drank the dew; soaring above the clouds, he drove a team of flying dragons and roamed beyond the limits of this world." And elsewhere he more than hints at a regimen of the soul and body which will keep death at bay.

Lieh Tzu, who revels in the marvellous, tells of a man who was seen passing through solid rock and floating in the midst of flames, but who when

questioned was unable to give any explanation of these feats. Lieh Tzu himself brought his mental passivity to such a pitch that he became wholly unconscious of what his body was resting on, and was borne this way and that by the wind. But the passage which most closely foreshadows the later conception of hsien occurs in his description of the five Islands of the Blest:

The towers and belvederes built upon their heights were all made of gold and jade, the birds and beasts living there were all spotlessly white. Trees of pearl and coral bore thick masses of flowers; their fruit was delicious to the taste, and those who are thereof knew neither old age nor death. The inhabitants all belonged to the race of demi-gods and immortals, and in countless numbers they would fly across to meet one another within the space of a single day or night.

Here we have the earliest known occurrence of the character for *hsien*, though the "immortals" thus designated are more like what we should call fairies than human beings who have won immortality through their own endeavours.

It is true that in a less exalted mood Lieh Tzu also writes as follows: "That which has life must by the law of its being come to an end; and the end can no more be avoided than the living creature can help being alive. So that he who hopes to perpetuate his life and to shut out death is deceived as to his destiny." But enthusiasts were content to ignore any such warning as this. To them it seemed only natural that Tao, the ultimate principle of the universe, being itself everlasting, should be able to impart the same blessing to its creatures; that is to say, if the whole human personality could be brought into complete harmony with Tao, it might be expected to share in its immortality. Thus, the great question came to be, how to achieve this harmony, or as the common phrase went, how to "attain Tao". Generally speaking, a twofold process was considered necessary: (1) cultivation of the mind, with Tao as the model: quietude, passivity, gentleness, self-effacement were the main characteristics to be aimed at; (2) a gradual refinement of the bodily substance by means of physical exercises, dieting, regulation of the breath, and the taking of appropriate drugs.

All these methods were practised, more or less, by aspirants to hsienship, but as time went on, more and more importance was attached to the swallowing of a special drug, or elixir, which could make one immortal on

the spot, without further trouble. The secret of its preparation has not been revealed to us in full, but we do know that cinnabar, or red sulphide of mercury, was an essential ingredient. Long before the theory of the transmutation of metals led to the beginnings of alchemy in China, instances are recorded of cinnabar having been used as food by hsien of the primitive type: one Ch'ih Fu, for example, is said to have succeeded in becoming completely rejuvenated after dosing himself with a mixture of refined cinnabar and some kind of stone which had been fused in a crucible. Other minerals generally used in compounding the elixir were realgar, copper carbonate, sulphur, mice, sal ammoniac, nitre, and ochre. But cinnabar heads the list as the most important of all, and the reason is not far to seek, for from it is obtained by sublimation the unique metal mercury or quicksilver (i.e. *living* silver), which is so volatile that it seems to be actually endowed with life. The making of pure gold, either for its own sake or as the basis of a life-prolonging potion known as gold-juice, was also a prime object with Chinese alchemists, and this too was produced in some mysterious way by means of cinnabar. The process is mentioned but not described by Li Shao Chun (see Chapter IV.), the first alchemist about whom we have reliable information.

Once the quest for immortality had got well under way, the number of officially recognized hsien increased rapidly. It was felt that any eminent Taoist ought to be included in their ranks, and consequently the list of immortals was swelled by the addition of numerous magicians, philosophers, statesmen, physicians, and so forth, to say nothing of various legendary figures of the past such as the Yellow Emperor and Hsi Wang Mu. Some difficulty must have arisen at first in the case of historical personages whose claim to immortality was rendered dubious by the fact that their deaths had been publicly recorded; but this could be met by the circulation of a report that their coffins had been opened and found empty, except perhaps for a sword or a slipper or some other article of clothing.

At least one great Taoist teacher appears to have been canonized in spite of himself. This was Ch'iu Ch'ang-ch'un, who in his old age was summoned to the court of Jenghiz Khan. When questioned about the secret of longevity, he replied that the essentials were a pure heart and few desires, whereupon Jenghiz exclaimed: "God has sent this venerable hsien to awaken my conscience!" But, strictly speaking, he was no hsien at all, for he openly

declared that there was no such thing as a drug of immortality, and his death was followed by no startling resuscitation. Yet he was duly enrolled in the list of immortals. Even a high moral standard was not always regarded as essential for a hsien. As an example we may take the wealthy Fan Li, who helped the King of Yueh to overcome the once powerful State of Wu in 473 B.C. Renowned for the his cunning and aptitude for intrigue, he may fitly be termed the Machiavelli of his day. After a diplomatic triumph in Yueh he migrate to Ch'i, where he amassed great riches. But again he refused to tempt fortune too long, and finally settled down in Lan-ling, where he became a millionaire for the third time. According to the Taoist version of his career, he then took to selling drugs, attained hsienship, and was seen and recognized by successive generations of mortals.

Taoism was largely a reaction against the sober outlook and strict moral discipline of the Confucianist system, which may account for the general tendency of hsien to treat life rather as a huge joke than as a serious problem. The life-story of the famous poet Li Po, dubbed "the banished hsien", reflects this carefree, bohemian mentality. Much of his time appears to have been spent in roaming over the country and in frequent carousals with a number of choice spirits whose thoughts were centred less on the elixir than on wine. One of these coteries was known as the Six Idlers of the Bamboo Brook, another as the Eight Immortals of the Wine-cup. Different accounts are given of Li Po's end. The Old T'ang History says bluntly that his last illness was brought on by excessive drinking, but the popular tradition is that he was drowned one night from a boat while making a drunken effort to embrace the reflection of the moon. Even this is rejected by the Taoist fraternity in favour of the more acceptable legend that he was borne up into the sky on the back of a whale.

As the number of hsien multiplied, it was found convenient to divide them into classes according to their habitat, as follows: (1) celestial hsien: those who ascend ot their abode in heaven; (2) terrestrial hsien, who either from insufficient merit, personal inclination, or, as some say, by taking half a dose only of the elixir, remain on earth for an indefinite period without growing any older; (3) aquatic hsien, or hsien of the watery element—purely *yin* or feminine, without any admixture of *yang* or the masculine principle; (4) divine or spiritual hsien, demi-gods who dwell on the Isles of the Blest or in the Paradise of Hsi Wang Mu. Another classification omits the third group

and introduces two others: the human hsien, ascetics who have been able to subdue all earthly passions and lusts of the flesh, but have not yet attained immortality; and the demonic hsien, bodiless phantoms who lead a spectral existence, flitting restlessly hither and thither. But neither of these groups can be regarded as hsien in the usual acceptation of the term, and the distinction between celestial and terrestrial hsien is the only one of real significance.

The Chinese have taken their immortals very seriously, and a literature of almost incredible bulk has grown up around them. A considerable portion of the huge Taoist Canon consists of works dealing with their lives, teachings, and multifarious activities. And in the great encyclopaedia *T'u Shu Chi Ch'eng* we find biographies of well over a thousand hsien, drawn from various sources and arranged in order of date. Of separate collections, the earliest is the *Lieh Hsien Chuan*, which contains tersely worded notices of 72 persons of every rank and station, ranging from purely mythical beings to hermits, heroes, and men and women of the common people. Its reputed author is the statesman and Taoist scholar Liu Hsiang, who lived from 77 to 6 B.C. For several reasons, this attribution will not pass muster, but there is some internal evidence to show that part of the book at least must have been written during Liu Hsiang's lifetime. Another work of a similar kind, but rather more expansive and stylish in composition, is the *Shen Hsien Chuan*, by the famous writer and adept Ko Hung, more about whom will be found in Chapter VII.. Lastly, we may mention a very popular compilation, also entitled *Lieh Hsien Chuan*, made by the Taoist monk Huan-ch'u of the Yuan dynasty, a thousand years after Ko Hung. This contains 55 biographies with illustrative woodcuts. In a few cases an account of the same hsien is given in more than one of these books, and Lao Tzu appears in all three.

Several other sources have been laid under contribution in the following pages, including some of the official dynastic histories; these are more sober as a rule in their treatment of facts, yet they do not refrain from reporting many a fantastic tale of magic. It has been thought best to make the arrangement of this selection as far as possible chronological, though dates are often uncertain. It will be remembered, of course, that the very nature of a hsien exempts him from the ordinary limitations of time.

NOTE ON PRONUNCIATION*

THE Wade system of orthography has been adopted for all Chinese names. Broadly speaking, consonants are to be pronounced as in English, and vowels as in Italian. The chief exception is the letter “j”, which stands for something between the soft French “j” and an “r”. The initial hs is a sort of compromise between h and sh, so that the word hsi, for instance, is neither quite “he” nor “she”. In ssŭ and tzŭ the vowel is hardly sounded at all. Ê is pronounced more or less as in “her”, ou as in “soul”, ih like the i in “shirt”, and ü in the same way as the French u. The aspirate as seen for instance in T‘ao, represents an expulsion of breath between the consonant and the vowel.

(*** orthography not used in this digital edition**)

NOTES

Notes by the translator are given in bold print and inserted, after the Chinese fashion, in the body of the text.

ABBREVIATIONS

C.H.F.C. = *Chin hua fu chih* : Topography of Chin-hua Prefecture.
C.S. = *Chin shu* : Chin dynastic history.
C.T.S. = *Chiu t'ang shu* : Old T'ang dynastic history.
F.S.T. = *Feng su t'ung* : Popular traditions (2nd cent. A.D.).
H.H.C. = *Hsu hsien chuan* : Supplementary biographies of hsien (T'ang Dynasty)
H.H.S. = *Hou han shu* : Later Han dynastic history.
H.W.T.N.C. = *Han wu ti nei chuan* : Legend of the Han Emperor Wu (3rd cent. A.D. ?).
K.S.C. = *Kao shih chuan* : Biographies of Scholars (Chin dynasty).
K.T.S.C. = *Kuan ti sheng chi* : Historic vestiges of Kuan Ti, God of War.
L.H.C. = *Lieh hsien chuan* : Biographies of hsien (3rd cent. A.D. ?)
L.H.C. (H.C.) = *Lieh hsien chuan (by Huan-ch'u)* : Biographies of hsien (Yuan dynasty).
L.H.C.C. = *Lieh hsien ch'uan chuan*: Detailed biographies of hsien.
L.T.S.H.C. = *Li tai shen hsien chuan* : Biographies of hsien through the ages.
N.H.H.C. = *Ning hai hsien chih* : Topography of Ning-hai District.
P.P.T. = *Pao p'o tzu* : Taoist practices. By Ko Hung (4th cent. A.D.)
P.W.C. = *Po wu chich* : Record of strange events.
S.C. = *Shih chi* : Historical Record. By Ssu-ma Ch'ien (1st cent. B.C.)
S.H.C. = *Shen hsien chuan* : Biographies of hsien. By Ko Hung (4th cent. A.D.).
S.H.F.C. = *Shao hsing fu chih* : Topography of Shao-hsing Prefecture.
S.H.T.K. = *Shih hua tsung kuei* : Literary Miscellany.
S.K.C. = *San kuo chih* : Dynastic history of the Three Kingdoms.
S.K.C.Y.I. = *San kuo chih yen i* : Historical novel of the Three Kingdoms.
S.S.C. = *Sou shen chi* : Book of marvels (4th cent. A.D.).
T.M.C. = *T'ung ming chi* : Events of the reign of the Han Emperor Wu.
T.P.K.C. = *Tai p'ing kuang chi* : Fabulous tales (10th cent. A.D.).

T.S.C.C. = *T'u shu chi ch'eng* : General Encyclopaedia (A.D. 1726).
T.Y.C.J.C. = *T'ang yeh chen jen chuan* : Life of Yeh Fa-shan.
Y.C.C.C. = *Yun chi ch'i ch'ien* : Taoist extracts (11th cent. A.D.).

I. REMOTE ANTIQUITY

HUANG AN

HUANG AN was a native of Tai Chun and became an official messenger at that place. He said to himself: "My condition in life is too mean for me to live in the society of others." When studying, he held a whip for self-castigation and carried a thorn in his bosom to keep him from drowsiness …. He was in the habit of eating cinnabar, and his body was red all over. In winter he wore no furs. He used to sit on a spirit tortoise, two feet broad, and to those who asked him how many years he had sat there he answered: "Long ago Fu Hsi caught this animal when he first invented fishing-nets, and gave it to me. I have sat on its back so long that the shell has become quite flat. The tortoise fears the light of sun and moon, and puts out its head only once in two thousand years. This I have seen it do five times already since I have been sitting here." When Huang An wandered about, he carried the tortoise on his back. Men of that time called him "An of the Myriad Years".

T.M.C.

MA SHIH HUANG

Ma Shih Huang was a horse doctor in the time of the Yellow Emperor. He knew the vital symptoms in a horse's constitution, and on receiving his treatment the animal would immediately get well. Once a dragon flew down and approached him with drooping ears and open jaws. Huang said to himself: "This dragon is ill and knows that I can effect a cure." Thereupon he performed acupuncture on its mouth just below the upper lip, and gave it a decoction of sweet herbs to swallow, which caused it to recover. Afterwards, whenever the dragon was ailing, it issued from its watery lair

and presented itself for treatment. One morning the dragon took Huang on its back and bore him away.

L.H.C.

PO SHIH SHENG

Po Shih Sheng was a pupil of the Venerable Chung Huang. In the days of P'eng Tsu [a Chinese Methuselah] he was already more than two thousand years old. He had no longing to ascend on high, but aspired to nothing more than a long life on earth. Gold-juice he regarded as the best of all drugs, but as his family was poor he could not obtain it. So he kept pigs and sheep, and after ten years or so had amassed a fortune of ten thousand pieces of silver, which enabled him to buy the drug and swallow it.

It was his habit to boil white stones and use them as food. This led him to make his abode on the White Stone Mountain, and thus he acquired the name of Po Shih Sheng (Master White Stone). Sometimes he would eat dried meat, and sometimes too he would abstain from all cereal food.

He was able to walk as far as three or four hundred *li* (about 130 miles) in one day. His appearance was that of a man of thirty. When somebody asked him why he did not wish to fly up to heaven, he replied: "I'm not at all sure I should enjoy myself as much in heaven as I do in this world."

L.H.C. (H.C.)

WU KUANG

Wu Kuang lived in the time of the Hsia dynasty. His ears were seven inches long.

Long pendant ears were regarded as the mark of a Sage.

He was fond of playing on the lute, and fed on garlic roots. When T'ang ofYin was about to smite Chieh,

A tyrant who was the last ruler of Hsia.

he approached Wu Kuang for counsel, but the latter said: “It is no affair of mine.” T’ang asked from whom he should seek advice.—“I do not know.”—“What about I Yin?”—“He who employs force must endure mortification. I do not know that it can be otherwise with him.”

When T’ang had overcome Chieh, he offered to hand over the administration of the Empire to Wu Kuang, saying: “The wise proffer counsel to it, warriors rally to it, good men abide in it. That is the way of the ancients. Why do you, Sir, not rally to it? I wish to make you my chief minister.” But Wu Kuang refused, saying: “To abandon one’s sovereign is not righteous; to kill other men is not humane. That others should encounter the difficulties and I enjoy the benefits is not just. I have heard that one should not touch the emoluments of unrighteousness, nor occupy an official post in a wicked generation. How can I, then, accept any honour for myself? I cannot bear to witness such things any longer.” Thereupon, taking a stone on his back, he threw himself into the Liao river, and disappeared for over four hundred years. In the reign of Wu Ting he appeared again, and Wu Ting wanted to make him his minister. He declined, and when Wu Ting went to seek him in his chariot and attempted forcible measures, he fled into the Fou-liang mountains, and afterwards wandered away over the Shang-fu range.

L.H.C.

II. CHOU DYNASTY (1122-249 B.C.)

LU SHANG

LU SHANG was a native of Chi Chou. He was born possessing the intuition of a sage and the capacity of foreseeing life and death. From the disorderly conditions prevailing under the rule of Chou Hsin

The last ruler of the Shang (or Yin) dynasty founded by T'ang.

he fled to Liao-tung, where he remained in seclusion for forty years. Then he wandered westward to the realm of Chou, and found in the Nan Shan

The same as the Ch'in-ling range in Shensi.

another retreat. There in a stream called P'an he angled with rod and line for three years without catching a fish; and the people of those parts all told him that he had better stop fishing. But Lu Shang replied: "This is something quite beyond your comprehension." And at last he did succeed in catching a large carp, with a military seal in its belly.

He seems to have been waiting for the authorization of Heaven before he could advise the ruler of Chou to embark on the grave enterprise of rebellion against the House of Yin.

Meanwhile, King Wen of Chou dreamt that he had found an inspired sage; and hearing of Lu Shang, he came in his chariot and took him back to the capital. When at last King Wu smote Chou Hsin, Lu Shang wrote a book entitled *Secret Counsel* in over a hundred sections. He used to eat marsh fungi and earth-marrow.

Rehmannia glutinosa, **Libosch. Its root was said to heal broken bones and tendons, to prolong life, "to quiet the soul and confirm the spirit".**

After the lapse of two hundred years he announced that he was about to depart this life. And so it came to pass, but there was trouble in the land, and his coffin remained unburied. Later on, when his son Chi came to fulfil the funeral rites, no corpse was found in the coffin, which was empty but for a jade seal and six bamboo tablets of manuscript.

L.H.C.

YU TZU

Yu Tzu [Jade philosopher] was fond of studying the classics as a youth, and King Yu of the Chou dynasty gave him an official post. He did not take it up, however, but exclaimed with a sigh: "We who are born into this world let the days of our life slip away one by one, death looming ever nearer as the day of our birth recedes further into the past. Yet all we crave for is wealth and honour, and we have no idea how to nourish the stream of life itself. As soon as our allotted span is exhausted and our breath fails, we die. Then, when we are merely dust and ashes, how shall we benefit by the rank of prince or marquis, or by stores of gold and jade piled mountain-high? Only by translation as a hsien can one hope to avoid dissolution." Accordingly, he became the disciple of Ch'ang Sang Tzu, who initiated him into all his arts.

There follows a recital of weird magical feats, of which only the last need be recorded here.

He would place a bowl of water between his two elbows and blow upon it, whereupon a brilliant red light would shoot up from the water to a height of ten feet. This water he used for medical purposes, giving it to the patient to drink if the disease was internal, or washing him with it if it was external. In every case the cure was instantaneous.

In the end, he climbed to the summit of Mount K'ung-t'ung [in Honan] and rose up to heaven in broad daylight.

S.H.C.

TU TZU

Tu Tzu ["Master Calf"] was a native of Yeh. As a young man, he used to gather fir-cones and *fu-ling*

Tubers of Pachyma cocos, a fungus growth upon the roots of fir-trees.

on the Black Mountain to diet himself with. For several hundred years he alternated between robust youth and old age, good looks and ugliness, so that he came to be recognized as a hsien. His usual round took him past the establishment of the vintner Yang Tu, whose daughter sold wine in the marketplace. Her eyebrows met in the middle, and her ears were long and delicate. These marks were considered extraordinary, and everybody declared that she was a celestial being.

Now Tu Tzu, while he was leading a yellow calf along the road, happened to meet Yang Tu's daughter, and was so delighted with the girl that he arranged to keep her as his handmaid. She, therefore, went out in Tu Tzu's company to gather peaches and plums. They would spend one night away and then return with a number of sacks full of fruit. People in the town tried to follow and keep a watch on them, but although they went out of the gate together, still leading the calf, no runner was able to overtake them, and there was nothing for it but to return.

The couple continued to frequent the market-place for thirty years or more, and then they departed. They have been seen at the foot of Mt. P'an selling their peaches and plums in winter.

L.H.C.

CH'ANG JUNG

Ch'ang Jung was a Taoist of Ch'ang-shan,

I.e. Heng-shan, the Northern Sacred Mountain in Hopei. The synonymous word ch'ang is here used instead of heng, which was the personal name of the Han emperor Wen Ti and therefore taboo.

who called himself Yin Wang Tzu. His food was the root of the wild bramble, and he spent his life roaming about the country. Though seen at intervals during more than two hundred years, his complexion remained that

of a man of about twenty. From certain plants he was able to extract purple which he used to sell to dyers. Any money that he got he would give to widows and orphans. Thus he lived for generation after generation, and the shrines put up in his honour were ten thousand in number.

L.H.C.

CH'I LUNG MING

Ch'i Lung Ming

This name, literally "Ride-dragon-cry", is obviously only a sobriquet based on the exploit narrated in the text. In Chinese folklore the dragon exercises power over the watery clement.

was a native of Hun-t'ing. At the age of twenty, when searching in a pool, he found a young dragon, in shape resembling a house-lizard, with more than ten heads. He gave it food and kept it in a hut thatched with straw. Soon after the dragon was fully grown it disappeared. Some fifty years later the hut was washed away by a flood, and its owner left the locality. One day he returned to Hun-t'ing riding on the dragon, and shouted to the inhabitants below: "I am the grandson of Feng Po-ch'ang.

Apparently a god of rain.

If the people in this place do not remove to a distance of five hundred li, they will perish." Those who put faith in the warning all went away, while the others regarded it merely as a piece of devilry. But in the eighth moon a flood actually did occur, in which thousands of persons lost their lives.

L.H.C.

HSIA CH'IU CHUNG

Hsia Ch'iu Chung was a native of Ning [in South Manchuria], where for over a hundred years he was a seller of drugs, the people merely regarding him as an instance of ordinary longevity.

Not knowing that he was a hsien.

His hut was shattered by an earthquake, and dozens of dwelling-houses in the same village were destroyed in the flood that followed. Chung himself perished; whereupon some people came and threw his dead body into the river,

In order to propitiate the river-god, because they looked upon him as a sort of Jonah.

afterwards proceeding to appropriate his drugs and offer them for sale. But ere long they found themselves confronted by Chung in person, who was wearing a fur robe. The culprits who had stolen his drugs and disposed of his body were terrified, and prostrating themselves at his feet begged for mercy. Chung, however, said: "I am only vexed that you have caused people to know me for what I am. I must depart." Subsequently he served as an express messenger under the barbarian King of Fu-yu,

A kingdom in the north of Korea.

in which capacity he revisited Ning. Throughout the northern regions he was known as the banished hsien.

L.H.C.

LAO TZU

Lao Tzu was a native of Ch'en.

One of the smaller feudal States in Central China. The standard history *Shih Chi* makes him a native of Ch'u, further South.

His surname was Li (Plum), his personal name Êrh (Ear), and his "style" Po-yang. His mother gave birth to him while leaning against a plum tree. He was able to speak as soon as he was born, and pointing to the plum tree said: "I take my surname from this tree." Though born in the Yin period, he became Palace Secretary under the Chou dynasty. He made a practice of nourishing his vital essence, his great aim being to absorb strength without dissipating

any. In due course he was made Custodian of the Archives, a post which he held for more than eighty years—the Shih Chi says, for over two hundred years. His contemporaries called him the Noble Recluse, and his posthumous title was Tan (Flat-eared). When Confucius came to Chou and visited Lao Tzu, he recognized him as an inspired sage and took him as his Master.

Later on, when the virtue of Chou had fallen into decay, he mounted a chariot drawn by a black ox and departed for the land of Ta Ch'in.

Vaguely identified as the Eastern Roman Empire.

When he passed through the Western Barrier, the Warden of the Pass, Yin Hsi, received him with honour, knowing that he was a saintly man, and persuaded him to write a treatise, which was no other than the *Tao Te Ching* in two parts, one roll to each.

L.H.C.

Ssu-ma Ch'ien, doubtless adopting a Taoist tradition, enlarges upon Lao Tzu's interview with Confucius as follows:

Confucius paid a visit to the Chou State in order to question Lao Tzu on matters of ceremonial. The latter replied, saying: "Those about whom you speak are men whose bones have all turned to dust, and whose words alone survive. Now, when the princely man finds his opportunity, he rides in a State chariot; if he fails to find his opportunity, he goes on foot in humble guise. I have heard it said that a clever merchant, though possessed of great hoards of wealth, will act as though his coffers were empty; and that the princely man, though of perfect moral excellence, maintains the air of a simpleton. Abandon your arrogant ways and countless desires, your suave demeanour and unbridled ambition, for they do not promote your welfare. That is all I have to say to you."

Confucius went away, and said to his disciples: "I understand how birds can fly, how fishes can swim, and how four-footed beasts can run. Those that run can be snared, those that swim may be caught with hook and line, those that fly may be shot with arrows. But when it comes to the dragon, I am unable to conceive how he can soar into the sky riding upon the wind and clouds. To-day I have seen Lao Tzu, and can only liken him to a dragon."

S.C.

Buddhism was introduced into China towards the beginning of the Christian era, and brought with it the doctrine of re-incarnation, which those eager imitators, the Taoists, at once proceeded to annex and apply to their own holy men. Thus, Lao Tzu is said to have been reborn many times, once even as the historical Buddha. Ko Hung gives a long list of other re-incarnations of Lao Tzu which had won popular acceptance, ending with the crafty diplomatist Fan Li! He himself is doubtful about the names actually cited, but sums up in these words:

I for my own part think it only natural that, if Lao was a spiritual being of celestial origin, he should have appeared in some form in each successive generation, exchanging his honourable rank for a humble condition, sacrificing his ease and freedom in order to subject himself to toil, turning his back on the pure serenity of paradise in order to come into contact with the defilement of the world, giving up his celestial office and accepting inferior rank amongst men.

S.H.C.

And now for a miracle recounted 1,500 years after the event.

During the reign of Wen Ti [I79-I57 B.C.] of the Han dynasty Lao Tzu went by the name of Kuang Ch'eng Tzu. The Emperor sent an envoy to question him, but the Sage replied: "Tao is worthy of veneration, and the virtue it manifests is highly to be prized. It is not meet that these things should be inquired about from a distance." The Emperor then ordered his carriage, went to visit him, and said: "Within the universe there are four great powers, of which the sovereign is one;

The others being Tao, Heaven, and Earth. See Tao Te Ching, 25.

and even though you are a man of Tao, you are still my subject. If you are unable to bend low, how shall you be exalted? It is in my power to bestow poverty and abasement as well as riches and rank."

By way of reply, the Sage clapped his hands and, remaining in a sitting posture, slowly levitated into mid-air like a rising cloud, until he hovered motionless in celestial space, some thousand feet above the earth. There was a pause, and then he looked down and spoke: "Poised thus between heaven and earth, having my abode in neither, nor belonging to the race of mortals,

how can I be subject to your sovereignty, and how can your Majesty cause me to be rich or poor, of high or lowly station?" Understanding came to the Emperor, and descending from his carriage, he made humble obeisance. The Sage then presented him with a copy of the two holy books.

The *Tao Ching* and *Te Ching*, originally regarded as separate works.

Not a generation passes but Lao Tzu appears. Throughout the past aeons of human existence he has ceaselessly exercised powers of conversion. For ever in the boundless ages to come he will continue to exist; sometimes visible, sometimes invisible, but always mysterious to mortal men. His transformations are without end; his achievements in bringing salvation to beings both of heaven and earth are too many to be told.

L.H.C.

FU LU

Where Fu Lu originally came from is not known; but he constantly stayed at Chii [in Shantung], and wandered about among the temples along the sea-coast. In one temple he found three hsien gambling for melons. Seeing Fu Lu, they bade him bring them a few dozen yellow and white melons, and then told him to shut his eyes. When he opened them again, he found himself in the island of Fang-chang, which lies to the south of P'eng-lai.

Two of the Isles of the Blest, placed by Lieh Tzu at fabulous distances from the coast of China.

Afterwards, when he revisited Chu, he brought out a quantity of pearls and jade and other precious things which he had taken from Fang-chang, and offered them for sale. Time went on, and one day he appeared in reddish brown garments.

The usual garb of a criminal.

with shaven head and all the look of an old man. On being questioned, he said that he had been convicted of stealing objects from a temple. A few

years later, however, he resumed his youthful appearance and his hair grew long again as it was in the days gone by.

L.H.C.

MU YU

Mu Yu was a native of Ho-p'ing village, south of Chu-lu [in Hopei]. His mother was poor and of humble station, and followed the profession of a midwife. She attended on a lady at her confinement, and when the child was born it opened its eyes and, looking at its mother, burst out laughing. The mother was much alarmed, but that night the midwife dreamed that she saw a personage in a large official cap with a red kerchief, watching over the child, who said: "This boy is the Controller of human destiny. In requital for your kindly services he will cause your son Mu Yu to attain hsien-ship." The woman believed and treasured up this promise in her heart; and afterwards, when she gave birth to a son, she gave him the name of Mu Yu. When the other boy, whom she had helped to bring into the world, had reached the age of fifteen, a carriage and horses came to fetch him away in the night; and as he passed the woman's house he called out: "Mu Yu! Mu Yu! Come and drive my carriage for me." So they both went off together.

More than twenty years later, a stork would come every morning with a fish two feet long in its beak and deposit it at the woman's door. The latter said nothing about it, but used to sell the fish. This continued for thirty years, when the bird ceased to appear. Mu Yu's mother attained the age of a hundred before she died.

L.H.C.

KU CH'UN

Ku Ch'un was a native of Yo-yang [in Shensi], and held an official post in the reign of the Emperor Ch'eng Ti (32-7 B.C.)

This seems to place his birth in the Han dynasty. But see under Mao Nu (Chapter III.).

Stricken with disease, he died to all appearance, except that his body did not grow cold. His relatives carried out the funeral ceremonies and went into mourning, but they were loth to nail up the coffin. Three years later, Ku Ch'un reappeared, sitting upon the parapet of one of the town gates, and still wearing his cone-shaped official hat. Consternation prevailed among the townsfolk. His relatives came to bring him home, but he would not go with them. They opened his coffin, and found grave-clothes but no corpse. For three days and nights Ku Ch'un remained where he was. Then he transported himself to Ch'ang-an [the capital] and took up a similar position above the Heng Gate. As soon as his people heard of it, they went after him and tried to get him to return. Again he departed, and took refuge on Mt. T'ai-po. A shrine was then built for him on the mountain, to which he would come from time to time and stay for the night.

L.H.C.

SHEN HSI

Shen Hsi was a native of Wu-chun [in Kiangsu] who studied Tao in the land of Shu [Szechwan]. He achieved the power of dissipating calamity, curing disease, and bringing succour to the common people, but knew nothing of the drugs of immortality and their use. His virtue found favour in the sight of God, and was duly recorded by the spirits of heaven.

Hsi and his wife, the lady Chia, were returning on one occasion from a visit to their daughter-in-law when they encountered three chariots, one drawn by a white deer, another by a green dragon, and the third by a white tiger. There were thirty or forty mounted attendants in scarlet livery, armed with lances and swords, who filled the roadway with pomp and glitter. They inquired if he was Shen Hsi; and the latter, who knew not what to make of this astounding apparition, replied: "I am; but why do you ask?" One of the men on horseback said: "Shen Hsi has deserved well of the people. Tao is ever present to his mind, and from earliest infancy his conduct has been free from blame. But his allotted span is short, and his years are approaching their close. So Huang and Lao [the Yellow Emperor and Lao Tzu] have sent down three hsien officials in these chariots to escort him to heaven" …

Presently the three hsien came forward in their feather robes, with staves of office in their hands, and bestowed on Hsi a tablet of white jade, a green jade suit of mail, and a set of red jade characters, which he could not understand. After this ceremony he was borne off to heaven, his ascension being witnessed by a number of field-labourers in the vicinity, who did not know what to make of it. For a little while here came a thick mist, and when it cleared away the whole company had disappeared; all that remained were the oxen which had drawn Hsi's carriage and which were now grazing in the fields. Someone recognized the animals as belonging to Hsi, and informed his family. His disciples, fearing that their master had been carried off to the hills by evil spirits, searched for him in every direction for a hundred *li* around, but in vain.

Over 400 years later, Shen Hsi unexpectedly revisited his native village and sought out one of his descendants named Huai-hsi. This man said he had heard his elders speak of a certain ancestor who became a hsien and disappeared, never to return. Shen Hsi stayed with his kinsfolk for about a month, and told them of his experiences when he first went up to heaven: "Though I was unable to see God himself," he said, "I saw Lao Chun ["Prince Lao", i.e. Lao Tzu] seated on the right-hand side. The attendants instructed me not to make any formal acknowledgments, but simply to take my seat in silence. The celestial palace seemed to be composed of an insubstantial, luminous haze; shot through with an indescribable variety of colours. There were hundreds of attendants, mostly female. In the gardens grew trees bearing gems and jade, and all the different kinds of *chih* plant in great profusion. Dragons and tigers gambolled in our midst, and a tinkling sound was audible, like that of bronze ornaments hanging round a bell, the origin of which I could not discover. The walls shone with a bright glow, and were covered with magic charms.

"Lao Chun was about ten feet in height. His hair hung loose, and he wore embroidered garments. His whole person radiated light. After a while, a bevy of fairy maidens brought in a golden table with jade goblets and set it before me, saying: 'This is the divine elixir: whoso quaffs it shall be exempt from death. If you and your wife

It appears from this that the lady Chia had accompanied her husband on high.

each take a cup, endless longevity will be yours.' After the draught we were to make an obeisance but proffer no thanks; and when we had drunk, they brought us two dates as large as hens' eggs, and five-inch slices of dried meat. 'Return for a time,' they said, 'to the world of mortals, and go on curing the diseases of the people. Whenever you wish to ascend on high, write out this charm and hang it on the end of a pole, and we will come to fetch you.' So saying, they handed me a charm and a fairy prescription; and anon I fell into a drowse from which I awaked to find myself on earth. Many times have I had occasion to test the efficacy of this charm."

S.H.C.

III. CH'IN DYNASTY (246-207 B.C.)

AN CH'I SHÊNG

THE Master An Ch'i was a native of Fu-hsiang in the district of Lang-yeh. He used to sell drugs on the shore of the Eastern Sea. His contemporaries all called him Old Father Thousand Years. When the First Emperor of the Ch'in dynasty made a journey to the East, he sought an interview with An Ch'i, and lingered talking with him for three days and three nights. The Emperor bestowed on him vast quantities of gold and precious jewels; but on his departure An Ch'i left his gifts in the pavilion of Fu-hsiang,

About ten *li* outside most Chinese towns there used to stand a pavilion or shelter where travellers rested, and whither they were accompanied by their friends when setting out on long journeys.

together with a letter saying that he considered himself sufficiently rewarded with a pair of red jade slippers, and adding: "After the lapse of a few years look for me on the island of P'eng-lai." The First Emperor lost no time in sending out to sea an expedition numbering several hundreds of persons, led by Hsu Shih and Lu Sheng. They never reached P'eng-lai, because they encountered violent storms which caused them to turn back. Shrines in honour of An Ch'i have been set up in about a dozen places along the sea shore near the Fu-hsiang pavilion.

L.H.C.

MAO NU

Mao Nü ["Hairy Woman"], whose style is Yü-chiang, has been seen by hunters on Mount Hua-yin

This is Mt. Hua, the Sacred Peak of the West, not far from Ch'ang-an.

for many generations. Her body is covered with hair. She professes to be one of the ladies from Ch'in Shih Huang's palace who, during the troubles that attended the downfall of the Ch'in dynasty, became a wandering fugitive and took refuge on the mountain. There she encountered the Taoist recluse Ku Ch'un (see Chapter II.), who taught her to eat pine-needles. In consequence of this diet she became immune from cold and hunger, and her body was so etherealized that it seemed to fly along. For over 170 years the mountain grotto in which she makes her abode has resounded to the thrumming of a lute.

L.H.C.

Here we have an important clue to the date of the composition of the Lieh Hsien Chuan. The Ch'in dynasty ended in 207 B.C., so that this tale at least would seem to have been written somewhere about the year 30 B.C.

IV. FORMER HAN DYNASTY (206 B.C.-A.D. 24)

YIN SHENG

YIN SHENG was a beggar boy who lived under a bridge spanning the river Wei at Ch'ang-an. He used to take up his stand in the market-place and beg from those who did business there. On one occasion, disgusted by his importunity, they bespattered him with filth. Yet, when he appeared in his place again, his clothes were in their normal condition and showed no trace of dirt. The authorities, getting wind of the affair, had him arrested and thrown into chains; and yet he continued to beg in the market-place. Being again arrested, and threatened with the death penalty, he left the city. But the houses of all those who had bespattered him collapsed in ruins, killing some dozen people. Hence the jingle which is current in Ch'ang-an:

"If you meet a beggar boy, give him a drink,
Or your house will fall down before you can wink."

L.H.C

CHANG LIANG

Chang Liang is a famous figure in Chinese history. Not only is he known as one of the "Three Heroes" concerned in establishing the great Han dynasty. but he was also the ancestor of Chang Tao-ling (see Chapter V.), the founder of Taoism as an organized religion. The following episode relates to the period when he was being hunted down after an attempt to assassinate the First Emperor.

One day, when Chang Liang was sauntering over the bridge at Hsia-p'ei [near Soochow], an old man clad in a coarse serge garment crossed his path, and deliberately let one of his shoes fall under the bridge. Thereupon he

turned to Liang and said: “My child, run down and fetch my shoe for me.” Liang, taken aback, felt half inclined to beat him for his impudence, but forbearing on account of his age, he went down and brought up the shoe. “Put it on my foot,” said the old man. Having already fetched the shoe for him, Liang knelt down and did as he was bid. With his shoe on once more, the old man went away chuckling, while Liang stared after him in utter amazement. However, he had not gone far before he turned and came back, saying: “My child, you are teachable. Meet me here at dawn in five days’ time.” Though he thought this very strange, Liang assented, and at dawn on the fifth day he went to the rendezvous; but the old man was already there, and said angrily: “Why do you come late when you have an appointment with an old man?” And he departed, telling Liang to meet him in the early morning five days later. On the fifth day Liang was there at cock-crow, but the old man was again before him, asked angrily why he was late, and went away telling him to come very early five days later. This time, Liang went before it was midnight, and the old man arrived very soon after. “That’s as it should be,” he exclaimed, well pleased; and producing a manuscript he said: “Read this, and you may become the teacher of princes. In ten years’ time you will begin to rise, and after thirteen years, my child, you will see me: a yellow stone lying at the foot of Mount Ku-ch’eng in Chi-pei—that is I.” Then he departed, saying nothing further, and was not seen again. When daylight came, Liang examined his book and found it was T’ai Kung’s *Art of War*, which he studied constantly until he knew it by heart.

Afterwards, Chang Liang imparted its secrets to the future Han emperor, and became his trusted lieutenant.

Thirteen years later, Liang was accompanying the Emperor through Chi-pei when, at the foot of Mount Ku-ch’eng, he did actually see a yellow stone, which he took home with him and treated with extraordinary honour….

Being afflicted with many physical ailments, Chang Liang now began practising regulation of the breath and abstained from cereal food. But when the Emperor died, the Empress Lu, out of pure kindness, strongly urged him to eat, saying: “Man’s life on earth is like a white colt passing a crack: why torture oneself in this manner?” Thus the Marquis of Liu [as he had then

become] had no option but to obey: he took some food, and eight years afterwards he died.

S.C.

So far the historian Ssu-ma Ch'ien. But the Taoists as usual have the last word, and here is their sequel to Chang Liang's supposed exit from the world as an ordinary mortal:

When the Marquis of Liu died, he was buried on the Dragon's Head Plateau. During the rebellion of the Red Eyebrows [at the close of the Former Han dynasty] his tomb was broken open, but only a yellow stone pillow was found, which by a sudden transformation flew away like a shooting star. No corpse nor clothing was to be seen, but a certain *Book of Plain Words* was recovered, and also several chapters of a military treatise.

T.P.K.C.

T'AI SHAN LAO FU

The real names of T'ai Shan Lao Fu ("The old Gaffer of Mt. T'ai") are not known. When Wu Ti of the Han dynasty was on a hunting expedition in the east, he saw an old man hoeing the ground near the roadside, round whose head there was a halo of light several feet in breadth. This astonished the Emperor, and he stopped to question him. The old fellow appeared to be about fifty years of age, but his face was fresh-coloured like a boy's, and his skin was unusually smooth and clear. Asked by the Emperor what Taoist method he had employed to this end, he replied: "When I was 85 years old, my body was decaying fast and death was at hand; my hair was white and my teeth were gone. Then I met one possessed of Tao who taught me to abstain from cereal food, to eat nothing but *shu* (Atractylis root) and drink nothing but water. He also made me a magic pillow, stuffed with 32 ingredients … I practised this regimen, and lo! my age was turned to youth; black hair grew again on my head, new teeth filled the place of those that had gone; I was able to travel 300 *li* in one day. Your servant has now reached the age of 180."

The Emperor, having received this prescription for longevity bestowed upon him jade and silk. The veteran afterwards retired into the fastnesses of

Mount T'ai, only returning to his village at intervals of five or ten years. When 300 years had elapsed, he returned no more.

S.H.C.

LI SHAO CHUN

Li Shao Chun was a native of Ch'i. When the Emperor Wu was summoning magicians to Court, Shao Chun had acquired from the Master An Ch'i the art of transmuting cinnabar in the furnace, but his family was poor and he was unable to procure the necessary drugs. So he said to his disciples: "Old age is approaching, and the money I earn is insufficient to supply my wants, even though I should labour with all my strength in the fields. Now, the Son of Heaven is addicted to Tao, and I wish to go and see him. I pray you to compound the drugs for me, so that my ambition may have free scope." They did so, and Shao Chun presented the drugs to the Emperor, saying: "Cinnabar may be transmuted into pure gold, and the latter when swallowed will enable one to rise to heaven as a hsien…" The Son of Heaven treated him with honour and respect, and gave him innumerable presents.

Shao Chun once attended a banquet given by the Marquis of Wu-an. Among the company was an aged man, over ninety years old. Shao Chun inquired his name and said: "I recognize that old man because I saw him as a child going for a walk with his grandfather." Whereat those present were much astonished. On another occasion, Shao Chun was able to identify an old bronze vessel which he saw in the imperial palace: "That vessel," he said, "was kept by Duke Huan of Ch'i in his sleeping-chamber." Accordingly, the Emperor examined the characters incised thereon, and found that, as he had said, it was an ancient vessel of the Ch'i State….

Having secretly manufactured the elixir, Shao Chun said to the Emperor: "So long as your Majesty cannot make an end of pride and extravagance, and renounce the allurements of the senses; while smiting and killing go on unchecked, and the passions of joy and anger are not overcome; while in your dominions there are spirits that are not submissive, and in the market-places there are executions and bloodshed, the great secret of the celestial drug cannot be mastered … " Soon after, Shao Chun fell dangerously ill. The Emperor went to see him, and commanded an attendant to take down from his lips the secrets of his art; but he died before the task was completed. "Shao

Chun is not dead," said the Emperor; "he has only undergone a voluntary transformation." When he was put into his coffin, the corpse suddenly disappeared, although the clothes in which he was wrapped were not unfastened, and remained there like the slough of a cicada. This increased the Emperor's wonder, and he regretted that he had not been more diligent in seeking out Shao Chun.

S.H.C.

To the above a paragraph may be added from the *Shish Chi*:

Shao Chun said to the Emperor Wu: "Sacrifice to the Furnace,

That is, the alchemist's furnace or crucible.

and you will be able to summon up the spirits. Having summoned up the spirits, you may transmute cinnabar into pure gold. When you have produced pure gold, make it into eating and drinking-vessels, and you will prolong your span of life. If your span of life is prolonged, you may behold the hsien who live on the island of P'eng-lai. When you have seen them, and performed the sacrifices to Heaven and Earth, then you will become immortal. That is what happened to the Yellow Emperor. Your humble servant once voyaged across the sea and visited An Ch'i Sheng, who gave me dates to eat as large as melons. An Ch'i Sheng is a hsien who wanders at will in P'eng-Iai. When it is fitting, he makes himself visible to men; otherwise he remains invisible."

It was after this that the Son of Heaven first sacrificed to the Furnace in person, sent magicians over the sea to seek for the island of P'eng-lai, An Ch'i Sheng and the other immortals,

"These could never be found, but along the seaboard of Yen and Ch'i eccentric adepts appeared in ever-increasing numbers to discourse on things supernatural."

and occupied himself with the transmutation of cinnabar and various other substances into yellow gold.

S.C.

LIU AN

The following account has been somewhat abbreviated.

Liu An was Prince of Huai-nan under the Han dynasty. In those days the young feudal princes made a virtue of extravagance: they spent their lives in music, making love, and hunting with dogs and horses. Liu An, on the contrary, maintained a humble demeanour, paying respectful attention to the learned. Scholarship was his constant and beloved pursuit, and he also acquired proficiency in prophecy and magic.

Taoists from all parts of the country visited Liu An's abode, and among others, eight worthies whose beards and eyebrows were all hoary white. The door-keeper went first secretly and informed the Prince, who ordered him, as if on his own initiative, to put some puzzling questions to the newcomers. Accordingly he said: "Uppermost in our Prince's mind is a desire to seek the Tao that makes one live long without growing old; next, he wishes to find great scholars with a wide range of learning and intimate knowledge of abstruse subjects; and lastly, he wants lusty devil-may-care fellows whose strength is equal to the lifting of weighty tripods or attacking tigers unarmed. Now you, Sirs, are too old, and it is evident that you lack the magic means of warding off senility. How can you investigate profundities, or exercise control over things at a distance, thoroughly assimilate eternal principles, perfect your moral nature? As you are wanting in these requirements I dare not announce you to the Prince."

To this the Eight Worthies smilingly replied: "If his Highness dislikes our antiquity, we will become young." Scarcely had they spoken these words than they all turned into youths of fourteen or fifteen. Their coils of hair became black and silky, and their complexions like peach-bloom. The door-keeper, much amazed, went and told the Prince. Directly the Prince heard the news, he went, without putting on his shoes, bare-footed to welcome them, and conducted them up to the Terrace of Meditation on Hsienship, where he spread brocaded hangings over an ivory couch, kindled the Hundred Harmonies Incense, and placed before them tables of gold and jade.

The Prince paid them deference as if he were their disciple. Facing north,

Because the Eight occupied the place of honour facing South.

he made obeisance to them, saying: "I am a man of mediocre ability. Since childhood I have loved Tao and the virtue it manifests. Fettered with ordinary occupations and sunk in the depths of mundane affairs, I cannot escape from my trammels and shoulder my satchel in order to live in the mountains and forests. Yet morning and evening I hunger and thirst while meditating on the glories of spiritual life, and long to wash away my muddy sediment of mortality … Earnestly I beg you Princes of Tao to pity and instruct me. Then, though now a crawling insect, I shall borrow the wings of a heron and be enabled to soar up into the sky."

Thereupon the eight youths turned into old men again and, addressing the Prince, said: "Although our knowledge is incomplete, and we possess merely the education of children, yet hearing that the Prince loves scholars, we have come to join him; but we have still to learn the Prince's mind and what it is he desires. One of us is able without effort to call up wind and rain, instantaneously to raise clouds and mists. He can trace lines across the land and they become rivers, and by scooping up the soil he can make mountains. Another of us can cause high hills to collapse, and the sources of deep springs to dry up. He can tame tigers and panthers, summon scaly monsters and dragons to appear, and press the spirits of heaven and earth into his service. Another of us can divide his personality and transform his shape, and is also able to become visible or invisible at will. He can hide whole army corps, and turn midday into night. Another can ride the clouds and tread the empyrean, cross the sea and walk upon the waves. He can go in and out where there is no crevice, or travel in a breath one thousand li. Another can enter flames unscathed and plunge into water without a wetting. He is invulnerable by sword or shaft. He feels no cold in winter frosts, nor does he sweat in summer heat. Another is capable of a myriad transformations: bird, beast, plant or tree—as the fancy takes him, he can become each or any of these. He can move mountains and bring rivers to a halt; he can transport a palace or shift a house. Another can boil mud into gold, or freeze lead into silver. He can fuse the eight minerals of the alchemist into a liquid from which pearls fly aloft in lieu of steam. He rides in a chariot of clouds with dragons for his team, and floats above the Great Purity.

Taoists distinguish "Three Purities", each being the abode of hsien: (1) Jade Purity; (2) Upper Purity; and (3) Great Purity. The latter is 40 *li* above the earth

and. of crystalline hardness.

Thou, O Prince, hast but to choose which of these powers thou desirest."

The upshot was that the magic drug was duly prepared, but the Prince did not yet proceed to swallow it. Before ascending to heaven he met some of the hsien nobility. Having had but little practice in doing honour to others, and having seldom had occasion to perform the ceremonies of self-abasement, he showed some lack of politeness in his demeanour, talked in too loud a voice, and made a blunder in referring to himself as the Solitary One.

A title used only by the reigning emperor.

Thereupon the chief of the hsien nobles formally accused him of disrespectful behaviour, and said that he ought to be expelled from their company. The Eight Worthies, however, interceded for him, and a milder penalty was substituted: he was condemned to be Keeper of the Latrines at the capital for three years, after which he was to become a hsien of the rank and file, ineligible for any official post, and merely exempted from mortality.

It is related by men who were living at this time that when Liu An and the Eight Worthies at last took their departure from this earth, the vessel containing the dregs of the elixir was left lying in the courtyard, and that the contents were finished up by the dogs and poultry of the establishment, with the result that they too sailed up to heaven; thus, cocks were heard crowing in the sky, and the barking of dogs resounded amidst the clouds.

S.H.C.

KOU-I FU-JEN

Kou-i Fu-jen [the Lady Hook-wing] was a native of Ch'i. Her real name was Chao. As a girl she followed the Taoist doctrine of "purity".

Keeping the mind free from agitation.

As the sequel of an illness which kept her bedridden for six years, her right hand became permanently contracted and clenched. She took very little food and drink. The imperial soothsayers announced that the aura of a noble lady made its presence felt in the north-east, and advised the emperor to seek

her out. She was summoned to Court, and found to be of surpassing loveliness. Wu Ti opened her clenched hand and found in it a jade hook, after which the hand remained open. In due course she conceived and bore the future emperor Chao Ti. Later on she was put to death by Wu Ti, but when the body was encoffined it did not grow cold, and diffused a fragrant odour for the space of a whole month. Afterwards, when Chao Ti came to the throne, he arranged for a reinterment, but nothing was found in the coffin except a silk slipper.

L.H.C.

It would be hard to guess from the above account that this beautiful lady was such a cruel and heartless wretch as the cold facts of history prove her to have been.

CH'I FU

Ch'i Fu was a basket-maker of Nan-chun [in the modern Hupeh], and dwelt in the mountains. There was constantly staying at his home a certain hsien from whom he bought melons. The latter taught him how to extract the active principle from melon-seeds; he kept a store of these together with the seeds of cassia fruit and berries of angelica, and after eating them in equal proportions for twenty years and more, was able to move at a flying speed, to scale high mountains, and to live under water. More than a century later he was dwelling on the summit of Mount Chüeh. People called him the Old Man of the Valley, and he would talk to them about things that had happened in the course of his lifetime.

L.H.C.

TUNG-FANG SO

Tung-fang So was a native of Yen-tz'u in P'ing-yuan, and lived for a long time in Wu [Kiangnan] as a schoolmaster. After thirty years or so, in the reign of Wu Ti, he sent in a memorial on the needs of the State, and was given an appointment at Court. By the time of Chao Ti, he was regarded by some of his contemporaries as an inspired sage, by others as a common fellow. His

behaviour showed such a strange combination of depth and shallowness, openness and reserve, that no one knew exactly when he was speaking from his heart or when he was merely jesting. At the beginning of the reign of Hsuan Ti, in order to escape from the disorders of the age, he threw up his post, laying aside his cap of state and quitting his official residence, and drifted away whithersoever chance might take him. Later on he was seen in Kuei-chi, selling drugs in the region of the Five Lakes.

The T'ai Hu and four others, the identity of which is disputed.

The initiated had reason to suspect that he was really the Spirit of the Year-star [the planet Jupiter].

L.H.C.

Tung-fang So is commonly said to be the spirit of the planet Venus,

Elsewhere, as we have seen, he is identified with Jupiter.

and to have passed through a number of incarnations. In the reign of the Emperor Wu, men of virtue and learning were invited to Court, with the expectation of obtaining posts outside the regular system of promotion. Written applications poured in from every part of the Empire, but So presented himself in person at the Palace and made the following declaration: "At the age of twelve I lost my father, and was brought up by my elder brother's wife. At thirteen I was engaged in study, at fourteen I practised sword-play, at sixteen I could repeat the Book of Odes, and at nineteen I was versed in the art of war as taught by Sun and Wu;

The earliest military writers, whose works are still extant and available in translation.

moreover, I always observe the rule of conduct attributed to Tzu Lu.

The disciple of Confucius who "never slept over a promise."

Now I am twenty-three years old, over six feet in height, with eyes like swinging pearls and teeth like even rows of white shells. I am as brave as

Meng Fen, active as Ch'ing Chi, honest as Pao Shu, faithful as Wei Sheng. Thus I am fully qualified to be your Majesty's chief minister."

Though So's words were lacking in modesty and extravagant in their self-praise, he was at once accepted as a man of heroic mould, and gradually rose high in the Emperor's favour. But he kept a troupe of singers and actors, and did not concern himself with State business. Liu Hsiang in his youth often questioned him about the prolongation of life, and found him full of shrewdness and insight. His own contemporaries all describe him as the prince of good fellows, and irresistible in argument.

F.S.T

At the age of three Tung-fang So was in the habit of gesticulating, pointing up to the sky, and talking to himself. One day his foster-mother missed him, and a year went by before he returned. She was greatly shocked, and said: "You have been away for a whole year. Is this how you care for me?" So replied: "I only went to the Sea of Purple Mud, where the water stained my clothes so that I had to go to the Yu spring to wash them. I left in the morning, and got back at noon: what do you mean by 'a whole year'?" His mother then asked him about the places he had been to.—"After I had finished washing my clothes," said So, "I rested for a bit in the Ming-tu-ch'ung Pavilion and took a nap. The King and his nobles fed me on red chestnuts and sunset-cloud liquor, and when I had eaten my fill I went into a sort of trance. Then I drank a small quantity of celestial yellow dew, and revived again. On my way home I came across an old tiger lying by the roadside, and returned riding on its back."

L.T.S.H.C.

The Western Queen Mother once paid a visit to the Han Emperor Wu, and was received in the Nine-Blossom Hall. She bade her attendants fetch in seven peaches, each only the size of a pill, five of which she presented to the Emperor, and ate the other two herself. When the Emperor had eaten his peaches, he placed the stones on his lap, and when the Queen Mother asked why he kept them, he replied: "These peaches are so delicious that I wish to plant the stones." She smiled at this and said: "My peach-tree only bears fruit once in three thousand years."

Now, the Emperor and the Queen Mother were sitting alone together, and none of their suite were allowed to enter the apartment. But Tung-fang So had stolen into the corridor adjoining the Hall on the south, and was peeping at the Queen Mother through a window. She observed him, and said to the Emperor: “This young fellow who is looking through the window has come three times before and stolen these peaches of mine.” The Emperor marvelled greatly at this, and from that time onward people looked upon Tung-fang So as a divine being.

P.W.C.

Wu Ti of the Han was travelling eastwards, and had not yet emerged from the Han Ku Pass when he came upon a monstrous creature blocking the way. Thirty or forty feet in length, its body resembled in shape that of a buffalo or an elephant. It had black eyes that blazed with light, and its four legs were so firmly planted in the ground that every effort to dislodge it was unavailing. All the courtiers were terrified, but Tung-fang So came to the rescue and asked for some wine to sprinkle over it; then, after some dozens of gallons had been used for that purpose, the monster gradually melted away.

The Emperor asked Tung-fang So to explain the phenomenon, and he replied: “This may be called the product of an atmosphere of sorrow and suffering. The spot on which we stand must have been the site of a dungeon under the Ch’in dynasty, or else the scene of the labours of a multitude of transported criminals. Now, wine has the power to banish grief, and that is why it was able to dispel this phantom.”—“Oh, man of much learning,” exclaimed the Emperor, “to think that your knowledge can extend as far as this!”

S.S.C.

When about to die, Tung-fang So said to one who shared his abode: “In all the world there is none who knows me for what I am, save only Ta Wu Kung.” After his death, Wu Ti sent for Ta Wu Kung and questioned him: “Do you know Tung-fang So?”—“No, I do not know him.”—“What sort of things can you do?”—“I possess some skill in astronomy.”—“Are all the stars included in the scheme of your calculations?”—“All are included,” he replied.”—“Alas!” said the Emperor, looking up to heaven with a sigh,

“Tung-fang So has lived at my side for eighteen of those years, and I never knew that he was the Year-star.”

L.H.C. (H.C.)

One day, Tung-fang So bestrode a dragon and flew away. At the same moment a number of people observed him ascending from the north-west and, gazing upwards, were able to watch his flight. After a while, he was enveloped in a dense mist which made it impossible to see where he went.

H.W.T.N.C.

FU CHU

The Master Fu Chu [Box-carrier] was a man of uncertain origin, but his speech seemed to indicate that he had lived in the old Yen State.

A feudal State in the north of China which was annexed by Ch’in in 222 B.C

He always carried on his back a box of implements for polishing mirrors, and used to frequent the market-towns of Wu in order to exhibit his skill in this work. He charged one cash for polishing a mirror. Having inquired of his host if there were any sick persons in the place, he would produce a drug made up into purple pills and administer these. Those who took them invariably recovered. After he had been practising in this way for some forty years or so, a great pestilence broke out, and whole families flocked to consult him. He gave medicine and saved thousands of lives, but would not take a single cash in return, so that the people of Wu recognized in him a man of spiritual purity. Afterwards he took up his abode on Mount Wu, and used to lower medicines down the side of a steep precipice for the benefit of those in the valley below. At last, having made up his mind to depart, he announced his intention as follows; “I am returning to the fairy island of P’eng-lai, and will send some magic water from the top of the cliff for you all.” And true enough, one day a stream of white-coloured liquid was seen trickling down rocks. People came and drank it, and many were cured of their diseases. In a dozen places shrines were erected in Fu Chu’s honour.

L.H.C.

HU TZU HSIEN

Hu Tzu Hsien was a fortune-teller of Kuan-hsia in Hall-chung [in Shensi]. When he had reached the age of a hundred odd, he made preparations to depart, and called to the wife of a certain wine-dealer, saying: "Get ready as quickly as you can! You and I must obey the summons of the Prince of Chung-ling [a ruler of the Immortals]." The same night, a hsien came to Hu Tzu Hsien, bringing with him a couple of straw dogs.

Such as were used in sacrifices. See *Tao Te Ching*, 5.

He and the lady of the wine-shop each mounted one of these steeds, which straightway turned into dragons and flew up Mount Hua-yin. Since then they have constantly been heard shouting from the top of the mountain: "Here we are!—Tzu Hsien and the old lady of the wine-shop."

L.H.C.

WEN PIN

Wen Pin was a villager of T'ai-ch'iu [the modern Yung-ch'eng Hsien, Honan] who made his living as a vendor of straw sandals. He took a number of wives, turning them away after thirty years or so. At a later period, one of his former wives, who had now passed the age of ninety, saw Wen Pin again. He was still in the full vigour of manhood, and the old lady wept, and pleaded with him to take her back. Wen Pin excused himself, saying: "It wouldn't do; but could you perhaps meet me at the altar west of the village pavilion, at daybreak on the first of the first moon?" Accordingly, the old lady, accompanied by her grandson, travelled over ten *li* by night and sat by the altar waiting for Pin. In a short time he arrived and was greatly surprised to see her. –"So you really love Tao, then?" he said. "Had I known that before, I should never have sent you away." He then instructed her to swallow chrysanthemum petals, *ti fu* [*Kochia scoparia*, Schr.], certain epiphytes of the mulberry, and pine-seeds. Thus increasing her store of vital energy, she too became rejuvenated, and was seen for more than a hundred years afterwards.

L.H.C.

V. LATER HAN DYNASTY (A.D. 25-220)

LIU CH'ÊN *and* YUAN CHAO

LIU CH'EN was a native of Yen Hsien [in Chekiang]. In the 15th year of Yung-p'ing in the Later Han dynasty (A.D. 72), he and his fellow-townsman Yüan Chao went up into the T'ien-t'ai mountains to collect herbs, but lost their way and could not get back. Thirteen days passed, and their hunger and thirst were extreme, when they saw a peach-tree growing on the mountain-side. They plucked the fruit and ate it, and then went down to drink from a mountain stream. Here they saw a freshly picked cabbage leaf come floating by, and afterwards a cup containing grains of sesamum. The two friends were overjoyed, feeling sure that there must be a human habitation close by. Crossing a hill, they passed into a large valley, where they came upon two maidens of surpassing beauty. One of the maidens addressed them by name and said with a smile: "Did you manage to get hold of that cup just now?" This filled them with astonishment, but the maidens went on to inquire merrily why they had been so long in coming, and invited them to their home. This was furnished with much magnificence, silken tapestries covering the walls. Richly attired waiting-women set before them a delicious meal of sesamum and goat's flesh. When they had finished, wine was handed round and a musical entertainment was given, lasting until midnight. Then they retired to rest, each in his own alcove.

After staying here for ten days, the two friends said they must depart, but were finally induced to remain for six months. The climate was mild and temperate, the birds singing as in one perpetual spring; but homesickness overtook them, and they begged hard to be allowed to return. The two fairy maidens said: "We got you to come here before retribution had fallen on the guilty."

In order that they might escape the destruction which was destined to fall upon their native place.

Then they directed fairy attendants to escort them on their way with music and singing, and pointed out the road they had to follow. But when they got back to their native town, they found it in ruins, in which condition it had already lain for several generations. A surviving member of the Liu family was discovered, who said he had heard a story about a remote ancestor who had gone away into the mountains and never come back. The two men went again to look for the house where they had been entertained, but failed to find it. In the Chin dynasty, in the 8th year of T'ai-k'ang [A.D. 287], both of them disappeared altogether.

L.H.C. (H.C.) *and* S.H.F.C.

Two very similar versions of the above tale have here been blended into one.

LIU KEN

Liu Ken was a native of the capital, Ch'ang-an. Having taken his degree, he was given an official post; but subsequently he renounced a worldly career in order to study Tao, and retired into a cave situated on the edge of a sheer precipice. Winter and summer he wore no clothes; his body was covered with a shaggy growth of hair over a foot long, yet his complexion was that of a boy. When sitting in company, he would suddenly assume conventional attire, consisting of a tall hat and dark-coloured robes, but no one ever saw him make the change.

On one occasion his aid was invoked to combat an epidemic that was sweeping the country, and he was able to dispel the pestilential miasma by means of a magical device. Then a new governor was appointed, who regarded Liu Ken as a mischievous wizard, and summoned him before his tribunal, meaning to have him beheaded. This proceeding caused widespread remonstrance, but the Governor would not desist from his purpose; and Liu Ken paid no attention to those who urged him to make his escape.

When the trial began, the court was crowded with spectators, and there were also present some fifty lictors, who stood holding knives, clubs, and

cords in their hands. Ken's countenance, however, showed no trace of concern. The Governor now addressed him in a bullying tone: "So you know some Taoist tricks, do you ?"—"I do," was the reply.—"Can you call up the spirits of the dead ?"—"I can."—"You can, eh? Well, you had better get some spirits to appear in this court; for if you don't, I'll have you ignominiously put to death."—"Nothing easier than to conjure up some spirits," Ken replied. He then asked for the use of a pen, an ink-slab, and a judge's table. All at once a metallic, clanking sound was heard outside the building, followed by a long whistle, extraordinarily shrill and piercing, which struck awe into the hearers, and set everyone trembling with fear. A moment later, the south wall of the court-house suddenly fell asunder, leaving a gap some forty feet wide, in which a number of heralds appeared shouting out a summons. After them came a body of armed soldiers in red uniform, escorting a closed chariot which was driven straight into the room through the shattered wall, which closed up again behind it.

Liu Ken ordered the occupants of the chariot to be brought out; whereupon the soldiers threw off the coverings and disclosed to view an old man and an old woman, whom they led up to the tribunal with their hands bound behind their backs and a noose round their necks. On looking at them closely, the Governor saw to his horror that they were his own deceased parents, and in an agony of terror and bewilderment began to weep bitterly. But the two spirits spoke sternly to him: "When we were alive," they said, "official promotion had not come your way, so that we were never able to benefit by your emoluments. Now that we are dead, why do you persecute a blameless hsien official, thus causing us to be arrested and to suffer all this humiliation and distress? How can you have the face to stand up in front of your fellow men?"

At these words the Governor rushed down from his dais and prostrated himself before Liu Ken. Humbly acknowledging his guilt as worthy of death, he begged that his father and mother might be pardoned and released from their bonds.

It must be remembered that under the Chinese patriarchal system a man's near relations shared the responsibility for his misdeeds.

Ken ordered the prisoners to be taken away and dismissed. As the chariot moved off, the wall opened to let it through, closing up as before when it had passed. No sooner had the chariot gone than Ken himself also vanished, leaving the Governor in such a state of stupefaction and remorse that he had all the appearance of a madman.

Immediately after this, the Governor's wife died, but later on came to life again and reported that she had seen her husband's parents: they were in a great rage over the treatment meted out to the hsien official and their own detention. "And now," she said, "they are coming to kill you." A month later, the Governor himself as well as his wife, son, and daughter were all dead.

After this grim little episode, the writer goes on to tell, in Liu Ken's own words, of the instruction he received from a celestial stranger:

"You have the bodily structure of a hsien," he said, "and that is why you were able to see me. But at present your marrow does not fill your bones, your blood lacks heat, your breath is scanty, your brain is of insufficient bulk, your sinews are undeveloped, and your flesh is wasting away. Hence you cannot derive the proper benefit from drugs and breathing exercises. If your desire is for long life, you must treat these physical defects for a period of twelve years before you can begin taking the drugs that lead to hsienship. Now, the Way of the Hsien includes ascension heavenwards and treading on the clouds; roaming over the Five Sacred Peaks; the avoidance of death by means of dieting; release from the mortal part of the body and attainment of hsienship.

"For every aspirant of hsienship an essential thing is the assimilation of drugs. But some drugs are better than others, and there are several grades of hsien. He who is unversed in the mysteries of sexual intercourse, in the art of controlling the breath, and in physical exercises, as well as in the science of celestial drugs, can never hope to become a hsien. Of drugs, the most potent are the reverting cinnabar, nine times refined, and the gold-juice of the Great Monad. Anyone who swallows these will rise up to heaven forthwith, without any interval of days or months. Next in efficacy are such drugs as mica and realgar, which do not immediately confer the power of riding on clouds and driving a team of dragons, yet enable you to have spirits at your command, to assume different shapes, and to live for an indefinite time. After

these come the vegetable drugs, which enable one to cure diseases, to rectify shortcomings, to preserve juvenility, to do without cereal food; and to strengthen the breath, although they cannot confer actual immortality. At the best, they will prolong life for a few hundred years, in other cases they will only fortify the natural constitution, and cannot be relied upon for long.

"If you are bent on attaining immortality, begin by getting rid of the three body-spirits. As soon as they are gone, you will gain fixity of will-power and freedom from passion and desire." According to a treatise which the stranger gave me, said Ken, these hidden spirits are in the habit of going up to heaven twice a month in order to report a man's sins and transgressions. Acting on this information, the Controller of Destiny deducts something from his allotted span and diminishes his length of years.

Ko Hung notes the similar proceeding of the Kitchen-god, who at the end of each month also presents his report on the family's behaviour: "As a punishment for the graver sins, 300 days of life are cut off; for lesser offences, three days only. I have not yet been able," he adds naively, "to ascertain the truth or falsity of this belief."

The ethereal spirit in a man's body is anxious to keep him alive, whereas these grosser spirits are anxious to have him die; for when he is dead they are dissipated into thin air and become ghosts, which can enjoy the flavour of any sacrifices that are offered to them.

I obeyed these instructions, prepared and swallowed the elixir accordingly, and was thus able to become a hsien.

S.H.C.

CHANG TAO-LING

Chang Tao-ling was a native of the State of P'ei [part of Kiangsu and Anhwei]. He began as a student at the Imperial Academy, and made a thorough study of the Five Canonical Books. "Alas!" he exclaimed with a sigh, "all this study will not add to my span of life;" so he set himself to master the principles of longevity. Having acquired a copy of the Yellow Emperor's *Treatise of the Elixir refined in Nine Cauldrons*, he wished to compound the magic draught, and dissipated his fortune on drugs required for the purpose. His family being in a chronic state of poverty, he resolved to

earn his livelihood by tilling the fields and breeding cattle; but these experiments failed through his lack of skill.

Hearing that the people of Shu [part of Szechwan] were simple, honest folk, easy to teach and convert, and that there were many celebrated mountains in that region, he departed thither with his disciples, and settled on the Crane's Call mountain, where he wrote a work on Tao in 24 parts. As the result of magical power bestowed on him by Lao Tzu, he now found himself able to heal the sick. Thereupon the people with one accord began to serve and venerate him as their Master, and the number of his followers amounted to tens of thousands. Straightway he appointed so-called Libationers, each of whom had a certain number of families under his control, while some carried out the functions of regular government officials. He also laid down laws and regulations whereby his followers had to contribute in rotation, according to circumstances, rice, silk, utensils, paper and writing-brushes, fuel, and various other articles.

The levy of rice amounted to five bushels a head. We learn from the dynastic history that this led to his being saddled with the opprobrious epithet of "rice-thief".

He ordered the people to repair the roads, and punished defaulters by sending sickness upon them. Inspectors were sent round to see that bridges and highways were kept in good condition. The peasants were made to lop away brambles and drain cesspools; in short, there was no useful work to which they did not put their hand.

Chang Tao-ling also tried to govern the people by appealing to their sense of shame, for he disliked inflicting punishment. He therefore made it a rule that sick persons should write down all the sins they had committed since they were born and cast these written confessions into a stream of water, vowing to the gods that they would sin no more, on penalty of death. The result was that all the people could count on a cure: if they unexpectedly fell sick, they would forthwith proclaim their misdeeds; thus on the one hand they obtained healing, and on the other were moved to shame and remorse, which deterred them from sinning again. Moreover, the fear of Heaven and Earth brought about a change of heart, and from that time forward all who had transgressed returned to the path of virtue.

In course of time Chang Tao-ling amassed much treasure wherewith to buy the drugs he needed in order to compound the elixir. When the elixir was ready, however, he only took half a dose, for he did not want to rise up to heaven immediately.

S.H.C.

Although some of the above details are singularly reminiscent of Butler's *Erewhon*, they may be accepted as substantially true. Very different is the account of Chang Tao-ling's career contained in the later *Lieh Hsien Chuan*, as the following extracts will show.

Chang Tao-ling, styled Fu-han [Pillar of the House of Han], was a descendant of Chang Liang (q.v.) in the eighth generation. He was over six feet tall, had bushy eyebrows, a wide forehead, a vermilion-coloured pate, a prominent nose, a square chin, and green eyes with triangular orbits. A tapering projection like a rhinoceros horn protruded from his skull. His hands, when hanging down, reached below his knees. When crouching, he looked dragon-like, and in movement, like a tiger. His general aspect was stern.

He was born near the T'ien-mu [Eye of Heaven] mountain in the 10th year of the *chien-wu* period of the reign of the Han Emperor Kuang Wu (A.D. 34). To begin with, his mother dreamt that a giant came down to earth from a star in the Great Bear, and gave her a perfume distilled from certain fragrant herbs. On waking, she found the whole house filled with this strange perfume, which still pervaded the place after a month had gone by. Subsequently she conceived and became pregnant. On the day of his birth, yellow clouds enveloped the building, a purple vapour filled the courtyard, and the chamber in which he lay was irradiated with light, as from the sun or moon.

At the age of seven, Tao-ling had mastered the *Tao Te Ching* and the diagrams known as the plan of the Yellow River and the Scroll of the River Lo, having profoundly studied their mysteries. His character was wise and virtuous, honest and upright. Although he embarked on an official career, all his thoughts were centred in alchemy and the cultivation of Tao. He visited Shu, and falling in love with its deep valleys and lofty peaks, he lived as a hermit on the Hao-ming [Crane's Call] mountain.

Among his disciples was one Wang Ch'ang, who had practised astronomy and was versed in the doctrines of Huang and Lao [the Yellow Emperor and Lao Tzu]. Together they engaged in alchemical research for the rejuvenating drug of the dragon and tiger, and in three years discovered it. Tao-ling was then over sixty, yet after tasting the magic potion he felt like a man of thirty. Accompanied by Wang Ch'ang, he retired to the Northern Sung Mountain, and there encountered a celestial envoy in embroidered robes who delivered the following message: "In a rocky cavern on the central peak are hidden two books entitled *The Esoteric Treatise of the Three Sovereigns* and *The Yellow Emperor's Classic of the nine times refined Elixir*. Find and study these, so that you may learn how to ascend to heaven." After that, Tao-ling fasted for the space of seven days. On entering the cavern he heard a sound like the tramping of feet. He dug into the earth at that spot, and there, sure enough, he found the two books.

By means of spiritual meditation and a process of mental refinement he was now able to multiply his bodily form and to dissipate his shadow. Thus, at one and the same time he would be seen floating in his boat on the lake, reciting Taoist scriptures in the main hall, talking to his guests with his elbows on the table, and humming verses as he leant on his staff. This puzzled everybody very much.

There follows a lengthy account of Chang Tao-ling's struggle, undertaken by Lao Tzu's command, against six Demon Kings and their countless hosts. He succeeded in exterminating them utterly, but this ruthlessness was displeasing to Lao Tzu, who sent down a herald with the following proclamation

"Your services should have qualified you to attain the ninth degree of purity, and to ascend on high as a hsien. I sent you into Shu merely to separate men and demons into their proper spheres, and thus prepare for your translation into the Pure Serene. Yet you slay an inordinate number of the demons; and, moreover, presume to raise the wind and rain, and to press spiritual beings into your service. You have darkened the light of day and polluted the void with the breath of slaughter—a deed inconsistent with the spirit of Tao that loves all creatures. God is about to punish your transgressions, and that is why I cannot approach you. You will retire to your place of abode and diligently work out your atonement. I shall await you at the Supremely Pure Eight-Prospect Palace in the Region of Non-Existence."

Ultimately, of course, the day of deliverance came, and after much ceremonial preparation Chang Tao-ling addressed Wang Ch'ang and Chao Sheng, saying:

"Some of the magic drug still remains. Divide it between you and partake thereof, my two disciples, for to-day you must accompany me on my long flight upward." At noontide the whole host of hsien formed round him a guard of honour, and to the strains of celestial music escorted him to the topmost peak of the Tower-in-the-Clouds Mountain. Thus at the age of 123 the Saintly One ascended to heaven in broad daylight.

L.H.C. (H.C.)

As an historical footnote it may be added that the development of Taoism into an organized religion owed its inception to Chang Tao-ling. He was the first of a long line of "Celestial Preceptors" whose office has been likened to that of the Pope at Rome; but it was a temporal rather than a spiritual realm over which the first Taoist Pontiff held sway.

CHAO SHÊNG

One day Chang Tao-ling said to his disciples; "The great secret of the elixir I have imparted to Wang Ch'ang alone, but by and by another man will come hither from the east, who will also acquire the secret. He will arrive in daylight on the 7th of the 1st moon." And he gave an exact description of his appearance and stature. On the day named, the prediction was fulfilled by the arrival of Chao Sheng. Chang Tao-ling proceeded to subject him to seven trials:

(I) When he arrived at the Master's door, he was not admitted, but kept standing there, exposed to the insults and abuse of underlings. This he bore for over forty days and nights, during which he slept in the open air, until at last he was allowed to enter.

(2) He was sent to watch millet fields in the country and keep off wild beasts. In the evening an extraordinarily beautiful damsel appeared, with a concocted tale of having come a long journey, and lost her way. She passed the night in a bed beside Chao Sheng's, and the next day she still stayed on,

pleading sore feet. Thus she remained dallying for several days, but Chao Sheng was not to be tempted from the path of rectitude.

(3) Chao Sheng was walking along the road, when he came upon thirty slabs of gold lying unguarded, but he passed on and did not pick them up.

(4) When he was sent into the hills to gather firewood, three tigers sprang out upon him and fixed their teeth in his garments, but without injuring him. Chao Sheng showed no fear, and did not so much as change colour, but said to the tigers: "I am only a poor Taoist who has done no wrong; else I had not come from a distance of a thousand *li* to serve the Divine Master and learn the secret of immortality. What is it you want? You must have been sent by mountain spirits to make trial of me." After a little while, the tigers got up and made off.

(5) Another time, Chao Sheng bought some dozen rolls of silk in the market; but after he had paid for them, the silk merchant falsely accused him, saying that he had not received the money. Chao Sheng took the clothes off his back and completed the purchase with these, showing no trace of irritation.

(6) Whilst he was keeping watch over a field of grain, a man came up, prostrated himself, and begged for food. His clothes were in tatters, his face was begrimed with dirt, his body covered with purulent sores, and there came from him an abominable smell. Chao Sheng showed every sign of pity and concern: he took off his own garments to clothe him, set food before him from his private store, and made him a present of some rice to boot.

(7) The last ordeal to which Chao Sheng was subjected came when Tao-ling led his disciples to the edge of an almost vertical precipice at the very summit of the Tower-in-the-Clouds mountain. At some distance below they spied a peach tree growing horizontally out of the face of the cliff, like a man's arm. Underneath it yawned a seemingly bottomless abyss. Peaches of unusual size weighed down the branches of the tree.

Turning to his disciples, Tao-ling pointed to the peach-tree and said: "To whichever of you succeeds in plucking peaches from that tree I will impart the most important mysteries of Tao." Thereupon they all crawled to the edge and looked over, but hastily retreated again with trembling limbs and bathed in sweat, declaring that it was impossible. Chao Sheng alone came forward and said: "Under the protection of a divine being, what danger is there to fear? Our Holy Master is here, and assuredly he will not let me be dashed to

pieces. If the Master bids us, there must be some way of getting those peaches." So saying, he leapt down and alighted safely on the tree, where he hastened to pluck peaches right and left, stuffing them into the bosom of his robe. The cliff, however, was so sheer and precipitous that it offered no foothold, and he was unable to get back. So he threw the peaches up one by one—two hundred and two in all—and Tao-ling caught them in the air and distributed them among his disciples until each had one. Tao-ling ate one, and kept the last for Chao Sheng. Then he stretched out his hand to help the latter climb up, while the others looked on. To the amazement of all, his arm grew out to a length of thirty feet, and in a moment the disciple was pulled up again.

S.H.C.

WEI PO-YANG

A vein of quaint humour, not unusual in stories of Chinese immortals, runs through the following adventure:

Wei Po-yang, a native of Wu, had no wish for an official career, but felt an instinctive love for Tao and its mysteries; so he retired into the hills and occupied himself with concocting the divine elixir.

Two of the three disciples whom he had at that time he knew to be lacking in faith and singleness of heart; so, when he had some of the elixir prepared, he said in order to test them: "The drug of immortality is made, but it would be as well to try its effect first upon a dog. If no harm befalls the beast, we can take some ourselves; but if the dog dies, then it is not for us."

Po-yang then gave the dog a dose, and immediately it fell dead. "Ah," said he, "the drug must have been wrongly compounded owing to failure on my part to understand the divine instructions. Whoever took it would, I fear, share the fate of the dog. What are we to do?" The disciples asked: "will not then our Master swallow the elixir?" To which Po-yang replied: "I have renounced all worldly interests, and have abandoned my family to come here. Were I to fail in my efforts to become a hsien, I should be ashamed to return home. In that case I would as soon be dead as alive, so I certainly shall take it."

With these words he swallowed the potion, but on the instant that it entered his mouth he fell down lifeless. Seeing which, one of the disciples declared: "Our Preceptor is no ordinary mortal. There must be some mystical reason for his dying after taking the elixir." And then, swallowing some himself, he also fell lifeless. The other two disciples now held a consultation, and agreed that it would be better to refrain from taking a drug that brought but death, though designed to confer immortality. So they set off from their mountain retreat to make arrangements for the funeral of their Master and dead companion.

As soon as they were gone, Po-yang rose up and set to work refining the drug until he got it perfect. Then he poured some into the mouths of his dead disciple and dog, and in a very short time they too came to life again. This done, he and the disciple went off, together with the dog, all having become hsien. On their way over the hills they met a wood-cutter, and handed him a letter to be delivered to the other two disciples, thanking them for the trouble they had taken in arranging the funeral.

L.H.C. (H.C.)

The following five hsien were all members of a group known as the Sixteen Magicians, who in response to a summons from Ts'ao Ts'ao had travelled to his Court from all parts of the Empire.

WANG CHEN

Wang Chen was a native of Shang-tang [in Shansi]. At the age of seventy-nine he began to study Tao practising the art of womb-breathing and abstaining from food for more than thirty years. His appearance was youthful, his complexion fine. He could walk as fast as a galloping horse, and his muscular power was equal to the combined strength of several men. Wu Ti of the Wei dynasty [i.e. Ts'ao Ts'ao] having heard of his fame, summoned him to an interview and found that he looked like a man of thirty or thereabouts; but suspecting trickery, he had searching inquiries made in his village, and obtained the same account from many different persons who had known Wang Cheng from their boyhood. It was agreed that he was at that time four hundred

years old. Wu Ti was then convinced that he was a man of Tao and paid him much honour and respect…. His outward appearance still continued impervious to age, until at last he ascended Mount Nü-chi and left the world to become a hsien.

S.H.C.

Breathing exercises, so we are told, form one of the essential means of attaining hsienship. A note by Ko Hung on the subject will not therefore be out of place:

Those who have acquired the art of womb-breathing are able to inhale and exhale the air independently of the nose and mouth, like the foetus in the womb…. When you are beginning to learn how to control your breath, you take in the air through the nose and hold it while you count your heart-beats. When you have counted 120, let the air out very gently through the mouth. During this process, care should be taken, that the passage of the air either way is quite inaudible to yourself, and more should go in than comes out.

A good test is to place a piece of swan's down at the aperture of the nostrils, and see that it does not stir when the breath is expelled. Practice will enable the number of heart-beats to be gradually increased, until at last you can hold your breath while you count a thousand. When this number is reached, the aged become rejuvenated, getting steadily younger day by day. This breathing exercise should be performed only in a period of "live air", not in a period of "dead air"… A day and a night are divided into twelve periods of two hours each: the six periods from midnight to midday are "live air" periods, and the six from midday to midnight are "dead air" periods. Breathing exercises performed in a "dead air" period are useless.

"Womb-eating" has an analogous meaning, namely, being nourished, like the foetus, otherwise than by ordinary food and drink. In exercising the breath it is most essential that much food be not eaten; for raw vegetables, fat meat, and the like, cause the breath to become strong and hard to retain. Anger should also be avoided, because if one gets angry the breath is disturbed and will not flow in abundance, or else it may set up a cough. Thus there are very few who are able to perform these exercises. My great-uncle Ko Hsuan, whenever he was thoroughly intoxicated or the weather was very hot, used to lie down at the bottom of a deep pool and only emerge after a day had passed

—a feat which was only rendered possible by his faculty of retaining the breath and of womb-respiration.

P.P.T.

HUA T'O

Medicine was included at an early date within the elastic sphere of Taoist activities, and it was only natural that famous physicians should sooner or later be acclaimed as hsien. The well-attested fact that Hua T'o made use of an anaesthetic for surgical operations over 1,600 years before Sir James Simpson certainly places him to our eyes on a pinnacle of fame, but convincing evidence that he became an immortal in the literal sense seems to be lacking.

The Master Hua T'o was temperamentally inclined to peaceful life and deeply interested in medical lore. He often visited famous mountains and their secret grottos, and met with many adventures.

One day he was resting, overcome with wine, at the mouth of an old cave on Mount Kung-i, when he caught the sound of voices discussing methods of curing disease. Much astonished he crept further into the cave and continued to listen, unobserved. After a while, he heard some one say, "The youth named Hua is near by. We might impart our secrets to him." To which another replied: "Better not. The young fellow is covetous by nature, and shows no compassion for his fellow-creatures."

These words startled our hero even more, and leaping to his feet, he hurried into the cave. There he saw two old men wearing garments of bark and hats made of straw. Quickly making an obeisance to each, he said: "Worthy sirs, I have just heard your discourse on the art of medicine, and became so rapt in it that I thought no more of turning homewards. It has long been my ambition to alleviate human suffering, and I grieve because I have not yet found the right method, nor succeeded in achieving my aim by my own unaided efforts. Hoping that you will take into consideration my doltish sincerity, I beg of you to enlighten my understanding, and will remember your kindness to the end of my days."

The old man sitting in the senior's place replied: "We do not begrudge the secrets of our art, but we fear lest some day they may be a source of trouble to you. If you make no account of vicissitudes of fortune, and are indifferent to poverty or wealth, high rank or humble station; if money-making is not

your chief aim, if you dread not toil and fatigue, if it is your urgent desire to bring comfort to old age and sympathy to the young, then it is in our power to remove the cause of your failure." Hua T'o thanked them with a humble obeisance, and said: "These sage and saintly words shall be treasured up in my heart and observed to the letter."

The old men smiled, and pointing to a recess on the east side, said: "You will find there a volume lying on a stone couch. Take it, and depart quickly from our dwelling. Guard this work with all secrecy, and show it not to the common herd." Having got hold of the book, Hua T'o looked round, but the old men had already disappeared. In some alarm, he quitted the cave, and suddenly it became lost to view. Clouds blew up, a deluge of rain fell, and the grotto in the rock collapsed in ruin.

When he came to examine the medical work, he found in it many strange and curious disquisitions. And from that time forth his every experiment was attended with marvellous success. But before he had reached the age of sixty,

Elsewhere he is said to have lived to over a hundred.

the warnings he had received from the old men were fulfilled, for he was put to death by the Emperor of Wei (i.e. Ts'ao Ts'ao).

T.S.C.C.

Hua T'o excelled in the knowledge of drugs, and in dispensing medicine he limited his choice to a few kinds. He was able to estimate the fraction of a grain without having recourse to scales or measures. In his practice, the application of acupuncture and cautery was restricted to a few spots of the body. If an internal malady developed itself which could not be reached by the needle or by drugs, he first made the patient swallow "hemp-bubble-powder"

No doubt something akin to hashish or bhang in other parts of the East.

mixed with wine, and as soon as intoxication and unconsciousness supervened, he made an incision in the belly or the back and cut out any morbid growth. If the stomach or intestine was the part affected, he

thoroughly cleansed those organs after the use of the knife, and removed the contaminating matter which had caused the infection. He would then stitch up the wound, and apply a marvellous ointment which caused it to heal in four or five days, and within a month the patient was completely restored to health…

To one Wu P'u, who studied under him, Hua T'o gave the following advice: "The human body," he said, "requires toil and exertion, only it must not be carried to excess. It is exercise that enables food to be properly digested, makes the blood circulate through the veins, and prevents the onset of disease, just as the hinge of a door, being constantly in motion, will never get rusty. It is on this account that the hsien of old practised all sorts of gymnastics—swinging about like a bear, turning their heads round like an owl, stretching their bodies and exercising their joints—in their efforts to check the advance of old age. One of the secrets of my art is called the 'Five-Animal Antics', based on the natural movements of a tiger, a deer, a bear, an ape, and a bird. For banishing disease and at the same time strengthening the leg and feet, physical exercises are essential. If your body is not in good condition, get up and do one of these animal gymnastics: it will cause a pleasant perspiration. Then dust yourself with powder, and you will experience a sensation of lightness and well-being, and have an appetite for food."

P'u put these precepts into practice, and at the age of over ninety his sight was clear, his hearing keen, and his teeth perfectly sound.

H.H.S.

One of Hua T'o's most famous operations was performed on the celebrated warrior Kuan Yu (afterwards canonized as the God of War), who seems to have disdained the use of an anaesthetic.

When Kuan Yu was attacking Fan, he was struck by an arrow which pierced his left arm. Afterwards, although the wound healed, whenever the weather was cloudy or rainy, the bone always ached. The physician Hua T'o said: "Poison from the arrow-head has entered the bone. An incision must be made in the arm, and the bone scraped in order to get rid of the poison. Then only will the pain cease." Kuan Yu bade him perform the operation, although

he happened to be entertaining guests at the time, and was drinking wine in their company. Blood streamed from the wound and filled a bowl to the brim, whereat those present were amazed and alarmed; but Kuan Yu went on carving the meat and pouring out wine, laughing and talking just as usual. This made Hua T'o to exclaim: "Really, one would take this man for a divine being!"

K.T.S.C.

Hua T'o's fame came to the ears of Ts'ao Ts'ao, who summoned him to his Court and kept him constantly in attendance. He suffered from persistent headache and giddiness, which T'o was able to cure immediately by means of acupuncture…. Now, Hua T'o was a bad-tempered man and difficult to please; he was ashamed of practising medicine as a profession, and moreover, being separated from his family, he was bent on returning home. So he approached Ts'ao Ts'ao and asked permission to go back in order to fetch some prescriptions. Subsequently he gave out that his wife was ill, and though he often promised to return to Court, always failed to do so. Ts'ao sent him repeated messages, and also instructed the prefect and district magistrate to see that he was sent back; but T'o, feeling confident of being able to tire him out, still refused to come. Ts'ao grew very angry, and sent some one to inquire into the matter, through whom he learnt that the wife was only feigning illness. Thereupon he had T'o arrested and thrown into prison: he was put on his trial and condemned to die by swallowing poison. Somebody pleaded for him, saying: "T'o is really a skilled physician, and one on whom human lives depend. He ought to be granted a free pardon." Ts'ao rejected this advice, however, and finally put him to death. When his end was approaching, T'o brought out a roll of manuscript and offered it to the gaoler, saying: "This will tell you how to bring a man to life again." But the gaoler, fearing punishment, dated not accept the gift. T'o did not press him, but procured fire and burned the manuscript.

H.H.S.

According to another version of the tale, the documents in question, contained in a black bag, were actually handed over to the gaoler, known as Warder Wu, who took them to his own house for safe keeping.

Ten days later, Hua T'o died in prison. Wu bought a coffin and had him decently buried, after which he resigned his post and hurried home to study the contents of the black bag. But when he arrived, he found his wife in the very act of burning the precious papers. Horrified at the sight, he hastily snatched the bundle out of the fire, but only a couple of sheets remained intact. In his anger he began cursing his wife, but she retorted: "Even if you were to become as great a genius as Hua T'o himself, it would only lead to your ending your days in prison, and what would be the good of that?" Wu sighed deeply, and said no more. Thus it happened that the writings in the black bag were never given to the world. The fragments that have been published, contained in the two unburnt sheets, deal only with small matters such as the methods of castrating fowls and pigs.

S.K.C.Y.I.

TSO TZ'U

Tso Tz'u, styled Yuan-fang, was a native of Lu-chiang [in Anhwei]. While yet a boy, he possessed supernatural powers. Once when he was at a banquet given by Ts'ao Kung,

I.e. Ts'ao Ts'ao. *Kung*, originally meaning" Duke", is here a vague honorific title, often bestowed on men of high station.

the latter looked smilingly round at his assembled guests and said: "I have made but poor provision of delicacies for this noble company today. What we lack are some perch from the Wu-sung River,

Passing through Shanghai. Ts'ao's capital was at Loyang, about midway between this and Shu.

with which to make a mince." Said Fang: "That is easily obtainable"; and, calling for a bronze bowl full of water, he began angling in it with a bamboo rod. After a little while he pulled out a perch, whereupon Ts'ao Kung clapped his hands vigorously, and the whole company was much astonished. "One fish," said Kung, "won't go round. It would be nice to have two." So

Fang cast his line again, and soon drew up another fish. Both were over three feet long, and deliciously fresh. Kung had them minced up before his eyes, and handed round the dainty to his guests sitting at table. “Now that we have got our perch,” he said, “it is a pity that we have no raw ginger from Shu to go with them.”—“That too can be procured,” said Fang. Suspicious lest he should buy some in the vicinity, Ts’ao Kung then said: “Some time ago I sent a man to Shu in order to buy brocade. Please instruct your messenger to tell my agent to purchase two extra lengths of it.” Fang’s messenger departed, and in a twinkling was back again with the raw ginger. “I saw your agent, Sir,” he said to Ts’ao’ Kung, “in a brocade shop, and gave him your order.” More than a year afterwards Kung’s agent returned, and sure enough he had got the two extra lengths. On being questioned, he said that the year before, on such and such a day of such and such a month, he had met a man in a shop who acquainted him with Kung’s order.

On a later occasion Ts’ao Kung, accompanied by some hundred scholars, went for an excursion not far outside the city. Fang provided a single jar of wine and a single piece of dried meat. Tilting the jar with his own hands, he poured out wine for all the assembled guests, not one of whom but ate and drank to repletion. Kung thought this very strange, and caused an investigation to be made. On sending round to inspect the wine-shops, he found that the day before they had all been cleared of their stocks of wine and meat. This angered him, and he secretly determined to put Fang to death. The latter was just about to be arrested as he was sitting in Ts’ao Kung’s private apartment, when he walked straight into a wall and incontinently vanished. Then Kung hired a number of men to capture him. One of these saw him in the market-place, and was on the point of seizing him when suddenly all the people there were transformed into his exact likeness, so that no one could tell which was really he.

Later on, some of them met Fang on the brow of the Yang-Ch’eng Hill, and again pursued him, whereupon he ran amongst a flock of sheep.

It is implied that he turned into a sheep himself.

Kung, realizing that he was not to be caught in this way, told his men to go among the sheep and make the following announcement: “Ts’ao Kung does

not want to put you to death. He has only been making trial of your magical arts; and now that they have stood the test, his desire is simply to have an interview with you." Then suddenly one old ram, bending its two forelegs, stood erect like a man and began to speak, saying: "What a fluster you're in!" Ts'ao Kung's men cried out: "That ram is the one we want," and all made a dash for him. But lo! the whole flock, numbering several hundreds, now turned into rams, all bending their forelegs, standing erect and calling out: "What a fluster you're in!" The result was that no one knew which of them to capture.

Lao Tzu said: "The ills that afflict me are due to my being encumbered with a body. Once I succeed in freeing myself from my body, what ill can befall me?"

See *Tao Te Ching*, chap. 13. This cryptic saying may have given the impulse to many later developments of Taoism which would hardly have met with the approval of Lao Tzu himself.

Those who are of Lao Tzu's persuasion may be said to have the power of freeing themselves from their bodies. How can they fail to keep misfortune at a distance?

S.S.C.

FEI CH'ANG-FANG

Fei Ch'ang-fang was a native of Ju-nan [in Honan], where he was made a market inspector. There was an aged man

Elsewhere called Hu Kung ("the Worthy of the Gourd").

who used to sell drugs in the market. He had a gourd hanging over his stall, and as soon as business was over for the day, he used to leap into the gourd. None of the people in the marketplace saw what happened except Ch'ang-fang, who observed it from the upper storey of his dwelling, and marvelled thereat. This caused him to go and pay his respects to the old fellow, who said to him: "Sir, come again to-morrow." So Ch'ang-fang did go early the next morning, and then the old man and he entered the gourd together. There

he beheld a magnificent hall, spacious and beautiful, where fine wines and toothsome delicacies were spread out in lavish profusion. Together they drank their fill, and then emerged from the gourd. The old man impressed upon him the need for secrecy concerning their adventure.

Afterwards he came up to see Ch'ang-fang in his chamber, and said: "I am really a hsien, but as punishment for an offence I was banished hither. Having now expiated my fault, I am about to quit this world. Would it not be possible for you to accompany me? Downstairs there is a small flagon of wine with which we might drink to each other before parting." In order to bring it up, Ch'ang-fang sent as many as ten men, yet they were unable to lift it. The old man laughed, and proceeded to carry it upstairs on one finger. Though the vessel appeared to hold little more than a pint, the two went on drinking for the rest of the day without emptying it.

Ch'ang-fang had a heartfelt longing to become a seeker after Tao, but the thought of his family caused him anxiety. The old man knew what was in his mind and cutting a piece of green bamboo, told him to hang it up behind his cottage. Now, to the eyes of his relatives this appeared to be not a bamboo but the corpse of Ch'ang-fang himself, and they thought he must have hanged himself. Shocked by the sight, old and young alike bewailed him, and in due course prepared his body for burial. All the while Ch'ang-fang was standing near by, yet he was quite invisible to any of them.

And thus it came about that Ch'ang-fang accompanied the old man into the mountains. They had to force their way through thorny undergrowth, and were surrounded by prowling tigers; yet, though he was left behind in a solitary place by his companion, he showed no sign of fear. Furthermore, the old man made Ch'ang-fang lie down in an empty cave, where with a rotten old rope he hung a boulder ten thousand pounds in weight just over his head. Then a number of snakes appeared and eagerly made for the rope in order to gnaw it through, yet Ch'ang-fang did not stir. On his return, the old man clapped him on the back and said; "I see that you are teachable." Next he told him to eat some ordure which contained three worms and had an evil odour of extraordinary pungency. Ch'ang-fang was overcome by feelings of disgust, whereupon the old man said: "You were near to the attainment of Tao, and it is a pity that you have broken down at this point."

Ch'ang-fang, then, had no alternative but to take his leave and return home. The old man presented him with a bamboo staff, saying: "Astride this, no

matter where you are going, you will be able to get there in a moment of time. When you reach home, take the staff and throw it into the Bean Pool." Riding on this staff, Ch'ang-fang flew back in a second. He was under the impression that he had been away from home only ten days, but in reality it was over ten years. Without delay he threw his staff into the pool, and as he watched he saw it transformed into a dragon.

The notion of witches riding on broomsticks, once widespread in Europe, forms an obvious parallel to this episode.

His family declared that he had died long ago, and were much taken aback by his story, which they refused to believe. Ch'ang-fang said: "What you buried long ago was only a bamboo stick." Thereupon they dug up the grave and broke open the coffin, and, sure enough, found the stick still inside.

L.H.C. (H.C.)

Fei Ch'ang-fang possessed the extraordinary power of contracting the veins of the earth, so that a stretch of a thousand *li* came within the limits of vision; and then, relaxing the spell, he would make it expand once more to its normal extent.

S.H.C.

The same authority tells us that, when dismissing his follower, Hu Kung tempered the shock by giving him a magic charm which made him" master of the spirit world". Unfortunately, the *Later Han History* adds the further information that he ultimately lost the charm and was slain by a host of evil spirits.

CHI TZU-HSUN

Chi Tzu-hsun came from nobody knows where; but in the *chien-an* period (A.D. 196-219) he was living at Wan-kou in Chi-yin [the modern Ts'ao-chou in Shantung]. He was a past-master in magic. On one occasion he was holding a neighbour's infant son in his arms, when he let the child slip from his grasp, so that it fell to the ground and was killed. The parents set up a

woeful clamour, and their grief and resentment were painful to witness. Yet Tzu-hsun merely apologized for the accident: not another word did he say. The funeral took place in due course, and about a month later Tzu-hsun presented himself at the parents' house with the child in his arms. Both were very frightened and cried: "The quick and the dead travel along different roads. Although we treasure the memory of our son, we would entreat you not to tantalize us by bringing him again before our eyes."

Fearing that what they beheld was a *kuei* or disembodied spirit.

Meanwhile, however, the child had recognized his father and mother, and showing every sign of delight, was trying to get to them. Instinctively the mother took the little one into her arms, and found it was really her son, alive and in the flesh. Great indeed was her joy, but having still some lingering doubts, she caused the grave to be opened secretly in order to see if the corpse was there. On finding nothing in the coffin except some articles of clothing, she was at last convinced.

After this event Tzu-hsun's renown spread far and wide, and all the high officials at the capital paid assiduous court to him. Some time afterwards, accompanied by his friends, he drove in a donkey-carriage on a visit to the country of Hsu [in Honan], and having reached Jung-yang, put up at a hostelry there. The donkey, however, which he had been driving, suddenly fell down dead, and crawling maggots appeared in the carcass. The landlord hurriedly brought the news to Tzu-hsun, who merely remarked: "Is that so?" and quietly sat down to dinner. When he had finished, he sauntered out and gave the donkey a tap with his stick, whereupon it sprang to its feet and resumed the journey….

In a later generation he was seen at Pa-ch'eng, east of Ch'ang-an, engaged with an old man in polishing a bronze statue. He said to his companion: "I happen to have witnessed the actual casting of this bronze nearly five hundred years ago." On looking round and seeing that he was observed, he made off, still driving the same old donkey-carriage as of yore. Those who saw him called out: "Master Chi, tarry with us a little!" and began following in the same direction; but though he seemed to be travelling at quite a slow

pace, they found that a galloping horse could not overtake him, and gave up the pursuit.

H.H.S.

The nobles of the capital, having heard of these wonders, were all very anxious to meet Tzu-hsun, but could find no pretext to gain his company. Now, there was a young advanced student whose family lived near Tzu-hsun. So the nobles formed a plan, and having called the student to them, said: "You are studying with toilsome industry in the hope of compassing wealth and honours. All you have to do is to get Tzu-hsun to come hither, and we will see that you obtain these things without effort." The young man agreed to the proposal, and went home to enter Tzu-hsun's service, sprinkling and sweeping, and attending to his personal wants for many months. Tzu-hsun knew what was in his mind and said: "My young friend, you must be studying for the attainment of Tao, else how could you labour thus?" The other still dissembled his motives, until Tzu-hsun said: "Why don't you tell me the truth instead of keeping up these hollow pretences? I know what is at the back of your mind. The nobles wish to meet me. Well, I won't grudge the trouble of a journey if it leads to your obtaining a good appointment. Go back to the capital, and on such-and-such a day I will come." The youth, much delighted, took his leave, and on arriving at the capital told the nobles all that his master had said.

When the appointed day came, the latter had not yet started on his journey, so the young man's parents came to make inquiries. "Ah," said Tzu-hsun, "you are afraid that I have forgotten my promise, and will cause your son to break faith with the nobles, thus forfeiting his official post. I am just having a meal, after which I will start without delay." In half a day he covered the two thousand *li* to the capital, where he was at once met by the youth with respectful salutations. When he asked who it was that wished to see him, the youth replied: "A great many persons, Sir, and they deem it no hardship to travel withersoever you may happen to be."—"A thousand *li* do not fatigue me," replied Tzu-hsun, "so how can I grudge a matter of a few paces? Tell those who want to see me to stay at home, and to-morrow I will pay a visit to each man's house." The youth reported these words to the nobles, and they all refrained from going abroad, but had their houses swept and garnished.

When the time came, Tzu-hsun duly appeared: in every one of the twenty-three homes there was a Tzu-hsun! Each of the courtiers believed that his own particular house had been visited first; but the next morning, when they went to Court and asked each other at what hour Tzu-hsun had been to their respective homes, it turned out that all the twenty-three had received him at exactly the same time. He had been seen by all dressed in the same clothes and presenting the same general appearance, only the words he had used varied according to the conversation of each particular host. The whole capital was struck with wonder and amazement at such a miraculous feat….

Instances of the power to make oneself seen in two places at once are to be found in the records of the Roman Church, St. Anthony of Padua being a notable example. "Bilocation" is the term used for such phenomena, but the foregoing would be more accurately described as "multi location".

Tzu-hsun arrived at the house of one Master Ch'en and said: "To-morrow at noon I must depart." Ch'en inquired whether his journey would be long or short, to which he replied: "I shall return no more." Ch'en provided him with a single garment made of summer cloth, and when the hour came Tzu-hsun simply died. He lay rigid, with hands and feet crossed like pieces of bent iron, so that it was impossible to straighten them. A mysterious blend of the five perfumes arose from the corpse and penetrated into the neighbouring streets.

The association of sweet smells with virtuous qualities is illustrate, by our own phrase "the odour of sanctity". Here again we may instance St. Anthony, who both in life and death carried with him a fragrant aroma.

The body was now placed in the coffin, but before it had been carried out for burial a sucking noise was heard inside the coffin, followed by a thunder-clap and a dazzling flash which lighted up the whole house. The mourners flung themselves on the ground, and when after sometime they ventured to look up they found that the lid of the coffin had been split into pieces and tossed into the air, while the coffin itself was empty except for a single shoe. A few minutes later, a cavalcade with flutes and drums was heard passing along the highway: it made straight for the east and vanished.

Its destination being presumably the Isles of the Blest.

Tzu-hsun was never seen again; but for a hundred days and more after his departure a fragrant perfume hung about the main road for a distance of some thirty *li*.

S.H.C.

VI. THE THREE KINGDOMS (A.D. 221-277)

KUAN LU

KUAN LU, also called Kung-ming, was a native of P'ing-yuan [in Shantung]. His features were coarse and ugly, and his manners lacking in dignity. Much addicted to wine and good cheer, and fond of his joke, he would only associate with congenial spirits. Hence he was an object of affection to many, though not regarded with particular veneration. At the age of eight or nine he was very fond of gazing at the stars, and was always asking what their names were. At night he would not go to sleep, and his parents found it impossible to keep him from his favourite occupation. "Although I am only a little boy," he said, "I do love looking at the patterns in the sky." He also used to say: "Even barn-door fowls and wild herons know about the seasons: how much more should man!" When playing at mud-pies with the urchins of the neighbourhood, he would draw pictures of the sun, moon, and stars on the ground. All his sayings and repartees were highly original, and his seniors were unable to get the better of him in argument. Everyone knew he was destined to be a man of extraordinary talent…

The magistrate of Hsin-tu had a wife and daughter who were afflicted with nervous terrors which developed into a serious malady. He got Kuan Lu to investigate the cause by means of stalk-divination, and the latter said: "On the west side of your house two dead men are buried, one with a spear in his hand, the other holding a bow and arrow. Their heads lie just inside the wall of the house, and their feet are outside. The man with the spear is the cause of the severe headaches from which your two patients suffer, while the man with the bow and arrow is responsible for the pain in the region of the heart which prevents them from eating and drinking. During the daytime these spirits are roaming about, but when night comes they are a plague to human

beings, causing nervous terrors." The skeletons were immediately dug up and removed, whereupon both patients recovered….

Hsii Chi-lung, magistrate of Ch'ing-ho, once took thirteen different articles which he placed in a box, and then asked Kuan Lu to guess what they were: "There are thirteen different things in here," replied the latter, "jumbled all together. The first is a hen's egg; the second is the chrysalis of a silk-worm"—and so he went on, naming each article in turn. His only mistake was when he said a fine-toothed comb instead of a large-toothed one.

Kuan Lu was accompanying the army of Wei on its march to the west when he came to the tomb of Wu-ch'iu Chien. Seized with a fit of melancholy, he leant against a tree and began to chant a doleful ditty. Someone asked him why he did so, whereupon he said: "This is a fine grove of trees, but it does not appear likely to last long; this is a beautiful monument, but it will not be preserved for posterity. The Black Warrior hides his head, the Green Dragon has no feet, the White Tiger is holding a corpse in his jaws, the Red Bird is wailing and lamenting.

These are the animals commonly used as symbols for the four quadrants into which the heavens are divided.

The four signs of danger are all present: this means that his whole clan is doomed to extinction."

In which case the family tombs would remain untended and fall into ruin.

Two years had not passed before this prophecy was fulfilled….

In the second year of Cheng-yuan [A.D. 255] Kuan Lu's younger brother Ch'en said to him: "The Commander-in-Chief has taken you into great favour: are you not looking forward to wealth and honours?" But Kuan Lu sighed deeply and replied: "I know the portion allotted to me. Heaven has bestowed on me intellectual gifts, but has not granted me length of years…. I am not fated to rule over the living, but am going to Mount T'ai to rule over the spirits of the dead." Ch'en wanted to know the grounds of his misgiving, and Kuan Lu said: "There is no bone of life in my forehead, no essence of stability in my eyes, no beam and pillar to my nose. My back, my belly, and

the sole of my foot all lack the marks of longevity. Moreover, I was born in the night during an eclipse of the moon. Heaven has its immutable laws which it is impossible to escape. First and last, I have predicted the death of more than a hundred persons, and have never made a mistake."

In the 8th moon of the same year Kuan Lu was appointed an Assistant-Governor, and in the 2nd moon of the following year he died at the age of forty-eight.

S.K.C

Kuan Lu was travelling to his native place when he saw a youth who was cutting wheat in a field. He heaved a deep sigh as he passed him, which made the youth inquire the cause of his melancholy.—"What is your name?" asked Kuan Lu. On being told that it was Chao Yen, he said: "I was only sad to think that your span of years would not exceed twenty." When pressed further, he added: "Our destinies are controlled by Heaven, and I can do nothing to save you." The youth ran home and told his father, and together they caught up Kuan Lu before he had gone far along the road. In response to their entreaties that he would rescue the son from such an untimely fate, Kuan Lu said: "His destiny is not in my hands, but I will do my best for you. Go home and prepare a flagon of wine and a joint of venison, then await my arrival." They followed these instructions, and on the morrow Kuan Lu appeared in due course. "South of the spot," he said, "where you were cutting wheat yesterday, there is a large mulberry tree. Under this tree you will find two men playing a game of *wei-ch'i*.

"Surrounding chequers", a game in which the object is to place pips on a large-sized chess-board in such a way as to enclose and capture territory.

Go up to them, and place these viands before them, replenishing their cups as soon as they are empty. If they question you, be careful not to say a word, but only bow. This perchance may save you. I will remain here until you return."

Chao Yen did as he was bid: he found the two men playing *wei-ch'i*, and so absorbed were they in the game that they finished the wine and venison without noticing him. At last the game came to an end, and the man who was sitting on the north side raised his head. When he saw Chao Yen waiting on

them, he cried out in anger: “What do you mean by coming here?” The youth, however, only bowed and made no reply. Thereupon the man on the south side said to his companion: “I am afraid we look rather silly. Here we have been drinking all this man’s wine, and eating up his venison. Ought we not to show him some gratitude?”—“That is all very well,” replied the other; “but the warrant is already drawn up and cannot be altered now.”—“May I have a look at it?” said his companion; and, taking the document, he saw that the length of life therein assigned to Chao Yen was some nineteen years. “Why, there is no difficulty here,” he cried; “the figures only need transposing.” And, making a flick with his pen, he said to the youth: “We hereby guarantee that you will live until the age of ninety-one.”

This is a slight modification of the original, necessary in translation. The Chinese numbers are *shih chiu* (19) and *chiu shih* (90) respectively.

At these words, Chao Yen was unable to contain himself for joy: making a low obeisance, he hurried home, where Kuan Lu congratulated him on the welcome addition to his years.—“The man sitting on the south side,” he said, “was the Spirit of the Southern Dipper [a constellation consisting of six stars], and the man on the north, the Spirit of the Northern Dipper [the seven stars known to us as the Great Bear]: they preside over birth and death respectively. Every person born into the world passes from the domain of the former into that of the latter; and all prayers for longevity have accordingly to be submitted to the Spirit of the Northern Dipper.” The grateful parent wished to load Kuan Lu with rich presents, but he refused to take anything.

S.S.C.

CHIAO HSIEN

Chiao Hsien was a native of Ho-tung [Shansi]. At the age of 170 he was in the habit of eating white stones after boiling them thoroughly like yams, and used to distribute them to others. Every day he went into the mountains to cut fuel which he gave away to the headman and other villagers in turn, after which he began afresh. Carrying the fuel on his back, he would deposit it outside each man’s door. Anyone who happened to see him would spread a

mat and invite him in to partake of a meal. Chiao Hsien would then sit down but say not a word to his host. If he saw no one when he came with his fuel, he would put it down silently at the door and go away. So it went on year after year.

When the House of Wei established their dynasty, he was dwelling on the bank of the Yellow River, having built himself a thatched hut in which he lived quite alone. He had no proper bed, but sat on a straw mattress. His body was dirty, as if he had been soused in liquid mud. Sometimes he would go several days without eating. In walking he did not keep to the path. He shunned the company of women. When his clothes wore out he would sell some firewood in order to buy old garments to replace them. Winter and summer alike, he wore clothing of a single thickness.

The Governor Tung Ching went to pay him a visit, but Hsien refused to speak to him. This only heightened Ching's opinion of his worth. Eventually his hut was caught in a forest fire, and men who came to look for Hsien found him sitting upright and motionless under the roof. When the fire had burnt itself out and the hut lay in ashes, Hsien got up quite calmly, and then it appeared that his clothes were not even singed.

After he had made himself another hut, there suddenly came a great snowfall which wrecked a large number of houses. Hsien's hut collapsed, and a party of rescuers, seeing no trace of him, feared that he must have frozen to death. But on digging their way into the hut they found him fast asleep under the snow, with a ruddy face and breathing freely, just like one lying drunk in the height of summer.

People recognized that he was no ordinary being, and many wished to learn from him about Tao; but Hsien declared that there was no Tao in him. Thus he continued, now old and now young, for more than two hundred years. At last he parted from his fellow men and went no one knows whither. Those who had questioned him got not a single word to appease their curiosity.

Somebody having asked Huang-fu Mi what kind of man Chiao Hsien was, he replied: "I am not able fully to under-stand him, but can speak from superficial observation only. What the world in general desires is honour and sensual gratification. Clothes are required by the human form, shelter is necessary for our bodies, the mouth cannot do without speech, the heart cannot endure the utter lack of kith and kin. Yet Chiao Hsien renounces honour and the pleasures of the senses, he does without clothes, without

house, without kindred. He keeps his mouth shut and speaks not, he makes the universe his roof-tree, he is in mystic unity with the antecedents of supreme Tao, he transcends the world of phenomena and enters into the seclusion of Primordial Stillness. No man is able to fathom his thoughts; the breadth of the Four Seas cannot encompass his mind…. Danger and stress cause him no qualm, honours and affections do not entangle his spirit. He lets not his ears and eyes be defiled by sights and sounds. He has planted his foot in the domain where no hurt is, and has established himself in the realm of independence. His length of years, exceeding those of the centenarian, cannot be reckoned even by his oldest acquaintance. He has been one and the same ever since the time of the Emperor Fu Hsi.

K.S.C.

VII. DIVISION INTO NORTH AND SOUTH

WU MÊNG

WU MENG was a native of Pu-yang [in Hunan] and served as an official in the Kingdom of Wu. By disposition he was an extraordinarily filial son.

He is ranked among the twenty-four paragons of filial piety.

He fell in with the great adept Ting I, who presented him with a number of divine prescriptions, besides which he acquired all manner of secret arts, celestial charms, and feats of Taoist magic. Once when a storm was raging, he wrote out a charm and threw it on the roof, where a black crow seized it in its beak and flew away. The wind instantly dropped. Asked why he had done this, he replied that a boat on the Southern Lake had been caught in the storm, and that on board was a Taoist priest who had prayed to be saved from the peril. On investigation this turned out to be true.

After Yu Ch'ing, magistrate of Hsi-an, had lain dead for three days, Meng declared that his allotted span was not yet exhausted: "I must go and lodge a complaint before God," he said. So he lay down to sleep beside the corpse,

That is to say, his *hun* or spiritual soul temporarily left his body.

and after a few more days both he and the magistrate rose to life again.

After this, Meng returned to Yu-chang [in Kiangsi] with one of his disciples. The Yangtse River happened to be in flood, so that no one could cross. But he pointed the white feather fan in his hand across the stream, and lo! a path was opened and left dry for them, by which they crossed over in a

leisurely manner. As soon as they were safely over, the water resumed its former course, much to the astonishment of the onlookers.

S.S.C.

This recalls the legend of Moses with his rod, parting the waters of the Red Sea.

See Exodus xiv, 16, 21.

In Shu, where an epidemic was raging, Meng effected many marvellous cures with magic water. He was arrested by the rebel general Wang Tun, but escaped and reached home in his boat in a single night. His disciples noticed that the boat did not actually touch the water, but was being borne along by two dragons with eyes as big as saucers.

Y.C.C.C.

In the Lu mountains [near Kiukiang] there is a bridge called the Bridge of the Three Rocks. Though some hundreds of feet long, it is not quite a foot in width, and it spans what seems to be a bottomless abyss. Taking a disciple with him, Wu Meng climbed the mountain and crossed over this bridge. They came upon an old man sitting under a cassia tree, and catching 'sweet dew liquor' in a jade goblet which he presented to Meng. A little further on they saw a small party of men preparing 'jade-fat' for him.

On certain sacred mountains there are hollows emitting a gentle stream of air which condenses into jade-fat. This is used as food for the prolongation of life.

The disciple purloined a piece of jade, with the intention of exhibiting it to his friends later on; and immediately the bridge shrank in size to a finger's breadth. Meng made the disciple return and replace the precious stone; then, grasping him by the hand and bidding him shut his eyes, he drew him back across the bridge in safety.

S.C.C.

Two different accounts are given of Wu Meng's end. One says that he died, but that his body retained all the appearance of life. It had vanished, moreover, before the time came for the funeral. Another describes how he soared heavenwards in a jewelled car drawn by white deer, and vanished into space.

SUN TENG

Sun Teng dwelt in a cave on the North Mountain in the prefecture of Chi [in Honan]. In summer, he made himself garments of plaited straw; in winter he covered himself only with his long hair. He was an expert in the art of whistling without a break, and he loved to read the Canon of Changes and to thrum a one-stringed lute. By temperament he was prone neither to joy nor to anger.

Once, we are told, in the hope of seeing him angry, a man pitched him into the river, but when Sun Teng had scrambled out, he only burst into fits of laughter.

The high-born statesman Hsi K'ang accompanied him in his wanderings for three years, yet whenever he questioned his Master about his aims, he could get no reply. When about to leave him, Hsi K'ang said: "After all this time, Sir, have you no word for me?" Sun Teng replied: "You know what fire is, don't you? It has the natural property of giving light, but not of using that light; yet its importance depends on the use made of its light. In man, intellectual capacity is a natural gift, but not the use made of that capacity; yet his worth depends on the use he makes of it. The use of light is contingent on a supply of fuel wherewith to preserve its radiance; and the use of intellect consists in acquiring a knowledge of Pure Truth so as to keep one's life immune from harm." Hsi K'ang also asked for instruction in playing the lute, but Sun Teng would not teach him. "Your intellectual capacity is great," he said, "but your knowledge is small. It will be difficult for you to pass unscathed through the world of to-day." This prophecy was verified later on, when Hsi K'ang met his fate in the Lu An affair.

He was involved in the disgrace of his friend Lu An, and executed along with him. It may be added that he himself is regarded as a hsien.

During his imprisonment he wrote a poem of self-censure containing the lines:

"*Erstwhile I was abashed when I thought of Hsia Hui;*
And now I am conscience-stricken when I remember Sun Teng."

In the end, Sun Teng rose up to heaven in broad daylight.

L.H.C. (H.C.)

Lin-hsia Hui was a governor of eminent virtue in the Lu State, who lived a little before Confucius.

Sun Teng, it is said, was seen by many successive generations, but his appearance never seemed to change. He used to beg for cash in the market-place, and then distribute them to the poor, though he himself had no other means of subsistence and was never seen eating. Yang Chun, who was at that time Grand Tutor, sent somebody to interrogate him, but Sun Teng made no reply. Once Yang Chun presented him with a cloth robe, which he accepted; but as soon as he got outside the gate, he borrowed a knife and slashed it in various places, threw it down on the threshold, and finally cut it into pieces. Everybody thought that he was mad, but afterwards it was realized that he was enacting in advance the impending slaughter and mutilation of Yang Chun himself. The latter now ordered his detention, whereupon Sun Teng lay down and died. Yang Chun provided a coffin and buried him at the Swaying Bridge, but a few days later he was seen alive….

S.H.C.

KO HUNG

Ko Hung was a native of Chu-jung in Tan-yang [in Kiangsu]. He was a studious lad, and his family being poor, he worked as a wood-cutter in order to provide himself with pens and paper. Much of the night he would spend in writing and in reciting what he had learnt; thus he soon acquired some reputation as a scholar. Being of a contented disposition, he had no great craving for pleasure; a simple fellow, awkward of speech, he hankered not after money or distinction. When the doors were closed at night, he swept the floor and never sought the company of his fellows. Sometimes, when on the quest for a book or the meaning of a certain passage, he would think nothing

of travelling immense distances over rugged and difficult country in order to get what he wanted. He was a great reader of old books, being especially interested in the secrets of hsienship and the physical exercises and training involved therein.

His great uncle was the famous adept Ko Hsuan, one of whose disciples became Ko Hung's teacher and passed on to him the secret of the elixir.

When Shih Ping started his rebellion in the T'ai-an period (A.D. 302-3), Hung received a special commission as captain, attacked Shih Ping's lieutenant and defeated him. For this service he was promoted to the post of "Wave-quelling General."

Not merely a complimentary title, but a military distinction of definite rank.

After the rising had been suppressed, he became military adviser to the Governor of Canton, and continued to stay in the south for many years, disregarding all the summonses he received from the capital. At last he returned home, and was rewarded with the title of Marquis.

Feeling the weight of years, he was now anxious to compound the elixir so as to secure immortality; and having heard that cinnabar was produced in Chiao-chih [part of Annam], he begged for an appointment in that neighbourhood. To this the Emperor objected that Hung's official standing was too high for such a post. But when Hung explained that he cared not for distinction, and that the cinnabar was what attracted him, the Emperor let him have his way. Accordingly, accompanied by his son and nephew, he travelled again to Canton. Here his friend the Governor detained him, and would not hear of his continuing the journey; so Hung stopped on Mount Lo-fou, and there prepared the magic drug.

For a number of years he wandered at will among the mountains, cultivating Tao and writing ceaselessly, until at last he passed away as though he were falling asleep. He was 81 years old, yet his complexion was that of a new-born babe, and his whole body, too, was soft and supple. When they raised the corpse to put it in the coffin, it was as light as an empty suit of clothes. The general belief was that he had merely been released from the flesh and become a hsien.

The last section of Ko Hung's *Pao P'o Tzu* is devoted to what is perhaps the only extant example of a hsien's autobiography. Written primarily as an Apologia, it contains much that is refreshingly candid in the way of self-analysis. The few extracts that follow will give some idea of its contents.

I was of a rustic habit, slow-witted and stammering. My exterior was clumsy and unprepossessing, my dress shabby and dirty, but this caused me no shame. Conservative in my taste, I steadfastly refused to follow the dictates of fickle fashion, whether it was the mode to wear broad collars and expansive girdles, or tight waists and long sleeves, or flowing skirts that swept the ground, or short ones that did not cover the feet. In speech I was truthful, and eschewed all jesting and raillery. Unless I found a congenial spirit, I would always remain silent. Hence the people of my district spoke of me as the Simple Scholar, a nickname which I adopted for my book.

That is to say, *Pao P'o Tzu*, which was his chief work.

My constitution was feeble, and I was often ill. I was too poor to afford a horse and carriage, yet not strong enough to go everywhere on foot; besides, the exercise of walking was naturally distasteful to me. Hence I kept much to myself, and lived in solitude with my pen….

After, a distinctly self-satisfied account of his military career, he explains his reasons for refusing to take up another post.

I felt that I was at the parting of the ways: unless I renounced the world and its affairs, how could I devote myself to stillness and mysticism? Yet I could not entirely abandon the life of a scholar. As I said to myself with a sigh: "Tao is not confined to the mountains and forests. The reason why the ancient devotees of Tao retired thither was that they wished to get away from the noise and clamour which might have disturbed the tranquillity of their souls."…

At the age of fifteen or sixteen I had written verses and various other things which at the time seemed to me worthy of publication. But on looking at them again a few years later, I found much in them to displease me, and I rejected the whole of this early work. When I was something over twenty, I came to the conclusion that these minor writings were dissipating my energy, and that it would be better to concentrate on a single philosophical work. So I made a

preliminary sketch of my Pao P'o Tzu. But then came the rebellion; and during my wandering life and my exile in the south, parts of the work were lost. More than ten years passed before I was able to complete the book in its final form, the esoteric part in 20 rolls, the exoteric in 50 rolls. This was in the *chien-wu* period (A.D. 317). The esoteric chapters treat of hsien and the drugs necessary for hsienship; of demons and magical transformations; of the conservation of vitality and the attainment of longevity; of the exorcising of evil spirits and the warding off of misfortune: all appertaining to Taoism. The exoteric chapters treat of success and failure in the world of mortals, and of what is good or bad in mundane affairs: philosophy of the orthodox school….

Owing to the poorness of my physique, I took little interest in sports and games. When a small boy, I was not equal to my companions in throwing the tile or in boxing. I never engaged in cock or duck fights, nor attended dog or horse racing.

This has a strangely modern sound. It would appear that in dog racing, as in so many other things, the Chinese anticipated us by hundreds or even thousands of years.

If I see people playing games and gambling, I take no notice of them; and if somebody drags me off to watch them, it makes no impression whatever on my mind, and I fall into a sort of day-dream. Thus it is that even at the present day I do not know how many squares there are on a chess-board, nor the names of the notches on dice. In general, it may be said that such trivial accomplishments tend only to confuse the mind and interfere with every sort of useful activity. They go by the name of pleasure, but in reality they give rise to sorrow, shamelessness, and the spirit of contention, besides causing material losses and leading to quarrels and resentment….

When I began writing this autobiography, some one criticized me for doing so, and asked why I should have any misgivings as to the verdict of posterity. To this I replied that man's life was fleeting and insecure, and my own position singularly unstable. I had been in conflict with the age, had no influence or friends at Court. No history had sounded my praises, nor had my fame been perpetuated by inscriptions on bronze. Although this

autobiography might not advantage me in my own lifetime, yet it would serve to hand my memory down to future times.

P.P.T.

KUO P'O

Kuo P'o was a contemporary of Ko Hung, and the lifetime of these two men forms a very important epoch in the history of Taoism. What Ko Hung did for alchemy, Kuo p'o may be said to have done for the dissemination of *feng-shui* ("wind and water") or Chinese geomancy. According to him, the art of burial consists in collecting and utilizing the vital currents which are formed underground out of the essence of *yin* and *yang*. These currents are dispersed by wind, but checked in their flow by the neighbourhood of water. Hence the prime object of geomancy is to cut off unpropitious winds, and above all to round up the vital currents by the proper disposition of Water. Generally speaking, then, *wind* is the noxious influence to be warded off, *water* the beneficial clement to be attracted.

Kuo P'o was a classical scholar of wide learning and eminent talents, though halting in conversation, and his poems were the best of all those produced in the period following the civil war of the Three Kingdoms. He was interested in the archaic script and out-of-the-way characters, and was a marvellous adept at sorcery and divination.

When troubles broke out in the country north of the Yellow River, P'o threw his divining slips in order to forecast future developments. "Alas!" he sighed, "the black-haired people are about to be submerged by an alien race, and I fear our native homesteads will be turned into barbarian wastes."

Alluding to the irruption of Turkic tribes into Shansi.

Thereupon he secretly collected his friends and relations, and travelled about in all directions to dozens of families, urging them to flee the country and betake themselves to the south-east. Kuo P'o now proceeded to Lu-chiang [in Anhwei], where Hu Meng-k'ang was governor. At that time the district between the Huai and the Yangtse was enjoying perfect peace, and Meng-k'ang, lulled into a sense of security, had no mind to retreat south of the great river. P'o had recourse to divination, and obtained in response the single word "Ruin", but Meng-k'ang still refused to be convinced. In urging the

people to pack up and go, P'o was actuated to some extent by a passion for one of his host's servant-girls. Finding no other means of getting hold of her, he took three peck-measures of small beans and scattered them in a circle about his host's dwelling. Early the next morning the latter saw several thousand men in scarlet surrounding the place, who however vanished when he approached to examine them more closely. Much disturbed by this vision, he begged P'o to consult the mystic diagrams on his behalf. P'o did so, and told him that he ought not to keep that particular girl in his household: "You should have her conveyed," he said, "twenty li away from here towards the south-east, and there put her up for sale; but be careful not to haggle over the price. Thus you may get rid of this uncanny manifestation." The other did as he was told, and P'o secretly commissioned a man to buy the girl for him at a low price. Then he wrote out a charm and threw it into the well, whereupon all the men in scarlet appeared with their hands bound behind their backs, and making for the well, jumped into it one after another. P'o's host was overjoyed, and P'o himself went off with the girl. Only a month or two ater Lu-chiang fell into the hands of the Tartars….

This un-hsienlike behaviour may prejudice us against Kuo P'o. But the next anecdote shows that he was at any rate a useful man in an emergency.

The Emperor's chief minister, Wang Tao, had a high opinion of Kuo P'o, and retained him as military adviser on his own staff. Once, when he had bidden him consult the diagrams, P'o replied: "Your Excellency is in danger of being struck by lightning. Order your men to drive some distance to the west, and fetch a cypress tree. Have this cut down to the length of your body, and keep it in the apartment where you are accustomed to sleep. In this way the mischief will be averted." Wang Tao acted on this advice; and, indeed, a few days later a thunderbolt fell, smashing the cypress log to atoms….

Afterwards Kuo P'o entered the service of Wang Tun, then plotting rebellion, who asked him to consult his divining slips as to the outcome. P'o returned the answer: "No success." This confirmed Tun in his suspicion that P'o had had dealings with his enemies; and having been told that the diagrams were also unfavourable, he went on to inquire how long he was going to live. P'o replied: "My previous reading of the diagrams, Sir, makes

it clear that if you embark on this enterprise, disaster will overtake you ere long; but if you remain quietly at Wu-ch'ang, your length of years will be beyond computation." This made, Tun very angry: "Now tell me, please," he said, "how long your own life will last."—"My allotted span," replied P'o, "comes to an end this very day." In a rage, Tun had him arrested and taken out to the South Hill for execution. Kuo P'o was then forty-nine years of age.

C.S.

One author makes this acid comment on his fate: "Those who are expert in divination must surely know when it is advantageous to go on or to draw back. Yet both Ching Fang of the Han and Kuo P'o of the Chin, who were masters of the art, suffered a violent death. It would seem, then, that what has been decreed by Heaven is not in man's power to avoid." The Taoists, on the other hand, say that Kuo P'o was seen in another town three days after his execution, wearing his ordinary attire, while his coffin, of course, was found empty. He is believed to have obtained release from the flesh by the "sword method", which will be explained under the next heading.

PAO CHING

Pao Ching was the father-in-law of Ko Hung. His biography contains only one important passage, namely the instruction he received from the hsien Yin Ch'ang-sheng, who said to him:

"Long have you been yearning for Tao. I will initiate you into the secret of hsienship. All those who are not conceived as hsien in their mother's womb can only attain to hsienship by release from the flesh. The better way of obtaining release from the flesh is by means of a sword; the inferior method is by means of bamboo or wood. Dipping your brush into the divine elixir, you write on the sword blade the charm of the Supreme Mystic Yin Sheng, and in a little while the sword is transformed into the shape and appearance of the person who is being translated, and lies quietly on the bed while the real man disappears. But the people of the house see only a corpse, and do not see the sword."

L.H.C.C.

WANG CHIH

This is another tale of the Rip Van Winkle type, highly compressed.

(See under Liu Ch'en, Chapter V.)

Wang Chih was a native of Ch'u-chou [in Chekiang]. He entered a mountain forest to fell trees, and came to a rock cavern in which he found a few old men playing wei-ch'i. Putting down his axe, he stood and watched them. One of the party took up something that looked like a date-stone and handed it to Chih, telling him to suck its juice, when he would find himself immune from hunger and thirst. Then he said to him: "You have been here a good while: you had better go home." Wang Chih picked up his axe, but found that its handle had crumbled away into dust. Quickly he returned to his home, and discovered that several centuries had elapsed! All his relatives and friends had long since disappeared, so he went back to the mountains and finally attained Tao. From time to time he was seen, still alive, by his fellow men.

L.H.C.

T'AO HUNG-CHING

The dynastic history makes Tao Hung-ching live between A.D. 452 and 536. Although he is known primarily as a Taoist adept, a strong Buddhist influence is apparent in the accounts given of his life. His versatility was amazing: scholar, philosopher, calligraphist, musician, alchemist, pharmacologist, astronomer, he may be regarded as the Chinese counterpart of Leonardo da Vinci.

T'ao Hung-ching was a native of Tan-yang [near Chinkiang on the Yangtse]. While yet a boy, he evinced an exceptionally strong character. At the age of ten, having acquired a copy of Ko Hung's *Shen Hsien Chuan*, he set himself to study the work night and day, and was fired with the ambition to cultivate his own spiritual nature. He read a vast number of other books, and was much ashamed if there was anything he did not know. Before he reached manhood he was made a minister by Kao Ti of the Ch'i dynasty, and appointed tutor to the Imperial Princes. Exemption from attendance at Court was granted to him, and although he held this high position, he kept himself in

strict seclusion, having no intercourse with the outer world. In the 10th year of the *yung ming* period (A.D. 492) he petitioned the Throne to be allowed to resign his office and emoluments, and permission to do so was granted him by the Emperor, who bestowed on him a bale of silk, and also instructed the authorities to provide him with five pounds of *fu-ling*

Identified as *Pachyma cocos*, a fungus growing. on the roots of pine and fir trees.

and two pints of white honey every month, in order to facilitate his dietetic experiments.

He now settled on the Mao mountain, beneath which, as he often maintained, was to be found the eighth cave-palace, one of the Ten Greater Celestial Domains, which was 150 li in circumference. Some years later he erected a three-storeyed building, of which he himself occupied the top floor and his disciples the middle floor, while guests were admitted to the ground floor only. He loved the sound of wind in the pines, and had all his courtyards planted with those trees. Occasionally he would wander alone amongst rocks and springs, and everyone who saw him took him for a hsien.

He also constructed a celestial globe, or planetarium, which was about three feet high. The earth was in the middle and remained stationary while the heavens revolved about it. The 28 Stellar Mansions thus fulfilled their periods, and the Seven Bright Ones (sun, moon, and five planets) pursued their courses. The stars were luminous in the dark and faded in the light. The globe was kept constantly revolving by a mechanical device, and the whole thing agreed with the actual motion of the heavens.

When he had received the divine charms and secret formulas from a friend, Hung-ching felt convinced that the elixir could be prepared, only it distressed him that he had none of the necessary drugs. The Emperor, however, gave him pure gold, cinnabar, copperas, realgar, and other minerals, with which he succeeded in compounding a “flying elixir”. It looked like hoar-frost or snow, and when he swallowed some it made his body lighter. The Emperor also took it with good results, and his esteem for Hung-ching increased. He frequently sent him presents with invitations to accept office at Court, which, however, Hung-ching declined. He merely drew a picture of two oxen, one of which was disporting itself in a meadow, while the other was wearing a

golden headstall, and being led by a man who whipped it to make it go. The Emperor laughed and said: “Our friend is not to be won over.” On all important matters of State, however, he was invariably consulted, whence he acquired the sobriquet of “Minister in the Mountains”. One of Hung-ching’s disciples, named Huan K’ai, having attained Tao, was about to ascend on high. His master said to him: “I too have cultivated Tao and practised its teachings with extreme dilligence. Surely there must be some fault in me that I am still kept lingering here on earth.” Accordingly, he commissioned K’ai to make inquiries, and after the latter had ascended to heaven, he returned and told Hung-ching, saying: “O Master! Your secret merit has been abundantly manifested; only in the preparation of your *Materia Medica*

One chapter of this work is still extant.

you have made extensive use of gadflies, leeches, and the like, so that, while deserving well of human beings, you have done injury to other living creatures. On this account twelve years must pass before you can emerge from the husk of your mortality and brush away the dust of this world, to become Supervisor of the Watery Element at the capital of P’eng-lai.” Hung-ching then atoned for his fault by preparing a new edition of his *Materia Medica*, in which he was able to substitute vegetable drugs for those made from living creatures.

One day, although free from illness, he felt that his hour was at hand, and after composing a poem announcing his departure, he died at the age of eighty-five; but his complexion remained unaltered, his limbs were as supple as ever, and a fragrant perfume hovered over the mountain for days together.

L.H.C.C. (condensed).

The foregoing account seems to leave it doubtful whether T’ao Hung-ching in the end attained full hsienship. In another work, too, we are told that he once said: “There are nine obstacles to becoming a hsien, and one of them is fame. That I have not risen to heaven in broad daylight may perhaps be due to the insubstantial fame I have enjoyed under three dynasties.” Yet the great man did become a hsien. Witness the fact that he was still seen among the abodes of men six hundred years after his supposed death. Here is the tale:

T’ao Hung-ching once dreamed that a spirit appeared to him and said: “The hills are behind you, the sea in front, a golden box and a jade coffer on either hand: in this place you may keep your cinnabar.” Accordingly he buried his cinnabar there; and every night after that the local fishermen used to descry the light of flames.

At the beginning of the *shao-hsing* period (A.D. 1131) a villager, when digging up the soil, found three porcelain boxes of different sizes, containing a reddish-brown mineral like rusty iron. One who lived near by, Lu Chih by name, got possession of the find and kept it for six months. Then a wandering Taoist, called the Hermit of Mount Mao, appeared on the scene. Lu was much charmed by his conversation, and showed him the cinnabar, at which he expressed his astonishment. It was late in the night before they sought their beds, and when morning came, both the stranger and the cinnabar had disappeared.

N.H.H.C.

VII. T'ANG DYNASTY (A.D. 618-907)

YEH FA-SHAN

Among the throng of wizards and adepts favoured by the earlier T'ang emperors Yeh Fa-shan was one of the most prominent. He is said to have been born in A.D. 616, and to have died at the age of 107.

HIS ancestors for three generations had been Taoists, and were skilled in the arts of divination and the preservation of vitality. Secret charms were imparted to him as a boy, which gave him the power of holding spirits in subjection. The Emperor Kao Tsung heard of his fame, and invited him to come to the capital. Here he wanted to confer on him rank and office, but Fa-shan steadfastly declined them, and asked only to be a Taoist. Accordingly, he was installed in a temple attached to the Palace and treated very liberally. On one occasion Fa-shan was sacrificing before an altar which he had erected in the Ling-k'ung Temple, while a crowd of men and women watched the proceedings. Suddenly thirty or forty persons threw themselves into the flames. The onlookers were horrified, and hastened to pull them back to safety. But Fa-shan smiled and said: "These people were all possessed by disease-demons, which have been detected by my magic art." Inquiry proved this to be true, and the sufferers went away cured.

C.T.S.

The Feast of Lanterns, on the 15th night of the 1st moon, was being celebrated in the grounds of the Palace with lavish profusion. The Imperial Artificer had designed a twelve-storeyed belvedere, 150 feet in height, made of coloured silk and hung with blue and gold ornaments, jade and other precious stones, which tinkled harmoniously in the lightest breeze. The

lanterns, made in the shape of prancing dragons, phoenixes, tigers and leopards, showed a degree of inventive skill hardly attainable by man.

Yeh Fa-shan, hurriedly summoned by the Emperor to behold the spectacle, admired it greatly: "Only the display at Liang-chou [in Kansu] can compare with it," he said. "Why, have you been there so lately?" asked the Emperor. "I had just come from there," replied Fa-shan, "when I received your Majesty's summons." The Emperor was puzzled by this, and said: "If wanted to go there now, could I do so?"—"With the greatest of ease," replied Fa-shan; and he bade the Emperor shut his eyes, recommending him not to take a peep, as otherwise he might be terrified by what he saw. The Emperor followed his advice, and with one bound they found themselves flying through the upper air. When their feet touched earth again, Fa-shan said: "Now you may gaze your fill." And they beheld row upon row of lanterns extending for miles in continuous array amid tightly packed horses and chariots and vast crowds of sightseers. The Emperor expressed his wonder at the scene, and after a while Fa-shan said: "Now we have enjoyed the spectacle, we must go back." So once again the Emperor shut his eyes and rose up with his companion into the void. In an instant they were back in their original position at the foot of the belvedere, where songs and music were still in progress….

The Tibetans sent an envoy to Hsuan Tsung with a richly carved box which he was entreated to open himself, so that no one else should discover the wonderful secret within. The other courtiers remained silent, but Fa-shan, scenting mischief, persuaded the Emperor not to open the box himself, but to make the envoy do so. And no sooner had the lid been raised than a hidden cross-bow came into action and shot the envoy dead….

Chang Yueh, Duke of Wei,

Distinguished as a painter and poet.

visited Fa-shan at his temple, and wine was served. As there was no other guest, the Master mentioned that there lived on the premises a certain retired scholar Ch'u,

The word means yeast or barm, used for fermenting liquor.

who had long been a recluse, with an impediment in his speech, but a great wine-bibber. At the Duke's request he was brought in, and turned out to be a squat figure hardly three feet high, with a waist of enormous girth. His salutations were clumsily performed, after which he addressed himself exclusively to the liquor. Bowl after bowl was emptied, yet his face remained quite expressionless. When the Duke was about to take his leave, the Master suddenly began to brandish his sword and abuse Mr. Ch'u, shouting: "Far from engaging in lofty conversation or profitable discourse, you have done nothing but immerse yourself in wine like a sot. What good is that?" With these words he cut off his head, and lo! it was only a large wine-cask.…

Fa-shan had arranged to make a sea-trip to Kua-chou [in Chekiang], and the boatmen were waiting for him when they saw two old men, one dressed in yellow and the other in white, who settled down on the shore and decided to while away the time with a game of wei-ch'i. So they made a beckoning gesture in the air, and an imp emerged from the water, his clothes showing no trace of wet. He was told to bring a chess-board and wine, and they sat down to their game after having agreed that "the winner should eat the Taoist who was coming on the morrow from the north". They laughed heartily at this gibe, and began putting down their pips. After a while the man in white exclaimed: "You have lost, my dear Sir! Though he is a succulent morsel, I hope you won't poach on my preserves!" Then they strolled out a long distance over the water and sank beneath the surface.

The boatmen, realizing that mischief was intended to Fa-shan, felt very uneasy, and when the Household Officer came along, informed him of what had passed. He too was much alarmed, and told Fa-shan what he had heard. But the latter only smiled and said: "Indeed! Happily there is no cause for anxiety" The boat had no sooner put off than a fierce storm arose, obscuring the light day. The other people on board grew pale with fear, but Fa-shan said quietly to his attendants: "Take my black charm and throw it over the bows." Directly this was done, the waves subsided and all was still, and they soon accomplished their voyage. Fa-shan then told the boatmen that they would find a huge fish somewhere within a radius of ten *li*. And, sure enough, a white fish over a hundred feet long and thirty spans in girth was discovered

lying stark and stranded on a sand-bank. They chopped it up into slices, and it provided several months' food for the neighbouring hamlets.

T.P.K.C.

At noon on the 3rd day of the 6th moon, the Holy Man turned his sword into the semblance of a corpse. A cloud chariot drove up to his door, strains of celestial music filled the house, a rainbow cloud enveloped him, exquisite perfumes spread abroad, and he departed with his cortege. During the whole of that day, a column of blue smoke was seen by the citizens rising straight up to heaven from the courtyard of the temple.

T.Y.C.J.C.

LO KUNG-YUAN

Lo Kung-yuan was a native of O-chou [Wu-ch'ang]. The prefect of that place gave a feast in celebration of spring, and spectators poured into the city. Among them was a man dressed in white, over ten feet in height,

The Chinese foot-measure is shorter than the English foot, but has varied at different periods.

and very strange in his appearance. He came along with the crowd, and the gate-keepers all wondered at him. Just then a youth passed by, and shouted angrily to the stranger: "Hi! you there: why have you left the place where you belong, and come to frighten these officials? Get out as fast as you can!" Thereupon the man picked up his skirts and ran away. But the police runners took the youth into custody, and having brought him into the banqueting hall, informed the prefect of the affair. The latter asked what his name was, and he replied: "My surname is Lo, my personal name is Kung-yuan. Ever since I was a child I have been interested in Taoist arts. I just happened to catch sight of the Keeper of the River Dragons, who had come ashore to see the fun, and I sent him about his business." The prefect did not believe this story,

and said: “You will have to show him to me in his proper shape.”—“Very well,” was the reply, “if you will kindly wait until to-morrow.”

When the time came, the youth dug a small pit by the river bank, just one foot deep, and about ten feet away from the water’s edge. This is filled with water. While the prefect and other citizens were looking doubtfully at these preparations, a white fish, five or six inches long, came swimming down with the current and leapt into the pool. It gradually increased in size, and a thin column of blue smoke began to rise out of the water. Very soon a dark haze filled the sky, making it hard to distinguish one object from another. Kung-yuan then said: “Let us adjourn to the Court house.” But before they had got there, lightning flashed, and a deluge of rain followed. When this had abated, they saw a huge white dragon in the middle of the river, with its head touching the clouds. A moment later it had vanished.

Now it happened that Hsuan Tsung was passionately fond of hsien magic, so the prefect sent Kung-yuan to the Court, together with a memorial recounting the miracle. The Emperor was playing wei-ch’i with Chang Kuo

One of the “Eight Immortals”. See Chapter IX.

and Yeh Fa-shan. When these two saw the newcomer, they burst out laughing and said: “What on earth can this village lad have to teach us?” Each then took a handful of *wei-ch’i* pips and asked him: “What have we got in our closed fists?” Kung-yuan replied: “Nothing at all.” They opened their hands, and sure enough they were empty, all the pips being held by Kung-yuan! The Emperor was dumbfounded, and directed that he should be seated in the same order of seniority as Chang and Yeh.

There was a certain fruit known as ‘sun-ripened berries’ which was then for the first time being brought to the Court from the distant province of Chien-nan. It was fetched by the magic arts of Chang and Yeh, and used to arrive every day just after noon. On this day, however, night came without the fruit. The two magicians looked at each other and said: “Can this be the work of Master Lo?” It was cold weather, and they were sitting round the stove. Kung-yuan, who had previously stuck a chopstick in the fire, now laughed and drew it out. Soon afterwards the fruit arrived. Yeh questioned the bearer as to the delay, and he said: “When I was just about to reach the capital,

blazing fire filled the heavens, and there was no way for me to pass. A few moments ago the fire died away, and I was able to get through." Thenceforward, everyone treated Kung-yuan with the utmost deference.

Next we come to a somewhat meagre and unimaginative account of a visit to the moon, which may be omitted. The following episode deals with another remarkable case of "multilocation".

Hsuan Tsung took lessons from Kung-yuan in the art of making himself invisible, but could not get the latter to disclose the whole secret, so that either a piece of his robes or a corner of his hat could always be seen. He inquired the reason, and Kung-Yuan replied: "Your Majesty is unable to cast away the Empire like an old shoe, and is only making a game of Tao. Were you complete master of all my magical arts, the bearers of the Imperial seal would be oppressed with the weight of your intellect." This made Hsuan Tsung very angry, and he began cursing his teacher; whereupon Kung-yuan quickly passed into the substance of one of the pillars in the hall, from which coign of vantage he remonstrated with the Emperor on his lack of courtesy. More furious still, the Emperor ordered the pillar to be removed, but when it had been cut away, a loud voice was still heard issuing from the stone pedestal. This also was removed, and on examination was found to be transparent, the form of Kung-yuan, little more than an inch high, being clearly visible within. The pedestal was then smashed to pieces, but in each of the fragments a tiny figure still remained. Thoroughly alarmed, the Emperor now offered an apology, and the figures disappeared.

L.H.C.C.

In other versions of the tale it is generally agreed that the Emperor caused the practical joker to be beheaded. Here we have the sequel.

Some time afterwards, an Imperial envoy was making his way to Shu when he met Kung-Yuan face to face. Taking a sealed envelope from his sleeve, the latter said: "Pray give this to his Majesty, and say it comes from one Wei Ssu-yen. He will understand." On reading the letter, Hsuan Tsung was quite disconcerted; but no sooner had the envoy left the presence than Kung-yuan

himself appeared. “Why have you changed your name?” asked the Emperor. “Your Majesty removed my head,” was the reply, “so I made the same alteration in my name.”

The three characters used for writing ”Wei Ssu-yen” are the same as those for “Lo Kung-yuan” *minus* their tops.

The Emperor humbly admitted his fault and wanted to make amends; but Kung-yuan assured him that the whole affair was merely a joke. “One who has attained hsienship,” he said, “is immune from all calamity. Heaven and Earth might be engulfed, and still he would remain unscathed; how much less could he be injured by ordinary weapons?”

T.P.K.C.

MA HSIANG

Ma Hsiang, better known as Ma Tzu-jan [“Ma the Natural Man”], was a native of Hangchow, and became a petty official in that district.

From another source we learn that “he had an ugly face, a grog-blossom nose, a bald patch over the temples, and a very large mouth”.

The Minister Ma Chih was so impressed with his personality that he said to him: “By a happy chance, we bear the same surname. Let us enter into a bond of brotherhood.” Meeting him again at a banquet, Ma Chih asked to be shown some minor feats of magic. So Hsiang placed a porcelain bowl on his mat, filled it with earth, and sowed a melon seed. In a few moments a melon plant was spreading in every direction, and put forth flowers and fruit. These were picked and handed to the assembled guests, who pronounced them to be delicious, and much superior to ordinary melons in flavour. He went on to extract a great number of coins from all parts of his person right down to his stockings.

Thus anticipating a favourite trick of our modern conjurors. The sequel, however, is something new.

They were thrown on the floor, and all appeared to be good copper cash. Then he swept them together into a well, and uttered a cry, whereupon they all came flying out one by one. They were picked up by the company, but after a while they disappeared again. Ma Chih having happened to remark that the city was infested with rats, Hsiang wrote out a charm, and got someone to stick it up on the south wall. Then he drummed on a bowl with a pair of chopsticks, and gave a long whistle. At once an army of rats appeared, scuttled up under the charm, and stopped there cowering. Hsiang commanded one of the rats, larger than the rest, to approach the dais on which he sat, and addressed it thus: "You diminutive creatures of the furry tribe, Heaven supplies you with food in the shape of grain. Why must you burrow your way through walls and gnaw holes in our dwelling-houses, making yourselves day and night a nuisance to his Excellency? Being tender-hearted, I cannot bring myself to exterminate you utterly, but your leader must in return conduct his hordes away from this town." The large rat then retired, and all the others came forward to make a sort of prostration, as though in contrition for their guilt. This done, they re-formed their ranks and passed out of the city gates in an unending stream. From that time onward the city has been entirely free from rats.

One may wonder if this originated the legend of the Pied Piper of Hamelin.

Later on, Ma Hsiang journeyed south with two Taoist companions, Wang Chih-wei and Wang Yen-sou, and came to a Buddhist monastery where three hundred monks were having a meal. Seeing that Hsiang and the others were just ordinary unescorted wayfarers, they remained squatting and eating their food without troubling to make any polite salutations. They let them have a little rice, but Hsiang refused to touch it, and hurried his companions away to an inn situated at some distance from the monastery.

In the middle of the night voices were heard outside inquiring for three Taoists, and the landlord hastened to tell them that the men they sought were still under his roof. This news appeared to fill the inquirers with great joy, and they begged to be allowed to see them without delay. When they were admitted, they turned out to be two of the monks. After making humble

obeisance, they exclaimed in piteous accents: “Our brethren of the monastery did not recognize you yesterday as men of Tao, and failed to receive you with proper respect, thereby drawing down severe punishment on their heads. Since then, none of the three hundred have been able to rise from their seats. We two alone were not seated, as we were engaged in work at the time, and that is how we were able to follow you hither in order to beg the release of our brethren.”

Hsiang did not reply to this appeal, but continued to slumber, while the other two only laughed. But the monks renewed their supplications with such earnestness that at last Hsiang said: “In future, don’t behave so rudely to strangers. Go home again, and when you enter the monastery you will find that your companions are able to rise from their seats.” The two did as they were bid, and it fell out just as Hsiang had promised….

The three friends continued their journey and put up for the night at another inn. The accommodation here was small, and the place was already crowded, so the innkeeper said jestingly: “There is no room left, but you Taoists can sleep on a wall, and I give you full permission to do that.” Darkness was rapidly coming on, and both Chih-wei and Yen-sou were strongly in favour of staying there for the night, so Hsiang said to them: “Do you sleep in the common room, and I will look after myself.” So saying, he sprang lightly up on to one of the roof-beams, and hanging from it by one leg, went to sleep upside down.

The innkeeper, happening to get up in the night, saw him in this posture by the light of his candle, and was struck dumb with amazement. But Hsiang said: “If I can make a beam do, what prevents me from trying the wall?” And in a trice he had passed into the wall itself, where he remained for a long time. Mine host was now full of apologies, and ushered the other two into his private apartments, where he provided them each with a clean and comfortable bed. The next morning he tried to persuade Hsiang to make a longer stay, but the latter suddenly vanished; and Chih-wei and Yen-sou, having proceeded several *li* in search of him, found him eventually waiting for them by the roadside.

H.H.C.

Ma Hsiang had all the outward appearance of a lunatic. He was in the habit of buying wine on credit from a wine-shop in the street of the White

Pagoda. One day, when flushed with liquor, he said to the owner of the establishment: “Now that I have achieved hsienship, I cannot bear to haggle over the price of the wine that I owe you for.” And, producing the philosopher’s stone from his satchel, he proceeded to turn all the wine-vendor’s iron vessels into glistening gold!

C.H.F.C.

We may fitly conclude with some stanzas attributed to Ma Hsiang. They sum up the philosophic creed of this eccentric hsien.

In days gone by I followed Wei Po-yang as my Master,
And spent half my time lying tipsy on a gilded couch.
He chid me harshly for slothful ways,
And back into the world I went, still a frenzied lover of wine.

Before I awakened to the Truth, I enjoyed no interval of repose;
But now I have shaken off all cares with the dust of mortality.
Let us sing the praises of good wine, precious as jade-juice,
And cease hankering after the charms of female face and form.

With smiles we disguise the bitterness in our heart,
And our hair turns white with the anguish of separation.
Happily, a refuge awaits me in cloud-land:
The illimitable green hills shall be mine!

Wherefore refine cinnabar in order to preserve our youth?
Noise is not in the market-place, not quiet on the mountain tops.
To those in quest of life-prolonging drugs I say:
“The great secret is to take things with an impassive mind.”

S.H.T.K.

IX. THE EIGHT IMMORTALS

About the "Eight Immortals", that figure so frequently in Chinese works of art, much has already been written, but a few words on each of them may not come amiss. Many such groups of eight have been famous in the past, the most ancient, so far as we know, being the Eight Worthies who visited Liu An (see Chapter IV.). The present group was apparently not heard of until the thirteenth century, though most of its members are assigned to the T'ang period. "Nine Immortals" are also mentioned in a manuscript of the seventh century, and their cult appears to have been widespread. One of the nine, having the sight of one eye, acted as leader to the other eight, who were all totally blind. They begged in the street as they went along, and used to perform feats of magic.

Chung-li Ch'uan, the earliest in point of time, seems to have been chiefly responsible for the formation of the group. Tradition makes him a Han general, but there is no real evidence to show that he was an historical personage; and, considering his popular renown, he has but few striking exploits to his credit. His birth was accompanied by strange phenomena, and several physical peculiarities are recorded. All his life he was a wanderer, and he was converted to Tao by an aged man whom he met in a remote village. Towards the end of his career he fell in with the Taoist adept T'ao Hung-ching (see Chapter VII.), and received from him "a pinch of the Great Monad" (a mysterious cosmic entity existing before the evolution of material things), a fire-charm, and some of the spiritual elixir.

Artists depict him as a fat, bearded old man, scantily clad, and carrying a feathered fan, with fly-whisk attached, or sometimes a two-edged sword.

Chang Kuo was a hermit whose origin is unknown. It was his custom to ride a white donkey, on which he could cover immense distances in a single day. When he stopped to rest, he would fold the animal up like paper, and put it away in his cap-box. Then, when he was ready to start again, he sprayed water over it from his mouth, and changed it back into a donkey. He is said to have been invited to Court by more than one of the early T'ang emperors, but did not respond until the reign of Ming Huang, who treated him with great respect. On receiving another summons, however, he immediately lay down and died. He was buried in the usual way by his disciples, but subsequently, when the coffin was opened, it was found to be quite empty.

Pictures of Chang Kuo show him seated on his donkey and holding a musical instrument called a fish-drum, which looks like a golf-bag with two clubs (really castanets) protruding from it.

Lu Yen (or familiarly, Lu Tung-pin), also of the T'ang dynasty, is probably the most popular member of the group. Though he is said to have failed twice for the doctor's degree, he is widely worshipped as a patron saint of literature. He became the pupil of an old Taoist encountered by chance, who was no other than Chung-li Ch'uan, and during a period of probation before he became a hsien he had to undergo a series of ten ordeals. The last of these was the hostile approach of a host of demons in terrifying shapes, which left him completely undismayed. Once he fell asleep while a meal of yellow millet was cooking, and dreamt of events extending over the best part of a lifetime; yet on awaking he found the millet still uncooked.

His emblem is the magic two-edged sword which conferred the gift of invisibility, and enabled him to overcome evil spirits.

A picture of Lu Tung-pin, reproduced from a painting on silk through the courtesy of Professor W. Perceval Yetts, will be found on the cover of this book.

Ts'ao Kuo-chiu is said, on dubious authority, to have been the younger brother of a Sung empress in the eleventh century, "a handsome youth of peaceful disposition". One day, in the course of their wanderings, Chung-li Ch'uan and Lu Tung-pin came to his dwelling-place, and asked to be told the object of his spiritual meditations. "Tao alone," he replied, "is the object which I have in view."—"And where is Tao?" asked the two hsien. Kuo-chiu

pointed up to heaven.—"Where then is heaven?"—Kuo-chiu pointed to his heart. Chung-li Ch'uan smiled and said: "The heart is one with heaven, and heaven is one with Tao? Nay, then you have a true understanding of the essential constitution of things." And accordingly they admitted him to the company of immortals.

Ts'ao Kuo-chiu is usually represented as a bearded grandee in Court attire. His distinctive attribute is, somewhat incongruously, a pair of clapper castanets.

Li T'ieh-kuai, that is, "Li with the Iron Staff", is depicted as a lame and repulsive-looking beggar, though originally he was a handsome, well-built man. This is how the transformation came about. When he was setting off to meet Lao Tzu on one of the sacred mountains, he told a disciple that only the spiritual part of him was making the journey, while his body would remain behind. If the spirit should not return within seven days, the body might be burnt. Now, the disciple was anxious to visit his sick brother, so he left on the sixth day, after burning the body. Consequently, when the Master's spirit returned on the following day, it had nowhere to go, until at last it entered and re-animated the corpse of a beggar who had died of starvation. Thereafter Li T'ieh-kuai walked the earth in the guise of a cripple, clad in rags and tatters.

In pictures he is seen hobbling along with the aid of a staff. Out of a bottle-gourd in his hand there rises a mysterious vapour, in which appears an emblem of his spiritual self.

Han Hsiang Tzu was a nephew of the great T'ang poet Han Yu. At birth he had all the marks of a future hsien. Of an eccentric disposition, he hated all the pomps and vanities of the world, and delighted in stillness and obscurity. His mind was absorbed in the art of alchemy and the pursuit of the elixir. When urged by his uncle to apply himself to study, he replied: "The object of my study is different from yours." He was instructed by Chung-li Ch'uan and Lu Tung-pin in their system of Tao, and followed them on their wanderings. Coming to a peach-tree, he climbed up to pluck the fruit of immortality, but was thrown to the ground by the snapping of a branch and was killed. At the very same moment he was transfigured and became a hsien. Afterwards, in the guise of a Taoist priest, he tried to convert his uncle, who was a strong

Confucianist, and succeeded at least in convincing him that he was no charlatan.

His attribute is a flute, besides which he is often to be seen with a pair of long castanets and an alchemist's crucible.

Lan Ts'ai-ho is portrayed as a ragged, unkempt, good-looking youth, sometimes even as a girl. All accounts of this hsien are purely legendary, but he is said to have gone about with one foot bare, singing crazy songs which he improvised as he went along. In summer he stuffed his gown with cotton-wool, while in winter he would sleep in the snow, with vapour rising from his body like steam. When drunk, he used to sing and caper, and was followed by crowds of people who did not know what to make of his antics. The cash which he received as alms he would thread on a string and trail behind him as he walked. If any were lost, he would pay no heed. He used to give his money to the poor, or spend it in wine-taverns. It was from a wine-tavern that he eventually soared up to the sky on the back of a crane. This strange being is generally shown with a basket full of flowers and plants associated with longevity, such as chrysanthemums, plum-blossoms, sprigs of pine and bamboo, etc.

Ho Hsien Ku is the only undoubted female hsien belonging to the group. At the age of fourteen or fifteen she dreamt that she was visited by a divinity who advised her to eat powdered mica in order to etherealize her body. She also met a stranger who gave her a peach, and on returning home she found that she had been absent not for one day, as she had supposed, but for a whole month; yet she was not one whit the worse for going all that time without food. Having made a vow of chastity, she withdrew into the mountains, where she would flit to and fro like a bird. Towards the beginning of the eighth century she is said to have ascended on high in broad daylight. Ho Hsien Ku's special emblem is a bamboo ladle, for which the following explanation is given: she had a stepmother who treated her harshly and kept her toiling all day long over menial domestic duties. Despite this, she behaved with such exemplary patience that Lu Tung-pin was moved to come and rescue her from her miserable drudgery. He found her busy in the kitchen, and as he bore her upwards the ladle she was using still remained in her hand.

ALPHABETICAL INDEX OF HSIEN

NAME

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Chang Kuo
Chang Liang
Chang Tao-ling
Ch’ang Jung
Chao Sheng
Chi Tzu-hsun
Ch’i Fu
Ch’i Lung Ming
Chiao Hsien
Chung-li Ch’uan
Fei Ch’ang-fang
Fu Chu
Fu Lu
Han Hsiang Tzu
Ho Hsien Ku
Hsia Ch’iu Chung
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Wang Chen
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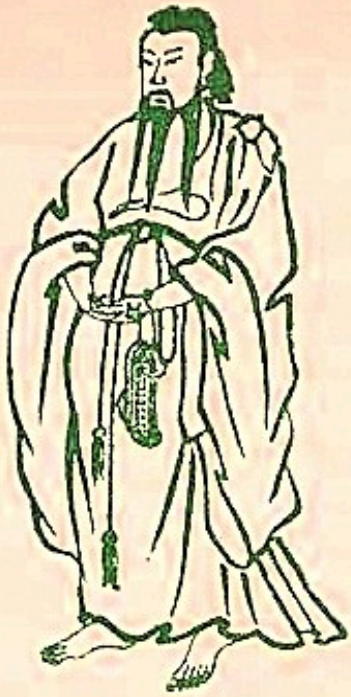
Wei Po-Yang
Wen Pin
Wu Kuang
Wu Meng
Yeh Fa-shan
Yin Sheng
Yu Tzu
Yuan Chao



A GALLERY OF CHINESE IMMORTALS

Selected Biographies

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