GILES HERBERT ALLEN

A HISTORY OF CHINESE LITERATURE

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Содержание

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PREFACE

This is the first attempt made in any language, including Chinese, to produce a history of Chinese literature.

Native scholars, with their endless critiques and appreciations of individual works, do not seem ever to have contemplated anything of the kind, realising, no doubt, the utter hopelessness, from a Chinese point of view, of achieving even comparative success in a general historical survey of the subject. The voluminous character of a literature which was already in existence some six centuries before the Christian era, and has run on uninterruptedly until the present date, may well have given pause to writers aiming at completeness. The foreign student, however, is on a totally different footing. It may be said without offence that a work which would be inadequate to the requirements of a native public, may properly be submitted to English readers as an introduction into the great field which lies beyond.

Acting upon the suggestion of Mr. Gosse, to whom I am

otherwise indebted for many valuable hints, I have devoted a large portion of this book to translation, thus enabling the Chinese author, so far as translation will allow, to speak for himself. I have also added, here and there, remarks by native critics, that the reader may be able to form an idea of the point of view from which the Chinese judge their own productions.

It only remains to be stated that the translations, with the exception of a few passages from Legge's "Chinese Classics," in each case duly acknowledged, are my own.

HERBERT A. GILES.

Cambridge.

BOOK THE FIRST
THE FEUDAL PERIOD (B.C. 600-200)

CHAPTER I
LEGENDARY AGES – EARLY CHINESE CIVILISATION – ORIGIN OF WRITING

The date of the beginning of all things has been nicely calculated by Chinese chronologers. There was first of all a period when Nothing existed, though some enthusiasts have attempted to deal with a period antecedent even to that. Gradually Nothing took upon itself the form and limitations of Unity, represented by a point at the centre of a circle. Thus there was a Great Monad, a First Cause, an Aura, a Zeitgeist, or whatever one may please to call it.

After countless ages, spent apparently in doing nothing, this Monad split into Two Principles, one active, the other passive; one positive, the other negative; light and darkness; male and female. The interaction of these Two Principles resulted in the production of all things, as we see them in the universe around us, 2,269,381 years ago. Such is the cosmogony of the Chinese

in a nutshell.

The more sober Chinese historians, however, are content to begin with a sufficiently mythical emperor, who reigned only 2800 years before the Christian era. The practice of agriculture, the invention of wheeled vehicles, and the simpler arts of early civilisation are generally referred to this period; but to the dispassionate European student it is a period of myth and legend: in fact, we know very little about it. Neither do we know much, in the historical sense, of the numerous rulers whose names and dates appear in the chronology of the succeeding two thousand years. It is not indeed until we reach the eighth century B.C. that anything like history can be said to begin.

For reasons which will presently be made plain, the sixth century B.C. is a convenient starting-point for the student of Chinese literature.

FEUDALISM

China was then confined to a comparatively small area, lying for the most part between the Yellow River on the north and the river Yang-tsze on the south. No one knows where the Chinese came from. Some hold the fascinating theory that they were emigrants from Accadia in the ancient kingdom of Babylonia; others have identified them with the lost tribes of Israel. No one seems to think they can possibly have originated in the fertile plains where they are now found. It appears indeed to be an ethnological axiom that every race must have come from somewhere outside its own territory. However that may be, the

China of the eighth century B.C. consisted of a number of Feudal States, ruled by nobles owning allegiance to a Central State, at the head of which was a king. The outward tokens of subjection were homage and tribute; but after all, the allegiance must have been more nominal than real, each State being practically an independent kingdom. This condition of things was the cause of much mutual jealousy, and often of bloody warfare, several of the States hating one another quite as cordially as Athens and Sparta at their best.

There was, notwithstanding, considerable physical civilisation in the ancient States of those early days. Their citizens, when not employed in cutting each other's throats, enjoyed a reasonable security of life and property. They lived in well-built houses; they dressed in silk or homespun; they wore shoes of leather; they carried umbrellas; they sat on chairs and used tables; they rode in carts and chariots; they travelled by boat; and they ate their food off plates and dishes of pottery, coarse perhaps, yet still superior to the wooden trencher common not so very long ago in Europe. They measured time by the sundial, and in the Golden Age they had the two famous calendar trees, representations of which have come down to us in sculpture, dating from about A.D. 150. One of these trees put forth a leaf every day for fifteen days, after which a leaf fell off daily for fifteen more days. The other put forth a leaf once a month for half a year, after which a leaf fell off monthly for a similar period. With these trees growing in the courtyard, it was possible to say at a glance what was the day of

the month, and what was the month of the year. But civilisation proved unfavourable to their growth, and the species became extinct.

In the sixth century B.C. the Chinese were also in possession of a written language, fully adequate to the most varied expression of human thought, and indeed almost identical with their present script, allowing, among other things, for certain modifications of form brought about by the substitution of paper and a camel's-hair brush for the bamboo tablet and stylus of old. The actual stages by which that point was reached are so far unknown to us. China has her Cadmus in the person of a prehistoric individual named Ts'ang Chieh, who is said to have had four eyes, and to have taken the idea of a written language from the markings of birds' claws upon the sand. Upon the achievement of his task the sky rained grain and evil spirits mourned by night. Previous to this mankind had no other system than rude methods of knotting cords and notching sticks for noting events or communicating with one another at a distance.

As to the origin of the written language of China, invention is altogether out of the question. It seems probable that in prehistoric ages, the Chinese, like other peoples, began to make rude pictures of the sun, moon, and stars, of man himself, of trees, of fire, of rain, and they appear to have followed these up by ideograms of various kinds. How far they went in this direction we can only surmise. There are comparatively few obviously pictorial characters and ideograms to be found even in

the script of two thousand years ago; but investigations carried on for many years by Mr. L. C. Hopkins, H.M. Consul, Chefoo, and now approaching completion, point more and more to the fact that the written language will some day be recognised as systematically developed from pictorial symbols. It is, at any rate, certain that at a very early date subsequent to the legendary period of "knotted cords" and "notches," while the picture-symbols were still comparatively few, some master-mind reached at a bound the phonetic principle, from which point the rapid development of a written language such as we now find would be an easy matter.

CHAPTER II
CONFUCIUS – THE FIVE CLASSICS

BOOK OF HISTORY

In B.C. 551 Confucius was born. He may be regarded as the founder of Chinese literature. During his years of office as a Government servant and his years of teaching and wandering as an exile, he found time to rescue for posterity certain valuable literary fragments of great antiquity, and to produce at least one original work of his own. It is impossible to assert that before his time there was anything in the sense of what we understand by the term general literature. The written language appears to have been used chiefly for purposes of administration. Many utterances, however, of early, not to say legendary, rulers had been committed to writing at one time or another, and such of these as were still extant were diligently collected and edited by Confucius, forming what is now known as the *Shu Ching* or Book of History. The documents of which this work is composed are said to have been originally one hundred in all, and they cover a period extending from the twenty-fourth to the eighth century B.C. They give us glimpses of an age earlier than that of Confucius, if not actually so early as is claimed. The first two, for instance, refer to the Emperors Yao and Shun, whose reigns, extending from B.C. 2357 to 2205, are regarded as the Golden Age of China. We read how the former monarch "united the

various parts of his domain in bonds of peace, so that concord reigned among the black-haired people." He abdicated in favour of Shun, who is described as being profoundly wise, intelligent, and sincere. We are further told that Shun was chosen because of his great filial piety, which enabled him to live in harmony with an unprincipled father, a shifty stepmother, and an arrogant half-brother, and, moreover, to effect by his example a comparative reformation of their several characters.

We next come to a very famous personage, who founded the Hsia dynasty in B.C. 2205, and is known as the Great Yü. It was he who, during the reign of the Emperor Shun, successfully coped with a devastating flood, which has been loosely identified with the Noachic Deluge, and in reference to which it was said in the *Tso Chuan*, "How grand was the achievement of Yü, how far-reaching his glorious energy! But for Yü we should all have been fishes." The following is his own account (Legge's translation): —

"The inundating waters seemed to assail the heavens, and in their vast extent embraced the mountains and overtopped the hills, so that people were bewildered and overwhelmed. I mounted my four conveyances (carts, boats, sledges, and spiked shoes), and all along the hills hewed down the woods, at the same time, along with Yi, showing the multitudes how to get flesh to eat. I opened passages for the streams throughout the nine provinces, and conducted them to the sea. I deepened the channels and canals, and conducted them to the streams, at

the same time, along with Chi, sowing grain, and showing the multitudes how to procure the food of toil in addition to flesh meat. I urged them further to exchange what they had for what they had not, and to dispose of their accumulated stores. In this way all the people got grain to eat, and all the States began to come under good rule."

A small portion of the Book of History is in verse: —

> "The people should be cherished,
> And should not be downtrodden.
> The people are the root of a country,
> And if the root is firm, the country will be tranquil.
>
> The palace a wild for lust,
> The country a wild for hunting,
> Rich wine, seductive music,
> Lofty roofs, carved walls, —
> Given any one of these,
> And the result can only be ruin."

From the date of the foundation of the Hsia dynasty the throne of the empire was transmitted from father to son, and there were no more abdications in favour of virtuous sages. The fourth division of the Book of History deals with the decadence of the Hsia rulers and their final displacement in B.C. 1766 by T'ang the Completer, founder of the Shang dynasty. By B.C. 1122, the Shang sovereigns had similarly lapsed from the kingly qualities of

their founder to even a lower level of degradation and vice. Then arose one of the purest and most venerated heroes of Chinese history, popularly known by his canonisation as Wên Wang. He was hereditary ruler of a principality in the modern province of Shensi, and in B.C. 1144 he was denounced as dangerous to the throne. He was seized and thrown into prison, where he passed two years, occupying himself with the Book of Changes, to which we shall presently return. At length the Emperor, yielding to the entreaties of the people, backed up by the present of a beautiful concubine and some fine horses, set him at liberty and commissioned him to make war upon the frontier tribes. To his dying day he never ceased to remonstrate against the cruelty and corruption of the age, and his name is still regarded as one of the most glorious in the annals of the empire. It was reserved for his son, known as Wu Wang, to overthrow the Shang dynasty and mount the throne as first sovereign of the Chou dynasty, which was to last for eight centuries to come. The following is a speech by the latter before a great assembly of nobles who were siding against the House of Shang. It is preserved among others in the Book of History, and is assigned to the year B.C. 1133 (Legge's translation): —

"Heaven and Earth are the parents of all creatures; and of all creatures man is the most highly endowed. The sincere, intelligent, and perspicacious among men becomes the great sovereign, and the great sovereign is the parent of the people. But now, Shou, the king of Shang, does not reverence Heaven

above, and inflicts calamities on the people below. He has been abandoned to drunkenness, and reckless in lust. He has dared to exercise cruel oppression. Along with criminals he has punished all their relatives. He has put men into office on the hereditary principle. He has made it his pursuit to have palaces, towers, pavilions, embankments, ponds, and all other extravagances, to the most painful injury of you, the myriad people. He has burned and roasted the loyal and good. He has ripped up pregnant women. Great Heaven was moved with indignation, and charged my deceased father, Wên, reverently to display its majesty; but he died before the work was completed.

"On this account I, Fa, who am but a little child, have, by means of you, the hereditary rulers of my friendly States, contemplated the government of Shang; but Shou has no repentant heart. He abides squatting on his heels, not serving God or the spirits of heaven and earth, neglecting also the temple of his ancestors, and not sacrificing in it. The victims and the vessels of millet all become the prey of wicked robbers; and still he says, 'The people are mine: the decree is mine,' never trying to correct his contemptuous mind. Now Heaven, to protect the inferior people, made for them rulers, and made for them instructors, that they might be able to be aiding to God, and secure the tranquillity of the four quarters of the empire. In regard to who are criminals and who are not, how dare I give any allowance to my own wishes?

"'Where the strength is the same, measure the virtue of

the parties; where the virtue is the same, measure their righteousness.' Shou has hundreds of thousands and myriads of ministers, but they have hundreds of thousands and myriads of minds; I have three thousand ministers, but they have one mind. The iniquity of Shang is full. Heaven gives command to destroy it. If I did not comply with Heaven, my iniquity would be as great.

"I, who am a little child, early and late am filled with apprehensions. I have received charge from my deceased father, Wên; I have offered special sacrifice to God; I have performed the due services to the great Earth; and I lead the multitude of you to execute the punishment appointed by Heaven. Heaven compassionates the people. What the people desire, Heaven will be found to give effect to. Do you aid me, the one man, to cleanse for ever all within the four seas. Now is the time! – it may not be lost."

Two of the documents which form the Book of History are directed against luxury and drunkenness, to both of which the people seemed likely to give way even within measurable distance of the death of Wên Wang. The latter had enacted that wine (that is to say, ardent spirits distilled from rice) should only be used on sacrificial occasions, and then under strict supervision; and it is laid down, almost as a general principle, that all national misfortunes, culminating in the downfall of a dynasty, may be safely ascribed to the abuse of wine.

THE ODES

The *Shih Ching*, or Book of Odes, is another work for the

preservation of which we are indebted to Confucius. It consists of a collection of rhymed ballads in various metres, usually four words to the line, composed between the reign of the Great Yü and the beginning of the sixth century B.C. These, which now number 305, are popularly known as the "Three Hundred," and are said by some to have been selected by Confucius from no less than 3000 pieces. They are arranged under four heads, as follows: – (*a*) Ballads commonly sung by the people in the various feudal States and forwarded periodically by the nobles to their suzerain, the Son of Heaven. The ballads were then submitted to the Imperial Musicians, who were able to judge from the nature of such compositions what would be the manners and customs prevailing in each State, and to advise the suzerain accordingly as to the good or evil administration of each of his vassal rulers. (*b*) Odes sung at ordinary entertainments given by the suzerain. (*c*) Odes sung on grand occasions when the feudal nobles were gathered together. (*d*) Panegyrics and sacrificial odes.

Confucius himself attached the utmost importance to his labours in this direction. "Have you learned the Odes?" he inquired upon one occasion of his son; and on receiving an answer in the negative, immediately told the youth that until he did so he would be unfit for the society of intellectual men. Confucius may indeed be said to have anticipated the apophthegm attributed by Fletcher of Saltoun to a "very wise man," namely, that he who should be allowed to make a nation's "ballads need care little who made its laws." And it was probably

this appreciation by Confucius that gave rise to an extraordinary literary craze in reference to these Odes. Early commentators, incapable of seeing the simple natural beauties of the poems, which have furnished endless household words and a large stock of phraseology to the language of the present day, and at the same time unable to ignore the deliberate judgment of the Master, set to work to read into countryside ditties deep moral and political significations. Every single one of the immortal Three Hundred has thus been forced to yield some hidden meaning and point an appropriate moral. If a maiden warns her lover not to be too rash —

> "Don't come in, sir, please!
> Don't break my willow-trees!
> Not that that would very much grieve me;
> But alack-a-day! what would my parents say?
> And love you as I may,
> I cannot bear to think what that would be," —

commentators promptly discover that the piece refers to a feudal noble whose brother had been plotting against him, and to the excuses of the former for not visiting the latter with swift and exemplary punishment.

Another independent young lady may say —

> "If you will love me dear, my lord,
> I'll pick up my skirts and cross the ford,

But if from your heart you turn me out …
Well, you're not the only man about,
You silly, silly, silliest lout!" —

still commentaries are not wanting to show that these straightforward words express the wish of the people of a certain small State that some great State would intervene and put an end to an existing feud in the ruling family. Native scholars are, of course, hide-bound in the traditions of commentators, but European students will do well to seek the meaning of the Odes within the compass of the Odes themselves.

Possibly the very introduction of these absurdities may have helped to preserve to our day a work which would otherwise have been considered too trivial to merit the attention of scholars. Chinese who are in the front rank of scholarship know it by heart, and each separate piece has been searchingly examined, until the force of exegesis can no farther go. There is one famous line which runs, according to the accepted commentary, "The muddiness of the Ching river appears from the (clearness of the) Wei river." In 1790 the Emperor Ch'ien Lung, dissatisfied with this interpretation, sent a viceroy to examine the rivers. The latter reported that the Ching was really clear and the Wei muddy, so that the wording of the line must mean "The Ching river is made muddy by the Wei river."

The following is a specimen of one of the longer of the Odes, saddled, like all the rest, with an impossible political

interpretation, of which nothing more need be said: —

"You seemed a guileless youth enough,
Offering for silk your woven stuff; [1]
But silk was not required by you;
I was the silk you had in view.
With you I crossed the ford, and while
We wandered on for many a mile
I said, 'I do not wish delay,
But friends must fix our wedding-day …
Oh, do not let my words give pain,
But with the autumn come again.'

"And then I used to watch and wait
To see you passing through the gate;
And sometimes, when I watched in vain,
My tears would flow like falling rain;
But when I saw my darling boy,
I laughed and cried aloud for joy.
The fortune-tellers, you declared,
Had all pronounced us duly paired;
'Then bring a carriage,' I replied,
'And I'll away to be your bride.'

"The mulberry-leaf, not yet undone
By autumn chill, shines in the sun.
O tender dove, I would advise,

[1] Supposed to have been stamped pieces of linen, used as a circulating medium before the invention of coins.

Beware the fruit that tempts thy eyes!
O maiden fair, not yet a spouse,
List lightly not to lovers' vows!
A man may do this wrong, and time
Will fling its shadow o'er his crime;
A woman who has lost her name
Is doomed to everlasting shame.

"The mulberry-tree upon the ground
Now sheds its yellow leaves around.
Three years have slipped away from me
Since first I shared your poverty;
And now again, alas the day!
Back through the ford I take my way.
My heart is still unchanged, but you
Have uttered words now proved untrue;
And you have left me to deplore
A love that can be mine no more.

"For three long years I was your wife,
And led in truth a toilsome life;
Early to rise and late to bed,
Each day alike passed o'er my head.
I honestly fulfilled my part,
And you – well, you have broke my heart.
The truth my brothers will not know,
So all the more their gibes will flow.
I grieve in silence and repine
That such a wretched fate is mine.

"Ah, hand in hand to face old age! —
Instead, I turn a bitter page.
O for the river-banks of yore;
O for the much-loved marshy shore;
The hours of girlhood, with my hair
Ungathered, as we lingered there.
The words we spoke, that seemed so true,
I little thought that I should rue;
I little thought the vows we swore
Would some day bind us two no more."

Many of the Odes deal with warfare, and with the separation of wives from their husbands; others, with agriculture and with the chase, with marriage and feasting. The ordinary sorrows of life are fully represented, and to these may be added frequent complaints against the harshness of officials, one speaker going so far as to wish he were a tree without consciousness, without home, and without family. The old-time theme of "eat, drink, and be merry" is brought out as follows: —

"You have coats and robes,
But you do not trail them;
You have chariots and horses,
But you do not ride in them.
By and by you will die,
And another will enjoy them.

"You have courtyards and halls,
But they are not sprinkled and swept;
You have bells and drums,
But they are not struck.
By and by you will die,
And another will possess them.

"You have wine and food;
Why not play daily on your lute,
That you may enjoy yourself now
And lengthen your days?
By and by you will die,
And another will take your place."

The Odes are especially valuable for the insight they give us into the manners, and customs, and beliefs of the Chinese before the age of Confucius. How far back they extend it is quite impossible to say. An eclipse of the sun, "an event of evil omen," is mentioned in one of the Odes as a recent occurrence on a certain day which works out as the 29th August, B.C. 775; and this eclipse has been verified for that date. The following lines are from Legge's rendering of this Ode: —

"The sun and moon announce evil,
Not keeping to their proper paths.
All through the kingdom there is no proper government,
Because the good are not employed.
For the moon to be eclipsed

Is but an ordinary matter.
Now that the sun has been eclipsed,
How bad it is!"

The rainbow was regarded, not as a portent of evil, but as an improper combination of the dual forces of nature, —

"There is a rainbow in the east,
And no one dares point at it," —

and is applied figuratively to women who form improper connections.

The position of women generally seems to have been very much what it is at the present day. In an Ode which describes the completion of a palace for one of the ancient princes, we are conducted through the rooms, —

"Here will he live, here will he sit,
Here will he laugh, here will he talk," —

until we come to the bedchamber, where he will awake, and call upon the chief diviner to interpret his dream of bears and serpents. The interpretation (Legge) is as follows: —

"Sons shall be born to him: —
They will be put to sleep on couches;
They will be clothed in robes;
They will have sceptres to play with;

Their cry will be loud.
They will be resplendent with red knee-covers,
The future princes of the land.

"Daughters shall be born to him: —
They will be put to sleep on the ground;
They will be clothed with wrappers;
They will have tiles to play with.
It will be theirs neither to do wrong nor to do good.
Only about the spirits and the food will they have to think,
And to cause no sorrow to their parents."

The distinction thus drawn is severe enough, and it is quite unnecessary to make a comparison, as some writers on China have done, between the tile and the sceptre, as though the former were but a dirty potsherd, good enough for a girl. A tile was used in the early ages as a weight for the spindle, and is here used merely to indicate the direction which a girl's activities should take.

Women are further roughly handled in an Ode which traces the prevailing misgovernment to their interference in affairs of State and in matters which do not lie within their province: —

"A clever man builds a city,
A clever woman lays one low;
With all her qualifications, that clever woman
Is but an ill-omened bird.
A woman with a long tongue

Is a flight of steps leading to calamity;
For disorder does not come from heaven,
But is brought about by women.
Among those who cannot be trained or taught
Are women and eunuchs."

About seventy kinds of plants are mentioned in the Odes, including the bamboo, barley, beans, convolvulus, dodder, dolichos, hemp, indigo, liquorice, melon, millet, peony, pepper, plantain, scallions, sorrel, sowthistle, tribulus, and wheat; about thirty kinds of trees, including the cedar, cherry, chestnut, date, hazel, medlar, mulberry, oak, peach, pear, plum, and willow; about thirty kinds of animals, including the antelope, badger, bear, boar, elephant, fox, leopard, monkey, rat, rhinoceros, tiger, and wolf; about thirty kinds of birds, including the crane, eagle, egret, magpie, oriole, swallow, and wagtail; about ten kinds of fishes, including the barbel, bream, carp, and tench; and about twenty kinds of insects, including the ant, cicada, glow-worm, locust, spider, and wasp.

Among the musical instruments of the Odes are found the flute, the drum, the bell, the lute, and the Pandæan pipes; among the metals are gold and iron, with an indirect allusion to silver and copper; and among the arms and munitions of war are bows and arrows, spears, swords, halberds, armour, grappling-hooks, towers on wheels for use against besieged cities, and gags for soldiers' mouths, to prevent them talking in the ranks on the occasion of night attacks.

The idea of a Supreme Being is brought out very fully in the Odes —

> "Great is God,
> Ruling in majesty."

Also,

> "How mighty is God,
> The Ruler of mankind!
> How terrible is His majesty!"

He is apparently in the form of man, for in one place we read of His footprint. He hates the oppression of great States, although in another passage we read —

> "Behold Almighty God;
> Who is there whom He hates?"

He comforts the afflicted. He is free from error. His "Way" is hard to follow. He is offended by sin. He can be appeased by sacrifice: —

> "We fill the sacrificial vessels with offerings,
> Both the vessels of wood, and those of earthenware.
> Then when the fragrance is borne on high,
> God smells the savour and is pleased."

One more quotation, which, in deference to space limits, must be the last, exhibits the husbandman of early China in a very pleasing light: —

> "The clouds form in dense masses,
> And the rain falls softly down.
> Oh, may it first water the public lands,
> And then come to our private fields!
> Here shall some corn be left standing,
> Here some sheaves unbound;
> Here some handfuls shall be dropped,
> And there some neglected ears;
> These are for the benefit of the widow."

BOOK OF CHANGES

The next of the pre-Confucian works, and possibly the oldest of all, is the famous *I Ching*, or Book of Changes. It is ascribed to Wên Wang, the virtual founder of the Chou dynasty, whose son, Wu Wang, became the first sovereign of a long line, extending from B.C. 1122 to B.C. 249. It contains a fanciful system of philosophy, deduced originally from Eight Diagrams consisting of triplet combinations or arrangements of a line and a divided line, either one or other of which is necessarily repeated twice, and in two cases three times, in the same combination. Thus there may be three lines ☰, or three divided lines ☷, a divided line above or below two lines ☱ ☲, a divided line between two lines ☲, and so on, eight in all. These so-called diagrams

are said to have been invented two thousand years and more before Christ by the monarch Fu Hsi, who copied them from the back of a tortoise. He subsequently increased the above simple combinations to sixty-four double ones, on the permutations of which are based the philosophical speculations of the Book of Changes. Each diagram represents some power in nature, either active or passive, such as fire, water, thunder, earth, and so on.

The text consists of sixty-four short essays, enigmatically and symbolically expressed, on important themes, mostly of a moral, social, and political character, and based upon the same number of lineal figures, each made up of six lines, some of which are whole and the others divided. The text is followed by commentaries, called the Ten Wings, probably of a later date and commonly ascribed to Confucius, who declared that were a hundred years added to his life he would devote fifty of them to a study of the *I Ching*.

The following is a specimen (Legge's translation): —

"*Text.* # This suggests the idea of one treading on the tail of a tiger, which does not bite him. There will be progress and success.

"1. The first line, undivided, shows its subject treading his accustomed path. If he go forward, there will be no error.

"2. The second line, undivided, shows its subject treading the path that is level and easy; – a quiet and solitary man, to whom, if he be firm and correct, there will be good fortune.

"3. The third line, divided, shows a one-eyed man who thinks

he can see; a lame man who thinks he can walk well; one who treads on the tail of a tiger and is bitten. All this indicates ill-fortune. We have a mere bravo acting the part of a great ruler.

"4. The fourth line, undivided, shows its subject treading on the tail of a tiger. He becomes full of apprehensive caution, and in the end there will be good fortune.

"5. The fifth line, undivided, shows the resolute tread of its subject. Though he be firm and correct, there will be peril.

"6. The sixth line, undivided, tells us to look at the whole course that is trodden, and examine the presage which that gives. If it be complete and without failure, there will be great good fortune.

"*Wing.*– In this hexagram we have the symbol of weakness treading on that of strength.

"The lower trigram indicates pleasure and satisfaction, and responds to the upper indicating strength. Hence it is said, 'He treads on the tail of a tiger, which does not bite him; there will be progress and success.'

"The fifth line is strong, in the centre, and in its correct place. Its subject occupies the God-given position, and falls into no distress or failure; – his action will be brilliant."

As may be readily inferred from the above extract, no one really knows what is meant by the apparent gibberish of the Book of Changes. This is freely admitted by all learned Chinese, who nevertheless hold tenaciously to the belief that important lessons could be derived from its pages if we only had the wit

to understand them. Foreigners have held various theories on the subject. Dr. Legge declared that he had found the key, with the result already shown. The late Terrien de la Couperie took a bolder flight, unaccompanied by any native commentator, and discovered in this cherished volume a vocabulary of the language of the Bák tribes. A third writer regards it as a calendar of the lunar year, and so forth.

BOOK OF RITES

The *Li Chi*, or Book of Rites, seems to have been a compilation by two cousins, known as the Elder and the Younger Tai, who flourished in the 2nd and 1st centuries B.C. From existing documents, said to have emanated from Confucius and his disciples, the Elder Tai prepared a work in 85 sections on what may be roughly called social rites. The Younger Tai reduced these to 46 sections. Later scholars, such as Ma Jung and Chêng Hsüan, left their mark upon the work, and it was not until near the close of the 2nd century A.D. that finality in this direction was achieved. It then became known as a *Chi* = Record, not as a *Ching* = Text, the latter term being reserved by the orthodox solely for such books as have reached us direct from the hands of Confucius. The following is an extract (Legge's translation): —

Confucius said: "Formerly, along with Lao Tan, I was assisting at a burial in the village of Hsiang, and when we had got to the path the sun was eclipsed. Lao Tan said to me, 'Ch'iu, let the bier be stopped on the left of the road; and then let us wail and wait till the eclipse pass away. When it is light again we will proceed.' He

said that this was the rule. When we had returned and completed the burial, I said to him, 'In the progress of a bier there should be no returning. When there is an eclipse of the sun, we do not know whether it will pass away quickly or not; would it not have been better to go on?' Lao Tan said, 'When the prince of a state is going to the court of the Son of Heaven, he travels while he can see the sun. At sundown he halts and presents his offerings (to the spirit of the way). When a great officer is on a mission, he travels while he can see the sun, and at sundown he halts. Now a bier does not set forth in the early morning, nor does it rest anywhere at night; but those who travel by starlight are only criminals and those who are hastening to the funeral rites of a parent.'"

Other specimens will be found in Chapters iii. and iv.

Until the time of the Ming dynasty, A.D. 1368, another and a much older work, known as the *Chou Li*, or Rites of the Chou dynasty, and dealing more with constitutional matters, was always coupled with the *Li Chi*, and formed one of the then recognised Six Classics. There is still a third work of the same class, and also of considerable antiquity, called the *I Li*. Its contents treat mostly of the ceremonial observances of everyday life.

THE SPRING AND AUTUMN

We now come to the last of the Five Classics as at present constituted, the *Ch'un Ch'iu*, or Spring and Autumn Annals. This is a chronological record of the chief events in the State of Lu between the years B.C. 722-484, and is generally regarded as

the work of Confucius, whose native State was Lu. The entries are of the briefest, and comprise notices of incursions, victories, defeats, deaths, murders, treaties, and natural phenomena.

The following are a few illustrative extracts: —

"In the 7th year of Duke Chao, in spring, the Northern Yen State made peace with the Ch'i State.

"In the 3rd month the Duke visited the Ch'u State.

"In summer, on the *chia shên* day of the 4th month (March 11th, B.C. 594), the sun was eclipsed.

"In the 7th year of Duke Chuang (B.C. 685), in summer, in the 4th moon, at midnight, there was a shower of stars like rain."

The Spring and Autumn owes its name to the old custom of prefixing to each entry the year, month, day, and season when the event recorded took place; spring, as a commentator explains, including summer, and autumn winter. It was the work which Confucius singled out as that one by which men would know and commend him, and Mencius considered it quite as important an achievement as the draining of the empire by the Great Yü. The latter said, "Confucius completed the Spring and Autumn, and rebellious ministers and bad sons were struck with terror." Consequently, just as in the case of the Odes, native wits set to work to read into the bald text all manner of hidden meanings, each entry being supposed to contain approval or condemnation, their efforts resulting in what is now known as the praise-and-blame theory. The critics of the Han dynasty even went so far as to declare the very title elliptical for "praise life-giving like

spring, and blame life-withering like autumn."

THE TSO CHUAN

Such is the *Ch'un Ch'iu*; and if that were all, it is difficult to say how the boast of Confucius could ever have been fulfilled. But it is not all; there is a saving clause. For bound up, so to speak, with the Spring and Autumn, and forming as it were an integral part of the work, is a commentary known as the *Tso Chuan* or Tso's Commentary. Of the writer himself, who has been canonised as the Father of Prose, and to whose pen has also been attributed the *Kuo Yü* or Episodes of the States, next to nothing is known, except that he was a disciple of Confucius; but his glowing narrative remains, and is likely to continue to remain, one of the most precious heirlooms of the Chinese people.

What Tso did was this. He took the dry bones of these annals and clothed them with life and reality by adding a more or less complete setting to each of the events recorded. He describes the loves and hates of the heroes, their battles, their treaties, their feastings, and their deaths, in a style which is always effective, and often approaches to grandeur. Circumstances of apparently the most trivial character are expanded into interesting episodes, and every now and again some quaint conceit or scrap of proverbial literature is thrown in to give a passing flavour of its own. Under the 21st year of Duke Hsi, the Spring and Autumn has the following exiguous entry: —

"In summer there was great drought."

To this the *Tso Chuan* adds —

"In consequence of the drought the Duke wished to burn a witch. One of his officers, however, said to him, 'That will not affect the drought. Rather repair your city walls and ramparts; eat less, and curtail your expenditure; practise strict economy, and urge the people to help one another. That is the essential; what have witches to do in the matter? If God wishes her to be slain, it would have been better not to allow her to be born. If she can cause a drought, burning her will only make things worse.' The Duke took this advice, and during that year, although there was famine, it was not very severe."

Under the 12th year of Duke Hsüan the Spring and Autumn says —

"In spring the ruler of the Ch'u State besieged the capital of the Chêng State."

Thereupon the *Tso Chuan* adds a long account of the whole business, from which the following typical paragraph is extracted: —

"In the rout which followed, a war-chariot of the Chin State stuck in a deep rut and could not get on. Thereupon a man of the Ch'u State advised the charioteer to take out the stand for arms. This eased it a little, but again the horses turned round. The man then advised that the flagstaff should be taken out and used as a lever, and at last the chariot was extricated. 'Ah,' said the charioteer to the man of Ch'u, 'we don't know so much about running away as the people of your worthy State.'"

The *Tso Chuan* contains several interesting passages on music,

which was regarded by Confucius as an important factor in the art of government, recalling the well-known views of Plato in Book III. of his *Republic*. Apropos of disease, we read that "the ancient rulers regulated all things by music." Also that "the superior man will not listen to lascivious or seductive airs;" "he addresses himself to his lute in order to regulate his conduct, and not to delight his heart."

When the rabid old anti-foreign tutor of the late Emperor T'ung Chih was denouncing the barbarians, and expressing a kindly desire to "sleep on their skins," he was quoting the phraseology of the *Tso Chuan*.

One hero, on going into battle, told his friends that he should only hear the drum beating the signal to advance, for he would take good care not to hear the gong sounding the retreat. Another made each of his men carry into battle a long rope, seeing that the enemy all wore their hair short. In a third case, where some men in possession of boats were trying to prevent others from scrambling in, we are told that the fingers of the assailants were chopped off in such large numbers that they could be picked up in double handfuls.

Many maxims, practical and unpractical, are to be found scattered over the *Tso Chuan*, such as, "One day's leniency to an enemy entails trouble for many generations;" "Propriety forbids that a man should profit himself at the expense of another;" "The receiver is as bad as the thief;" "It is better to attack than to be attacked."

When the French fleet returned to Shanghai in 1885 after being repulsed in a shore attack at Tamsui, a local wit at once adapted a verse of doggerel found in the *Tso Chuan*: —

> "See goggle-eyes and greedy-guts
> Has left his shield among the ruts;
> Back from the field, back from the field
> He's brought his beard, but not his shield;"

and for days every Chinaman was muttering the refrain —

> "Yü sai, yü sai
> Ch'i chia fu lai."

KU-LIANG AND KUNG-YANG

There are two other commentaries on the Spring and Autumn, similar, but generally regarded as inferior, to the *Tso Chuan*. They are by Ku-liang and Kung-yang, both of the fifth century B.C. The following are specimens (Legge's translation, omitting unimportant details): —

Text.– "In spring, in the king's first month, the first day of the moon, there fell stones in Sung – five of them. In the same month, six fish-hawks flew backwards, past the capital of Sung."

> The commentary of Ku-liang says, "Why does the text first say "there fell," and then "stones"? There was the falling, and then the stones.
>
> In "six fish-hawks flying backwards past the capital of

Sung," the number is put first, indicating that the birds were collected together. The language has respect to the seeing of the eyes.

The Master said, "Stones are things without any intelligence, and fish-hawks creatures that have a little intelligence. The stones, having no intelligence, are mentioned along with the day when they fell, and the fish-hawks, having a little intelligence, are mentioned along with the month when they appeared. The superior man (Confucius) even in regard to such things and creatures records nothing rashly. His expressions about stones and fish-hawks being thus exact, how much more will they be so about men!"

The commentary of Kung-yang says, "How is it that the text first says "there fell," and then "stones"?

"There fell stones" is a record of what was heard. There was heard a noise of something falling. On looking at what had fallen, it was seen to be stones, On examination it was found there were five of them.

Why does the text say "six," and then "fish-hawks"?

"Six fish-hawks backwards flew" is a record of what was seen. When they looked at the objects, there were six. When they examined them, they were fish-hawks. When they examined them leisurely, they were flying backwards.

Sometimes these commentaries are seriously at variance with that of Tso. For instance, the text says that in B.C. 689 the ruler of the Chi State "made a great end of his State." Tso's commentary explains the words to mean that for various urgent

reasons the ruler abdicated. Kung-yang, however, takes quite a different view. He explains the passage in the sense that the State in question was utterly destroyed, the population being wiped out by the ruler of another State in revenge for the death in B.C. 893 of an ancestor, who was boiled to death at the feudal metropolis in consequence of slander by a contemporary ruler of the Chi State. It is important for candidates at the public examinations to be familiar with these discrepancies, as they are frequently called upon to "discuss" such points, always with the object of establishing the orthodox and accepted interpretations.

KUNG-YANG CHUAN

The following episode is from Kung-yang's commentary, and is quite different from the story told by Tso in reference to the same passage: —

Text.– "In summer, in the 5th month, the Sung State made peace with the Ch'u State.

"In B.C. 587 King Chuang of Ch'u was besieging the capital of Sung. He had only rations for seven days, and if these were exhausted before he could take the city, he meant to withdraw. He therefore sent his general to climb the ramparts and spy out the condition of the besieged. It chanced that at the same time an officer of the Sung army came forth upon the ramparts, and the two met. 'How is your State getting on?' inquired the general. 'Oh, badly,' replied the officer. 'We are reduced to exchanging children for food, and their bones are chopped up for fuel.' 'That is bad indeed,' said the general; 'I had heard, however, that the

besieged, while feeding their horses with bits in their mouths, kept some fat ones for exhibition to strangers. What a spirit is yours!' To this the officer replied, 'I too have heard that the superior man, seeing another's misfortune, is filled with pity, while the ignoble man is filled with joy. And in you I recognise the superior man; so I have told you our story.' 'Be of good cheer,' said the general. 'We too have only seven days' rations, and if we do not conquer you in that time, we shall withdraw.' He then bowed, and retired to report to his master. The latter said, 'We must now capture the city before we withdraw.' 'Not so,' replied the general; 'I told the officer we had only rations for seven days.' King Chuang was greatly enraged at this; but the general said, 'If a small State like Sung has officers who speak the truth, should not the State of Ch'u have such men also?' The king still wished to remain, but the general threatened to leave him, and thus peace was brought about between the two States."

CHAPTER III
THE FOUR BOOKS – MENCIUS

THE LUN YÜ

No Chinaman thinks of entering upon a study of the Five Classics until he has mastered and committed to memory a shorter and simpler course known as The Four Books.

The first of these, as generally arranged for students, is the *Lun Yü* or Analects, a work in twenty short chapters or books, retailing the views of Confucius on a variety of subjects, and expressed so far as possible in the very words of the Master. It tells us nearly all we really know about the Sage, and may possibly have been put together within a hundred years of his death. From its pages we seem to gather some idea, a mere *silhouette* perhaps, of the great moralist whose mission on earth was to teach duty towards one's neighbour to his fellow-men, and who formulated the Golden Rule: "What you would not others should do unto you, do not unto them!"

It has been urged by many, who should know better, that the negative form of this maxim is unfit to rank with the positive form as given to us by Christ. But of course the two are logically identical, as may be shown by the simple insertion of the word "abstain;" that is, you would not that others should abstain from certain actions in regard to yourself, which practically conveys the positive injunction.

When a disciple asked Confucius to explain charity of heart, he replied simply, "Love one another." When, however, he was asked concerning the principle that good should be returned for evil, as already enunciated by Lao Tzŭ (see ch. iv.), he replied, "What then will you return for good? No: return good for good; for evil, justice."

He was never tired of emphasising the beauty and necessity of truth: "A man without truthfulness! I know not how that can be."

"Let loyalty and truth be paramount with you."

"In mourning, it is better to be sincere than punctilious."

"Man is born to be upright. If he be not so, and yet live, he is lucky to have escaped."

"Riches and honours are what men desire; yet except in accordance with right these may not be enjoyed."

Confucius undoubtedly believed in a Power, unseen and eternal, whom he vaguely addressed as Heaven: "He who has offended against Heaven has none to whom he can pray." "I do not murmur against Heaven," and so on. His greatest commentator, however, Chu Hsi, has explained that by "Heaven" is meant "Abstract Right," and that interpretation is accepted by Confucianists at the present day. At the same time, Confucius strongly objected to discuss the supernatural, and suggested that our duties are towards the living rather than towards the dead.

He laid the greatest stress upon filial piety, and taught that man is absolutely pure at birth, and afterwards becomes depraved only because of his environment.

Chapter x. of the *Lun Yü* gives some singular details of the every-day life and habits of the Sage, calculated to provoke a smile among those with whom reverence for Confucius has not been a first principle from the cradle upwards, but received with loving gravity by the Chinese people at large. The following are extracts (Legge's translation) from this famous chapter: —

"Confucius, in his village, looked simple and sincere, and as if he were not able to speak. When he was in the prince's ancestral temple or in the court, he spoke minutely on every point, but cautiously.

"When he entered the palace gate, he seemed to bend his body, as if it were not sufficient to admit him.

"He ascended the daïs, holding up his robe with both his hands and his body bent; holding in his breath also, as if he dared not breathe.

"When he was carrying the sceptre of his prince, he seemed to bend his body as if he were not able to bear its weight.

"He did not use a deep purple or a puce colour in the ornaments of his dress. Even in his undress he did not wear anything of a red or reddish colour.

"He required his sleeping dress to be half as long again as his body.

"He did not eat rice which had been injured by heat or damp and turned sour, nor fish or flesh which was gone. He did not eat what was discoloured, or what was of a bad flavour, nor anything which was not in season. He did not eat meat which was not cut

properly, nor what was served without its proper sauce.

"He was never without ginger when he ate. He did not eat much.

"When eating, he did not converse. When in bed, he did not speak.

"Although his food might be coarse rice and vegetable soup, he would offer a little of it in sacrifice with a grave respectful air.

"If his mat was not straight, he did not sit on it.

"The stable being burned down when he was at Court, on his return he said, 'Has any man been hurt?' He did not ask about the horses.

"When a friend sent him a present, though it might be a carriage and horses, he did not bow. The only present for which he bowed was that of the flesh of sacrifice.

"In bed, he did not lie like a corpse. At home, he did not put on any formal deportment.

"When he saw any one in a mourning dress, though it might be an acquaintance, he would change countenance; when he saw any one wearing the cap of full dress, or a blind person, though he might be in his undress, he would salute them in a ceremonious manner.

"When he was at an entertainment where there was an abundance of provisions set before him, he would change countenance and rise up. On a sudden clap of thunder or a violent wind, he would change countenance."

MENCIUS

Next in educational order follows the work briefly known as Mencius. This consists of seven books recording the sayings and doings of a man to whose genius and devotion may be traced the final triumph of Confucianism. Born in B.C. 372, a little over a hundred years after the death of the Master, Mencius was brought up under the care of his widowed mother, whose name is a household word even at the present day. As a child he lived with her at first near a cemetery, the result being that he began to reproduce in play the solemn scenes which were constantly enacted before his eyes. His mother accordingly removed to another house near the market-place, and before long the little boy forgot all about funerals and played at buying and selling goods. Once more his mother disapproved, and once more she changed her dwelling; this time to a house near a college, where he soon began to imitate the ceremonial observances in which the students were instructed, to the great joy and satisfaction of his mother.

Later on he studied under K'ung Chi, the grandson of Confucius; and after having attained to a perfect apprehension of the roms or Way of Confucius, became, at the age of about forty-five, Minister under Prince Hsüan of the Ch'i State. But the latter would not carry out his principles, and Mencius threw up his post. Thence he wandered away to several States, advising their rulers to the best of his ability, but making no very prolonged stay. He then visited Prince Hui of the Liang State, and abode there until the monarch's death in B.C. 319. After that event

he returned to the State of Ch'i and resumed his old position. In B.C. 311 he once more felt himself constrained to resign office, and retired finally into private life, occupying himself during the remainder of his days in teaching and in preparing the philosophical record which now passes under his name. He lived at a time when the feudal princes were squabbling over the rival systems of federation and imperialism, and he vainly tried to put into practice at an epoch of blood and iron the gentle virtues of the Golden Age. His criterion was that of Confucius, but his teachings were on a lower plane, dealing rather with man's well-being from the point of view of political economy. He was therefore justly named by Chao Ch'i the Second Holy One or Prophet, a title under which he is still known. He was an uncompromising defender of the doctrines of Confucius, and he is considered to have effectually "snuffed out" the heterodox schools of Yang Chu and Mo Ti.

The following is a specimen of the logomachy of the day, in which Mencius is supposed to have excelled. The subject is a favourite one – human nature: —

"Kao Tzŭ said, 'Human nature may be compared with a block of wood; duty towards one's neighbour, with a wooden bowl. To develop charity and duty towards one's neighbour out of human nature is like making a bowl out of a block of wood.'

"To this Mencius replied, 'Can you, without interfering with the natural constitution of the wood, make out of it a bowl? Surely you must do violence to that constitution in the process

of making your bowl. And by parity of reasoning you would do violence to human nature in the process of developing charity and duty towards one's neighbour. From which it follows that all men would come to regard these rather as evils than otherwise.'

"Kao Tzŭ said, 'Human nature is like rushing water, which flows east or west according as an outlet is made for it. For human nature makes indifferently for good or for evil, precisely as water makes indifferently for the east or for the west.'

"Mencius replied, 'Water will indeed flow indifferently towards the east or west; but will it flow indifferently up or down? It will not; and the tendency of human nature towards good is like the tendency of water to flow down. Every man has this bias towards good, just as all water flows naturally downwards. By splashing water, you may indeed cause it to fly over your head; and by turning its course you may keep it for use on the hillside; but you would hardly speak of such results as the nature of water. They are the results, of course, of a *force majeure*. And so it is when the nature of man is diverted towards evil.'

"Kao Tzŭ said, 'That which comes with life is nature.'

"Mencius replied, 'Do you mean that there is such a thing as nature in the abstract, just as there is whiteness in the abstract?'

"'I do,' answered Kao Tzŭ.

"'Just, for instance,' continued Mencius, 'as the whiteness of a feather is the same as the whiteness of snow, or the whiteness of snow as the whiteness of jade?'

"'I do,' answered Kao Tzŭ again.

"'In that case,' retorted Mencius, 'the nature of a dog is the same as that of an ox, and the nature of an ox the same as that of a man.'

"Kao Tzŭ said, 'Eating and reproduction of the species are natural instincts. Charity is subjective and innate; duty towards one's neighbour is objective and acquired. For instance, there is a man who is my senior, and I defer to him as such. Not because any abstract principle of seniority exists subjectively in me, but in the same way that if I see an albino, I recognise him as a white man because he is so objectively to me. Consequently, I say that duty towards one's neighbour is objective or acquired.'

"Mencius replied, 'The cases are not analogous. The whiteness of a white horse is undoubtedly the same as the whiteness of a white man; but the seniority of a horse is not the same as the seniority of a man. Does our duty to our senior begin and end with the fact of his seniority? Or does it not rather consist in the necessity of deferring to him as such?'

"Kao Tzŭ said, 'I love my own brother, but I do not love another man's brother. The distinction arises from within myself; therefore I call it subjective or innate. But I defer to a stranger who is my senior, just as I defer to a senior among my own people. The distinction comes to me from without; therefore I call it objective or acquired."

"Mencius retorted, 'We enjoy food cooked by strangers just as much as food cooked by our own people. Yet extension of your principle lands us in the conclusion that our appreciation of

cooked food is also objective and acquired.'"

The following is a well-known colloquy between Mencius and a sophist of the day who tried to entangle the former in his talk: —

The sophist inquired, saying, "'Is it a rule of social etiquette that when men and women pass things from one to another they shall not allow their hands to touch?'

"'That is the rule,' replied Mencius.

"'Now suppose,' continued the sophist, 'that a man's sister-in-law were drowning, could he take hold of her hand and save her?'

"'Any one who did not do so,' said Mencius, 'would have the heart of a wolf. That men and women when passing things from one to another may not let their hands touch is a rule for general application. To save a drowning sister-in-law by taking hold of her hand is altogether an exceptional case.'"

The works of Mencius abound, like the Confucian Analects, in sententious utterances. The following examples illustrate his general bias in politics: – "The people are of the highest importance; the gods come second; the sovereign is of lesser weight."

"Chieh and Chou lost the empire because they lost the people, which means that they lost the confidence of the people. The way to gain the people is to gain their confidence, and the way to do that is to provide them with what they like and not with what they loathe."

This is how Mencius snuffed out the two heterodox

philosophers mentioned above: —

"The systems of Yang Chu and Mo Ti fill the whole empire. If a man is not a disciple of the former, he is a disciple of the latter. But Yang Chu's egoism excludes the claim of a sovereign, while Mo Ti's universal altruism leaves out the claim of a father. And he who recognises the claim of neither sovereign nor father is a brute beast."

Yang Chu seems to have carried his egoism so far that even to benefit the whole world he would not have parted with a single hair from his body.

"The men of old knew that with life they had come but for a while, and that with death they would shortly depart again. Therefore they followed the desires of their own hearts, and did not deny themselves pleasures to which they felt naturally inclined. Fame tempted them not; but led by their instincts alone, they took such enjoyments as lay in their path, not seeking for a name beyond the grave. They were thus out of the reach of censure; while as for precedence among men, or length or shortness of life, these gave them no concern whatever."

Mo Ti, on the other hand, showed that under the altruistic system all calamities which men bring upon one another would altogether disappear, and that the peace and happiness of the Golden Age would be renewed.

TA HSÜEH AND CHUNG YUNG

In the *Ta Hsüeh*, or Great Learning, which forms Sect. xxxix. of the Book of Rites, and really means learning for adults, we

have a short politico-ethical treatise, the authorship of which is unknown, but is usually attributed partly to Confucius, and partly to Tsêng Ts'an, one of the most famous of his disciples. In the former portion there occurs the following well-known climax: —

"The men of old, in their desire to manifest great virtue throughout the empire, began with good government in the various States. To achieve this, it was necessary first to order aright their own families, which in turn was preceded by cultivation of their own selves, and that again by rectification of the heart, following upon sincerity of purpose which comes from extension of knowledge, this last being derived from due investigation of objective existences."

One more short treatise, known as the *Chung Yung*, which forms Ch. xxviii. of the Book of Rites, brings us to the end of the Four Books. Its title has been translated in various ways.[2] Julien rendered the term by "L'Invariable Milieu," Legge by "The Doctrine of the Mean." Its authorship is assigned to K'ung Chi, grandson of Confucius. He seems to have done little more than enlarge upon certain general principles of his grandfather in relation to the nature of man and right conduct upon earth. He seizes the occasion to pronounce an impassioned eulogium upon Confucius, concluding with the following words: —

"Therefore his fame overflows the Middle Kingdom, and

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[2] *Chung* means "middle," and *Yung* means "course," the former being defined by the Chinese as "that which is without deflection or bias," the latter as "that which never varies in its direction."

reaches the barbarians of north and south. Wherever ships and waggons can go, or the strength of man penetrate; wherever there is heaven above and earth below; wherever the sun and moon shed their light, or frosts and dews fall, – all who have blood and breath honour and love him. Wherefore it may be said that he is the peer of God."

CHAPTER IV
MISCELLANEOUS WRITERS

Names of the authors who belong to this period, B.C. 600 to B.C. 200, and of the works on a variety of subjects attributed to them, would fill a long list. Many of the latter have disappeared, and others are gross forgeries, chiefly of the first and second centuries of our era, an epoch which, curiously enough, is remarkable for a similar wave of forgery on the other side of the world. As to the authors, it will be seen later on that the Chinese even went so far as to create some of these for antiquity and then write up treatises to match.

There was Sun Tzŭ of the 6th century B.C. He is said to have written the *Ping Fa*, or Art of War, in thirteen sections, whereby hangs a strange tale. When he was discoursing one day with Prince Ho-lu of the Wu State, the latter said, "I have read your book and want to know if you could apply its principles to women." Sun Tzŭ replied in the affirmative, whereupon the Prince took 180 girls out of his harem and bade Sun Tzŭ deal with them as with troops. Accordingly he divided them into two companies, and at the head of each placed a favourite concubine of the Prince. But when the drums sounded for drill to begin, all the girls burst out laughing. Thereupon Sun Tzŭ, without a moment's delay, caused the two concubines in command to be beheaded. This at once restored order, and ultimately the corps

was raised to a state of great efficiency.

The following is an extract from the Art of War: —

"If soldiers are not carefully chosen and well drilled to obey, their movements will be irregular. They will not act in concert. They will miss success for want of unanimity. Their retreat will be disorderly, one half fighting while the other is running away. They will not respond to the call of the gong and drum. One hundred such as these will not hold their own against ten well-drilled men.

"If their arms are not good, the soldiers might as well have none. If the cuirass is not stout and close set, the breast might as well be bare. Bows that will not carry are no more use at long distances than swords and spears. Bad marksmen might as well have no arrows. Even good marksmen, unless able to make their arrows pierce, might as well shoot with headless shafts. These are the oversights of incompetent generals. Five such soldiers are no match for one."

It is notwithstanding very doubtful if we have any genuine remains of either Sun Tzŭ, or of Kuan Tzŭ, Wu Tzŭ, Wên Tzŭ, and several other early writers on war, political philosophy, and cognate subjects. The same remark applies equally to Chinese medical literature, the bulk of which is enormous, some of it nominally dating back to legendary times, but always failing to stand the application of the simplest test.

The *Erh Ya*, or Nearing the Standard, is a work which has often been assigned to the 12th century B.C. It is a guide to

the correct use of many miscellaneous terms, including names of animals, birds, plants, etc., to which are added numerous illustrations. It was first edited with commentary by Kuo P'o, of whom we shall read later on, and some Chinese critics would have us believe that the illustrations we now possess were then already in existence. But the whole question is involved in mystery. The following will give an idea of the text: —

"For metal we say *lou* (to chase); for wood *k'o* (to carve); for bone *ch'ieh* (to cut)," etc., etc.

T'AN KUNG

There are some interesting remains of a writer named T'an Kung, who flourished in the 4th and 3rd centuries B.C., and whose work has been included in the Book of Rites. The three following extracts will give an idea of his scope: —

1. "One day Yu-tzŭ and Tzŭ-yu saw a child weeping for the loss of its parents. Thereupon the former observed, 'I never could understand why mourners should necessarily jump about to show their grief, and would long ago have got rid of the custom. Now here you have an honest expression of feeling, and that is all there should ever be.'

"'My friend,' replied Tzŭ-yu, 'the mourning ceremonial, with all its material accompaniments, is at once a check upon undue emotion and a guarantee against any lack of proper respect. Simply to give vent to the feelings is the way of barbarians. That is not our way.

"'Consider. A man who is pleased will show it in his face. He

will sing. He will get excited. He will dance. So, too, a man who is vexed will look sad. He will sigh. He will beat his breast. He will jump about. The due regulation of these emotions is the function of a set ceremonial.

"'Further. A man dies and becomes an object of loathing. A dead body is shunned. Therefore, a shroud is prepared, and other paraphernalia of burial, in order that the survivors may cease to loathe. At death there is a sacrifice of wine and meat; when the funeral cortège is about to start, there is another; and after burial there is yet another. Yet no one ever saw the spirit of the departed come to taste of the food.

"'These have been our customs from remote antiquity. They have not been discarded, because, in consequence, men no more shun the dead. What you may censure in those who perform the ceremonial is no blemish in the ceremonial itself.'"

2. "When Tzŭ-chü died, his wife and secretary took counsel together as to who should be interred with him. All was settled before the arrival of his brother, Tzŭ-hêng; and then they informed him, saying, 'The deceased requires some one to attend upon him in the nether world. We must ask you to go down with his body into the grave.' 'Burial of the living with the dead,' replied Tzŭ-hêng, 'is not in accordance with established rites. Still, as you say some one is wanted to attend upon the deceased, who better fitted than his wife and secretary? If this contingency can be avoided altogether, I am willing; if not, then the duty will devolve upon you two.' From that time forth the custom fell into

desuetude."

3. "When Confucius was crossing the T'ai mountain, he overheard a woman weeping and wailing beside a grave. He thereupon sent one of his disciples to ask what was the matter; and the latter addressed the woman, saying, 'Some great sorrow must have come upon you that you give way to grief like this?' 'Indeed it is so,' replied she. 'My father-in-law was killed here by a tiger; after that, my husband; and now my son has perished by the same death.' 'But why, then,' inquired Confucius, 'do you not go away?' 'The government is not harsh,' answered the woman. 'There!' cried the Master, turning to his disciples; 'remember that. Bad government is worse than a tiger.'"

HSÜN TZŬ

The philosopher Hsün Tzŭ of the 3rd century B.C. is widely known for his heterodox views on the nature of man, being directly opposed to the Confucian doctrine so warmly advocated by Mencius. The following passage, which hardly carries conviction, contains the gist of his argument: —

"By nature, man is evil. If a man is good, that is an artificial result. For his condition being what it is, he is influenced first of all by a desire for gain. Hence he strives to get all he can without consideration for his neighbour. Secondly, he is liable to envy and hate. Hence he seeks the ruin of others, and loyalty and truth are set aside. Thirdly, he is a slave to his animal passions. Hence he commits excesses, and wanders from the path of duty and right.

"Thus, conformity with man's natural disposition leads to all

kinds of violence, disorder, and ultimate barbarism. Only under the restraint of law and of lofty moral influences does man eventually become fit to be a member of regularly organised society.

"From these premisses it seems quite clear that by nature man is evil; and that if a man is good, that is an artificial result."

The *Hsiao Ching*, or Classic of Filial Piety, is assigned partly to Confucius and partly to Tsêng Ts'an, though it more probably belongs to a very much later date. Considering that filial piety is admittedly the keystone of Chinese civilisation, it is disappointing to find nothing more on the subject than a poor pamphlet of commonplace and ill-strung sentences, which gives the impression of having been written to fill a void. One short extract will suffice: —

"The Master said, 'There are three thousand offences against which the five punishments are directed, and there is not one of them greater than being unfilial.

"'When constraint is put upon a ruler, that is the disowning of his superiority; when the authority of the sages is disallowed, that is the disowning of all law; when filial piety is put aside, that is the disowning of the principle of affection. These three things pave the way to anarchy.'"

The *Chia Yü*, or Family Sayings of Confucius, is a work with a fascinating title, which has been ascribed by some to the immediate disciples of Confucius, but which, as it now exists, is usually thought by native scholars to have been composed by

Wang Su, a learned official who died A.D. 256. There appears to have been an older work under this same title, but how far the later work is indebted to it, or based upon it, seems likely to remain unknown.

Another discredited work is the *Lü Shih Ch'un Ch'iu*, or Spring and Autumn of Lü Pu-wei, who died B.C. 235 and was the putative sire of the First Emperor (see ch. vii.). It contains a great deal about the early history of China, some of which is no doubt based upon fact.

MU T'IEN TZŬ CHUAN

Lastly, among spurious books may be mentioned the Mu T'ien Tzŭ Chuan, an account of a mythical journey by a sovereign of the Chou dynasty, supposed to have been taken about 1000 B.C. The sovereign is unfortunately spoken of by his posthumous title, and the work was evidently written up in the 3rd century A.D. to suit a statement found in Lieh Tzŭ (see chapter vi.) to the effect that the ruler in question did make some such journey to the West.

Chapter V
POETRY – INSCRIPTIONS

The poetry which is representative of the period between the death of Confucius and the 2nd century B.C. is a thing apart. There is nothing like it in the whole range of Chinese literature. It illumines many a native pronouncement on the poetic art, the drift of which would otherwise remain obscure. For poetry has been defined by the Chinese as "emotion expressed in words," a definition perhaps not more inadequate than Wordsworth's "impassioned expression." "Poetry," they say, "knows no law." And again, "The men of old reckoned it the highest excellence in poetry that the meaning should lie beyond the words, and that the reader should have to think it out." Of these three canons only the last can be said to have survived to the present day. But in the fourth century B.C., Ch'ü Yüan and his school indulged in wild irregular metres which consorted well with their wild irregular thoughts. Their poetry was prose run mad. It was allusive and allegorical to a high degree, and now, but for the commentary, much of it would be quite unintelligible.

LI SAO

Ch'ü Yüan is the type of a loyal Minister. He enjoyed the full confidence of his Prince until at length the jealousies and intrigues of rivals sapped his position in the State. Then it was that he composed the *Li Sao*, or Falling into Trouble, the first

section of which extends to nearly 400 lines. Beginning from the birth of the writer, it describes his cultivation of virtue and his earnest endeavour to translate precept into practice. Discouraged by failure, he visits the grave of the Emperor Shun (chapter ii.), and gives himself up to prayer, until at length a phœnix-car and dragons appear, and carry him in search of his ideal away beyond the domain of mortality, – the chariot of the Sun moving slowly to light him longer on the way, the Moon leading and the Winds bringing up the rear, – up to the very palace of God. Unable to gain admission here, he seeks out a famous magician, who counsels him to stand firm and to continue his search; whereupon, surrounded by gorgeous clouds and dazzling rainbows, and amid the music of tinkling ornaments attached to his car, he starts from the Milky Way, and passing the Western Pole, reaches the sources of the Yellow River. Before long he is once again in sight of his native land, but without having discovered the object of his search.

Overwhelmed by further disappointments, and sinking still more deeply into disfavour, so that he cared no longer to live, he went forth to the banks of the Mi-lo river. There he met a fisherman who accosted him, saying, "Are you not his Excellency the Minister? What has brought you to this pass?" "The world," replied Ch'ü Yüan, "is foul, and I alone am clean. There they are all drunk, while I alone am sober. So I am dismissed." "Ah!" said the fisherman, "the true sage does not quarrel with his environment, but adapts himself to it. If, as you say, the

world is foul, why not leap into the tide and make it clean? If all men are drunk, why not drink with them and teach them to avoid excess?" After some further colloquy, the fisherman rowed away; and Ch'ü Yüan, clasping a large stone in his arms, plunged into the river and was seen no more. This took place on the fifth of the fifth moon; and ever afterwards the people of Ch'u commemorated the day by an annual festival, when offerings of rice in bamboo tubes were cast into the river as a sacrifice to the spirit of their great hero. Such is the origin of the modern Dragon-Boat Festival, which is supposed to be a search for the body of Ch'ü Yüan.

A good specimen of his style will be found in the following short poem, entitled "The Genius of the Mountain." It is one of "nine songs" which, together with a number of other pieces in a similar strain, have been classed under the general heading, *Li Sao*, as above.

"Methinks there is a Genius of the hills, clad in wistaria, girdled with ivy, with smiling lips, of witching mien, riding on the red pard, wild cats galloping in the rear, reclining in a chariot, with banners of cassia, cloaked with the orchid, girt with azalea, culling the perfume of sweet flowers to leave behind a memory in the heart. But dark is the grove wherein I dwell. No light of day reaches it ever. The path thither is dangerous and difficult to climb. Alone I stand on the hill-top, while the clouds float beneath my feet, and all around is wrapped in gloom.

"Gently blows the east wind; softly falls the rain. In my joy I

become oblivious of home; for who in my decline would honour me now?

"I pluck the larkspur on the hillside, amid the chaos of rock and tangled vine. I hate him who has made me an outcast, who has now no leisure to think of me.

"I drink from the rocky spring. I shade myself beneath the spreading pine. Even though he were to recall me to him, I could not fall to the level of the world.

"Now booms the thunder through the drizzling rain. The gibbons howl around me all the long night. The gale rushes fitfully through the whispering trees. And I am thinking of my Prince, but in vain; for I cannot lay my grief."

SUNG YÜ

Another leading poet of the day was Sung Yü, of whom we know little beyond the fact that he was nephew of Ch'ü Yüan, and like his uncle both a statesman and a poet. The following extract exhibits him in a mood not far removed from the lamentations of the *Li Sao*: —

> "Among birds the phœnix, among fishes the leviathan holds the chiefest place;
> Cleaving the crimson clouds the phœnix soars apace,
> With only the blue sky above, far into the realms of space;
> But the grandeur of heaven and earth is as naught to the hedge-sparrow race.
>
> And the leviathan rises in one ocean to go to rest in a second,

While the depth of a puddle by a humble minnow as the depth of the sea is reckoned.

And just as with birds and with fishes, so too it is with man;
Here soars a phœnix, there swims a leviathan …
Behold the philosopher, full of nervous thought, with a flame that never grows dim,
Dwelling complacently alone; say, what can the vulgar herd know of him?"

As has been stated above, the poems of this school are irregular in metre; in fact, they are only approximately metrical. The poet never ends his line in deference to a prescribed number of feet, but lengthens or shortens to suit the exigency of his thought. Similarly, he may rhyme or he may not. The reader, however, is never conscious of any want of art, carried away as he is by flow of language and rapid succession of poetical imagery.

Several other poets, such as Chia I and Tung-fang So, who cultivated this particular vein, but on a somewhat lower plane, belong to the second century B.C., thus overlapping a period which must be regarded as heralding the birth of a new style rather than occupied with the passing of the old.

It may here be mentioned that many short pieces of doubtful age and authorship – some few unquestionably old – have been rescued by Chinese scholars from various sources, and formed into convenient collections. Of such is a verse known as "Yao's Advice," Yao being the legendary monarch mentioned in chapter

ii., who is associated with Shun in China's Golden Age: —

> "With trembling heart and cautious steps
> Walk daily in fear of God …
> Though you never trip over a mountain,
> You may often trip over a clod."

There is also the husbandman's song, which enlarges upon the national happiness of those halcyon days: —

> "Work, work; – from the rising sun
> Till sunset comes and the day is done
> I plough the sod
> And harrow the clod,
> And meat and drink both come to me,
> So what care I for the powers that be?"

INSCRIPTIONS

It seems to have been customary in early days to attach inscriptions, poetical and otherwise, to all sorts of articles for daily use. On the bath-tub of T'ang, founder of the Shang dynasty in B.C. 1766, there was said to have been written these words: – "If any one on any one day can make a new man of himself, let him do so every day." Similarly, an old metal mirror bore as its legend, "Man combs his hair every morning: why not his heart?" And the following lines are said to be taken from an ancient wash-basin: —

"Oh, rather than sink in the world's foul tide
I would sink in the bottomless main;
For he who sinks in the world's foul tide
In noisome depths shall for ever abide,
But he who sinks in the bottomless main
May hope to float to the surface again."

In this class of verse, too, the metre is often irregular and the rhyme a mere jingle, according to the canons of the stricter prosody which came into existence later on.

CHAPTER VI
TAOISM – THE "TAO-TÊ-CHING"

TAO-TÊ-CHING

The reader is now asked to begin once more at the sixth century B.C. So far we have dealt almost exclusively with what may be called orthodox literature, that is to say, of or belonging to or based upon the Confucian Canon. It seemed advisable to get that well off our hands before entering upon another branch, scarcely indeed as important, but much more difficult to handle. This branch consists of the literature of Taoism, or that which has gathered around what is known as the Tao or Way of Lao Tzŭ, growing and flourishing alongside of, though in direct antagonism to, that which is founded upon the criteria and doctrines of Confucius. Unfortunately it is quite impossible to explain at the outset in what this Tao actually consists. According to Lao Tzŭ himself, "Those who know do not tell; those who tell do not know." It is hoped, however, that by the time the end of this chapter is reached, some glimmering of the meaning of Tao may have reached the minds of those who have been patient enough to follow the argument.

LAO TZŬ

Lao Tzŭ was born, according to the weight of evidence, in the year B.C. 604. Omitting all reference to the supernatural phenomena which attended his birth and early years, it only

remains to say that we really know next to nothing about him. There is a short biography of Lao Tzŭ to be found in the history of Ssŭ-ma Ch'ien, to be dealt with in Book II., chapter iii., but internal evidence points to embroidery laid on by other hands. Just as it was deemed necessary by pious enthusiasts to interpolate in the work of Josephus a passage referring to Christ, so it would appear that the original note by Ssŭ-ma Ch'ien has been carefully touched up to suit the requirements of an unauthenticated meeting between Lao Tzŭ and Confucius, which has been inserted very much *à propos de bottes*; the more so, as Confucius is made to visit Lao Tzŭ with a view to information on Rites, a subject which Lao Tzŭ held in very low esteem. This biography ends with the following extraordinary episode: —

"Lao Tzŭ abode for a long time in Chou, but when he saw that the State showed signs of decay, he left. On reaching the frontier, the Warden, named Yin Hsi, said to him, 'So you are going into retirement. I beg you to write a book for me.' Thereupon Lao Tzŭ wrote a book, in two parts, on Tao and Tê,[3] extending to over 5000 words. He then went away, and no one knows where he died."

It is clear from Ssŭ-ma Ch'ien's account that he himself had never seen the book, though a dwindling minority still believe that we possess that book in the well-known *Tao-Tê-Ching*.

It must now be stated that throughout what are generally believed to be the writings of Confucius the name of Lao Tzŭ is

[3] Tê is the exemplification of Tao.

never once mentioned.[4] It is not mentioned by Tso of the famous commentary, nor by the editors of the Confucian Analects, nor by Tsêng Ts'an, nor by Mencius. Chuang Tzŭ, who devoted all his energies to the exposition and enforcement of the teaching of Lao Tzŭ, never once drops even a hint that his Master had written a book. In his work will now be found an account of the meeting of Confucius and Lao Tzŭ, but it has long since been laughed out of court as a pious fraud by every competent Chinese critic. Chu Hsi, Shên Jo-shui, and many others, declare emphatically against the genuineness of the *Tao-Tê-Ching*; and scant allusion would indeed have been made to it here, were it not for the attention paid to it by several more or less eminent foreign students of the language. It is interesting as a collection of many genuine utterances of Lao Tzŭ, sandwiched however between thick wads of padding from which little meaning can be extracted except by enthusiasts who curiously enough disagree absolutely among themselves. A few examples from the real Lao Tzŭ will now be given: —

"The Way (Tao) which can be walked upon is not the eternal Way."

"Follow diligently the Way in your own heart, but make no display of it to the world."

"By many words wit is exhausted; it is better to preserve a mean."

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[4] The name Lao Tan occurs in four passages in the Book of Rites, but we are expressly told that by it is not meant the philosopher Lao Tzŭ.

"To the good I would be good. To the not-good I would also be good, in order to make them good."

"Recompense injury with kindness."

"Put yourself behind, and you shall be put in front."

"Abandon wisdom and discard knowledge, and the people will be benefited an hundredfold."

These last maxims are supposed to illustrate Lao Tzŭ's favourite doctrine of doing nothing, or, as it has been termed, Inaction, a doctrine inseparably associated with his name, and one which has ever exerted much fascination over the more imaginative of his countrymen. It was openly enunciated as follows: —

"Do nothing, and all things will be done."

"I do nothing, and the people become good of their own accord."

To turn to the padding, as rendered by the late Drs. Chalmers and Legge, we may take a paragraph which now passes as chapter vi.: —

Chalmers: – "The Spirit (like perennial spring) of the valley never dies. This (Spirit) I call the abyss-mother. The passage of the abyss-mother I call the root of heaven and earth. Ceaselessly it seems to endure, and it is employed without effort."

Legge: – "The valley spirit dies not, aye the same;
The female mystery thus do we name.
Its gate, from which at first they issued forth,
Is called the root from which grew heaven and earth.

Long and unbroken does its power remain,
Used gently, and without the touch of pain."

One more example from Chalmers' translation will perhaps seal the fate of this book with readers who claim at least a minimum of sense from an old-world classic.

"Where water abides, it is good for adaptability.
In its heart, it is good for depth.
In giving, it is good for benevolence.
In speaking, it is good for fidelity."

That there was such a philosopher as Lao Tzŭ who lived about the time indicated, and whose sayings have come down to us first by tradition and later by written and printed record, cannot possibly be doubted. The great work of Chuang Tzŭ would be sufficient to establish this beyond cavil, while at the same time it forms a handy guide to a nearer appreciation of this elusive Tao.

CHUANG TZŬ

Chuang Tzŭ was born in the fourth century B.C., and held a petty official post. "He wrote," says the historian Ssŭ-ma Ch'ien, "with a view to asperse the Confucian school and to glorify the mysteries of Lao Tzŭ… His teachings are like an overwhelming flood, which spreads at its own sweet will. Consequently, from rulers and ministers downwards, none could apply them to any definite use."

Here we have the key to the triumph of the Tao of Confucius

over the Tao of Lao Tzŭ. The latter was idealistic, the former a practical system for everyday use. And Chuang Tzŭ was unable to persuade the calculating Chinese nation that by doing nothing, all things would be done. But he bequeathed to posterity a work which, by reason of its marvellous literary beauty, has always held a foremost place. It is also a work of much originality of thought. The writer, it is true, appears chiefly as a disciple insisting upon the principles of a Master. But he has contrived to extend the field, and carry his own speculations into regions never dreamt of by Lao Tzŭ.

The whole work of Chuang Tzŭ has not come down to us, neither can all that now passes under his name be regarded as genuine. Alien hands have added, vainly indeed, many passages and several entire chapters. But a sable robe, says the Chinese proverb, cannot be eked out with dogs' tails. Lin Hsi-chung, a brilliant critic of the seventeenth century, to whose edition all students should turn, has shown with unerring touch where the lion left off and the jackals began.

The honour of the first edition really belongs to a volatile spirit of the third century A.D., named Hsiang Hsiu. He was probably the founder, at any rate a member, of a small club of bibulous poets who called themselves the Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove. Death, however, interrupted his labours before he had finished his work on Chuang Tzŭ, and the manuscript was purloined by Kuo Hsiang, a scholar who died A.D. 312, and with some additions was issued by the latter as his own.

Before attempting to illustrate by extracts the style and scope of Chuang Tzŭ, it will be well to collect from his work a few passages dealing with the attributes of Tao. In his most famous chapter, entitled Autumn Floods, a name by which he himself is sometimes spoken of, Chuang Tzŭ writes as follows: —

"Tao is without beginning, without end." Elsewhere he says, "There is nowhere where it is not." "Tao cannot be heard; heard, it is not Tao. Tao cannot be seen; seen, it is not Tao. Tao cannot be spoken; spoken, it is not Tao. That which imparts form to forms is itself formless; therefore Tao cannot have a name (as form precedes name)."

"Tao is not too small for the greatest, nor too great for the smallest. Thus all things are embosomed therein; wide, indeed, its boundless capacity, unfathomable its depth."

"By no thoughts, by no cogitations, Tao may be known. By resting in nothing, by according in nothing, Tao may be approached. By following nothing, by pursuing nothing, Tao may be attained."

In these and many like passages Lao Tzŭ would have been in full sympathy with his disciple. So far as it is possible to deduce anything definite from the scanty traditions of the teachings of Lao Tzŭ, we seem to obtain this, that man should remain impassive under the operation of an eternal, omnipresent law (Tao), and that thus he will become in perfect harmony with his environment, and that if he is in harmony with his environment, he will thereby attain to a vague condition of general immunity.

Beyond this the teachings of Lao Tzŭ would not carry us. Chuang Tzŭ, however, from simple problems, such as a drunken man falling out of a cart and not injuring himself – a common superstition among sailors – because he is unconscious and therefore in harmony with his environment, slides easily into an advanced mysticism. In his marvellous chapter on The Identity of Contraries, he maintains that from the standpoint of Tao all things are One. Positive and negative, this and that, here and there, somewhere and nowhere, right and wrong, vertical and horizontal, subjective and objective, become indistinct, as water is in water. "When subjective and objective are both without their correlates, that is the very axis of Tao. And when that axis passes through the centre at which all Infinities converge, positive and negative alike blend into an infinite One." This localisation in a Centre, and this infinite absolute represented by One, were too concrete even for Chuang Tzŭ. The One became God, and the Centre, assigned by later Taoist writers to the pole-star (see Book IV. ch. i.), became the source of all life and the haven to which such life returned after its transitory stay on earth. By ignoring the distinctions of contraries "we are embraced in the obliterating unity of God. Take no heed of time, nor of right and wrong; but passing into the realm of the Infinite, make your final rest therein."

That the idea of an indefinite future state was familiar to the mind of Chuang Tzŭ may be gathered from many passages such as the following: —

"How then do I know but that the dead repent of having previously clung to life?

"Those who dream of the banquet, wake to lamentation and sorrow. Those who dream of lamentation and sorrow, wake to join the hunt. While they dream, they do not know that they dream. Some will even interpret the very dream they are dreaming; and only when they awake do they know it was a dream. By and by comes the Great Awakening, and then we find out that this life is really a great dream. Fools think they are awake now, and flatter themselves they know if they are really princes or peasants. Confucius and you are both dreams; and I who say you are dreams, – I am but a dream myself."

The chapter closes with a paragraph which has gained for its writer an additional epithet, Butterfly Chuang: —

"Once upon a time, I, Chuang Tzŭ, dreamt I was a butterfly, fluttering hither and thither, to all intents and purposes a butterfly. I was conscious only of following my fancies as a butterfly, and was unconscious of my individuality as a man. Suddenly, I awaked, and there I lay, myself again. Now I do not know whether I was then a man dreaming I was a butterfly, or whether I am now a butterfly dreaming I am a man."

Chuang Tzŭ is fond of paradox. He delights in dwelling on the usefulness of useless things. He shows that ill-grown or inferior trees are allowed to stand, that diseased pigs are not killed for sacrifice, and that a hunchback can not only make a good living by washing, for which a bent body is no drawback, but escapes

the dreaded press-gang in time of war.

With a few illustrative extracts we must now take leave of Chuang Tzŭ, a writer who, although heterodox in the eyes of a Confucianist, has always been justly esteemed for his pointed wit and charming style.

(1.) "It was the time of autumn floods. Every stream poured into the river, which swelled in its turbid course. The banks receded so far from one another that it was impossible to tell a cow from a horse.

"Then the Spirit of the River laughed for joy that all the beauty of the earth was gathered to himself. Down with the stream he journeyed east, until he reached the ocean. There, looking eastwards and seeing no limit to its waves, his countenance changed. And as he gazed over the expanse, he sighed and said to the Spirit of the Ocean, 'A vulgar proverb says, that he who has heard but part of the truth thinks no one equal to himself. And such a one am I.

"'When formerly I heard people detracting from the learning of Confucius, or underrating the heroism of Po I, I did not believe. But now that I have looked upon your inexhaustibility – alas for me had I not reached your abode, I should have been for ever a laughing-stock to those of comprehensive enlightenment!'

"To which the Spirit of the Ocean replied, 'You cannot speak of ocean to a well-frog, the creature of a narrower sphere. You cannot speak of ice to a summer-insect, – the creature of a season. You cannot speak of Tao to a pedagogue: his scope

is too restricted. But now that you have emerged from your narrow sphere and have seen the great ocean, you know your own insignificance, and I can speak to you of great principles.'"

(2.) "Have you never heard of the frog in the old well? – The frog said to the turtle of the eastern sea, 'Happy indeed am I! I hop on to the rail around the well. I rest in the hollow of some broken brick. Swimming, I gather the water under my arms and shut my mouth. I plunge into the mud, burying my feet and toes; and not one of the cockles, crabs, or tadpoles I see around me are my match. [Fancy pitting the happiness of an old well, ejaculates Chuang Tzŭ, against all the water of Ocean!] Why do you not come, sir, and pay me a visit?'[5]

"Now the turtle of the eastern sea had not got its left leg down ere its right had already stuck fast, so it shrank back and begged to be excused. It then described the sea, saying, 'A thousand *li* would not measure its breadth, nor a thousand fathoms its depth. In the days of the Great Yü, there were nine years of flood out of ten; but this did not add to its bulk. In the days of T'ang, there were seven years out of eight of drought; but this did not narrow its span. Not to be affected by duration of time, not to be affected by volume of water, – such is the great happiness of the eastern sea.'

"At this the well-frog was considerably astonished, and knew

[5] "To the minnow, every cranny and pebble and quality and accident of its little native creek may have become familiar; but does the minnow understand the ocean tides and periodic currents, the trade-winds, and monsoons, and moon's eclipses…?" —*Sartor Resartus*, Natural Supernaturalism.

not what to say next. And for one whose knowledge does not reach to the positive-negative domain, to attempt to understand me, Chuang Tzŭ, is like a mosquito trying to carry a mountain, or an ant to swim a river, – they cannot succeed."

(3.) "Chuang Tzŭ was fishing in the P'u when the prince of Ch'u sent two high officials to ask him to take charge of the administration of the Ch'u State.

"Chuang Tzŭ went on fishing, and without turning his head said, 'I have heard that in Ch'u there is a sacred tortoise which has been dead now some three thousand years. And that the prince keeps this tortoise carefully enclosed in a chest on the altar of his ancestral temple. Now would this tortoise rather be dead, and have its remains venerated, or be alive and wagging its tail in the mud?'

"'It would rather be alive,' replied the two officials, 'and wagging its tail in the mud.'

"'Begone!' cried Chuang Tzŭ. 'I too will wag my tail in the mud.'"

(4.) "Chuang Tzŭ one day saw an empty skull, bleached, but still preserving its shape. Striking it with his riding whip, he said, 'Wert thou once some ambitious citizen whose inordinate yearnings brought him to this pass? – some statesman who plunged his country in ruin, and perished in the fray? – some wretch who left behind him a legacy of shame? – some beggar who died in the pangs of hunger and cold? Or didst thou reach this state by the natural course of old age?'

"When he had finished speaking, he took the skull, and placing it under his head as a pillow, went to sleep. In the night, he dreamt that the skull appeared to him, and said, 'You speak well, sir; but all you say has reference to the life of mortals, and to mortal troubles. In death there are none of these. Would you like to hear about death?'

"Chuang Tzŭ having replied in the affirmative, the skull began: – 'In death, there is no sovereign above, and no subject below. The workings of the four seasons are unknown. Our existences are bounded only by eternity. The happiness of a king among men cannot exceed that which we enjoy.'

"Chuang Tzŭ, however, was not convinced, and said, 'Were I to prevail upon God to allow your body to be born again, and your bones and flesh to be renewed, so that you could return to your parents, to your wife, and to the friends of your youth – would you be willing?'

"At this, the skull opened its eyes wide and knitted its brows and said, 'How should I cast aside happiness greater than that of a king, and mingle once again in the toils and troubles of mortality?'"

(5.) "The Grand Augur, in his ceremonial robes, approached the shambles and thus addressed the pigs: —

"'How can you object to die? I shall fatten you for three months. I shall discipline myself for ten days and fast for three. I shall strew fine grass, and place you bodily upon a carved sacrificial dish. Does not this satisfy you?'

"Then speaking from the pigs' point of view, he continued, 'It is better perhaps after all to live on bran and escape the shambles…'

"'But then,' added he, speaking from his own point of view, 'to enjoy honour when alive one would readily die on a war-shield or in the headsman's basket.'

"So he rejected the pigs' point of view and adopted his own point of view. In what sense then was he different from the pigs?"

(6.) "When Chuang Tzŭ was about to die, his disciples expressed a wish to give him a splendid funeral. But Chuang Tzŭ said, 'With heaven and earth for my coffin and shell, with the sun, moon, and stars as my burial regalia, and with all creation to escort me to the grave, – are not my funeral paraphernalia ready to hand?'

"'We fear,' argued the disciples, 'lest the carrion kite should eat the body of our Master'; to which Chuang Tzŭ replied, 'Above ground I shall be food for kites, below I shall be food for mole-crickets and ants. Why rob one to feed the other?'"

LIEH TZŬ

The works of Lieh Tzŭ, in two thin volumes, may be procured at any Chinese book-shop. These volumes profess to contain the writings of a Taoist philosopher who flourished some years before Chuang Tzŭ, and for a long time they received considerable attention at the hands of European students, into whose minds no suspicion of their real character seems to have found its way. Gradually the work came to be looked upon as

doubtful, then spurious; and now it is known to be a forgery, possibly of the first or second century A.D. The scholar – for he certainly was one – who took the trouble to forge this work, was himself the victim of a strange delusion. He thought that Lieh Tzŭ, to whom Chuang Tzŭ devotes a whole chapter, had been a live philosopher of flesh and blood. But he was in reality nothing more than a figment of the imagination, like many others of Chuang Tzŭ's characters, though his name was less broadly allegorical than those of All-in-Extremes, and of Do-Nothing-Say-Nothing, and others. The book attributed to him is curious enough to deserve attention. It is on a lower level of thought and style than the work of Chuang Tzŭ; still, it contains much traditional matter and many allusions not found elsewhere. To its author we owe the famous, but of course apocryphal, story of Confucius meeting two boys quarrelling about the distance of the sun from the earth. One of them said that at dawn the sun was much larger than at noon, and must consequently be much nearer; but the other retorted that at noon the sun was much hotter, and therefore nearer than at dawn. Confucius confessed himself unable to decide between them, and was jeered at by the boys as an impostor. But of all this work perhaps the most attractive portion is a short story on Dream and Reality: —

"A man of the State of Chêng was one day gathering fuel, when he came across a startled deer, which he pursued and killed. Fearing lest any one should see him, he hastily concealed the carcass in a ditch and covered it with plaintain leaves, rejoicing

excessively at his good fortune. By and by, he forgot the place where he had put it, and, thinking he must have been dreaming, he set off towards home, humming over the affair on his way.

"Meanwhile, a man who had overheard his words, acted upon them, and went and got the deer. The latter, when he reached his house, told his wife, saying, 'A woodman dreamt he had got a deer, but he did not know where it was. Now I have got the deer; so his dream was a reality.' 'It is you,' replied his wife, 'who have been dreaming you saw a woodman. Did he get the deer? and is there really such a person? It is you who have got the deer: how, then, can his dream be a reality?' 'It is true,' assented the husband, 'that I have got the deer. It is therefore of little importance whether the woodman dreamt the deer or I dreamt the woodman.'

"Now when the woodman reached his home, he became much annoyed at the loss of the deer; and in the night he actually dreamt where the deer then was, and who had got it. So next morning he proceeded to the place indicated in his dream, – and there it was. He then took legal steps to recover possession; and when the case came on, the magistrate delivered the following judgment: – 'The plaintiff began with a real deer and an alleged dream. He now comes forward with a real dream and an alleged deer. The defendant really got the deer which plaintiff said he dreamt, and is now trying to keep it; while, according to his wife, both the woodman and the deer are but the figments of a dream, so that no one got the deer at all. However, here is a deer, which you

had better divide between you.'"

HAN FEI TZŬ

Han Fei Tzŭ, who died B.C. 233, has left us fifty-five essays of considerable value, partly for the light they throw upon the connection between the genuine sayings of Lao Tzŭ and the *Tao-Tê-Ching*, and partly for the quaint illustrations he gives of the meaning of the sayings themselves. He was deeply read in law, and obtained favour in the eyes of the First Emperor (see Book II., ch. i.); but misrepresentations of rivals brought about his downfall, and he committed suicide in prison. We cannot imagine that he had before him the *Tao-Tê-Ching*. He deals with many of its best sayings, which may well have come originally from an original teacher, such as Lao Tzŭ is supposed to have been, but quite at random and not as if he took them from an orderly work. And what is more, portions of his own commentary have actually slipped into the *Tao-Tê-Ching* as text, showing how this book was pieced together from various sources. Again, he quotes sentences not to be found in the *Tao-Tê-Ching*. He illustrates such a simple saying as "To see small beginnings is clearness of sight," by drawing attention to a man who foresaw, when the tyrant Chou Hsin (who died B.C. 1122) took to ivory chopsticks, that the tide of luxury had set in, to bring licentiousness and cruelty in its train, and to end in downfall and death.

Lao Tzŭ said, "Leave all things to take their natural course." To this Han Fei Tzŭ adds, "A man spent three years in carving a

leaf out of ivory, of such elegant and detailed workmanship that it would lie undetected among a heap of real leaves. But Lieh Tzŭ said, 'If God Almighty were to spend three years over every leaf, the trees would be badly off for foliage.'"

Lao Tzŭ said, "The wise man takes time by the forelock." Han Fei Tzŭ adds, "One day the Court physician said to Duke Huan, 'Your Grace is suffering from an affection of the muscular system. Take care, or it may become serious.' 'Oh no,' replied the Duke, 'I have nothing the matter with me;' and when the physician was gone, he observed to his courtiers, 'Doctors dearly love to treat patients who are not ill, and then make capital out of the cure.' Ten days afterwards, the Court physician again remarked, 'Your Grace has an affection of the flesh. Take care, or it may become serious.' The Duke took no notice of this, but after ten days more the physician once more observed, 'Your Grace has an affection of the viscera. Take care, or it may become serious.' Again the Duke paid no heed; and ten days later, when the physician came, he simply looked at his royal patient, and departed without saying anything. The Duke sent some one to inquire what was the matter, and to him the physician said, 'As long as the disease was in the muscles, it might have been met by fomentations and hot applications; when it was in the flesh, acupuncture might have been employed; and as long as it was in the viscera, cauterisation might have been tried; but now it is in the bones and marrow, and naught will avail.' Five days later, the Duke felt pains all over his body, and sent to summon his

physician; but the physician had fled, and the Duke died. So it is that the skilful doctor attacks disease while it is still in the muscles and easy to deal with."

HUAI-NAN TZŬ

To clear off finally this school of early Taoist writers, it will be necessary to admit here one whose life properly belongs to the next period. Liu An, a grandson of the founder of the Han dynasty, became Prince of Huai-nan, and it is as Huai-nan Tzŭ, the Philosopher of that ilk, that he is known to the Chinese people. He wrote an esoteric work in twenty-one chapters, which we are supposed still to possess, besides many exoteric works, such as a treatise on alchemy, none of which are extant. It is fairly certain, however, that alchemy was not known to the Chinese until between two and three centuries later, when it was introduced from the West. As to the book which passes under his name, it is difficult to assign to it any exact date. Like the work of Lieh Tzŭ, it is interesting enough in itself; and what is more important, it marks the transition of the pure and simple Way of Lao Tzŭ, etherealised by Chuang Tzŭ, to the grosser beliefs of later ages in magicians and the elixir of life. Lao Tzŭ urged his fellow-mortals to guard their vitality by entering into harmony with their environment. Chuang Tzŭ added a motive, "to pass into the realm of the Infinite and make one's final rest therein." From which it is but a step to immortality and the elixir of life.

Huai-nan Tzŭ begins with a lengthy disquisition "On the Nature of Tao," in which, as elsewhere, he deals with the sayings

of Lao Tzŭ after the fashion of Han Fei Tzŭ. Thus Lao Tzŭ said, "If you do not quarrel, no one on earth will be able to quarrel with you." To this Huai-nan Tzŭ adds, that when a certain ruler was besieging an enemy's town, a large part of the wall fell down; whereupon the former gave orders to beat a retreat at once. "For," said he in reply to the remonstrances of his officers, "a gentleman never hits a man who is down. Let them rebuild their wall, and then we will renew the attack." This noble behaviour so delighted the enemy that they tendered allegiance on the spot.

Lao Tzŭ said, "Do not value the man, value his abilities." Whereupon Huai-nan Tzŭ tells a story of a general of the Ch'u State who was fond of surrounding himself with men of ability, and once even went so far as to engage a man who represented himself as a master-thief. His retainers were aghast; but shortly afterwards their State was attacked by the Ch'i State, and then, when fortune was adverse and all was on the point of being lost, the master-thief begged to be allowed to try his skill. He went by night into the enemy's camp, and stole their general's bed-curtain. This was returned next morning with a message that it had been found by one of the soldiers who was gathering fuel. The same night our master-thief stole the general's pillow, which was restored with a similar message; and the following night he stole the long pin used to secure the hair. "Good heavens!" cried the general at a council of war, "they will have my head next." Upon which the army of the Ch'i State was withdrawn.

Among passages of general interest the following may well be

quoted: —

"Once when the Duke of Lu-yang was at war with the Han State, and sunset drew near while a battle was still fiercely raging, the Duke held up his spear, and shook it at the sun, which forthwith went back three zodiacal signs."

The end of this philosopher was a tragic one. He seems to have mixed himself up in some treasonable enterprise, and was driven to commit suicide. Tradition, however, says that he positively discovered the elixir of immortality, and that after drinking of it he rose up to heaven in broad daylight. Also that, in his excitement, he dropped the vessel which had contained this elixir into his courtyard, and that his dogs and poultry sipped up the dregs, and immediately sailed up to heaven after him!

BOOK THE SECOND
THE HAN DYNASTY
(B.C. 200 – A.D. 200)

CHAPTER I
THE "FIRST EMPEROR" – THE BURNING OF THE BOOKS – MISCELLANEOUS WRITERS

Never has the literature of any country been more closely bound up with the national history than was that of China at the beginning of the period upon which we are now about to enter.

The feudal spirit had long since declined, and the bond between suzerain and vassal had grown weaker and weaker until at length it had ceased to exist. Then came the opportunity and the man. The ruler of the powerful State of Ch'in, after gradually vanquishing and absorbing such of the other rival States as had not already been swallowed up by his own State, found himself in B.C. 221 master of the whole of China, and forthwith proclaimed himself its Emperor. The Chou dynasty, with its eight hundred years of sway, was a thing of the past, and the whole fabric of

feudalism melted easily away.

This catastrophe was by no means unexpected. Some forty years previously a politician, named Su Tai, was one day advising the King of Chao to put an end to his ceaseless hostilities with the Yen State. "This morning," said he, "when crossing the river, I saw a mussel open its shell to sun itself. Immediately an oyster-catcher thrust in his bill to eat the mussel, but the latter promptly closed its shell and held the bird fast. 'If it doesn't rain to-day or to-morrow,' cried the oyster-catcher, 'there will be a dead mussel.' 'And if you don't get out of this by to-day or to-morrow,' retorted the mussel, 'there will be a dead oyster-catcher.' Meanwhile up came a fisherman and carried off both of them. I fear lest the Ch'in State should be our fisherman."

LI SSŬ

The new Emperor was in many senses a great man, and civilisation made considerable advances during his short reign. But a single decree has branded his name with infamy, to last so long as the Chinese remain a lettered people. In B.C. 13, a trusted Minister, named Li Ssŭ, is said to have suggested an extraordinary plan, by which the claims of antiquity were to be for ever blotted out and history was to begin again with the ruling monarch, thenceforward to be famous as the First Emperor. All existing literature was to be destroyed, with the exception only of works relating to agriculture, medicine, and divination; and a penalty of branding and four years' work on the Great Wall, then in process of building, was enacted against all who refused

to surrender their books for destruction. This plan was carried out with considerable vigour. Many valuable works perished; and the Confucian Canon would have been irretrievably lost but for the devotion of scholars, who at considerable risk concealed the tablets by which they set such store, and thus made possible the discoveries of the following century and the restoration of the sacred text. So many, indeed, of the literati are said to have been put to death for disobedience that melons actually grew in winter on the spot beneath which their bodies were buried.

Li Ssŭ was a scholar himself, and the reputed inventor of the script known as the Lesser Seal, which was in vogue for several centuries. The following is from a memorial of his against the proscription of nobles and others from rival States: —

"As broad acres yield large crops, so for a nation to be great there should be a great population; and for soldiers to be daring their generals should be brave. Not a single clod was added to T'ai-shan in vain: hence the huge mountain we now behold. The merest streamlet is received into the bosom of Ocean: hence the Ocean's unfathomable expanse. And wise and virtuous is the ruler who scorns not the masses below. For him, no boundaries of realm, no distinctions of nationality exist. The four seasons enrich him; the Gods bless him; and, like our rulers of old, no man's hand is against him."

The First Emperor died in B.C. 210,[6] and his feeble son, the

[6] An account of the mausoleum built to receive his remains will be found in Chapter iii. of this Book.

Second Emperor, was put to death in 207, thus bringing their line to an end. The vacant throne was won by a quondam beadle, who established the glorious House of Han, in memory of which Chinese of the present day, chiefly in the north, are still proud to call themselves Sons of Han.

So soon as the empire settled down to comparative peace, a mighty effort was made to undo at least some of the mischief sustained by the national literature. An extra impetus was given to this movement by the fact that under the First Emperor, if we can believe tradition, the materials of writing had undergone a radical change. A general, named Mêng T'ien, added to the triumphs of the sword the invention of the camel's-hair brush, which the Chinese use as a pen. The clumsy bamboo tablet and stylus were discarded, and strips of cloth or silk came into general use, and were so employed until the first century A.D., when paper was invented by Ts'ai Lun. Some say that brickdust and water did duty at first for ink. However that may be, the form of the written character underwent a corresponding change to suit the materials employed.

Meanwhile, books were brought out of their hiding-places, and scholars like K'ung An-kuo, a descendant of Confucius in the twelfth degree, set to work to restore the lost classics. He deciphered the text of the Book of History, which had been discovered when pulling down the old house where Confucius once lived, and transcribed large portions of it from the ancient into the later script. He also wrote a commentary on the Analects

and another on the Filial Piety Classic.

CH'AO TS'O – LI LING

Ch'ao Ts'o (perished B.C. 155), popularly known as Wisdom-Bag, was a statesman rather than an author. Still, many of his memorials to the throne were considered masterpieces, and have been preserved accordingly. He wrote on the military operations against the Huns, pleading for the employment of frontier tribes, "barbarians, who in point of food and skill are closely allied to the Huns." "But arms," he says, "are a curse, and war is a dread thing. For in the twinkling of an eye the mighty may be humbled, and the strong may be brought low." In an essay "On the Value of Agriculture" he writes thus: —

"Crime begins in poverty; poverty in insufficiency of food; insufficiency of food in neglect of agriculture. Without agriculture, man has no tie to bind him to the soil. Without such tie he readily leaves his birth-place and his home. He is like unto the birds of the air or the beasts of the field. Neither battlemented cities, nor deep moats, nor harsh laws, nor cruel punishments, can subdue this roving spirit that is strong within him.

"He who is cold examines not the quality of cloth; he who is hungry tarries not for choice meats. When cold and hunger come upon men, honesty and shame depart. As man is constituted, he must eat twice daily, or hunger; he must wear clothes, or be cold. And if the stomach cannot get food and the body clothes, the love of the fondest mother cannot keep her children at her side. How then should a sovereign keep his subjects gathered around him?

"The wise ruler knows this. Therefore he concentrates the energies of his people upon agriculture. He levies light taxes. He extends the system of grain storage, to provide for his subjects at times when their resources fail."

LI LING

The name of Li Ling (second and first centuries B.C.) is a familiar one to every Chinese schoolboy. He was a military official who was sent in command of 800 horse to reconnoitre the territory of the Huns; and returning successful from this expedition, he was promoted to a high command and was again employed against these troublesome neighbours. With a force of only 5000 infantry he penetrated into the Hun territory as far as Mount Ling-chi (?), where he was surrounded by an army of 30,000 of the Khan's soldiers; and when his troops had exhausted all their arrows, he was forced to surrender. At this the Emperor was furious; and later on, when he heard that Li Ling was training the Khan's soldiers in the art of war as then practised by the Chinese, he caused his mother, wife, and children to be put to death. Li Ling remained some twenty years, until his death, with the Huns, and was highly honoured by the Khan, who gave him his daughter to wife.

With the renegade Li Ling is associated his patriot contemporary, Su Wu, who also met with strange adventures among the Huns. Several Chinese envoys had been imprisoned by the latter, and not allowed to return; and by way of reprisal, Hun envoys had been imprisoned in China. But a new Khan had

recently sent back all the imprisoned envoys, and in A.D. 100 Su Wu was despatched upon a mission of peace to return the Hun envoys who had been detained by the Chinese. Whilst at the Court of the Khan his fellow-envoys revolted, and on the strength of this an attempt was made to persuade him to throw off his allegiance and enter the service of the Huns; upon which he tried to commit suicide, and wounded himself so severely that he lay unconscious for some hours. He subsequently slew a Chinese renegade with his own hand; and then when it was found that he was not to be forced into submission, he was thrown into a dungeon and left without food for several days. He kept himself alive by sucking snow and gnawing a felt rug; and at length the Huns, thinking that he was a supernatural being, sent him away north and set him to tend sheep. Then Li Ling was ordered to try once more by brilliant offers to shake his unswerving loyalty, but all was in vain. In the year 86, peace was made with the Huns, and the Emperor asked for the return of Su Wu. To this the Huns replied that he was dead; but a former assistant to Su Wu bade the new envoy tell the Khan that the Emperor had shot a goose with a letter tied to its leg, from which he had learnt the whereabouts of his missing envoy. This story so astonished the Khan that Su Wu was released, and in B.C.. 81 returned to China after a captivity of nineteen years. He had gone away in the prime of life; he returned a white-haired and broken-down old man.

Li Ling and Su Wu are said to have exchanged poems at parting, and these are to be found published in collections under

their respective names. Some doubt has been cast upon the genuineness of one of those attributed to Li Ling. It was pointed out by Hung Mai, a brilliant critic of the twelfth century, that a certain word was used in the poem, which, being part of the personal name of a recent Emperor, would at that date have been taboo. No such stigma attaches to the verses by Su Wu, who further gave to his wife a parting poem, which has been preserved, promising her that if he lived he would not fail to return, and if he died he would never forget her. But most famous of all, and still a common model for students, is a letter written by Li Ling to Su Wu, after the latter's return to China, in reply to an affectionate appeal to him to return also. Its genuineness has been questioned by Su Shih of the Sung dynasty, but not by the greatest of modern critics, Lin Hsi-chung, who declares that its pathos is enough to make even the gods weep, and that it cannot possibly have come from any other hand save that of Li Ling. With this verdict the foreign student may well rest content. Here is the letter: —

"O Tzŭ-ch'ing, O my friend, happy in the enjoyment of a glorious reputation, happy in the prospect of an imperishable name, – there is no misery like exile in a far-off foreign land, the heart brimful of longing thoughts of home! I have thy kindly letter, bidding me of good cheer, kinder than a brother's words; for which my soul thanks thee.

"Ever since the hour of my surrender until now, destitute of all resource, I have sat alone with the bitterness of my grief. All

day long I see none but barbarians around me. Skins and felt protect me from wind and rain. With mutton and whey I satisfy my hunger and slake my thirst. Companions with whom to while time away, I have none. The whole country is stiff with black ice. I hear naught but the moaning of the bitter autumn blast, beneath which all vegetation has disappeared. I cannot sleep at night. I turn and listen to the distant sound of Tartar pipes, to the whinnying of Tartar steeds. In the morning I sit up and listen still, while tears course down my cheeks. O Tzŭ-ch'ing, of what stuff am I, that I should do aught but grieve? The day of thy departure left me disconsolate indeed. I thought of my aged mother butchered upon the threshold of the grave. I thought of my innocent wife and child, condemned to the same cruel fate. Deserving as I might have been of Imperial censure, I am now an object of pity to all. Thy return was to honour and renown, while I remained behind with infamy and disgrace. Such is the divergence of man's destiny.

"Born within the domain of refinement and justice, I passed into an environment of vulgar ignorance. I left behind me obligations to sovereign and family for life amid barbarian hordes; and now barbarian children will carry on the line of my forefathers. And yet my merit was great, my guilt of small account. I had no fair hearing; and when I pause to think of these things, I ask to what end I have lived? With a thrust I could have cleared myself of all blame: my severed throat would have borne witness to my resolution; and between me and my country all

would have been over for aye. But to kill myself would have been of no avail: I should only have added to my shame. I therefore steeled myself to obloquy and to life. There were not wanting those who mistook my attitude for compliance, and urged me to a nobler course; ignorant that the joys of a foreign land are sources only of a keener grief.

"O Tzŭ-ch'ing, O my friend, I will complete the half-told record of my former tale. His late Majesty commissioned me, with five thousand infantry under my command, to carry on operations in a distant country. Five brother generals missed their way: I alone reached the theatre of war. With rations for a long march, leading on my men, I passed beyond the limits of the Celestial Land, and entered the territory of the fierce Huns. With five thousand men I stood opposed to a hundred thousand: mine jaded foot-soldiers, theirs horsemen fresh from the stable. Yet we slew their leaders, and captured their standards, and drove them back in confusion towards the north. We obliterated their very traces: we swept them away like dust: we beheaded their general. A martial spirit spread abroad among my men. With them, to die in battle was to return to their homes; while I – I venture to think that I had already accomplished something.

"This victory was speedily followed by a general rising of the Huns. New levies were trained to the use of arms, and at length another hundred thousand barbarians were arrayed against me. The Hun chieftain himself appeared, and with his army surrounded my little band, so unequal in strength, – foot-soldiers

opposed to horse. Still my tired veterans fought, each man worth a thousand of the foe, as, covered with wounds, one and all struggled bravely to the fore. The plain was strewed with the dying and the dead: barely a hundred men were left, and these too weak to hold a spear and shield. Yet, when I waved my hand and shouted to them, the sick and wounded arose. Brandishing their blades, and pointing towards the foe, they dismissed the Tartar cavalry like a rabble rout. And even when their arms were gone, their arrows spent, without a foot of steel in their hands, they still rushed, yelling, onward, each eager to lead the way. The very heavens and the earth seemed to gather round me, while my warriors drank tears of blood. Then the Hunnish chieftain, thinking that we should not yield, would have drawn off his forces. But a false traitor told him all: the battle was renewed, and we were lost.

"The Emperor Kao Ti, with 300,000 men at his back, was shut up in P'ing-ch'êng. Generals he had, like clouds; counsellors, like drops of rain. Yet he remained seven days without food, and then barely escaped with life. How much more then I, now blamed on all sides that I did not die? This was my crime. But, O Tzŭ-ch'ing, canst thou say that I would live from craven fear of death? Am I one to turn my back on my country and all those dear to me, allured by sordid thoughts of gain? It was not indeed without cause that I did not elect to die. I longed, as explained in my former letter, to prove my loyalty to my prince. Rather than die to no purpose, I chose to live and to establish my good name. It was

better to achieve something than to perish. Of old, Fan Li did not slay himself after the battle of Hui-chi; neither did Ts'ao Mo die after the ignominy of three defeats. Revenge came at last; and thus I too had hoped to prevail. Why then was I overtaken with punishment before the plan was matured? Why were my own flesh and blood condemned before the design could be carried out? It is for this that I raise my face to Heaven, and beating my breast, shed tears of blood.

"O my friend, thou sayest that the House of Han never fails to reward a deserving servant. But thou art thyself a servant of the House, and it would ill beseem thee to say other words than these. Yet Hsiao and Fan were bound in chains; Han and P'êng were sliced to death; Ch'ao Ts'o was beheaded. Chou Po was disgraced, and Tou Ying paid the penalty with his life. Others, great in their generation, have also succumbed to the intrigues of base men, and have been overwhelmed beneath a weight of shame from which they were unable to emerge. And now, the misfortunes of Fan Li and Ts'ao Mo command the sympathies of all.

"My grandfather filled heaven and earth with the fame of his exploits – the bravest of the brave. Yet, fearing the animosity of an Imperial favourite, he slew himself in a distant land, his death being followed by the secession, in disgust, of many a brother-hero. Can this be the reward of which thou speakest?

"Thou too, O my friend, an envoy with a slender equipage, sent on that mission to the robber race, when fortune failed thee

even to the last resource of the dagger. Then years of miserable captivity, all but ended by death among the wilds of the far north. Thou left us full of young life, to return a graybeard; thy old mother dead, thy wife gone from thee to another. Seldom has the like of this been known. Even the savage barbarian respected thy loyal spirit: how much more the lord of all under the canopy of the sky? A many-acred barony should have been thine, the ruler of a thousand-charioted fief! Nevertheless, they tell me 'twas but two paltry millions, and the chancellorship of the Tributary States. Not a foot of soil repaid thee for the past, while some cringing courtier gets the marquisate of ten thousand families, and each greedy parasite of the Imperial house is gratified by the choicest offices of the State. If then thou farest thus, what could I expect? I have been heavily repaid for that I did not die. Thou hast been meanly rewarded for thy unswerving devotion to thy prince. This is barely that which should attract the absent servant back to his fatherland.

"And so it is that I do not now regret the past. Wanting though I may have been in my duty to the State, the State was wanting also in gratitude towards me. It was said of old, 'A loyal subject, though not a hero, will rejoice to die for his country.' I would die joyfully even now; but the stain of my prince's ingratitude can never be wiped away. Indeed, if the brave man is not to be allowed to achieve a name, but must die like a dog in a barbarian land, who will be found to crook the back and bow the knee before an Imperial throne, where the bitter pens of courtiers tell

their lying tales?

"O my friend, look for me no more. O Tzŭ-ch'ing, what shall I say? A thousand leagues lie between us, and separate us for ever. I shall live out my life as it were in another sphere: my spirit will find its home among a strange people. Accept my last adieu. Speak for me to my old acquaintances, and bid them serve their sovereign well. O my friend, be happy in the bosom of thy family, and think of me no more. Strive to take all care of thyself; and when time and opportunity are thine, write me once again in reply.

"Li Ling salutes thee!"

LU WÊN-SHU

One of the Chinese models of self-help alluded to in the *San Tzŭ Ching*, the famous school primer, to be described later on, is Lu Wên-shu (first century B.C.). The son of a village gaoler, he was sent by his father to tend sheep, in which capacity he seems to have formed sheets of writing material by plaiting rushes, and otherwise to have succeeded in educating himself. He became an assistant in a prison, and there the knowledge of law which he had picked up stood him in such good stead that he was raised to a higher position; and then, attracting the notice of the governor, he was still further advanced, and finally took his degree, ultimately rising to the rank of governor. In B.C. 67 he submitted to the throne the following well-known memorial: —

"May it please your Majesty.

"Of the ten great follies of our predecessors, one still survives

in the maladministration of justice which prevails.

"Under the Ch'ins learning was at a discount; brute force carried everything before it. Those who cultivated a spirit of charity and duty towards their neighbour were despised. Judicial appointments were the prizes coveted by all. He who spoke out the truth was stigmatised as a slanderer, and he who strove to expose abuses was set down as a pestilent fellow. Consequently all who acted up to the precepts of our ancient code found themselves out of place in their generation, and loyal words of good advice to the sovereign remained locked up within their bosoms, while hollow notes of obsequious flattery soothed the monarch's ear and lulled his heart with false images, to the exclusion of disagreeable realities. And so the rod of empire fell from their grasp for ever.

"At the present moment the State rests upon the immeasurable bounty and goodness of your Majesty. We are free from the horrors of war, from the calamities of hunger and cold. Father and son, husband and wife, are united in their happy homes. Nothing is wanting to make this a golden age save only reform in the administration of justice.

"Of all trusts, this is the greatest and most sacred. The dead man can never come back to life: that which is once cut off cannot be joined again. 'Rather than slay an innocent man, it were better that the guilty escape.' Such, however, is not the view of our judicial authorities of to-day. With them, oppression and severity are reckoned to be signs of magisterial acumen and

lead on to fortune, whereas leniency entails naught but trouble. Therefore their chief aim is to compass the death of their victims; not that they entertain any grudge against humanity in general, but simply that this is the shortest cut to their own personal advantage. Thus, our market-places run with blood, our criminals throng the gaols, and many thousands annually suffer death. These things are injurious to public morals and hinder the advent of a truly golden age.

"Man enjoys life only when his mind is at peace; when he is in distress, his thoughts turn towards death. Beneath the scourge what is there that cannot be wrung from the lips of the sufferer? His agony is overwhelming, and he seeks to escape by speaking falsely. The officials profit by the opportunity, and cause him to say what will best confirm his guilt. And then, fearing lest the conviction be quashed by higher courts, they dress the victim's deposition to suit the circumstances of the case, so that, when the record is complete, even were Kao Yao[7] himself to rise from the dead, he would declare that death still left a margin of unexpiated crime. This, because of the refining process adopted to ensure the establishment of guilt.

"Our magistrates indeed think of nothing else. They are the bane of the people. They keep in view their own ends, and care not for the welfare of the State. Truly they are the worst criminals of the age. Hence the saying now runs, 'Chalk out a prison on the ground, and no one would remain within. Set up a gaoler of

[7] A famous Minister of Crime in the mythical ages.

wood, and he will be found standing there alone.'[8] Imprisonment has become the greatest of all misfortunes, while among those who break the law, who violate family ties, who choke the truth, there are none to be compared in iniquity with the officers of justice themselves.

"Where you let the kite rear its young undisturbed, there will the phœnix come and build its nest. Do not punish for misguided advice, and by and by valuable suggestions will flow in. The men of old said, 'Hills and jungles shelter many noxious things; rivers and marshes receive much filth; even the finest gems are not wholly without flaw. Surely then the ruler of an empire should put up with a little abuse.' But I would have your Majesty exempt from vituperation, and open to the advice of all who have aught to say. I would have freedom of speech in the advisers of the throne. I would sweep away the errors which brought the downfall of our predecessors. I would have reverence for the virtues of our ancient kings and reform in the administration of justice, to the utter confusion of those who now pervert its course. Then indeed would the golden age be renewed over the face of the glad earth, and the people would move ever onwards in peace and happiness boundless as the sky itself."

Liu Hsiang (B.C. 80-89) was a descendant of the beadle founder of the great Han dynasty. Entering into official life, he sought to curry favour with the reigning Emperor by submitting some secret works on the black art, towards which his Majesty

[8] Contrary to what was actually the case in the Golden Age.

was much inclined. The results not proving successful, he was thrown into prison, but was soon released that he might carry on the publication of the commentary on the Spring and Autumn by Ku-liang. He also revised and re-arranged the historical episodes known as the *Chan Kuo Ts'ê*, wrote treatises on government and some poetry, and compiled Biographies of Eminent Women, the first work of its kind.

His son, Liu Hsin, was a precocious boy, who early distinguished himself by wide reading in all branches of literature. He worked with his father upon the restoration of the classical texts, especially of the Book of Changes, and later on was chiefly instrumental in establishing the position of Tso's Commentary on the Spring and Autumn. He catalogued the Imperial Library, and in conjunction with his father discovered – some say compiled – the Chou Ritual.

YANG HSIUNG

A well-known figure in Chinese literature is Yang Hsiung (B.C. 53-A.D. 18). As a boy he was fond of straying from the beaten track and reading whatever he could lay his hands on. He stammered badly, and consequently gave much time to meditation. He propounded an ethical criterion occupying a middle place between those insisted upon by Mencius and by Hsün K'uang, teaching that the nature of man at birth is neither good nor evil, but a mixture of both, and that development in either direction depends wholly upon environment. In glorification of the Book of Changes he wrote the *T'ai Hsüan*

Ching, and to emphasise the value of the Confucian Analects he produced a philosophical treatise known as the *Fa Yen*, both between A.D. 1 and 6. On completion of this last, his most famous work, a wealthy merchant of the province was so struck by its excellence that he offered to give 100,000 *cash* if his name should merely be mentioned in it. But Yang answered with scorn that a stag in a pen or an ox in a cage would not be more out of place than the name of a man with nothing but money to recommend him in the sacred pages of a book. Liu Hsin, however, sneeringly suggested that posterity would use Yang Hsiung's work to cover pickle-jars.

Besides composing some mediocre poetry, Yang Hsiung wrote on acupuncture, music, and philology. There is little doubt that he did not write the *Fang Yen*, a vocabulary of words and phrases used in various parts of the empire, which was steadily attributed to him until Hung Mai, a critic of the twelfth century, already mentioned in Chapter I. of this Book, made short work of his claims.

A brilliant writer who attracted much attention in his day was Wang Ch'ung (A.D. 27-97). He is said to have picked up his education at bookstalls, with the aid of a superbly retentive memory. Only one of his works is extant, the *Lun Hêng*, consisting of eighty-five essays on a variety of subjects. In these he tilts against the errors of the age, and exposes even Confucius and Mencius to free and searching criticisms. He is consequently ranked as a heterodox thinker. He showed that the

soul could neither exist after death as a spirit nor exercise any influence upon the living. When the body decomposes, the soul, a phenomenon inseparable from vitality, perishes with it. He further argued that if the souls of human beings were immortal, those of animals would be immortal likewise; and that space itself would not suffice to contain the countless shades of the men and creatures of all time.

Ma Jung (A.D. 79-166) was popularly known as the Universal Scholar. His learning in Confucian lore was profound, and he taught upwards of one thousand pupils. He introduced the system of printing notes or comments in the body of the page, using for that purpose smaller characters cut in double columns; and it was by a knowledge of this fact that a clever critic of the T'ang dynasty was able to settle the spuriousness of an early edition of the *Tao-Tê-Ching* with double-column commentary, which had been attributed to Ho Shang Kung, a writer of the second century B.C.

TS'AI YUNG – CHÊNG HSÜAN

Ts'ai Yung (A.D. 133-192), whose tippling propensities earned for him the nickname of the Drunken Dragon, is chiefly remembered in connection with literature as superintending the work of engraving on stone the authorised text of the Five Classics. With red ink he wrote these out on forty-six tablets for the workmen to cut. The tablets were placed in the Hung-tu College, and fragments of them are said to be still in existence.

The most famous of the pupils who sat at the feet of Ma

Jung was Chêng Hsüan (A.D. 127-200). He is one of the most voluminous of all the commentators upon the Confucian classics. He lived for learning. The very slave-girls of his household were highly educated, and interlarded their conversation with quotations from the Odes. He was nevertheless fond of wine, and is said to have been able to take three hundred cups at a sitting without losing his head. Perhaps it may be as well to add that a Chinese cup holds about a thimbleful. As an instance of the general respect in which he was held, it is recorded that at his request the chief of certain rebels spared the town of Kao-mi (his native place), marching forward by another route. In A.D. 20 °Confucius appeared to him in a vision, and he knew by this token that his hour was at hand. Consequently, he was very loth to respond to a summons sent to him from Chi-chou in Chihli by the then powerful Yüan Shao. He set out indeed upon the journey, but died on the way.

It is difficult to bring the above writers, representatives of a class, individually to the notice of the reader. Though each one wandered into by-paths of his own, the common lode-star was Confucianism – elucidation of the Confucian Canon. For although, with us, commentaries upon the classics are not usually regarded as literature, they are so regarded by the Chinese, who place such works in the very highest rank, and reward successful commentators with the coveted niche in the Confucian temple.

CHAPTER II
POETRY

At the beginning of the second century B.C., poetry was still composed on the model of the *Li Sao*, and we are in possession of a number of works assigned to Chia I (B.C. 199-168), Tung-fang So (*b.* B.C. 160), Liu Hsiang, and others, all of which follow on the lines of Ch'ü Yüan's great poem. But gradually, with the more definite establishment of what we may call classical influence, poets went back to find their exemplars in the Book of Poetry, which came as it were from the very hand of Confucius himself. Poems were written in metres of four, five, and seven words to a line. Ssŭ-ma Hsiang-ju (*d.* B.C. 117), a gay Lothario who eloped with a young widow, made such a name with his verses that he was summoned to Court, and appointed by the Emperor to high office. His poems, however, have not survived.

Mei Shêng (*d.* B.C. 140), who formed his style on Ssŭ-ma, has the honour of being the first to bring home to his fellow-countrymen the extreme beauty of the five-word metre. From him modern poetry may be said to date. Many specimens of his workmanship are extant: —

(1.) "Green grows the grass upon the bank,
The willow-shoots are long and lank;
A lady in a glistening gown

Opens the casement and looks down
The roses on her cheek blush bright,
Her rounded arm is dazzling white;
A singing-girl in early life,
And now a careless roué's wife…
Ah, if he does not mind his own,
He'll find some day the bird has flown!"

(2.) "The red hibiscus and the reed,
The fragrant flowers of marsh and mead,
All these I gather as I stray,
As though for one now far away.
I strive to pierce with straining eyes
The distance that between us lies.
Alas that hearts which beat as one
Should thus be parted and undone!"

LIU-HÊNG – LIU CH'Ê

Liu Hêng (*d*. B.C. 157) was the son by a concubine of the founder of the Han dynasty, and succeeded in B.C. 180 as fourth Emperor of the line. For over twenty years he ruled wisely and well. He is one of the twenty-four classical examples of filial piety, having waited on his sick mother for three years without changing his clothes. He was a scholar, and was canonised after death by a title which may fairly be rendered "Beauclerc." The following is a poem which he wrote on the death of his illustrious father, who, if we can accept as genuine the remains attributed to him, was himself also a poet: —

"I look up, the curtains are there as of yore;
I look down, and there is the mat on the floor;
These things I behold, but the man is no more.

"To the infinite azure his spirit has flown,
And I am left friendless, uncared-for, alone,
Of solace bereft, save to weep and to moan.

"The deer on the hillside caressingly bleat,
And offer the grass for their young ones to eat,
While birds of the air to their nestlings bring meat

"But I a poor orphan must ever remain,
My heart, still so young, overburdened with pain
For him I shall never set eyes on again.

"'Tis a well-worn old saying, which all men allow,
That grief stamps the deepest of lines on the brow:
Alas for my hair, it is silvery now!

"Alas for my father, cut off in his pride!
Alas that no more I may stand by his side!
Oh, where were the gods when that great hero died?"

The literary fame of the Beauclerc was rivalled, if not surpassed, by his grandson, Liu Ch'ê (B.C. 156-87), who succeeded in B.C. 140 as sixth Emperor of the Han dynasty. He was an enthusiastic patron of literature. He devoted great

attention to music as a factor in national life. He established important religious sacrifices to heaven and earth. He caused the calendar to be reformed by his grand astrologer, the historian Ssŭ-ma Ch'ien, from which date accurate chronology may be almost said to begin. His generals carried the Imperial arms into Central Asia, and for many years the Huns were held in check. Notwithstanding his enlightened policy, the Emperor was personally much taken up with the magic and mysteries which were being gradually grafted on to the Tao of Lao Tzŭ, and he encouraged the numerous quacks who pretended to have discovered the elixir of life. The following are specimens of his skill in poetry: —

> "The autumn blast drives the white scud in the sky,
> Leaves fade, and wild geese sweeping south meet the eye;
> The scent of late flowers fills the soft air above.
> My heart full of thoughts of the lady I love.
> In the river the barges for revel-carouse
> Are lined by white waves which break over their bows;
> Their oarsmen keep time to the piping and drumming…
> Yet joy is as naught
> Alloyed by the thought
> That youth slips away and that old age is coming."

The next lines were written upon the death of a harem favourite, to whom he was fondly attached: —

"The sound of rustling silk is stilled,
With dust the marble courtyard filled;
No footfalls echo on the floor,
Fallen leaves in heaps block up the door…
For she, my pride, my lovely one, is lost,
And I am left, in hopeless anguish tossed."

A good many anonymous poems have come down to us from the first century B.C., and some of these contain here and there quaint and pleasing conceits, as, for instance —

"Man reaches scarce a hundred, yet his tears
Would fill a lifetime of a thousand years."

The following is a poem of this period, the author of which is unknown: —

"Forth from the eastern gate my steeds I drive,
And lo! a cemetery meets my view;
Aspens around in wild luxuriance thrive,
The road is fringed with fir and pine and yew.
Beneath my feet lie the forgotten dead,
Wrapped in a twilight of eternal gloom;
Down by the Yellow Springs their earthy bed,
And everlasting silence is their doom.
How fast the lights and shadows come and go!
Like morning dew our fleeting life has passed;
Man, a poor traveller on earth below,

Is gone, while brass and stone can still outlast.
Time is inexorable, and in vain
Against his might the holiest mortal strives;
Can we then hope this precious boon to gain,
By strange elixirs to prolong our lives?..
Oh, rather quaff good liquor while we may,
And dress in silk and satin every day!"

THE LADY PAN

Women now begin to appear in Chinese literature. The Lady Pan was for a long time chief favourite of the Emperor who ruled China B.C. 32-6. So devoted was his Majesty that he even wished her to appear alongside of him in the Imperial chariot. Upon which she replied, "Your handmaid has heard that wise rulers of old were always accompanied by virtuous ministers, but never that they drove out with women by their side." She was ultimately supplanted by a younger and more beautiful rival, whereupon she forwarded to the Emperor one of those fans, round or octagonal frames of bamboo with silk stretched over them,[9] which in this country are called "fire-screens," inscribed with the following lines: —

"O fair white silk, fresh from the weaver's loom,
Clear as the frost, bright as the winter snow —
See! friendship fashions out of thee a fan,

[9] The folding fan, invented by the Japanese, was not known in China until the eleventh century A.D., when it was introduced through Korea.

Round as the round moon shines in heaven above,
At home, abroad, a close companion thou,
Stirring at every move the grateful gale.
And yet I fear, ah me! that autumn chills,
Cooling the dying summer's torrid rage,
Will see thee laid neglected on the shelf,
All thought of bygone days, like them bygone."

The phrase "autumn fan" has long since passed into the language, and is used figuratively of a deserted wife.

CHAPTER III
HISTORY – LEXICOGRAPHY

SSŬ-MA CH'IEN

So far as China is concerned, the art of writing history may be said to have been created during the period under review. Ssŭ-ma Ch'ien, the so-called Father of History, was born about B.C. 145. At the age of ten he was already a good scholar, and at twenty set forth upon a round of travel which carried him to all parts of the empire. In B.C. 110 his father died, and he stepped into the hereditary post of grand astrologer. After devoting some time and energy to the reformation of the calendar, he now took up the historical work which had been begun by his father, and which was ultimately given to the world as the Historical Record. It is a history of China from the earliest ages down to about one hundred years before the Christian era, in one hundred and thirty chapters, arranged under five headings, as follows: – (1) Annals of the Emperors; (2) Chronological Tables; (3) Eight chapters on Rites, Music, the Pitch-pipes, the Calendar, Astrology, Imperial Sacrifices, Watercourses, and Political Economy; (4) Annals of the Feudal Nobles; and (5) Biographies of many of the eminent men of the period, which covers nearly three thousand years. In such estimation is this work justly held that its very words have been counted, and found to number 526,500 in all. It must be borne in mind that these characters were, in all probability,

scratched with a stylus on bamboo tablets, and that previous to this there was no such thing as a history on a general and comprehensive plan; in fact, nothing beyond mere local annals in the style of the Spring and Autumn.

Since the Historical Record, every dynasty has had its historian, their works in all cases being formed upon the model bequeathed by Ssŭ-ma Ch'ien. The Twenty-four Dynastic Histories of China were produced in 1747 in a uniform series bound up in 219 large volumes, and together show a record such as can be produced by no other country in the world.

The following are specimens of Ssŭ-ma Ch'ien's style: —

(1.) "When the House of Han arose, the evils of their predecessors had not passed away. Husbands still went off to the wars. The old and the young were employed in transporting food. Production was almost at a standstill, and money became scarce. So much so, that even the Son of Heaven had not carriage-horses of the same colour; the highest civil and military authorities rode in bullock-carts, and the people at large knew not where to lay their heads.

"At this epoch, the coinage in use was so heavy and cumbersome that the people themselves started a new issue at a fixed standard of value. But the laws were too lax, and it was impossible to prevent grasping persons from coining largely, buying largely, and then holding against a rise in the market. The consequence was that prices went up enormously. Rice sold at 10,000 *cash* per picul; a horse cost 100 ounces of silver. But by

and by, when the empire was settling down to tranquillity, his Majesty Kao Tsu gave orders that no trader should wear silk nor ride in a carriage; besides which, the imposts levied upon this class were greatly increased, in order to keep them down. Some years later these restrictions were withdrawn; still, however, the descendants of traders were disqualified from holding any office connected with the State.

"Meanwhile, certain levies were made on a scale calculated to meet the exigencies of public expenditure; while the land-tax and customs revenue were regarded by all officials, from the Emperor downwards, as their own personal emolument. Grain was forwarded by water to the capital for the use of the officials there, but the quantity did not amount to more than a few hundred thousand piculs every year.

"Gradually the coinage began to deteriorate and light coins to circulate; whereupon another issue followed, each piece being marked 'half an ounce.' But at length the system of private issues led to serious abuses, resulting first of all in vast sums of money accumulating in the hands of individuals; finally, in rebellion, until the country was flooded with the coinage of the rebels, and it became necessary to enact laws against any such issues in the future.

"At this period the Huns were harassing our northern frontier, and soldiers were massed there in large bodies; in consequence of which food became so scarce that the authorities offered certain rank and titles of honour to those who would supply a given

quantity of grain. Later on, drought ensued in the west, and in order to meet necessities of the moment, official rank was again made a marketable commodity, while those who broke the laws were allowed to commute their penalties by money payments. And now horses began to reappear in official stables, and in palace and hall signs of an ampler luxury were visible once more.

"Thus it was in the early days of the dynasty, until some seventy years after the accession of the House of Han. The empire was then at peace. For a long time there had been neither flood nor drought, and a season of plenty had ensued. The public granaries were well stocked; the Government treasuries were full. In the capital, strings of *cash* were piled in myriads, until the very strings rotted, and their tale could no longer be told. The grain in the Imperial storehouses grew mouldy year by year. It burst from the crammed granaries, and lay about until it became unfit for human food. The streets were thronged with horses belonging to the people, and on the highroads whole droves were to be seen, so that it became necessary to prohibit the public use of mares. Village elders ate meat and drank wine. Petty government clerkships and the like lapsed from father to son; the higher offices of State were treated as family heirlooms. For there had gone abroad a spirit of self-respect and of reverence for the law, while a sense of charity and of duty towards one's neighbour kept men aloof from disgrace and shame.

"At length, under lax laws, the wealthy began to use their riches for evil purposes of pride and self-aggrandisement and

oppression of the weak. Members of the Imperial family received grants of land, while from the highest to the lowest, every one vied with his neighbour in lavishing money on houses, and appointments, and apparel, altogether beyond the limit of his means. Such is the everlasting law of the sequence of prosperity and decay.

"Then followed extensive military preparations in various parts of the empire; the establishment of a tradal route with the barbarians of the south-west, for which purpose mountains were hewn through for many miles. The object was to open up the resources of those remote districts, but the result was to swamp the inhabitants in hopeless ruin. Then, again, there was the subjugation of Korea; its transformation into an Imperial dependency; with other troubles nearer home. There was the ambush laid for the Huns, by which we forfeited their alliance, and brought them down upon our northern frontier. Nothing, in fact, but wars and rumours of wars from day to day. Money was constantly leaving the country. The financial stability of the empire was undermined, and its impoverished people were driven thereby into crime. Wealth had been frittered away, and its renewal was sought in corruption. Those who brought money in their hands received appointments under government. Those who could pay escaped the penalties of their guilt. Merit had to give way to money. Shame and scruples of conscience were laid aside. Laws and punishments were administered with severer hand. From this period must be dated the rise and growth of

official venality."

(2.) "The Odes have it thus: – 'We may gaze up to the mountain's brow: we may travel along the great road;' signifying that although we cannot hope to reach the goal, still we may push on thitherwards in spirit.

"While reading the works of Confucius, I have always fancied I could see the man as he was in life; and when I went to Shantung I actually beheld his carriage, his robes, and the material parts of his ceremonial usages. There were his descendants practising the old rites in their ancestral home, and I lingered on, unable to tear myself away. Many are the princes and prophets that the world has seen in its time, glorious in life, forgotten in death. But Confucius, though only a humble member of the cotton-clothed masses, remains among us after many generations. He is the model for such as would be wise. By all, from the Son of Heaven down to the meanest student, the supremacy of his principles is fully and freely admitted. He may indeed be pronounced the divinest of men."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.