

Chên Shih-yin^① in a dream fantasy learns of the Spiritual Intelligence. Chia Yü-ts'un in the world of reality cherishes thoughts of a
(beautiful girl.

In this, the first chapter, the author begins by saying of himself: "In the sequence of a certain dream fantasy which I experienced, I have concealed the real events and made use of Spiritual Intelligence in telling this story—The Tale of the Stone. That is why I say 'Chên Shih-yin' and so on." But what are the events and who are the persons described in the book? Again he himself says: "This world is now very wearisome and I have not accomplished anything whatever. Suddenly I think of the girls there were in those days and go on to compare them carefully one by one. I realize that in conduct and understanding they were in every case superior to me. With my imposing beard and eyebrows I am of a truth not equal to those of the skirt and the hairpin. It is a day on which my shame indeed abounds and regret is no use; there is nothing whatever that I can do. On a day like this I wish to compile a book and tell the world of that time in the past when in dependence on the favour of Heaven and the virtue of my ancestors I wore embroidered garments and trousers of silk, the days when I drank what was sweet and was filled with fat things, how wrong it was of me to turn my back on the kindness of my parents in their instruction and their provision for my needs and on the goodness of my teachers and friends in their admonition and advice, with the result that today I am accomplished in no kind of skill and have squandered half a lifetime. I know that my offences are indeed many, yet in the women's apartments, again and again, there were those who must certainly not be consigned to oblivion because in my unworthiness I have covered up my own shortcomings. And so the tangled windows, the rafters covered with straw, the bed of cords, and the earthen stove, are not enough to hinder my feelings. Moreover, I am very conscious how the breeze in the morning, the moon at night, the willows by the steps, and the flowers in the courtyard, moisten a man's pen and ink. Although I lack scholarship and have no literary gifts, yet what is there to hinder me from expressing it all in fictitious language and rustic speech? And so I may transmit the ~~thoughts~~ ~~of~~ of the occupants of the women's apartments, and also may dissipate occasional low spirits and awaken the eyes of my companions. And is not this as it should be? That is why I say 'Chia Yü-ts'un' and so on. Moreover, although the story makes use now and then of dream fantasies, yet the original aim of the book includes also the purpose of arousing the mind of the reader."

Gentle reader, whence do you say this book took its rise? Although the telling of it comes very near to the wildly improbable, yet if it is carefully examined it has very much of interest. It is said that when Nü-kua smelted stones for the repair of Heaven on the cliff of Wu-chi on Mt. Ta-huang, she smelted thirty-six thousand five hundred and one stones, each twelve chang high and twenty-four chang square. But the Empress Kua used only thirty-six thousand five hundred blocks, leaving an odd one which she did not use and which she cast away beneath the Ch'ing-kêng Peak. Who

would have thought that after this stone had been ~~sculpted~~ ^{sculpted} its spiritual nature was opened up? It could go and come of its own accord. It could make itself great and make itself small. When it saw that all the other stones had been used to repair Heaven and that it alone was unqualified and was not selected, it thereupon became very resentful and ashamed and mourned day and night. One day, just as it was sighing and lamenting, it suddenly saw a Buddhist monk and a Taoist priest approaching from a distance, men of no ordinary build and of very distinguished appearance. They came to this Ch'ing-k'eng Peak and talked together as they sat on the ground beneath it. They saw this pure lustrous stone which had contracted itself to resemble the pendant of a fan, exceedingly delightful. The monk laid it on the palm of his hand and said with a smile: 'In shape and substance you are a spiritual object, but you have no real use. It is still necessary to engrave a few characters on you so that when men see you they may all know that you are a wonderful thing. Afterwards I will take you to an enlightened and prosperous State, to a family of culture and official rank, a land of flowers and willows in luxuriant bloom, a neighbourhood of agreeable mildness and dignified wealth, that you may wander around there.'

When the stone heard this it was delighted and went on to ask: 'I do not know what characters are to be engraved or in what direction I am to be taken. I look up to you with expectancy and crave a clear indication.' The monk smiled and said: 'Do not ask. The time will come when of course you will understand.' When he had finished speaking he put it up his sleeve and in company with the Taoist as it were floated away we do not know whither. Nor do we know how many generations, how many kalpas, had passed when a Taoist of the Great Void, enquiring for the Way and seeking to become an Immortal, passed below the Ch'ing-k'eng Peak of the cliff of Wu-chi on ~~Mount~~ Ta-huang and suddenly saw a large stone on the face of which were the marks of distinct and clear characters recounting a story in great detail. The Taoist of the Great Void read it from beginning to end. It was in fact the selfsame stone which, not being suitable for the repair of Heaven, had entered the world in magic form and had been taken by that 'Great Scholar of the Infinite Vastness' and that 'Pure Man of Vague Infinity' into the Red Dust and guided on to that other shore. On its face were recorded the neighbourhood into which it had descended, the place of its incarnation, as well as the trivial affairs of the home, the idle feelings of the women's apartments, the poems and the riddles, all complete except that the dynasty and the year were missing and could not be checked. On the other side there was a verse which said:

'Having no fitness to go for the repair of the blue sky,
In vain have I entered the Red Dust for so many years.'
These are the events before birth and after death.

Whom can I get to go and record them and make a wonderful tale?' (3)
When the Taoist of the Great Void had looked at it awhile he knew this was a stone with a history. So he said to the stone: 'Elder brother Stone, this story of yours, according to what you yourself say, is of some interest; and that is why it has been engraved here, with the idea that it may become known to the world as a wonderful tale. As I see it, in the first place, there is no dynasty or year which may be checked, in the second place, there is no good government by means of great virtue and great loyalty who regulated the Court and ordered the manners of the people. There are only a few unusual girls in it, some romantic, some infatuated, some with small ability and slight virtue. If I copy it out,

It will not count as a wonderful book.' The stone replied abruptly: 'My Master, why must you be too silly? I think that until now works of fiction have all been falsely ascribed to the Han or the T'ang dynasties. There is none so good as what I, this stone, relate. I on the contrary make a new departure by not ~~making use of~~ this convention but confining myself to my own affairs and my own feelings. Moreover, in those works of fiction they either libel princes and ministers or find fault with wives and daughters. Their immoralities and their deeds of violence are more than can be counted. Then there is another kind of dissolute writing of which the licentious filth and the foul odour very easily corrupt the young. As for books about persons of genius or of beauty, they are always alluding to Wên-chün^{er} the whole book is full of Tzu-chien—a thousand volumes all of one pattern, a thousand persons all with one face. And they too are not free from the taint of licence. As for the authors, they simply want to write out a couple of their own love-poems and wanton verses. And so they invent a pair of fictitious characters, a man and a woman, and are sure to add at their side a mean fellow to stir up trouble between them like the low comedy man in a play. What is still more objectionable, they are always talking about virtue and refinement, far removed from the facts of life and contradicting themselves. It is much better to write about those few girls whom in half a lifetime I myself have seen and heard. Although I do not dare to say that they are better than those in the books of former generations, yet to consider their lives and deeds may also serve to melt away sorrow and dissipate melancholy. As for the few doggerel verses, they too may give a flavour to the rice and help down the wine. The circumstances of the separations, unions, sorrows, joys, rise and decay, which it contains are all faithfully traced. I have not dared in the least to add any forced interpretation and cause the truth to be lost. My only wish is that when people wake up from sleep after drinking heavily or when they want to escape from the world and dispel their sorrow, they may take this up for their amusement. In this way I shall not only wash away the old and turn over to something new, but by not going again to think of what never happened and to pursue what is false, I may also save myself from wasting my life and my energies. What, my Master, is your opinion?'

The Taoist of the Great Void listened to this speech. He thought for a long while and then again examined this Tale of the Stone. He saw that its great theme was all about love, that it was a true record of events and that it was quite free from the fault of doing injury to the times or giving instruction in licentiousness. And so he copied it all out again from beginning to end and gave this ~~strange~~ strange story to the world. From this time the Taoist of the Great Void, beginning from emptiness, beheld beauty. From beauty love was born. Telling of love he entered into beauty. From beauty he understood emptiness. He therefore changed his name to 'Love Monk' and changed 'The Tale of the Stone' to 'The Love Monk's Transcription' 'ung Mei-ch'i of eastern Lu entitled it 'The Precious Mirror of Romance'. Afterwards Ts'ao Hsüeh-ch'in studied it for ten years in the Tao-hung Pavilion, added to it and took away from it five times, compiled a table of contents, divided it into chapters, and also gave it the title 'The Twelve Beauties of Chin-ling.' He also put a quatrain at the head of it. This then is the origin of 'The Tale of the Stone'. The quatrain says:

' Paper full of wildly impossible stories.
A handful of hot bitter tears.

K'ung

Everyone says that the author is crazy.

Who can explain its inner flavour?' (5)

Now that the origin of the Tale of the Stone has been made plain, it has still not been told what persons and what events were recorded on the face of that stone. Gentle reader, please listen. According to what was written on that stone, at that time the place was in the South-east. In this South-east was the city of Ku-su. In this city by the Ch'ang Gate were some of the foremost places in the world for wealth and rank and luxury. Outside the Ch'ang Gate there was a Ten Li Street. In this street was a Benevolent Pure Lane. In this lane there was an old temple. Because its space was very restricted, people all called it the Gourd Temple. By the side of the temple dwelt one of the local gentry. His clan-name was Chén, his personal name Fei, and his style Shih-yin. His wife's clan-name was Fêng. She was of a virtuous disposition who knew well the rules of propriety and wifely duty. Although the family was without great wealth or high rank, yet they were esteemed in the locality as highly respectable folk. Because this Chén Shih-yin was of a quiet disposition without any thought of official honours, he found his delight every day in looking after flowers, planting bamboos, sipping wine, and humming over verses. He was indeed a man akin to the Immortals. There was only one lack. He was more than half a hundred years old but he had no son at his knees. He had only a daughter. Her baby name was Ying-lien. She was just three years old.

One day, when the summer heat blazed the whole day long, Shih-yin was sitting unoccupied in his study when his book dropped from his tired hand and, with his head on the desk, he went off into a doze. He had a hazy idea that he had gone somewhere but he could not distinguish what place it was. Suddenly he saw a Buddhist monk and a Taoist priest coming from the market-place, talking together as they walked. He heard the Taoist ask: 'You have brought this thing. Where do you want to go?' The monk smiled and said: 'Don't you worry. Just now there is a romantic affair which ought to be wound up. As the lovers in this romance have not yet been born into this world, I am taking this opportunity to smuggle this thing into their midst so that it may go and gain some experiences.' The Taoist said: 'And so before long some lovers in a romantic affair are also about to appear among men and pass through the world. But I do not know where it arose and where it will settle.' The monk said: 'It is a story to make one laugh. But because in years gone by the Empress Kua did not make use of this stone, it fell into wandering about wherever it pleased, roaming off all over the place for its own amusement. One day it came to the abode of the goddess Ching-huan. That goddess knew that it had a history and so she retained it in the Red Cloud Palace and named it the Attendant Shén-ying of the Red Cloud Palace. Nevertheless it continually travelled about on the banks of the Spiritual River of the western region. It saw on the bank of that Spiritual River by the side of the Stone of the Three States of Existence that there was a crimson pearl fairy plant ~~perfectly~~ PERFECTLY beautiful and lovable. Thereupon it watered it every day with the sweet dew, and so this crimson plant was able to continue for many years and afterwards, receiving the Essential and the Ornamental of Heaven and Earth, and obtaining the nourishment of the sweet dew, it was born from the womb of the vegetable world and was magically transformed into human shape and at last attained the form of a female. All the day she wandered outside the Heaven of Resentment at Separation. When she was hungry she ate of Fruit of Secret Love. When she was thirsty she drank of the Replenishing Sorrow Water. But she had not yet recompensed the kindness of the watering,

and so there was engendered within her an inextricable abiding purpose. She often said: 'I myself have received his kindness in watering me with the dew. I certainly have none of that water with which to repay his favour. If he descends to the world as a man I also will go with him on that journey. Only if I take the tears of a lifetime shall I be able to repay him.' Because of this affair a number of romantic lovers are being involved who are all about to descend into the world of the mortals to share in the experiences occasioned by that mysterious connection, the crimson pearl divine plant among them. Today this stone ought indeed to go down into the world. I come on purpose to take it before the goddess ~~Ching~~^{Ching}-huan to have it registered so that it goes along with these love Spirits into the world of the mortals and brings this case to an end."

The Taoist said: 'That is indeed ridiculous. I have never heard until now of repaying a debt with tears. Why should not you and I also take advantage of this and go down into the world and rescue a few of them? Would that not be a meritorious work?' The monk said: 'That is exactly what I am thinking. You too go with me to the palace of the goddess Ching-huan to take this silly thing and fulfil our mission. Let us wait until all these Spirits involved in the evils of romance have gone down into the world and then you and I will go. Up to now a half of them have descended to the world of men and so far they are not all assembled.' The Taoist said: 'That being so I will accompany you.'

Now the story says that Chen Shih-yin heard all this quite clearly. So he did not hesitate to go up to them and, bowing to them, asked with a smile: 'Divine Masters, allow me to salute you.' The Buddhist and the Taoist made haste to respond to his bow and enquired of him in turn. So Shih-yin said: 'I have just heard what you two Divine Masters were saying on the subject of cause and effect. It is indeed something of which men in this world seldom hear. But your pupil is dull and stupid. I cannot understand it clearly. If you will do me the favour of opening up my doltish stupidity I am ready to listen with the closest attention. Your pupil will wash his ears and give the most careful heed. If I can be aroused to some little understanding of it I may escape the bitterness of destruction.' The two immortals smiled and said: 'This is a secret operation of Nature. It must not be disclosed before the time. Only, when the time comes do not forget us two. Then you may leap out of the pit of fire.' When Shih-yin heard this he could not conveniently ask any more. And so he smiled and said: 'The secret operation of Nature must certainly not be disclosed, but that silly thing you spoke of just now, I do not know what it is or whether I may be allowed to see it.' The monk said: 'If you ask about this thing, it happens that you are destined to see it.' So saying, he brought it out and handed it to Shih-yin. When Shih-yin took it and looked at it, it was in fact a beautiful piece of ~~clear~~^{clear} translucent jade. On its surface were the four characters clearly engraved 'T'ung ling pao yu.' On the reverse side were also a few columns of small characters. Just as he wished to read them carefully the monk said: 'We have already reached the Land of Illusion', and snatched it forcibly out of his hand. He finally passed along with the Taoist through a large stone archway. On the top were written four large characters which were 'Great Void Illusion Region'. On the two sides also were antithetical sentences which said:

'When the false is taken for the real, the real also is false.
Where non-existence is taken for existence, existence is also non-existence.'

Shih-yin also had it in mind to follow them through, but just as he raised his foot he suddenly heard a crash as if a mountain had collapsed and the earth had fallen in. He gave a great shout and when he fixed his gaze he only saw the fierce glare of the scorching sun and the waving banana trees. And he had already forgotten half of what had happened in his dream. He also saw a nurse walking towards him with Ying-lien in her arms. When Shih-yin saw the child specially bedecked and adorned he felt unusually delighted with her. He stretched out his hands and took her and nursed her and played with her for a while. He also took her to the street-front to see the excitement of the procession which was passing by. Just as he was ^{intending to} ~~about to~~ ^{come} ~~go~~ in, he caught sight of a Buddhist monk and a Taoist priest coming from that direction. The monk had a scabby head and his feet were bare. The priest walked with a limp and had tangled hair. They came along gesticulating as they talked and laughing like madmen. When they arrived in front of his door and saw Shih-yin nursing Ying-lien, the monk burst out crying aloud and said to Shih-yin: 'Gracious benefactor, what are you doing ^{to} ~~nursing~~ that thing ^{is} ~~is~~ destined to an evil fate and will involve her father and mother in trouble?' When Shih-yin heard them he knew that they were the words of a madman and he took no notice of ~~them~~ ^{him}. The monk went on to say: 'Give her to me. Give her to me.' Shih-yin was annoyed and, with the little girl in his arms, turned round and was just ^{about to} ~~going~~ in when the monk pointing at him laughed out aloud and chanted four sentences. They were: 'She is brought up as a pet. They will laugh at you for doting on her. The flower of the water-chestnut is blighted as the snow melts away. Take good care at the Festival. After the fifteenth of the first month— That will be the time when the smoke clears away and the fire is ^{extinguished.}'

Shih-yin heard this clearly. He was undecided in his mind. He was about to ask ~~what~~ ^{was} behind it when he heard the Taoist say: 'You and I must not walk together. Let us separate here and each of us go to attend to his own business. Three kalpas hence I will wait for you at Mt Pei-mang. When we meet we will go together to the Magic Region of the Great Vacancy and cancel the certificate.' The monk said: 'Very good! Very good!' As soon as they had finished speaking the two men went away and he saw no further trace of them. Shih-yin at this time thought to himself: 'These two men must have a history. I certainly ought to have enquired of them. But it is too late to regret now.' Just as Shih-yin was lost in thought he suddenly saw a poor scholar named ~~Chia~~ ^{Chia}, his personal name being Hua, his 'style' Shih-fei, otherwise called Yü-ts'un, who lodged in the neighbouring Gourd Temple, walking towards him. This Chia Yü-ts'un was a native of Hu-chou and he belonged to a cultured ^{family} ~~family~~ of official rank. Because he was born late, the foundation laid by his parents and ancestors was already used up, and the family was so reduced that he alone was left. There was no advantage in staying at home and so he was on his way to the Capital in search of a degree in order that he might repair his fortunes. Ever since he had come two years before he had lingered on, being settled for the time being in the temple and making a living day by day as a letter writer. So Shih-yin frequently had intercourse with him. On this occasion, when Yü-ts'un saw Shih-yin, he made haste to bow to him and greeting him with a smile he said: 'You were leaning against the door, Sir, and looking out. I venture to ask if there is any particular news on the street.' Shih-yin smiled and said: 'No. There is not. The little girl was crying, and so I brought her out to amuse her.'

Just now I feel very depressed. You have come exactly at the right time, elder brother Chia. Be pleased to come into my small study so that you and I may pass this whole day together.' So saying, he ordered a servant to take the child indoors and he himself took Yü-ts'un by the hand and came into his study. A boy served tea and they had just spoken a few words when suddenly a servant came and announced: 'Yen Lao-yeh has come to call on you.'

Shih-yin hastily arose and apologized, saying: 'Excuse me if I leave you for a while. Please take a seat for a short time and I, your younger brother, will come to have the honour of your company.' Yü-ts'un also rose and, making way for him, said: 'As you please, Sir, I, your junior, am a frequent visitor. What objection is there to waiting a while?' When he had said this, Shih-yin went out to the front hall while Yü-ts'un here relieved the monotony by turning over the poems and books. Suddenly he heard a woman's cough outside the window. Yü-ts'un got up and looked out. As a matter of fact it was a slave-girl who was picking flowers there. She had an uncommon appearance. Her features were clear and elegant. Although she was not a perfect beauty, she had that about her which could move men. Yü-ts'un, without realizing it, stood staring at her. The slave-girl of the Chen household had picked the flowers and was just about to go when she suddenly raised her head and saw a man at the window with a worn-out cap and old garments. Although he was in straitened circumstances yet he was round in the waist and thick in the back. His face was broad, his mouth square, and in addition he had oblique eyebrows and twinkling eyes, a straight nose and square cheeks. The girl hastily turned herself to avoid him. She thought to herself: 'Such an imposing man and so shabbily dressed! In our house we have no relative or friend so wretchedly poor as this. I think he must be that Chia Yü-ts'un the master often speaks of. And no wonder he also says that he is not one to be kept long in poor circumstances, and again and again has had it in mind to help him, only he has no opportunity.' As she was thinking like this, she could not help turning her head round once or twice. Yü-ts'un saw her turning her head and took it that this girl in her heart had a mind towards him. And so his wild delight was unrestrained. He said to himself: 'This girl must be a heroine of great discernment, my kindred spirit in this world.' After a while a boy came in. Yü-ts'un enquired and heard that at the front the guest was being detained for a meal. He could not stay long. So he went out through a side-door in a passage between walls two. Shih-yin waited until his guest had departed and when he knew that Yü-ts'un had already gone he did not go to seek him again.

One day when the Mid-Autumn Festival had come round, after Shih-yin's family feast was over, another table was made ready in his study and he himself strolled in the moonlight into the temple to look for Yü-ts'un. As a matter of fact, since that day when Yü-ts'un saw the slave-girl of the Chen family he had turned to glance at her on two occasions. Ever since he had said that she was a kindred spirit he had kept her constantly in his heart. Now again just at Mid-Autumn he could not help having moonlight fancies. And so he recited to himself a five words to the line poem:

'Are the forecast of my lifelong desire, (10)
A strain of sadness was constantly added.

When in melancholy mood I came, contracted was my brow.

As she went away she slightly turned her head.

I beheld her shadow myself before the breeze.

Who is worthy to be my mate beneath the moon?

If the toad-light has it in mind,

First adorn the head of the beautiful girl.' (10)

When Yü-ts'un had finished humming this over, because he was thinking too how that throughout life he had been very ambitious and how bitter

it was that he had never met a suitable opportunity, he scratched his head again and sighed long to Heaven. Again he recited a couplet:

'The jade in the chest seeks a good price.

The hairpin in the dressing-case awaits the time to fly.'

Just then Shih-yin walked in and heard it. He smiled and said: 'Elder brother Yü-ts'un, indeed ~~you are a scholar~~ ^{you are a scholar}.' Yü-ts'un hastily smiled and said: 'I am not worthy. I only happened to be reciting the verse of a man of former times. How is it that you over-praise me like this?' He went on to ask: 'To what, Sir, do I owe the pleasure of this call?' Shih-yin smiled and said: 'Tonight is Mid-Autumn, commonly called the Festival of the Perfect Circle. I thought, honourable elder brother, that, lodging in the monk's house, you might feel rather lonely. So I have specially prepared a small repast and invite you, elder brother, to come to my humble study for a drink. I do not know whether it will meet with your approval.' When Yü-ts'un heard this he did not decline the invitation but smiled and said:

'Since I have received this mistaken affection how dare I brush aside such abundant kindness?' So saying, he came across again with Shih-yin into the study. After a little while, when the tea was finished, cups and plates were set out. There is of course no need to speak of the excellent wine and the rich viands. The two men took their seats. At first the wine was poured out slowly and sipped leisurely. Gradually the conversation became more animated and, without their being aware of it, the cups began to fly and the goblets to be offered. At the same time on the street, in every house, there was the playing of pipes and flutes, at every door the sound of mouth-organ and song. Above them was the bright circle of the moon—flying colour and fixed brightness. The two men became more and more exhilarated. They drank until the cups were dry. Yü-ts'un by this time was already seven or eight tenths drunk. He was wildly roused and could not restrain himself. And so he allegorized his love to the moon and chanted a four-line stanza:

'When the season comes to the fifteenth the circle is complete.

In ~~the heaven above~~ ^{the heaven above} a disc has just been brought forth.

The ten thousand families of mankind lift up their heads to look.'

When Shih-yin heard this he exclaimed in a loud voice: 'Excellent! I, your younger brother, often say that you are one who will certainly, elder brother,

not long dwell below other men. Now this verse which you have recited—the omen of your lofty flight is already manifest. Any day you may be received to walk above the fleecy clouds. Congratulations! Congratulations!'

Whereupon he himself poured out a cup by way of congratulation. Yü-ts'un drank it dry. Suddenly he sighed and said: 'They are not ^{your junior's} wild words

after wine. If it is a case of the scholarship which is esteemed in these times ^{this case} also perhaps could go and enroll myself to compete in the

examination. Only just now I have no means whatever to arrange for luggage and road expenses. It is a long way to the Capital. I cannot get there by

selling characters and composing letters.' Without waiting for him to finish speaking, Shih-yin said: 'Elder brother, why did you not speak of this before? ~~I have~~ already had this in mind for a long time. But you have never

talked of it when I have met you. And so I did not venture to butt rudely in. Since now it is like this, although I have no ability, still I ^{understand} the

two words 'Righteousness' and 'Profit'. Moreover, fortunately next year is the

year for the triennial examination. You ^{elder brother} ought to set off quickly for the Capital. Once you have been successful in the Spring examination your

scholarship will not be without an opportunity for its use. As for the travelling expenses and

(Your younger brother has)

Other matters I, younger brother, will see to them for you myself and elder brother's derogatory acquaintance with me will not have been in vain.' He immediately ordered a boy to go in and quickly wrap up fifty ounces of silver and two sets of winter clothes. He also said: 'The nineteenth is an auspicious day. Elder brother can then hire a boat and go up West and wait for the bird to fly and mount on high'. Next winter when we meet again, it will an occasion of great rejoicing, will it not?' Yü-ts'un took the silver and the clothing. He merely said a word of thanks and did not regard it as anything important. And they went on as before drinking and chatting. It was not until the beginning of the third watch that the two men parted. After Shih-yin had escorted Yü-ts'un away he came back to his own room, went to sleep, and did not wake up until the red sun was three poles high. Then he thought of what had taken place the night before, and had it in mind to write two letters of introduction for Yü-ts'un to take to the Capital and ~~and~~ with them call on an official family and find there a lodging. So he sent a servant across to ask when he might see him. The servant came back and said: 'The monk says that Mr Chia set off for the Capital this morning at the fifth watch. He left word for the monk to pass on to you, Lao-veh, that scholars did not bother about lucky or unlucky days; they always regarded the correct management of affairs as the important thing. And so he had not taken leave of you in person.' Shih-yin heard this and could but let the matter drop.

True it is that as one dwells in retirement light and shade easily pass. Suddenly it was once more New Year with the Lantern Festival soon after. Shih-yin told a servant Ho-ch'i to take Ying-lien in his arms to see the illuminations in honour of the gods of the earth, and the ornamental lanterns. In the middle of the night, because he wanted to urinate, Ho-ch'i put Ying-lien on the railing at the door of someone's house to sit there until he had relieved himself. When he came back to take her up in his arms, where was there any trace of Ying-lien? In his agitation he searched right through half the night but when daylight came he had not found her. He did not dare to come back and see his master. So he ran off to his home in the country. As for Shih-yin and his wife, when they saw that their daughter did not come back that night, they knew that there was something wrong. They sent a few more men to look for her. But they came back and all said that ~~that~~ there was no trace of her whatever.

Husband and wife had reached middle life and had only this daughter. One morning she was lost. How great was their distress! Because of it they wept day and night almost as if their own lives were of no account. They kept on looking for a month. Shih-yin was the first to fall ill, and then his wife Madam Fêng, with thinking of her daughter, was taken sick. Day after day they called in doctors and consulted fortune-tellers. On the fifteenth of the third month quite unexpectedly, when he was frying offerings in the Gourd Temple the monk was not careful and the fire under the oilpan flared up and burned the paper of the window. People in that quarter all used bamboo fences and wooden partitions. Besides, it was fated that this should happen. Thereupon in quick succession all the buildings in the street were ablaze like a mountain of flame. By that time, although soldiers and civilians came to the rescue, the fire had already got a firm hold. How could anything be saved? It burned right through the night and then it died down. No one knows how many households were burnt out. Enough that, alas! the Chen household was next door and was very soon reduced to a heap of rubble. Only the lives of husband and wife and a few servants were not harmed. Shih-yin was so vexed that he could only stamp his feet and heave long sighs. He talked things over with his wife and they went to live on his estate in the country. Unfortunately in recent years because of floods

(there had been no harvest. Thieves and robbers swarmed like bees. Government troops were attacking them and rounding them up. And so it was difficult to settle on his estate. All he could do was to sell all the fields and take his wife and a couple of slave-girls and seek refuge in the home of his father-in-law. His father-in-law was called Fêng Hsiao. He originally belonged to Ta-ju-chou. Although tillers of the soil they were a family of some substance. Now when he saw his son-in-law coming broken down like this, he did not feel too pleased. Happily Shih-yin still had by him ~~the~~ the silver from the sale of his fields. He brought it out and entrusted him at his convenience to buy a house and some land as a provision for clothing and food in days to come. But Fêng Hsiao used part of it and kept part of it for himself, and gave him a few poor fields and a house in bad repair. Shih-yin was a scholar. He was not used to business or farming. With an effort he managed to bear up for a year or two but he became poorer than ever. Fêng Hsiao used to speak in conventional terms to his face but in the presence of others he complained that he could not make a living; he was nothing but a hearty eater and a lazy worker. Shih-yin knew this and could not help feeling regret and vexation. Add to this the fright, the distress, the anger, the resentment, and the pain, of the last few years, and that he was a man in the evening of life; how could he endure the attacks at the same time of both poverty and sickness? The upshot was that he seemed to be gradually going off in a decline.

It happened that on this particular day when, leaning on a staff, he was making an effort to go to the street front to cheer himself up, he suddenly saw a lame Taoist coming from over there, a madman, poor and friendless, with hempen shoes and clothes as ragged as the tail of a quail. He was chanting some verses:

'Men of the world all know that it is good to be an Immortal.
But ^{their} merit and reputation they cannot forget.
Where are the generals and ministers of the past and the present?
Their neglected tombs are hidden under heaps of grass.'

Men of the world all know that it is good to be an Immortal.
But ^{their} gold and silver they cannot forget.
All day long they do but grieve that what they have collected is not much.
When they reach the time when they have much, their eyes are closed for
[ever.]

Men of the world all ^{know} say that it is good to be an Immortal.
But their winsome wives they cannot forget.
While, Sir, you are alive, day by day they speak ^{of} kindness and affection.
When, Sir, you are dead, they will go off with someone else.

Men of the world all ^{know} say that it is good to be an Immortal.
But their sons and grandsons they cannot forget.
Doting parents from ancient times have been many.
Filial and obedient sons and grandsons who has seen?'

When Shih-yin heard this he went up to meet him and said: "What are those words with which you are filling your mouth? All I hear is 'Hao liao. Hao liao.' The Taoist smiled and said: "If you really hear those two words 'hao liao', then I reckon that you understand. You must know that in the world every kind of 'good' is 'Finished'. If it is 'Finished' then it is 'good'. If it is not 'Finished' then it is not 'good'. If you want 'good' you must have 'Finished'. This song of mine is called the 'Hao liao' song." Shih-yin was naturally quick-witted. As soon as he heard this he understood it thoroughly. And so he smiled and said: "Wait a while. I will explain this 'Hao liao' song of yours. How about

that? The Taoist smiled and said: 'Please explain it then.' Thereupon Shih-yin said:

'A mean house, an empty hall.

The official tablets of former years filling the bed.

Decayed grass and withered willows.

It used to be a place for song and dance.

The threads of spiders' webs are knotted all over the carved beams.

The green gauze is still on the weed-grown windows.

Talk of ointment all rich, powder all fragrant!

How is it that the hair on both temples has become frosted?

Yesterday in the mound of yellow earth white bones were buried.

This night beneath the curtain made of red silk

Sleep ~~with husband and wife~~ ⁽¹⁶⁾

Gold fills the box. Silver fills the box.

In the turn of an eye beggars all revile.

Just as one sighs that the allotted span of another is not long,

How does he know that he himself returns to death?

Although the instruction is methodical,

It cannot be guaranteed that afterwards ~~he~~ ^{HE} will ~~make~~ ^{BE} a strong beam.

Choose fat meat and fine millet.

Who would have expected him to slip down into opium ^{DENS} shops and brothels?

Because he disliked that his gauze hat was small,

It came to pass that he was locked in the cangue.

Yesterday he felt it pitiable that he was cold in his tattered jacket.

Now he dislikes that his crimson boa is long.

A blaze of confusion!

When you have finished ^{PLAYING YOUR PART} ~~singing~~ I come on the scene.

But I recognize ~~that~~ his native place ~~is~~ my native place.

~~WHAT A PERVESE MISTAKE!~~
~~Very incoherent~~

To bring the matter to a head,

It is all a case of making bridal garments for another.'

When that mad lame Taoist heard this he clapped his hands and laughed aloud, saying: 'Very much to the point! Very much to the point!' Shih-yin then said one word: 'Let us be going', snatched the sack which the Taoist was carrying on his shoulder and put it on his own back. He never returned home but drifted off with the mad Taoist. At once the street was in an uproar. Everybody regarded the affair as a new piece of gossip. When ^{MADAM FENG} ~~she~~ heard these tidings she cried herself into hysterics. All she could do was to consult with her father and mother and send men everywhere to enquire and search for him. But ~~there was no news of him~~ ^{there was no news of him}. There was nothing else she could do but live in dependence on her parents. Fortunately she still had at her side two slave-girls of the olden days to wait on her. Mistress and maids, the three of them, day and night, did needlework to help her father to make a living. Although Fêng Hsiao cherished resentment against her all the time he was quite helpless in the matter.

One day the elder of those slave-girls of the Chen family was buying thread in front of the door. She suddenly heard a great shouting on the street. Everybody said: 'The new magistrate has come to take up his office.' When the girl looked from inside the doorway she saw the soldiers and runners passing ~~two~~ ^{two} by two. All at once a large chair was carried by in which there sat an official. He wore a black hat and a red robe. The girl

felt perplexed. She thought to herself: 'This official is very good-looking. I seem to have seen him somewhere.' Then she went into the house and soon put the matter on one side and thought no more about it. When evening came, just as they were about to go to rest, they suddenly heard knocks on the door. Ever so many men were shouting in confusion. They said: 'Messengers have come from the magistrate to call someone to be questioned.' When Fêng Hsiao heard this he was so scared that his eyes stared vacantly and his mouth gaped. If you do not know what evil had befallen him, see the explanation in the next chapter. (16) (17)

Chapter ii

Madam Chia departs from Yang-chou to join the Immortals.
Lêng Tzu-hsing speaks at length of the Jung-kuo-Fu.

The story tells that when Fêng Hsiao heard that messengers had brought a summons from the magistrate he came out hastily and greeted them with a smile and began to enquire. But the men merely shouted: 'Be quick and invite Mr Chên to come out.' Fêng Hsiao hastily replied with a smile: 'My humble name is Fêng. I am not called Chên. But I used to have a humble son-in-law who was called Chên, only he has now been away from home for a year or two. I do not know whether you are asking about him.' The messengers said: 'We don't know anything about true or false. Since he is your son-in-law we are going to take you to report to the T'ai-yeh in person.' And they ~~hastily~~ ^{ALARMED} took Fêng Hsiao along and went off with him. The members of the Fêng household were all ~~alarmed~~ and agitated. They did not know what was the matter. At the time of the second watch Fêng Hsiao at last came back. They hurriedly asked him all about it. As a matter of fact the newly arrived magistrate is called Chia. His personal name is Hua. He is a native of Hu-chou. He is an old acquaintance of my son-in-law's. He saw the girl Chiao-hsing in our doorway buying thread and so he assumed that my son-in-law had removed and was living here. That is why the messengers came. I explained the circumstances to him. The T'ai-yeh was moved with sorrow and sighed for a while, and then he asked about my grand-daughter. I said that she had been lost while she was looking at the lanterns. The T'ai-yeh said: 'Never mind. Wait until I send men to look for her. They are sure to find her and bring her back.' He talked for a while and when I was going he gave me two ounces of silver. When Mrs Chên heard this she was instinctively moved with sorrow.

The night passed without incident but early the next day there was a messenger from Yu-ts'un to present two packets of silver, four rolls of embroidered satin as an expression of thanks to Mrs Chên, also a sealed letter for Fêng Hsiao entrusting him to ask Mrs Chên for Chiao-hsing as his 'second chamber'. Fêng Hsiao was so delighted that his eyebrows opened and his eyes smiled. He was eager to go and ingratiate himself with the magistrate. He strongly urged the suit upon his daughter and that night he escorted Chiao-hsing in a small chair into the yamen. That Yu-ts'un was pleased there is of course no need to say. He wrapped up a hundred ounces of silver and presented it to Fêng Hsiao and sent ever so many gifts to Mrs Chên, and told her to bear up while she waited for him to discover her child's whereabouts. Now the slave-girl Chiao-hsing was the one who on a former occasion had turned to glance at Yu-ts'un. Because he had accidentally seen her that once there had followed this wonderful chain of events, something one would never have thought of. Unexpectedly her good fortune was complete in two respects. She had never thought that she would come to be at Yu-ts'un's side. A year later she gave birth to a son, and half a year afterwards Yu-ts'un's principal wife suddenly took ill and died. Yu-