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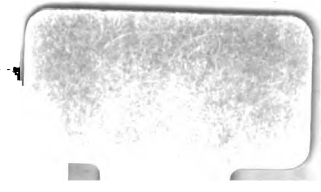

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IU-KIAO-LI :

OR, THE

TWO FAIR COUSINS.

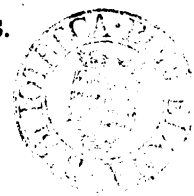
A CHINESE NOVEL.

FROM THE FRENCH VERSION OF

M. ABEL-REMUSAT.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



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ADVERTISEMENT.

It is proper to inform the English reader, that the following version of a curious specimen of Chinese imagination is intermediately derived from the French, into which language the original production has been translated by M. Abel Remusat, so well known for his acquaintance with the literature of the extraordinary country which gave it birth. Such being the fact, nothing on the part of an English translator, in the way of preface, would bear equal authority with the remarks of a writer whose acquirements and power of comparison give so much weight to his opinions. For this reason the ingenious preface of M. Remusat is retained, with the exception of a few passages here and there, which concern French readers almost exclusively; or which, seeing that it is rather lengthy, it has been thought might be spared without any abatement either of interest or novelty. It amounts, in fact, to a brief dissertation on the merits and peculiarities of Chinese fiction, and would be curious even without reference to the book which it precedes. As it is, it prepares us for what is to follow in a way which both instructs and amuses; and we fully agree with its author, that the translation of a few of the best specimens of Chinese fiction, the object of which is a portraiture of native life and manners, will do more to make us intimately acquainted with that secluded people, than all the journals, or books of travels, which have ever been compiled. For the rest little apology is necessary: it is both pleasant and instructive to study human nature in every variety of masquerade; and national modes of thinking,

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of manners, and of costume, after all amount to little more. The biped man lurks under every disguise, and can assume none either so simple or so fantastic, as totally to preclude sympathy with his fate and his feelings. Iu-Kiao-Li comes in this "questionable shape," as Hamlet says; and it is hoped that the public will condescend to *speak* to it, especially as German diablerie is apparently on the wane, and as novelty is one of the prime literary virtues at a season when a reading veteran will despatch two or three volumes of romance in an afternoon, and then, like Hotspur, complain of want of work. At all events the appeal is here made; and as a large portion of the inhabitants of London have been recently gratified with the contemplation of two Chinese ladies who have condescended to waive the privileges of high rank for the small consideration of half-a-crown per head admission, it is trusted that a due stock of interest has been excited to ensure the favourable reception of "Two Fair Cousins" of the same national family, through the familiar medium of a brace of neat duodecimos.

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FRENCH TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE*.

THE Chinese have for many ages past been in the habit of composing both historical romances and romances of manners, nearly as each species of fiction has been cultivated in France and England. Looking to their remote and secluded situation on the globe, this is no mean honour. Nations in their infancy compose apologues, marvellous narratives, and epic fables: the genuine romance or novel is the fruit of a more advanced period of society, when the abatement of credulity turns attention from the wild and wonderful to the sober realities of life. It is not until civilization has reached a certain stage, that people are disposed to ponder over scenes of domestic life, contemplate the play of the passions, analyze sentiment, or watch over the social collision produced by the unceasing encounter of interests, and the variable intermixture of pursuits. Fictions of this class naturally follow the course of actual habits and manners. The theatre which they occupy necessarily changes with the modes of life of those whom it is constructed to entertain. The muse which inspires them originally delighted in forests and savage places, and for a long time dallied upon mountains, or wandered along the shores of the ocean. It was comparatively late that it penetrated into cities; and the Chinese, with a few of the nations of modern Europe, have alone admitted her into parlours and drawing-rooms, and allowed her to take part in familiar discourse, in amicable reciprocation, in domestic discussion, in the

* Some commencing observations on the nature and tendency of the modern novel or romance, and on the productions of Sir Walter Scott in particular, are omitted, as possessing little which has not been frequently repeated by English writers.

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diplomacy of the household, and in all the petty details which, in the aggregate, compose by far the greater part of the lives of civilized men.

Such is precisely the source of interest in the romance of the Chinese. Writers of that class in China address the reason much more frequently than the imagination, and seem less desirous to startle their readers with bold conceptions and remarkable adventures, than to afford them subjects of reflection and the means of anticipating the tardy lessons of experience. All the other Asiatics, attracted by a taste for the marvellous, have disfigured their most respectable traditions, and shewn themselves composers of romance even in their histories. The Chinese, on the contrary, remain historians even in their romances, and it may be added, that their fictions are not the more tedious for not being constantly childish and destitute of common sense. Every day shews us examples of writers who can be extravagant without ceasing to be insipid; and that authors may run altogether away from probability or matter of fact, without being in the slightest degree either original or entertaining.

Man in relation to man, his vices, his aptitudes, and his moral habits, including the tone and language of society, forms the subject of the more prevalent Chinese compositions of all kinds. Confined to the sphere of reality, the imaginations of their authors seem especially bounded by the limits of the sensible world. Thus the same sort of amusement must not be sought in them, which is afforded by the Arabian Tales, or the poems of the Hindoos. The world in which we live is their scene of action, and not the abyss of the sea, islands in mid air, or imaginary regions in the wide immensity of space. They never exhibit to us princes engaged in combat with giants, princesses borne away by geni, all-powerful talismans, and incessant transformations. The persons whom they introduce are men and women, acting naturally within the circle of their passions and

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their interests. Integrity is seen in contact with intrigue, and honest men involved in the snares of knavery. Setting aside names, these inventions might even pass among ourselves for realities; for after all nothing more resembles Nankin and Canton, than Paris or London.

If there be any narrators who merit attention from those who are anxious to become fully acquainted with the spirit and genius of a people, they are such as have been just described; and in this point of view, the most approved Chinese romances may fill up an important void. They are, at the same time, more accurate and diverting than the relations of travellers; for who can paint a people so well as themselves? What traveller, under such circumstances, can vie with the novelist? The missionaries have enjoyed frequent opportunities of observing the Chinese in political and public life, but they have very rarely gained admittance into the bosom of families. One half of society too, and by no means that portion of it which is most easy to understand, they have scarcely been able to see at all. Little can be really known of the manners and way of thinking of a nation, without some acquaintance with its women.

As to other Europeans who have visited China in the train of the embassies of England and Holland, the reception given to these uninvited visitors will sufficiently account for the very little which they have been able to add to the accounts of the Jesuits. "We were received," said one of them, with great *naïveté*, "like mendicants, treated like prisoners, and sent back like vagrants;"—these are persons to whom people scarcely communicate their more intimate thoughts, and who enjoy little opportunity of appreciating social character. It follows not, however, that because these travellers have seen little, they have not much to relate, especially as the writings of the missionaries supply an inexhaustible magazine of ready-formed matter. But even with these aids, it is not surprising that they are often mistaken in respect to the genius of a people whom they have

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scarcely seen, and that they frequently pronounce at random when they judge of two hundred millions of people, by five or six members of the ministry of ceremonies, and sixty or eighty chairmen,—the only Chinese who were allowed to approach them.

The Chinese romances are, therefore, excellent in their way for supplying the information wanting in the accounts of voyagers and the common geographical authorities. They are at the same time the more valuable, as the authors do not appear either as strangers to, or pleaders for, their countrymen, and often employ ridicule with considerable address. Their satire indeed is not so pointed and direct as that of Gil Blas or Gulliver, but more resembles the medium class of novel, in which the moral is not obtruded, but rather deducible from the incidents in a plan of action lively and pleasantly represented. It is in the portraiture of details that the Chinese novelists excel, in which respect they may be compared to Richardson. Like that ingenious author, they render their characters interesting and natural by reiterated strokes of the pencil, which finally produce a high degree of illusion. The persons whom they create, may be said to stand before you, their motives of action are fully laid open, you hear them speak of themselves, and learn to track even their minute peculiarities of manners and conversation. What so many continental readers have experienced on the perusal of the English Clarissa, has been often felt by me in running over for the first time certain Chinese romances. The interest in their pages arose precisely in proportion to the stage of my progress; and in approaching to the termination, I found myself about to part with some agreeable people, just as I had duly learnt to relish their society. This is always the case with the romance of detail, when it is correct in the species of portraiture which it assumes to delineate. It is felt heavy in the first instance, but after a while the progress seems too rapid; we yawn over the first volume, and devour the last.

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Moreover, the details, which are deemed a defect in Richardson by certain refined readers, and felt as a charm by others whose refinement is still greater, are not to be condemned in a fiction produced in a remote quarter of the globe. These minute particulars, these circumstantial descriptions, and these long conversations, serve to exhibit the various shades of action, the locality, the character, the passions, and the interests of the interlocutors. Of what value must all this be to readers who wish to become intimately acquainted with the Chinese! How can they accomplish their object in a better manner than by an introduction to individuals of that nation, by conversing with them as often as possible, and mingling, if the term may be allowed, with their most secret deliberations? Their very soliloquies will assist in this direction, although heaven knows they are sometimes as tedious and as misplaced, as those of certain dramatists, and of our own long-winded Abbé Prevost.

There is another defect in the Chinese romances, which arises from the excess of a good quality; it consists in the length of their poetic descriptions, and prolix display of the wonders of art, or the beauties of nature. These Asiatic authors not unfrequently suspend the narrative, in order to make the slightest circumstance in the recital the subject of pictures, which both in grouping and colouring are often admirable. They forget that the chief art of a novelist consists in knowing how to conceal his art; that traits of description which are only connected by certain invisible links with the main action, are so much lost in the way of illusion; and that everything which concurs not to the expression of sentiment, or developement of character, diverges from rather than approaches to the common object of the story-teller and dramatist. For the rest, a facile introduction of common-places distinguishes the writers of eastern Asia, as much as those of the west of Europe. *We* have our enchanting landscapes, our savage recesses,

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our misty mountains reflected from the polished surface of the lakes below, our sun-sets in purple majesty, and our moons with an attendance of silver clouds. In lieu of these, we meet in the scribes of China with the verdure of the willows, the transparence of the waters, the diversified aspect of the clouds, the snowy blossoms of the fruit-trees, the scarlet of the peony, the rich gilding of the chrysanthemum; the periodical returns of which produce an agreeable variety, liable in description however to verge into a sort of elegant monotony. Some other points in common might lead to the supposition that the Chinese story-tellers had copied from our own, but for the fact that they are seven or eight hundred years more ancient. No character is introduced without the author's deeming himself called upon to describe his mien, appearance, dress, and mode of conducting himself when thus brought forward. If he be an amiable young man, his face is compared to the moon in the middle of autumn; something *literary*, that is to say, in the Chinese sense, a degree of modesty and reserve, is diffused over his whole physiognomy; and even the folds of his light-coloured vesture announce a cultivated scholar, who is destined some day to gather the fragrant olive branch, the palm of the academical examinations. If a beautiful woman be introduced, her bright eyes, set off by an arched eyebrow, will remind the writer of the pure water of the autumnal fountain, on the surface of which floats a leaf of the spring willow. It is also customary in China to place at the head of each chapter a quotation from some ancient poet, and a summary of the contents in brief metaphorical, and sometimes even enigmatical terms. Moral reflections, many of which are of a very obvious kind, are also frequently given in couplets or quatrains, which interrupt the narrative. On all these occasions the writer elevates his tone, and vulgar prose gives way to the musical cadences and picturesque expression of the style literary or poetical; or, as Beaumarchais has it, "that which is not worth being said, they sing." That

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author's theory of the operatic air and ballad, indeed, applies correctly enough to the passages which we have been describing. They are understood as it may happen, and applied as the reader pleases; and if altogether passed over, the recital will not be the less clear or the less interesting: neither the author, nor those whom he addresses, will in fact lose anything.

These passages of poetical prose, which are only written for the sake of writing, when an author purposes to exhibit proofs of wit and imagination, are, it must be confessed, as ornaments, entirely out of place, especially in the majority of Chinese novels, the subjects of which will scarcely support this unnatural elevation. The persons who figure in them are seldom taken from the most exalted ranks of life; but, on the contrary, persons of the middling or intermediate classes, such as magistrates, governors of towns or of provinces, judges, councillors of state, and private men of letters, abound. The hero of one celebrated romance of a hundred volumes, is a rich druggist, who gets into authority by the means of his wealth. The language put into the mouths of these characters is usually adapted to their stations in life. Underlings and ordinary people deliver themselves in common phraseology, while that of the men of letters is always more or less flowery; and when they are made to converse with one another, their style becomes so ornamented with metaphors and poetical figures, as to be sometimes nearly unintelligible. Their speeches are so many riddles which they address to each other, and to which it is usual to reply in the most high-flown terms that can be devised. Thus their conversation forms a profusion of traits of wit, a crowd of ingenious images, of recondite emblems and learned allusions, in respect to which the last speaker is always to endeavour to excel all who have preceded him. It was something in this way that our wits frequently employed themselves at the celebrated Hotel de Rambouillet. History, ancient and modern, particular anecdotes, the customs of antiquity,

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local traditions, superstitious notions in relation to the properties of plants and animals, and finally fables,—all are put under contribution in these learned and flowery discourses, in order to embellish the language of educated persons, and furnish ornaments for an epistolary style. These polished expressions frequently degenerate into mere forms of courtesy, the genuine sense of which is altogether a matter of indifference to those who employ them, and in this manner they construct a vocabulary of tumid extravagance, and of sounding and sophisticated expressions, from which proper words and simple phraseology are carefully banished. To understand all these fine things is as difficult as, without the assistance of tradition, it would be to comprehend the elegant jargon which was once prevalent in our saloons. But such is not in China, as it has been with us, the mere peculiarity of an individual, or a temporary fashion like the affectation exposed in the *Precieuses Ridicules*, or which abounds in the epistles of Voiture, and of some writers near our own time who have sought to revive a similar species of absurdity; it is, on the contrary, a trait of natural character, which cannot be dispensed with but to the injury of truth. It is not proper that the lettered class in China should pass for being more simple in their manners, or natural in their mode of expressing themselves, than they really are. They would, indeed, lose the extraordinary time and pains it costs them to become distinguished, if after passing all their lives in pondering over the writings of their predecessors, in order to become something peculiar, they should be made to deliver themselves in the common-place language of all the world.

All the shades of style to which I have alluded, mingle in different proportions, according to the condition of the characters who occupy the scene. As I have before remarked, the heroes of these stories are seldom chosen from the most elevated ranks; and there is, even in this respect, a variety which extends to the nature of the fable, to the action that it includes, and to

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the incidents which it discloses. Were it worth the trouble, I might enter widely into these distinctions; and although we by no means possess an equal number of them in Europe, a sufficient quantity may be found to convey an idea of the divers forms in which Chinese imagination has ushered in the various productions to which it has given birth. Some of them more especially merit the title of "Historical Romances," the story being formally founded on the annals of a reign or of an entire dynasty. In these, some real events form the text: princes, magistrates, and commanders, who have really existed, are introduced by name, and made to act according to their recorded character and qualities, mental and personal. It seems as if their object was to compile a species of imaginary chronicle, in which history is made a romance, in order, as a witty writer observes, to revenge the insertion of so much romance in history. The austerity of the form agrees with the gravity which is characteristic of these productions; the style of them is simple and severe, and they even contain dissertations and chronological tables, and are little more entertaining than if not for the most part invented. In a word, they rank with certain productions among ourselves, which are called historical because their authors would not confess that they dealt in fiction. Some of them are of considerable length; but others are short, and may be compared to our modern novels. The latter are published in collections, each of which contain several hundreds, many of them composed in verse, and many in the literary style: those which are in prose almost always containing scraps of poetry. Some are also in dialogue from beginning to end; and this is a form to which the authors of what may be termed romances, more properly speaking, seem particularly partial; so that entire chapters resemble little comedies with two, three, or four speakers. In these instances the names of the latter are repeated every time they deliver themselves, and always with

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their literary, political, or official titles: as "The Licentiate Toung said," "Doctor Leaou replied," "Judge Ssema resumed," *&c.*

With respect to the adventures narrated in all these compositions, and the springs of action supplied to them, one general remark will suffice. There are but a few in which supernatural agents are employed, either to involve or develope the knot of an intrigue. In others, some mysterious personage, whose exact condition the author leaves in doubt, will throw over the surface of a story that vague and uncertain colouring which has been so much esteemed in certain modern poetry. These are ordinarily astrologers or physiognomists, and may for the most part be assimilated with the tribe of unknown personages who in European romances are described as tormented with remorse for secret crimes to which we hesitate to give a name; and to those aged women with gray dishevelled locks, whose strange and equivocal conduct leaves us in doubt whether they are votaries of some occult science, or partially deprived of reason. In the greater part of Chinese romances, however, everything is contained within the bounds of the possible and even probable. We might be tempted to regard most of them as the private memoirs of some particular family, compiled by an accurate and faithful observer; and in the same manner as, it is said, a fine institution exists to register all the events of the sceptre and the actions of the prince, that an attention of the same sort is extended to families, in order that lessons of experience may be furnished for guidance in the most common affairs of life. Visits, and the formalities of polished statesmen; assemblies, and, above all, the conversations which make them agreeable; repasts, and the social amusements which prolong them; walks of the admirers of beautiful nature; journeys; the manœuvres of adventurers; law-suits; the literary examinations; and, in the sequel, marriage,—form their most frequent episodes and ordinary conclusions. I

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know a Chinese romance which presents a complete society of men and women who represent the various relations which spring out of civil life, and who are beheld successively occupying all the situations which in such a state can be experienced. The translation of this romance would render every other work upon Chinese opinions and habits superfluous; but it is unpleasant to be obliged to add, that a great number of passages in the book could not be translated into an European language. It is not so with the greater part of the others; and without affording a complete idea of irreprehensible manners, or of a state founded rigorously on the principles of Confucius, most of those which I have read would on the score of morals and decorum be found irreproachable.

Every people, according to the habits in which they have been nurtured, and the ideas by which they are pre-occupied, exhibit in their poetry and romances a certain number of conceptions which, although reproduced with some variety, fail not to impress a peculiar character upon their works of imagination. In China the hero of romance is usually a young academic, endowed with an amiable disposition, devotedly attached to the study of classic authors, and unmoved by any anxieties but such as are connected with the love of flowers, of wine, and of poetry. Setting these aside, he may possess nothing chivalric in his manner or character; for it imports little that he be active, intrepid, and a graceful horseman, if he knows how to cap verses and form *bouts-rimés*. But that which characterizes China most favourably is, that it is unnecessary for a hero of romance in that country to be possessed of great riches, as science and literature will infallibly open to him a road to fortune, and facilitate an access to the highest dignities. This at least must sometimes be the case in reality, as it is a settled matter in all their romances; just as in Europe it is presumed that high offices are merited by honour, disinterestedness, talent, and a regard for the public good.

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The same diversity may be observed in different nations, in the choice of incidents and kinds of adventure, as well as in the general conduct of the story. In Greek romances, lovers just about to light the torch of Hymen, find themselves suddenly separated by an unexpected invasion of pirates, and are not reunited until after the experience of a cruel captivity, which is usually terminated by some heroic act of friendship. Gallantry and intrigue form the foundation of most of our Gallic fictions. Spanish cavaliers are in the habit of saving the life of some beautiful incognita menaced by a furious bull, or about to be devoured by the foaming waves. Among the Chinese, promotion and marriage supply the two leading ideas, both in actual life and in the airy regions of imagination. No step can be taken, real or supposed, which bears not some relation to one of these grand objects. Every man above the lowest rank is perpetually occupied either in exalting himself in literary rank, in marrying with a view to posterity, or in looking to the future establishment of his sons as soon as they are born. This disposition, so necessary to be understood, if we are desirous to appreciate the motives of Chinese action, obliges me to enter into a few details.

Marriage in all places, whatever may be said to the contrary, forms the most grave of all serious affairs; but there is no people who thus regard it so early in life, and so constantly, as the Chinese. Even independently of the general notions which lead them to consider this union as the origin and base of all their social relations, they are solicitous, above all things, not to die without posterity. It is strange that a people who seem to embarrass themselves very little with any idea of a future state, and who form no precise notion on the subject of rewards in another life, should feel so much inquietude on the subject of what will happen on earth when they are no more. This fact may well lead us to admire the influence of habit, and the dominion of ancient usage, even after the moral principle in which each was ori-

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ginally founded is obscured or lost to view. There may possibly be one Chinese in a thousand who is anxious to know if any part of him will survive the dissolution of the body; and in the mean time there is not one in the whole thousand that can support without horror the thought of being deprived of funeral honours, and above all, of those which ought, at different epochs in the year, to be addressed to a tablet inscribed with his name by his son and his grandson. The anticipation of this reverential homage takes place of everything else in the estimation of a Chinese; and a sentiment which it is difficult for us to conceive, is one of the most powerful mainsprings of his entire conduct. Hence the extreme aversion to celibacy, and the commiseration which the Chinese bestow upon all who die without male descendants. Condemned criminals, who have no male children alive, sometimes request, and obtain as a signal favour, that their wives may visit them in prison; and they die with joy in the hope that they may thereby leave some heirs to their name; and such is the sympathy in this respect, that the barbarity of tyrants, and the severity of laws, seldom go so far as to refuse them this satisfaction. It is to be observed that sons alone succeed to the family name of their father in China, or can perform the reverential ceremonies deemed so important; daughters, who change their names in marriage, being of no service in this respect. Few can either understand the romance or the drama of the Chinese, if unacquainted with the customs which render the lamentations of those who so pathetically bewail the want of male posterity intelligible, and with the expedients, some of which are singular enough, that they have recourse to in order to avoid so great a calamity. One of the most natural is to marry early, and another to espouse several women; and this double resource is rarely neglected by the novelist as he approaches the sequel of his story.

We now understand why marriage is so constantly present to the minds of the Chinese of all conditions. The

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other grand object of attention to which I have alluded, is peculiar to the literary class; but as in China this class includes every man of distinction, who is elevated above the vulgar, and who maintains a rank in society, allusions in relation to their advancement from one grade of distinction to another, continually abound in works of imagination. All Chinese, without distinction of birth, are admitted to the annual examinations in their native places, and, every third year, to others in the large towns of the provinces. Those who have obtained the lowest literary titles, are by the missionaries termed bachelors; and none are excused from these examinations, until they have attended ten times, that is to say, until about thirty years of age. They are, however, entitled to present themselves at the triennial examination in the capital of the province, for a superior grade, and finally, at that held in the capital of the empire—as it were, in the sight of the sovereign himself—in order to obtain the most exalted rank of all, which our authors have translated doctor. All these examinations open the road to preferment, and even to the possession of posts of great dignity; and he who distinguishes himself at them is almost certain of advancement; for at this distant part of our continent it is determined by *law*, that office is due to talent, and that promotion is the just recompense of merit. Hence all the young men who have learned to read are incessantly occupied in preparing themselves for their periodical examinations; and when the time of trial arrives, students are seen crowding to the theatre of competition, as they formerly did in France to the theses of the Sorbonne or the University. It is at once the field of glory and fortune; and the results, which are proclaimed with great form and ceremony, become the general subject of conversation. Literature, and the productions of genius at these times, exact the same attention from the Chinese public, as political opinions and principles claim from ourselves at the period of electing representatives. A great number of expressions, both in the familiar and elevated lan-

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guage of China, contain allusions to these pacific combats; and the idea of examination is so rooted in the head of a Chinese, that in one of their novels a magistrate promises two beautiful wards, not to the most brave or most virtuous, but to the most learned and the most classical of the competitors for the prize. Even in the romance which we are prefacing, a tender father takes his daughter to an examination, to be disposed of, like a professor's chair, to the ablest candidate, in order at once to promote her happiness and his own parental satisfaction.

Habits so singular, and manners so widely removed from all to which Europeans are accustomed, ensure originality to the productions which they engender; and in this respect those of China are not to be imitated. Many have been solicitous to collect from historical memoirs, and the journals of travellers, materials for similar fictions; but they can never impose upon a genuine connoisseur. The honest dealers in romance of the last century who composed so many Chinese tales, Chinese letters, and Chinese histories, vainly spent their time in the invention of strange names and extraordinary adventures. They were as unable to paint the manners of the Chinese, as the Chinese to describe the customs of Europe. All these pretended Chinese were Frenchmen and Englishmen, and as little Asiatics as Usbeck in the "Persian Letters" of Montesquieu. A native of China who resided in London for some years, composed a relation in verse of all which principally arrested his attention in that capital. Will the reader expect from him profound views, or frequent epigrams on the privileges of the two houses of parliament, the reform of the Commons, or Catholic emancipation? Nothing of the kind gives him a moment's concern; but, on the contrary, he calmly relates that in spring and autumn the English recommend one another to return home early, for fear of losing themselves in the fog; that the houses in London are so high that the *stars may be ga-*

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thered from the tops of them; that men and women walk together in the fields to collect flowers; that they marry as pleases themselves, and that no one is allowed to possess two wives. Now these naive and puerile observations are never made by a native of any country, simply because people cease to be struck by that with which they are familiar, and are no longer impressed by mere appearances, when well versed in realities. On this account there are some points of this nature which are not to be acquired from the real romances of the Chinese; but they are precisely such as, in the instance of the Chinese resident in London, are to be collected from missionaries and journalists. But on the other hand these fictions make us acquainted with what such adventurers seldom can either see or appreciate; and this being the case, it is surprising that, with a disposition to enjoy frivolous and imaginary imitations, more recourse has not been had to similar entertainment from a genuine source, which instructs and amuses at the same time.

Some attempts have however been made to render us acquainted with that branch of Chinese literature, the first fragments of which we owe to the missionaries. These consist of brief novels, or moral tales, of which the Chinese possess many thousands. Lost however in a voluminous collection, such translations have been little read, and will be less so in future; for who will peruse novels in large folios, which are scarcely tolerated in octavos, and which threaten to be only endurable in eighteens? One of these tales is no other than the old worn-out story of the Ephesian matron. This cosmopolitan subject, the origin of which is as difficult to be traced as the birth-place of Homer, is pleasantly enough given by the Chinese author, who seems even to have supplied some traits to the "Zadig" of Voltaire. More recently also, a few English writers have profited by their residence at Canton, to translate some other novels out of the same collections, one of which is of considerable length. The most remarkable of these tales bears

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a considerable analogy to the story of Pyramus and Thisbe. Several of them abound with graceful and ingenious traits, but they are upon too brief a scale to admit of the necessary development, and present nothing of the chain of action, or of circumstance, which belongs to a complete narration, and which serves both to make us acquainted with the society which supplies the subject, and the literary taste to which it owes its existence.

A single romance of this extent, and of the kind to which we have just been adverting, has alone met the face of day in Europe. Although it bore a considerable reputation in China, it has remained very little known, owing to the faults of those who have made it pass successively from the Chinese into the Portuguese, English, and French. The latter version by Eidous presents but a very imperfect copy of the original. The Chinese style and turn of thought, all the interesting details and characteristic expressions, with nearly the whole of the conversations, which latter give so much spirit to these works, have disappeared. The canvass alone remains, exhibiting a meagre and uninteresting abstract, as if condensed and concocted for the *Bibliotheque des Romans*.

Such being the case, I have been led to believe that I should employ myself usefully, and fill up what may be deemed a gap in our literature, by translating a Chinese romance. In the fulfilment of the determination consequent on this opinion, the judgment of two learned missionaries, Prémare and the Bishop of Rosalie, led me to select the romance entitled Iu-Kiao-Li, as meriting a preference from its purity of style, and its grace and elegance as a literary composition. I have found in it a fable simple and well conceived, an easy and agreeable development, characters skilfully introduced and duly sustained to the termination. It might be better if there were fewer verses, and less of improvisation and poetic description; but these defects are inherent in the adventures attri-

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buted to students; and as the lettered class in China form the *elite* of the population, it is desirable that their manner of thinking, speaking, and acting, should be preserved in a picture after nature. This species of story presents the ideal of society and good company in China, and exhibits, better than any other, the impression made by institutions which constitute literature the principal occupation of a sagacious and polished people.

Another defect will be detected by readers habituated to the magnificent entanglement of modern romance: we allude to the extreme simplicity of action and expression which is deemed classical in China. Nothing is laboured in the utterance of sentiment in prose; there is no complication in the incident, no extraordinary effort of invention in the construction of the adventures, which for the most part are such as might really take place. We are impressed neither by acts of atrocious vengeance nor of sublime self-devotion; by the unforeseen rencontres of the Abbé Prevost, by the spectres of Mrs Radcliffe, or by the dungeons of Sir Walter Scott. Not a single person is murdered in the whole of the story; and although at the conclusion the virtuous are rewarded, the vicious are not punished; an arrangement so opposed to the morality of romance, that on the part of the author it can only be a sacrifice to verisimilitude. It is a great thing if it can please and interest by means so simple, by springs so slightly complicated, and resources so bounded. When however it is recollected, that this story is far more ancient than any of the models which prevail in Europe, and that the personages whose lives are thus delineated were contemporaries of Charles VII and Louis XI, we ought to feel some respect for writers capable of conceiving compositions so regular, of clothing their moral observations in forms so lively and ingenious, of seizing shades so delicate, of successfully describing the refined habits of an advanced state of civilization, while forming the picture of an epoch which produced among ourselves only obscure *fabliaux*, or tales absurd

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and insipid in the extreme. The refinement of the former, and the coarseness of the latter, form a lively contrast, and teach us that it was not until the fifteenth century that Europe could sustain with China a comparison, the results of which in the nineteenth century so naturally flatter us.

There exists but one point in reference to which the genius of Asia must allow its inferiority; and unfortunately that is an essential one, since it forms the leading circumstances in the romance of the "Two Fair Cousins," and bestows on it both title and *denouement*. It is a notion that has occurred to some Europeans, and among the rest to Goëthe, who in his youth exemplified it in his drama of "Stella;" but, withheld by the moral forms of the West, he has confined himself to a few indications, and forborne all development which might have been felt revolting; the *Wir sind dein* of the conclusion being the only hazardous expression in this singular composition. In the present tale, on the contrary, the sentiment, being legitimated by national habits and manners, is freely unfolded, without offence either to modesty or decorum. The hero, if so he may be termed, extends to two cousins vows and sentiments which with us can be addressed to one female exclusively. He becomes smitten with one of them, without ceasing to adore the other. Two virtuous women partake of the affections of a man of delicacy, who, when he says to either of them "I have but one heart," must not be understood to mean "I will be eternally constant," but, on the contrary, "If I discover a second woman as amiable as you are, how can I help loving her?" Moreover, this double union is at the same time made the secret wish of the two cousins also, who it is presumed will not be completely happy unless they effect it. The discovery which they make of their love for the same object, not only detracts nothing from their mutual regard, but inspires them with an additional motive to esteem and friendship. Thus what in Europe would prove a source of discord and

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despair, the ladies of China regard as a grateful and generous source of sympathy, and the pledge of a more perfect felicity. This is truly to be transported into another world: we must go to China to witness bigamy justified by sentiment, and the most exacting of passions accommodate itself to participation and arrangement, without losing either its force or its vivacity.

The union of three persons linked together by a happy conformity of taste, accomplishment, and disposition, forms in the eyes of the Chinese the highest earthly blessing, a sort of ideal happiness which heaven reserves for its favourites as the reward of talent and of virtue. In Europe the aversion to polygamy is so great, that I am not certain whether the practice would not be better endured than the theory. Among the Mahometans this Chinese custom will meet with greater indulgence; but the purely Platonic and intellectual notions of our hero will excite sympathy in neither case, and I fear that he will even be disliked for his very delicacy. A man sentimentally loving two women at once, is a monster only to be found in the extremity of Asia. In the West two simultaneous passions cannot be endured; even when successively experienced, their admission into a romance is a point of some difficulty. Writing as a novelist, rather than a moralist or a philosopher, I may be allowed to dwell upon a few of the advantages which a writer may derive from the Chinese mode of thinking. In the first place it is thereby easy to make every one happy at the end of the tale, without having recourse to the hopeless depressions, and fatal consumptions, which European scribes are obliged to have recourse to, in order to dispose of a supernumerary heroine, whom our fastidious notions will allow neither to surmount nor survive a misplaced predilection. The Chinese process would have spared many tears to the *Corinna* of De Stael, and to the *Clementina* of Richardson, and have saved much lively regret to the indecisive Oswald, and possibly also to the virtuous Grandison himself.

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Eccentricity of sentiment and opinion however is not always a bad recommendation for a foreign work; there is one of a far more trifling description, which may prove much more annoying to the general reader. I speak of the proper names, the strange orthography of which is no slight obstacle to the translators of oriental books. Those of China are particularly disagreeable and difficult to pronounce; nor have I found it possible to remedy the evil, as many of them are significant, and form subjects of perpetual allusion. A few slight changes of letter, when the two languages have clashed in sound a little ludicrously, form nearly all the liberty which has been taken in this respect. For the rest, it may be observed, that Chinese names embarrass us not only in the way of pronunciation, but by reason of the various modes in which it is customary to apply them. Among this formal and ceremonious people the common name of all the individuals of the same family; the honorary name which distinguishes the one from the other; the nursery appellation received in infancy from parents, which is never used except by a person in allusion to himself, and in the way of humility,—all these constitute so many particular denominations, which Chinese politeness will not allow to be used indifferently. The literary and official titles which are to be united with these different modes of address, also contribute to the variety, which has a great tendency to create confusion. It is an extension of the difficulty attendant on our own Christian, family, and titular, appellations; with this difference, that with us the baptismal name precedes that of the family, while in China the family name constantly precedes all the rest.

The slight liberty which has been taken in regard to names, may be regarded as a fair criterion of that which I have taken throughout. For the rarity of the thing, I have sought to make it faithful, and would have rendered it literally, if I had deemed it possible to make it at the same time endurable. It is the taste of the nation

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from whom I have taken this romance that I wish to exhibit, not that of the people to whom this translation is addressed; I have therefore repressed every disposition to improve or embellish the original. Translations from the eastern languages ought to exhibit the faults and beauties of the national literature of which they are intended to form a specimen, and not to degenerate into mongrel compositions which neither satisfy the curiosity of the learned, nor amuse the lighter reader. For my own part, I have not hesitated to shew myself a Chinese on this occasion: the style, the images, the turn of phraseology, have all been preserved where they could be rendered intelligible; and when circumstances have rendered alteration indispensable, I have generally stated in an accompanying note the literal sense which I have been obliged to abandon.

The style of China is however replete with the greatest difficulties. In the poetical or elevated passages of the kind which I have heretofore endeavoured to describe, it is pompous and flighty, at the same time that the common course of the narrative displays the greatest simplicity. As I have been unwilling in any case to substitute our flowers of rhetoric for those of the original, I have confined myself to the task of transcribing and rendering them intelligible. Without being eloquent myself, I might be able to shew the means taken by a Chinese writer to display eloquence. I have found it much more difficult to imitate the original author where his diction is more humble and less studied. Exactness in the latter case is by no means of easy accomplishment; for what is simple and natural in our language, in another may appear insipid and childish. In spite of all my efforts, I fear that I have not always succeeded; and that not because of the difference of idioms, but owing to our own ingenious manner of finding figurative language for details, the extreme familiarity of which may seem to border on vulgarity. The secret of attaining to simplicity without coarseness, belongs only to our

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best authors; and in seeking an eligible expression for a common or a trifling matter, I have clearly discovered why certain modern writers have adopted a language so extraordinary. They have launched into the sublime, only because they knew not how to be natural; and had they been able to write like Moliere, would have forborne to imitate Ronsard, and Cyrano de Bergerac.

The manner of the writers to whom I have just alluded, would be signally appropriate to the scraps of poetry, and the songs and inscriptions in verse, which our author has inserted in various parts of his book. Such excrescences must be very agreeable to the taste of the Chinese, since they are found in almost all their romances; but I know of few in which they are so multiplied and conceived in terms so elegant and refined as in the present work. One of the translators of the novels to which I have before alluded, asserts that the verses composed on these occasions are principally intended to please the ear, and that the sense is often sacrificed to the sound. If we may credit him, these pieces, in their want of connexion, resemble the airs in our comic operas and vaudevilles. This analogy must certainly be striking; for, having requested a young Chinese to sing me one of his native songs, after he had complied with my desire, he could not decide whether the subject of it was love, wine, or patriotism, so obscure were its allusions. This excessive darkness decided the translator in question to suppress these passages altogether; and I confess that I was almost tempted to follow his example. The poetical language of China is, in fact, untranslateable, and often, indeed, unintelligible. Metaphors the most incoherent, and figures of the boldest description, are lavished with inconceivable profusion; and as we possess not in Europe the assistance which is indispensable to decipher such enigmatical flights, we can frequently proceed by conjecture alone.

Of this species of logogriphe or verbal symbol, "The Two Fair Cousins" affords but too many examples; and,

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unfortunately, the turns of our own poetry assist us but little in our attempts to divine them. When to these difficulties are added those which originate in the multiplicity and difficulty of the metonymes, others which spring out of allusions to facts, anecdotes, and persons, of which we know nothing, with all the relations which a wandering imagination may establish between objects the most naturally disconnected, it must be allowed that these ingenious galimatias may be readily misconceived. It might have been best to retrench these preposterous ornaments altogether; but this alternative could not be properly adopted in respect to a story with which many of such passages were intimately connected. If in the translation some of the poetical beauties of the original may have escaped me, I have, on the other hand, probably introduced more order into many of the verses than they possessed before; and in this respect the advantage may, after all, be on the side of the translation.

The simplicity which distinguishes the prosaic part of the narrative, excludes not, on the part of a Chinese author, the employment of certain metaphorical phrases which have passed into common use, and of figurative expressions, the original sense of which is effaced by habitual usage. Relatively to these last, I have not acted invariably in the same manner. If I had replaced them all by equivalent expressions, the characteristic traits might have disappeared; while, by always preserving them, I should have cast an aspect of singularity over scenes which have nothing uncommon in them. The rule adopted by me on these occasions has been, to enter as much as possible into the ideas of the original author, to conform to his intentions, and literally to preserve his own expressions when clear and precise, and not liable to carry the mind too far away from the leading thought. In this publication I have preferred the side of exactitude to that of freedom; for some of these passages, clearly understood, contribute

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more than all the book besides to convey a due notion of the people who supply them.

But while it has appeared necessary, in my estimation, not to suppress any of the ideas which it was possible for me to preserve and to render, I have not left any Chinese term in its original form, but have constantly adopted periphrastic or equivalent expressions, in order to convey their due import. Thus, I have not called the Chinese magistrates *mandarins*, their boats *junks* their itinerary measure a *lee*, nor their monasteries *miao*, or *pagodas;* I have also acted in the same way in respect to their titles of office and of persons, and to the polite denominations by which they address one another in conversation. Three modes might be adopted in regard to their expressions—to suppress them altogether; to transcribe the Chinese terms; or to substitute equivalent expressions. The first of these appeared to me to amount to a suppression of many traits of national character; while the second would have filled many pages with the barbarous words, Tchang, Siangkoung, Mengli, Siaothsiei, Laoye, Sianseng, Fougin, *&c.*, which would have conveyed no precise notion at all. After mature reflection, I have therefore resolved to give my Chinese personages equivalent titles in the languages into which their adventures have been translated. In thus deciding, I am aware that I have taken a great liberty; but it was impossible at the same time to write French and Chinese, and something in all cases must be sacrificed in translation. My greatest cause of regret has been my inability to discover in our polished language a sufficient number of gradations to faithfully represent all the modifications of Chinese urbanity. According to rank, age, and the social relation, they employ four or five ways of pronouncing *sir;* as many means to address a man in office; with a variety of expressions of the same nature, for friends, relations, and inferiors. A part of all this has unavoidably disappeared; and I never was so much aware of the poverty of our language as since I dis-

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covered its inadequacy to convey the inexhaustible variety of ceremonious modes of address, which custom has consecrated in China.

But incumbent as I have felt it not to augment without necessity the asperities of a composition which at best will abound in them, I have still refrained from introducing anything into my translation which is foreign to the ideas, to the manner of seeing things, or to the prejudices, of the original author. This negative rule has exacted very close attention; but I have not seen how I could with propriety dispense with it. While, however, I have found nothing inconsistent in saying, that a young Chinese was destined for the magistracy or the bar, I have not allowed myself to write, that a bachelor of Nankin aspired to the *hand* of a beautiful young lady; because the Chinese marry without joining hands. These and similar metaphors should give way to native ones which express the same ideas; for it is in such figures, and not in mere syllables, that the local tinge so much spoken of chiefly consists; on which account they should be carefully preserved, undebased by foreign admixture. A Chinese man of letters ought never to count upon the favours or the frowns of *fortune*, a divinity of which even the name is unknown in China. The *empire* of beauty, and the *flame* of genius, must find other appellations. Neither must a traitor take off his *mask*, or cover himself with a *veil* of dissimulation. A hero will not be allowed *honour* for a device, or a waiting-woman be permitted to exclaim *my God* or *my conscience!* The pains which I have taken to avoid these incompatibilities may occasionally render the style of the translation monotonous and stiff; but critics who may remark this fault, will know how to excuse it, as the only method of avoiding a greater. The part which I have taken in respect to titles, and the names of official dignities, may at first appear inconsistent with this nicety; but if the principles which guided me be truly considered, no contra-

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diction will be discoverable. That principle has been, to preserve the thought and interpret the language; or, to use a fashionable barbarism, to *gallicise* the expression, and never to *gallicise* the idea; a maxim which in a few words includes the whole art of translation.

The four or five editions of Iu-Kiao-Li, which I have procured for the purpose of this translation, often differ materially from each other in respect both to the poetry and the prose; a liberty frequently taken in China by successive editors. I might have taken advantage of some of these, to illustrate many of the observations into which I have been led in this preface; but I deem it better to reserve them for the larger edition of this work which I intend to publish for the benefit of the amateurs of eastern literature. I have acted in the same manner in respect to the notes, inserting in these small volumes a few only which may be deemed indispensable. A novel would scarcely be distinguished from a book of travels, if loaded with a heavy commentary; and many readers not only dislike to have their attention called to the bottom of the page, but care little for the explanation thus offered them.

In conclusion, I may be allowed to observe, that it often happens, that works which are given to the world as solid, turn out to be superficial; and that others, possessing little beyond entertainment, have been found heavy and tiresome. The mixed nature of this production ought to preserve it from this double danger. If grave critics pronounce it frivolous, it may be represented to them that it is merely a romance, a light composition which merits not the honour of a formal consideration. On the other hand, if only moderately appreciated by the general reader, he must be requested to observe, that it is an exotic production, translated from a learned and very difficult language, and that the trouble it has given the translator entitles him to their indulgence. These allowances duly made, "The Two Fair Cousins" may secure general approbation.

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NOTE.

A COPY of *Iu-Kiao-Li* has for nearly two hundred years formed a part of the very rich collection of Oriental works in the King's Library at Paris: father Foureau has made a short analysis of it, which was published by M. Bruguière de Sorsum: Sir George Staunton, in an "*Appendix*" to a "*Narrative of the Chinese Embassy to the Khan of the Tourgouth Tartars, in* 1712-13-14, and 15, *by a Chinese Ambassador*," published at London in 1821, has given an abstract of the four first chapters, and announced at the same time, "that a distinguished Chinese scholar on the Continent, M. Abel Rémusat, from whom we already possess some valuable translations, had made considerable progress in an entire version of it." These alone are incontrovertible proofs of the authenticity of *Iu-Kiao-Li*, which has been called in question by some friends to literature on the other side the Channel; and they cannot fail totally to overthrow such invidious and unjust aspersions, which, from their asperity and malignity, have defeated their object, and become the highest compliment which the work can possibly receive.

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IU-KIAO-LI:

OR, THE

TWO FAIR COUSINS.

CHAPTER I.

A LEARNED YOUNG LADY COMPOSES VERSES IN PLACE OF HER FATHER.

"The human heart is the great fountain from which our classic works are drawn. Their satires and invectives owe everything to the charms of style. The world is the great stage of one long drama, and our contentions make up the scenes thereof."

It is related that, in the reign of *Universal Honesty* *, there was a learned man who filled a great post in the magistracy. His family name was Pe, his sirname Hiouan, and his name of rank Thaihiouan. He was of the race of Kinling or Nankin, and lived at the time when the eunuch Wangtchin had in

* Viz. from 1436 to 1450. This is one of the titles which the emperors of China give to the years of their reign, solely for the convenience of date, and without any reference to the import of the expression. Thus we have those very years dignified with the appellation of "Great Abundance" in which the empire was actually desolated with famine; and it is notorious that civil wars convulsed the state in the years which were denominated "*Profound Tranquillity*," or "*Eternal Peace*."

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some measure usurped the imperial authority *. Pe, unwilling to be a party to such an outrage, threw up his office and retired to his native country.

Pe had no brothers, but he had an only sister, who was younger than himself. She had been married to an officer named Lo, who carried her into the distant province of Chantoung; so that Pe now saw himself solitary, without family, and altogether an isolated being. He gave himself up to ease, and was moderate in his desires. Caring as little for fame as for emolument, he disliked society, and the only gratifications for which he shewed any relish were those which wine and poetry afforded. Averse from the world and its business, he led a retired life in a village called Kinchi, sixty or seventy miles from the city †. This village was protected on every side by verdant rising grounds, and from east to west it was traversed by a winding stream, whose banks were adorned with the willow and the peach-tree. Here were seen united, in happy effect, the beauties of water and mountain scenery.

The village consisted of about a thousand houses but of those belonging to the higher order of inhabitants the mansion of Pe was beyond doubt the most considerable. Having discharged high offices, and being possessed of vast property, he enjoyed an excellent reputation as a literary as well as an official character. One thing only nearly concerned

* It is an historical fact that the eunuch Wangtchin headed the council of regency under the Emperor Yingtsoung, and removed every worthy man from office, to fill their situations with his own creatures.

† About eighteen English miles.

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him; he had attained his *fortieth* year, and was without a son; not that he had refused to enrol amongst his household females of the second rank. He retained them five or six years, in the hope of having a family; and at the end of that time, his wishes being disappointed, he dismissed them. Strange enough, these women no sooner contracted new matrimonial engagements, than at the termination of a year they blessed their husbands with issue. Pe with sighs resigned himself to what he thought the decree of providence, and resolved to take no more wives from the second rank of females. His first wife, who belonged to the family of *Gou*, went about everywhere addressing prayers to the gods, offering adoration to the genii, burning perfumes, and tendering vows. In short, she had attained her forty-fourth year, when she brought forth a daughter. The night of her birth, Pe thought he beheld, during a dream, a divine personage, who presented him with a portion of jasper of the deepest red, and brilliant as the sun. It was on this account he gave to his daughter the name of *Houngiu*.

Though Pe and his wife were mortified that at their time of life they should be destitute of male issue, yet the birth of a daughter filled them with joy. Nature had endowed this infant with extraordinary beauty; her eyebrows resembled the autumn willow leaf, and her eyes were like the crystal of the autumnal fountains. But she was more happily gifted with the qualities of the mind. She was but eleven years old when she lost her mother, and from the period of that event she accustomed herself to repair to her father every day

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for the purpose of study and to learn to read the characters. One might almost imagine that she was formed of the pure atmosphere of the mountains and rivers, for nowhere could one believe that her equal was to be found. Possessed of as much intelligence and acuteness as of beauty, she had scarcely arrived at her fourteenth or fifteenth year when she was already thoroughly conversant with books, and was even enabled to compose some herself. Youthful as she was, she might have ranked with the first literary characters of the empire. We have said that the only pleasures which Pe enjoyed were derived from wine and poetry. He every day amused himself with writing verses. Houngiu thus acquired the art of versification, and very soon excelled in it. The father composed at his leisure some poetical piece, and then caused his daughter to write some verses to the same rhymes. He then taught her to correct her own composition, pointing out the faults, and instructing her in the means of improving it. Blessed with such a daughter, it is easy to believe that Pe no longer felt the want of a son. All that he now wished for was a husband in exterior and in merit worthy of such a damsel; and that was a description of person not easily to be met with. But time passed on: the young lady attained her sixteenth year, and was not yet betrothed. In the mean time the defeat of Thoumou took place; the emperor who reigned under the title of *Universal Honesty*, was led captive to the north; and the prince, his successor, gave to his reign the name of *Supreme Splendour*. Wangtchin received the punishment due to his crimes, the ancient magistrates were recalled,

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and Pe, who was of their number, was made, by a decree of the supreme court of magistrates, master of ceremonies of the first class.

The commission was despatched without delay, and the news arrived at Nankin. At the first blush, Pe felt disinclined to return to public business, but then his wish to establish his daughter suggested some reflections. "I wish," said he to himself, "to have some distinguished man for my son-in-law; but in this village which I now inhabit, and even in the neighbouring city, there are none but persons of very limited worth; if I go to court, there I shall find assembled the most eminent in literature that the empire can produce; I cannot fail to procure a suitable match for my daughter; such an opportunity must not be let slip: should the event of a suitable marriage depend on the journey I am about to take, and I find a son-in-law to my mind, he will be to me as a half son, one on whom my heart can repose itself." Having thus fixed on his design, he took care not to decline the place to which he had been appointed; he chose a lucky day for the purpose, and set out with his daughter, Houngiu, for the capital, to take possession of his new appointment.

On his arrival he was presented to the emperor and installed in his office; he then set about procuring a suitable residence. The office of master of the ceremonies is nearly a sinecure. Now although he was a magistrate of much integrity, and strongly impressed with a sense of his duties, still he possessed a considerable stock of indifference and irresolution; nor was Pe the man to be on the alert for occupation. When the government sent

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to the nine masters of the ceremonies any matter of importance to examine, it was sufficient for two amongst them to see to the matter, the remainder of their colleagues having only to give in their names if they approved of the decision; there was not, therefore, a great deal for a magistrate to do. Every day, when public business was done with, Pe indulged in his favourite recreation of drinking and making verses.

At the termination of a few months he had formed a society of friends, like himself, who loved wine and poetry; and they amused themselves together in commemorating the beauties of willows and flowers. It was about the middle of the ninth moon, that one of Pe's dependants sent him twelve pots of odoriferous queen marguerites. He had them placed at the foot of the staircase leading to his library. In the same place were disposed rose and satyrion trees, and amaranths. All the vases consisted of fine porcelain. The scent of the flowers embalmed the air to a great distance: their leaves, wreathing about the trellis-works and banisters, disclosed at equal distances, twelve golden heads. Pe contemplated the scene with extreme pleasure, and came daily to repeat the gratification. One day, whilst he was in this place, and ardently bent on the composition of some verses, he was disturbed by the announcement of a visit from Gou, a doctor of the imperial academy, and Sse, one of the inspectors-general of the empire *. Gou was the brother of Pe's wife,

* Officers who are in fact no better than spies. It is their duty to visit the provinces, either openly or in disguise, as occasion may require, to observe the conduct of the

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his sirname was Kouei, and his name of rank Chouian; he was from the same country with Pe, a steady man, and of undoubted integrity. Sse's sirname was Youan, and his name of rank Fan-ghoei. Although he had received his degrees in Ho-nan, and was enrolled one of the doctors of that province, still his first inscriptions were taken at Nankin. He was of the same age as Pe, and partook of his taste for wine and poetry. Between these three magistrates there existed the closest intimacy, and in the intervals of leisure left them by business they eagerly sought each other to pass the time together. As soon as they were announced, Pe arose hastily, and went out to meet them. As they passed much of their time together, benevolence and courtesy reigned at their meetings, and the restraint of formal visits was banished from amongst them. "Gentlemen," exclaimed Pe, the moment he saw them, "here are so many queen marguerites blown these two days; how is it you have never come to see them?"

"Some days ago," answered Dr Gou, "the seigneur Li was appointed chief examiner to the college of Nankin, and we had to offer him the *parting feast**. I have not had an in-

different authorities, and report to the emperor. There are Chinese who make the situation very profitable to themselves; but there are instances in which individuals in this office have shewn a great deal of courage and devotion at the risk of their lives and liberty. "Privilege of speech," is a part of the prerogatives of the inspector-general, and it consists in a free discussion of the acts of public authority, and sometimes of sovereign power itself.

* In China, when a man of distinction sets out on a journey, it is the custom for his colleagues and dependants to es-

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stant to spare. I fully intended coming to see you yesterday, but just as I was coming out, whom should I meet but that tedious creature Yang, who brought me a copy of verses, begging I would correct them, for the birth-day of viceroy Chi's wife; he spoiled my whole day; and this morning, when I saw it was such fine weather, I was apprehensive I should not be in time for the flowers; so I have been to bring the seigneur Sse, and came here without further delay."

"And I also wished," replied Sse, "to come here to see you; but we had a great deal to do at our office, so that I have unfortunately missed the perfume."

Whilst thus conversing, the three friends entered the apartment. After having addressed to each other the customary salutations, they took off their outside garments and then prepared for tea. Pe first invited them to pass into the library to view the queen marguerites. The golden colour of these flowers, combined with the purplish tints of the amaranths, formed on each side the resemblance of a double line of vermilion. Gou and Sse expatiated on the beauty of these flowers, and whilst the three friends were fixed in admiration of them, Pe ordered his servants to bring some wine for his guests. After having drunk some cups *, Dr

cort him to the gate of the town, each offering him refreshments as they go along.

* It is necessary to remember that the *cup* which the Chinese use in drinking their warm wine is very small, and contains not more than a spoonful. The tenfold cup, which is drank as a punishment, corresponds with our small tea cup.

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Gou began. "These flowers are beautiful without ornament," said he: "art has nothing to do with their lustre. The red, the blue, the yellow, the white, all this variety of hues which adorn them, derive their brightness from the pure influence of nature. It is by their very simplicity that they attract and fix attention. It is very nearly the same case with you and me, gentlemen; though confined here by office, we love to retire from its embarrassments, and every day to come and taste the innocent pleasures of poetry and wine. Very different from that old Yang, who is so infatuated with his calling, that he goes about to men of rank and power, and thinks of nothing but emolument and promotion:—what a fit subject for ridicule, when compared even with these simple productions of nature!"

"Nay, I rather think," answered Pe, smiling, "that the world is much more disposed to ridicule you and me, for thus deserting our employments, and choosing to end our days amidst the breath and in the society of flowers and shrubs."

"Those who laugh at us, have excellent reasons for it," said Sse; "and it is we that are wrong to laugh at Yang."

"How should we be wrong in laughing at him?" asked Dr Gou.

"The court is the temple of emolument and reputation," replied Sse; "those who labour to acquire either the one or the other, are there in their proper place. But you and I, who are neither avaricious nor ambitious, wherefore should we lose ourselves amidst those labyrinths, if it is not to draw on ourselves the ridicule of our

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neighbours, particularly seigneur Pe and I, who have neither sons nor heirs."

At these words Pe sighed deeply. "Seigneur," said he, "you are perfectly right, and I see it just in the same way that you do. However, every one knows his own business best, and for my part, if I remain here, it is certainly not because I would hesitate to lay down this black cap *."

"The seigneur Gou is a member of the imperial academy," replied Sse, "and the seigneur Pe a magistrate of the old foundation; during the intervals of leisure from your employment, you can retire from public life, and enjoy in this retreat the pleasures of wine and poetry. As for me, who am in the *free speech*† department, the very nature and obligations of my office render it almost insupportable. When a person is inclined to speak, that is the time he must hold his tongue; and if he is disposed to be silent, then it is that he is obliged to speak. I cannot endure it any longer: I am only waiting the promotion the emperor is going to make, to beg to be sent on some foreign mission. I then quit this place, and follow my own inclinations."

"A poet of the dynasty of Thang," replied Gou, "has a distich which imports that *an eloquent man is like the wild marguerite.* Its home is amidst the mountains, and hence it is that

* This cap was the symbol of office.

† We have already said, that it was one of the duties, (a hazardous one, doubtless,) of an inspector-general to investigate and remonstrate against the acts of authority, and even, occasionally, of royalty itself: this was called, "*le province de la parole.*"

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the seigneur now speaks to us of solitude. Since then you and I take so much pleasure in drinking and enjoying the beautiful appearance of these flowers, the best thing we can do, is to retire to the depths of some desert in the midst of the mountains."

The three friends thus passed their time chatting and jesting, and now and then taking a cup of wine. Their discourse, which was continued with the utmost confidence and harmony, soon became animated, and the fancy struck them to begin and compose verses. Pe ordered his servants to bring pens and ink; and seating himself near Gou and Sse, they proposed each to write verses on the queen marguerites which they had so much admired. They still held the pens in their hands, when a servant hastily entered, and informed his master, that seigneur Yang, the inspector-general, had just arrived. This news was not at all welcome to the three friends; and Pe, abusing his servant, said, "Stupid thing, did you not know that I was engaged with seigneurs Gou and Sse? You should have told him that I was not at home."

"Sir," replied the servant, "I told him you had gone out to make some visits; but seigneur Yang's servant told me, that his master had been to seigneur Sse's, and was there informed that he had come to take some refreshment here. This is the reason he is come to look for him. Besides, there are the chairs of the two gentlemen at the door; so that my answer was useless." Pe was still meditating, when another servant hastened to tell him that Yang had absolutely entered the house,

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and was coming up stairs. Pe was then obliged to get up, and without altering either cap or girdle, and being loosely dressed, went out to meet him.

Yang, who was one of the inspectors-general of the empire, had been a chum of Pe's, and brought up with him; but he was a person of common place and disagreeable conversation, affable and insinuating in exterior, but really grasping and jealous. His intriguing and officious disposition had provoked against him a number of enemies. As soon as he entered the apartment, and saw Pe, he exclaimed, "Seigneur, excellent man—all friends, gentlemen—so, having these exquisite flowers at home, you ask Gou and Sse to come and see you, and never say a word to me, as if I was not your old school-fellow."

"I should have been very happy to invite you," answered Pe; "but I really thought that press of important business would have prevented you. Besides, it is only a little friendly meeting, brought about by a similarity of taste in the party. It is quite a chance that Sse and my relation Gou should have come here together to-night, for no invitation had been given them."

Upon Pe requesting him, Yang laid aside his outward garments, made his reverence, and without waiting for tea, went into the library. The moment Gou and Sse saw him come in, they were constrained to rise and approach him, both addressing him at the same time. "Seigneur Yang, to what blessed inspiration are we indebted for the felicity of this visit?"

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Yang, first saluting Sse, said to him, "Let me tell you, you are a very sad neighbour, when there is such amusement here, to run away from me, and keep it all to yourself; that is not fair." He then saluted Gou, and broke forth in acknowledgments:—"I yesterday put into requisition your poetical talents, and you have, I must say, converted 'iron into gold:' I brought the composition to the viceroy Chi; he was enchanted with it, and gave me the best reception I have ever met with from him."

"Oh if the viceroy Chi has been well pleased," replied Gou, laughing, "it is on account of your politeness and attention, and not from the little composition you presented to him."

"In my situation," replied Yang, "this composition was rather a tribute due from my office, than a simple offering of courtesy."

Sse interposed good humouredly. "You have just been complaining," said he to Yang, "that I have not brought you with me to see these flowers: now it strikes me, that you are not altogether so open with me, when you are thinking of visiting the palaces of the great, and celebrating the birth-days of fair ladies. So you see, we are all even with each other." They then all burst out laughing.

Pe then ordered a cup and spoon for each, and begged his guests to be seated.

Yang, having drunk but two cups, observed to Sse, "Although on this anniversary we were separated from each other, my heart was really with you; my motive is not to curry favour with the great, but I have an excellent thing in view, on which I wish to consult you."

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" Pray inform me," replied Sse, " what this matter is: let me know it, I beseech you."

" The queen Wangkouei," answered Yang, " is going to be made empress; the decree is drawn up; and the viceroy Wangtsiouan is admitted amongst the connexions of the emperor. Now there is a very large property situated about a couple of leagues from the city, which he is very desirous of having; he has got one of his household to obtain possession of it. For some days back our counsel have been talking a great deal about the matter, and a suit against him is spoken of. The old seigneur Tchu is a leading man in the affair. The report reached the viceroy Wang; and feeling somewhat disconcerted, he sent a friend to request that I would settle the matter; but knowing who Tchu was, I made frequent overtures to him without effect. Now as I know that you and he are the best friends, and that he has great confidence in you, if you will but interpose, I am convinced that all will be ended. The viceroy Wang will never forget it, and his gratitude will be infinite. You and I, you know, who fill public offices, must now and then oblige persons of this sort; and really, after all, what great crime is it? What is your opinion?"

As he listened, Sse showed that he was not pleased, and candidly said, " Sir, if Wangtsiouan wants to take advantage of his alliance with the emperor, to enable him to seize the houses and lands of the people, it is not Tchu who should denounce the crime; but it is your duty and my duty to cry out against it. Why are you anxious to cushion this matter? This is carrying subserviency and selfishness a little too far."

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Yang, concluding from Sse's tone and manner, that he was not in a very complying humour, held his tongue; but Pe burst out laughing, and said, "Seigneur Yang, I thought you came here purposely to have a sight of my queen marguerites, but now I see that you wanted to transact some business for Wangtsiouan; it was very good of you to complain that I had not gone to invite you."

"Here, gentlemen," exclaimed Gou, laughing, "here is some agreeable work for you! Come, let us go on drinking and making verses: it is really quite preposterous to come here amidst these flowers and shrubs to talk politics; and I propose that seigneur Yang be fined a good large cup, to expiate this treason against the god of flowers."

Yang, somewhat disturbed by the unexpected reception he met with from Sse, became quite disconcerted at the railleries of Pe and Gou: nevertheless, he attempted an exculpation. "It was really seigneur Sse that began the subject, and I only by chance mentioned this matter," said he: "I had no thought of it at first; why therefore should I be punished?"

"'Tis a settled thing," answered Pe; "drink it you must;" and ordering a servant to bring a large cup, he presented it to Yang, who took it, saying, "Well, I submit to the fine; but if from this moment any one drops a word about the court or the government, I will not spare him."

"Oh! that's quite superfluous," interposed Dr Gou. Yang emptied his glass, and taking up pen and ink, said, "Now, gentlemen, you are all three

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in the full mood of composing : won't you let me see what you have been writing ?"

" We were certainly intent upon composing, but we have not yet put pen to paper."

" If that be the case," said Yang, " let me not disturb your inspirations ; give vent to your effusions then, and scatter freely the pearls and diamonds of your poetry. In the mean time, I shall keep up with you in drinking, as well as I can."

" Seigneur Yang," rejoined Pe, " if we are to have this amusement at all, why not compose as well as we ? It will be a little diversion to us all."

" Well, I see you are determined not to leave me to myself," answered Yang ; " but you know very well that it would be almost out of my power to compose even a stanza."

Pe began to laugh. " What !" said he, " you that compose such eloquent anniversary pieces, you that celebrate the merit and the virtues of the great, their birth days, and what not—you who can do all these with so much ease, to balk at a stanza of ten characters ? But I see how it is : unfortunately my queen marguerites yield no inspiration."

" A fine !" exclaimed Yang : " Seigneur Pe, a fine of ten cups on you. Awhile ago, I was condemned for having spoken of the court and the government : there, you are in the same predicament. Do you mean to say that you won't pay the penalty ?" And he forthwith caused a large cup to be filled and presented to Pe.

" But 'tis not talking of the court," said Gou, " to drop a word about an anniversary piece."

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"Anniversary piece, as much as you like," rejoined Sse, smiling; "but you may depend upon it, it must be very closely connected with politics, or Yang would never have composed it. Pe must undergo the fine; beyond all doubt, he ought to pay it."

Pe tossed off the cup good-humouredly. "The fine is paid; and now, if we are to versify at all, let us think of a subject, and let every defaulter be condemned in the penalty of ten large cups."

"Well thought of," said Gou.

"For goodness' sake, gentlemen," exclaimed Yang, "do not exercise your superior talents at my expense. The other day his majesty wanted to send some one to the captive emperor, but no one would go. It was a very serious undertaking, no doubt; had the task been only to compose verses or drink wine, the difficulty would not certainly have been so great."

"Politics again from Yang!" cried out Sse. "Has he not incurred the fine?"

But Pe, wearied with the childish vanity of Yang, was now provoked, and in a burst of honest indignation said, "Seigneur Yang, this is not the language of a rational man: you and I are in office—are we not then both the servants of the emperor? No matter where he chooses to send any of us, east or west, north or south; how can you say that nobody could be found to obey him? If his majesty orders any one to such a place, can he excuse himself from going? And if what you have just stated be the fact, what is the use of the emperor giving away so many honours and lucrative places?"

Yang put on a forced smile. "That is precisely

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what a faithful and zealous subject would say ; but if it were imposed on any one just to carry into practice this description of yours, I doubt if he would not begin with trembling limbs."

" No one but a fool or a knave would entertain these fears, when he is doing his duty," exclaimed Pe.

Gou and Sse, seeing the probable result of this dialogue, determined to divert them from the subject. " Gentlemen," said they, " it was ruled that politics should be avoided ; you have both contravened the agreement ; you are, therefore, fined two large cups ;" and they called for the cups. Yang declined his, and was going on ; but Pe tossed off his cup without minding Yang. He ordered it to be filled again, and in drinking it said, " I have been too hasty in my expressions ; my indiscretion called down a fine of two cups—I have drunk them ; but seigneur Yang may take his or not, as he likes ; I shall not take the liberty of pressing him."

" Why do you fly out so, seigneur ?" said Yang, laughing ; " there can be no reason for disobedience on my part ; and when I have finished my cups, it will only remain for me to take your commands and admire good verses."

" Now that you are in the vein of composing, quick and drink," said Sse.

Yang complied. " Now, gentlemen," said he, " that I have done all you wanted, and since you are going to start, just tell me your subject, and allow me to meditate at my ease."

" We have no other subject than the queen marguerites, and that's an excellent one," said Gou.

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"But I am not in humour for making verses to-day," observed Pe; "and if you wish to compose, I request you to go on: I must retire."

At these words Yang exclaimed, "Seigneur Pe, you are a sad deceiver: just now, when I wanted not to compose, you insisted that I should, and you decreed a punishment of ten cups against him who should refuse; now that I have consented, you tell us you won't do so yourself; but you only want to mock me. As you know that I am no poet, you do not choose to sing with me; however, though I am unskilful, and though one may very well blush to be seated at the same table with me for my bad phrases and ill-turned verses, surely these blemishes in a precious stone will not cause any dishonour to your lordship. If you abstain, you break your own law, and the punishment ought to be doubled: so stay where you are, for you really must drink."

"If I must, I submit," answered Pe; "but as for composing, I am resolved not to do it."

"If you prefer drinking," said Yang, "that's quite enough;" and he ordered a large cup quite full. The others wished to dissuade Pe from taking it, but he grasped the cup and emptied it two or three times. Yang wanted to fill it again, when Gou said—"Pe, having declined composing, has been condemned in a cup: the account is square."

"No abatement from what has been laid down," said Yang: "he must absolutely take the twenty cups."

"My greatest pleasure is to be drinking beneath these flowering shrubs," said Pe, laughing; "but what interest has your lordship in this matter, that

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you are so urgent?" But he took the cup, and, large as it was, began to drink.

"It is not your pleasure or mine that we are talking about now," said Yang, also laughing; "take off your twenty cups, and there is no more to be said;" and he filled out another cup. But the vapours of the wine getting into Pe's head, he began to feel somewhat unsteady, and was gradually losing all sense of Yang's importunities, who, nevertheless, continued them. After he had taken another cup, Pe finding himself not well on his seat, rose as well as he could, and went behind a screen, where he lay down on a bed, and soon fell fast asleep.

Yang wanted now to follow and torment him more, but was prevented by Sse. "The seigneur," said he, "has been drinking too rapidly; he has been sufficiently punished by five or six cups; wait, let him sleep a little."

"He is but a miserable drinker," said Yang; "but he shall not get off of a single cup."

"If we are to inflict the rest of the fine upon him, let us wait at all events until we have completed our verses: for if we do not compose, what right shall we have to fine at all?"

"A very just reflection," said Sse.

"Well gentlemen," said Yang, resuming his seat, "as you please; but when we shall have done, don't you believe that he will be disinclined to drink; if he refuses, I'll spill the liquor over him."

They then took paper and pen, and directing themselves towards the flowers, began their task by murmuring the following lines:—

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Ne'er expect that the cup its true balm will afford,
Until fond faithful friendship shall hallow the board;
They who own not the links that connect heart with heart,
Shall in vain seek the pleasures which song can impart.
Song and wine! the best joys that humanity knows,
Amidst any save friends, they but turn into woes.

Ever since Pe lost his wife, he discarded all females of the second rank from his household. His domestic affairs, even those of the greatest importance, were entirely under the control of his daughter Houngiu; and he even frequently consulted her on matters of business. On the present occasion a servant went to apprize her of the dispute between her father and Yang with respect to the verses they were to have composed. When she heard all that had occurred, being mindful of the malignity of Yang, she dreaded that her father had been betrayed by his candour into the use of expressions which would bring him into serious trouble.

"Is your master now composing?" asked Houngiu of the servant.

"No; he has declined it. Seigneur Yang has obliged him to take five or six cups of wine very rapidly; and my master, finding himself almost stupified, went to lie down, and is now asleep."

"And Yang and the rest, are they still drinking or composing?"

"They are all composing; but seigneur Yang only waits until his verses are made, to go and teaze my master again."

"Do you know if your master be really overcome by the wine, or does he only affect to be so?"

"He has taken several cups; and although he is

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not completely intoxicated, I am quite certain that the wine has got into his head."

The young lady considered for a moment. "Well, as your master is asleep, go you, and without any one seeing you, take him the paper containing the subject of composition; and when you have done so, fetch the paper for me to look at."

The servant accordingly returned to where the company was, and taking advantage of a moment of abstraction, took away the sheet, and carried it to his young mistress. She was not long in discovering that the subject was the queen marguerites. She called to her attendant Yansen, to fetch pen and ink, and then she wrote some verses of seven syllables. She next took a piece of paper in which she traced some lines, which she gave to the servant, and said to him, "Take these verses, with this little note, and go to the couch where your master sleeps, and wait there till he wakes. As soon as his slumber is over, hand these to him; and be sure that seigneur Yang does not observe you."

The servant repaired immediately to the library, where he saw Doctor Gou yet holding his pen in the attitude of one committing something to paper, Sse contemplating the flowers as if wishing to derive inspiration from them, and Yang neither writing nor meditating, but with his cup in hand, muttering some words between his teeth as though he had been composing. The servant however proceeded to his master's couch, and there waited until he awoke.

Now Pe was in the habit of drinking more than he had this day without getting intoxicated; but on this occasion he drank so rapidly, and

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his excitement from other causes was so great, that the wine took immediate effect, and there was no resisting the drowsy fit. However, this was but a transitory insensibility: he soon awoke, and called for a cup of tea, which was quickly brought to him. The servant then gave him, unperceived, the verses and note with which he had been charged by his young mistress. Pe first read the note, as follows: "The capital is a dangerous place of residence: poetry and wine, instead of yielding happiness, are there only productive of perils." Pe, on reading these words, shook his head; he then took the other paper, unfolded it, and found that it contained some verses on the queen marguerites, which had been made for him, and which on perusal he highly approved of. He then proceeded to the table and resumed his seat. The moment Sse perceived him, he exclaimed, "What! Seigneur Pe awake! That's good news."

"Gentlemen, I have been for a moment deprived of the pleasure of your society. What! are all your verses finished?" inquired Pe.

"Seigneur," said Yang, "you played the drunkard tolerably well; but are you aware that you have yet fourteen cups to take off? Just wait until my verses are completed, and I am determined not to give you the indulgence of even a cup."

"Now, brother Pe," said Gou, "what's the reason that you, who are so able, now that you are awake, will not take up your pen? You will save yourself he fine, and you know when the stag is dead, nobody asks who killed it."

"But let me tell you," said Pe, laughing, "that my verses *are* composed; but I don't wish to shew

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them before seigneur Yang, for he would ridicule their inferiority."

"Do not jest at me," said Yang; "undoubtedly you are quick and clever, but it is impossible that you can have been so wonderfully expeditious as all this. If really your verses are completed, it will fall to my lot to drink the fine. But it is out of the question: you are only joking; and in addition to the fourteen cups, you should drink three more; otherwise our agreement is violated."

"Well, well, if you will have it that the verses are not composed," replied Pe, "be it so; but if you will allow that they can be in existence, I shall just produce them. These discussions lead to nothing." Pe then handed him the paper of verses which he held in his hand. Sse took them. "Positively, Pe has written his verses—that is strange." Gou and Yang took and read them, one after the other, as follows:—

TO THE QUEEN MARGUERITE.

Fair flower! for whose beauties kind nature united
Her deep purple shade, and her bright tints of snow;
In her gold she then deck'd thee, and lastly invited
Her carnation along the soft surface to glow.

By what hand wert thou flung from Elysium to earth?
And as thus through the lattice sweet flower, thou art peeping,
Must thou waste all thy bloom for a lone maiden's mirth.
Whilst the sage that should court all thy beauties is sleeping?

What a calm is around—'tis the stillness of heaven;
All liberty's soul seems to swell in my breast,
And I feel as if now to my spirit 'twere given,
To fly to some holier region of rest.

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Few—few are the hours from the world I can steal,
To forget all its cares 'mid the balm of thy breathing;
Oh, give me on earth nought to see or to feel,
Through the long endless day, but thy fragrance and wreathing.

The perusal of these verses filled the three guests with indescribable astonishment. "You have effected a miracle," cried Sse: "not only have you written with wonderful despatch, but your phrases are so well selected; they are marked by care, purity, elegance, and strength. It is certainly a most brilliant effusion; how different from what we are in the habit of reading daily! This is admirably perfect, and should make us blush to take a pen again in our hands."

"Why, gentlemen," said Pe, "I was afraid of being charged with obstinacy, if I any longer refused to comply with Yang's commands. In addition to this, I was anxious to balance the account by having the pleasure of commending a cup to him in turn. I have done all I could, but you have praised the piece beyond its deserts."

"That the verses are excellent, is not to be denied; but I have some doubts about me," said Yang. "Pe was insensible not a minute ago; he has not laid hold of a pen since; and if he be the real author of the verses, he was bound to have written them in our company."

Gou examined the verses several times, and at last concluded that they were the composition of Houngiu. He could not avoid smiling, and Yang observed it.

"What makes Gou laugh?" he inquired. "He must have some motive for it. If you do not give

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me an ample explanation, I will positively pay no fine."

Gou only laughed on; and Pe, smiling also, said, "You fined me very heavily for not making verses: now they are finished, it is your turn. What reason have you for doubting? Do you suspect any plagiarism?"

"Gou has been laughing," said Yang: "he certainly must have a motive for it."

"Evidently," said Sse, looking at Gou, "you wrote these verses for Pe whilst he slept."

"I shall die with confusion," said Gou. "What! I write such verses as these?"

"If it is not you that have done this for Pe," said Yang, "I see no other person in the room to do it. Who composed them then?" Gou again laughed and remained silent. "What!" said Pe, "am I incapable of writing these verses myself, that you are so certain they must be done by some one else?"

"Who would presume to say such a thing?" answered Yang. "Only Gou laughed; he surely must have had some cause. You and he are relations; you favour each other, doubtless; there is some underhand work going on to deceive me. If I am to be fined, it is but justice that Gou should be made, first of all, to drink three large cups: I will drink afterwards." And he ordered a cup to be presented to Gou.

"I have incurred no fine," said the latter; "I am in no secret; in truth there has been no plot about these verses; but a thought strikes me that they were made by my niece, who feared her father was not in a condition to compose verses, and espoused his cause."

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"What!" cried Yang, struck with astonishment, "this masterpiece to be the composition of your daughter?"

"Yes," said Pe, "'tis so; hearing that I was unable to compose myself, she came to my assistance in order to save me from the fine."

"What!" exclaimed Yang and Sse, "your daughter to possess such an exquisite talent? Not only is there no young lady, but there is not a poet in the empire, to be compared to her; and can it be that we who spend nearly half our lives with you, the companions of your studies, should never have known that you had a daughter so skilled in learning and poetry? She is a complete wonder."

"My niece not only excels in poetry," said Gou, "but there is scarcely a book that she has not read; she manages her pen well, and composes extemporaneously with the greatest ease."

"Then," said Sse, "if that be the case, it appears that a young lady possesses all the merit of the first doctors of the empire."

"Yes," replied Pe, "in the decline of my life, the talents of my daughter console me; but unfortunately she is not yet established."

"If I remember rightly," said Sse, "you told me your daughter had attained her sixteenth or seventeenth year."

"She is now sixteen," said Pe.

"Is she yet betrothed?" inquired Yang.

"No," replied Pe. "I have the misfortune in my old age to have no son. Since my wife was snatched from me by a premature death, I have devoted myself to the education of my daughter; and up to

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this day I have not been able to make any engagement for her."

"To establish a son, and get a daughter married, are two things of very great importance," said Yang. "You should not lose a moment in procuring an establishment for your child."

"Nor does he wish to lose a moment," rejoined Gou; "but the difficulty is to find a man of merit for a son-in-law."

"The capital is a large city," said Yang. "Why cannot you find out some distinguished young man of birth for her husband? I will undertake the business to-morrow morning."

"Nay, but all this while," interposed Pe, "your elegant compositions are still unfinished; let me request you will resume them."

"Pearls and precious stones glitter in our eyes," said Sse, "and I should be ashamed, for one, to sully them with my dust. If you take my advice, you will all give up, and let us inflict upon ourselves a fine of three cups each."

"Well said!" exclaimed Yang. "I am for drinking."

Gou was about to conclude his verses, but seeing the other two undergoing their fine, he also consented to the three cups.

Drinking, and conversing on the verses they so much admired, made the time pass agreeably until a gating of the lantern; the three guests then returned to their respective homes. Those who do not know what afterwards happened, may have their curiosity satisfied in the next chapter.]

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CHAPTER II.

OLD YANG WISHES TO HAVE HIS SON MARRIED.

"Take a father's word, and his son is a paragon; but the first trial exposes his dulness. A virtuous girl was never won by wealth. Violence alone can make her wed a bad man. Hypocrisy does not finally succeed; and merit, with similarity of disposition, will alone stand the test."

When he called to mind what had occurred at Pe's, and thought of the verses on the queen marguerites, but particularly of the composition of Houngiu, Yang resolved to ask this young person in marriage for his son. He had two children, a son and a daughter. Yang Fang was the name of the first: he was just twenty; his appearance was by no means disagreeable, but of his literary accomplishments a great deal could not be said. His father's influence had, however, procured for him unmerited advancement, until he became a candidate for license in the province of Chansi; but he had failed at the general examination, and was obliged to return with his father to the capital, there to continue his studies. But yet it occurred to Yang that Pe was a man of an inflexible nature, and that with respect to the choice of a son-in-law his notions were irrevocably fixed. Nothing, to be sure, was more easy than to broach the business; but to bring it to an issue was the grand difficulty. Yang thought of it again and again, not well know-

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ing what course to pursue. One day, as he was returning home from visiting, he perceived, as he approached the door of his house, a man attired in blue, with a letter in his hand; this person fell on his knees in the street, and presented the letter to him: " here," said he, " is a letter that Mr Wang, of the province of Tchekiang, has addressed to your lordship."

" Is it from Mr Wang of the ministry of the personal*?" inquired Yang, looking at it. " The same," answered the man in blue. Yang immediately ordered his servant to take the letter, and told the man to wait a moment. He came off his horse, went to his apartment, and while disrobing himself, he opened the letter and read as follows: " Your brother Wang-Kouemow has the honour to present his respects to you. On my return from Siangpou, I found that your excellency had already repaired to the eminent post which you occupy in the capital. Spring was turned into winter for me; the gravity, the nobleness of your excellency, the weight which you possess, distinguish you above all your colleagues. I have ascertained this much even in my remote situation, and it fills me with joy. This letter will be handed you by Liao-teming, my countryman and friend; he is a learned man, and a true mirror of polite knowledge. He is, besides, a very good astrologer, and has made excel-

* The ministry of the personal is one of the six supreme departments of which the Chinese government is composed. It is their duty to present proper persons to fill all offices, and they have the control and regulations of all political appointments. They exercise the duties of their office publicly before the people, and with a great deal of solemn ceremony.

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lent predictions under various circumstances; I entertain a particular esteem for him; he is now about to make a journey to the capital, and I take the liberty of recommending him to you. He can be of service to you in everything concerning the art of divination. If you would condescend to cast an eye on him, and vouchsafe some favour to him, good Liao alone will not have to express gratitude, but I shall feel it my duty to prove mine according to my humble means."

As soon as Yang finished reading the letter, and saw that it was only a recommendation of an astrologer, he did not feel any great concern; but he could not avoid ordering a servant to go and see if Liao, who brought a letter from seigneur Wang, was waiting; and if he was, to request he would come in. The servant did as he was directed, and immediately returned with a visiting card, and told his master that Mr Liao was coming. A moment afterwards, a personage was seen ascending the staircase; and this is the exact description of his appearance. He had on a square cap, and affected the deportment of a man of letters; but there was something rustic in his attire. He might have been taken for a hermit issuing from his cell. His beard and mustaches were short, but thick and disordered; his eyes, wild and starting, almost resembled a pair of bounding balls; in making his salutation, he advanced his body, and precipitately drew back again, without grace, but with an air of profound humility. When he commenced speaking, he turned his head one way, and his eyes were directed in another. You saw a covetous dispo-

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sition painted in his very face. He pretended to be an astrologer, but in fact his real character was that of a parasite.

As soon as he saw Liao, Yang advanced to meet him, and led him to the apartment. After the first compliments had been passed, they respectively sat down in those places which custom assigns to the host and his visitors. Liaoteming opened the conversation.

"I have had an anxiety for a long time to become acquainted with you, but never had the opportunity. On this occasion I am charged with a message to your excellency from seigneur Wang, and I avail myself of it to present myself in person before you; my happiness exceeds my expecpectations."

"Wang speaks in the highest terms of your accomplishments and talents in this letter: you give me the greatest pleasure in honouring me with this visit."

In a few minutes tea was brought. Yang continued—"You have come, no doubt, to exercise your art in the capital, but we have already a good number of your order here."

"I am one altogether unskilled in the mode of recommending myself; I have with me a good number of letters of introduction, but I am fearful that the deserving and the ignorant are equally despised, and it is not quite certain that I shall make use of these letters. I have presented myself to your excellency to-day; to-morrow I shall go and visit Tchin, who is from my own country; then I shall call on Ju, the sub-governor of the heir-

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apparent; next, the viceroy Chi; then Pe, the master of ceremonies; and three or four other persons of distinction."

As soon as the man mentioned Pe, a thought came across Yang's mind, and he inquired if this was Pe the master of ceremonies, his fellow student.

"The same, your excellency's fellow student," answered Liaoteming.

"Now," said Yang to himself, "what if I make this fellow a go-between to effect the marriage?" And having ordered some refreshments to be brought, he invited the astrologer to accompany him to the library.

The latter wanted to excuse himself. "I have been but scarcely introduced to you. I have not as yet been able to serve you in any way. Why should I thus put you to inconvenience?"

"If you were another sort of person, I should not seek to detain you, certainly; but as you are a man of talent, I have, luckily, a little matter in hand with respect to which I am anxious to consult you."

As soon as they gained the library, Liaoteming immediately said, "Let me ask your excellency just to turn your face this way, that I may examine it."

"That is unnecessary," said Yang, "as it is respecting the horoscope * of my son that I want to have your judgment."

* Or, speaking properly, "the eight letters of my son." These eight letters are formed thus: there are two characters for the year one is born in, then two more for the month, two for the day, and, lastly, two for the hour. Out of the combinations of these characters, divers presages are made; and they are the materials whereby parents are accus-

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Yang, having called for pen, ink, and paper, wrote four lines, which he presented to Liaoteming. The latter attentively examined them, and said, "Your son's horoscope appears extremely fortunate; the five elements are there combined in the most perfect harmony; it is a bough pulled from the grove of olive-trees—it is a piece of jasper from the mountain of the pole, obedient to the most benignant influences of the stars. It is needless to speak of the success he has had, from his tenderest youth, in his examinations; but it would not at all surprise me if, at his twentieth year, (according to the character, No. 10,) his head became erect, and foppishly adorned. That is nothing; but when he shall attain his twenty-fifth year, which will be marked No. 13 in the cycle, and when he shall receive the influence of the south, I behold him advancing to the lake of Phœnix, and wandering through the academic shades. It is then that he will have attained the height of his ambition. It only remains to say, that the house of marriage should not be opened too speedily for him; and if he is established very soon, it may be unfortunate."

Yang began to laugh. "Your computation is excellent, admirable. My son did certainly present himself at the general examination, and was not accepted. He is now at my house pursuing his studies, and I have already frequently thought of establishing him, but he will not listen to it, until he has obtained a doctorship: however, as I know his attainments and the extent of his abilities, I am

tomed to ascertain the suitableness of disposition and destiny, when they are about to unite their children in marriage.

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inclined to believe that it is his destiny to begin by marriage."

"Rich and distinguished individuals are governed by destiny—what human means can free them from it? Your son has formed no engagement yet?"

"I had concluded one for him with the granddaughter of governor Lieou of my own country, but unfortunately she was snatched away by an early death before the time of marriage. This has suspended my purpose to this time."

"Such an event as that must have been brought about by destiny; but if your purpose be marriage, you should select some rich lady born under happy auspices, to form a fortunate union."

The servants having now brought in refreshments, Yang invited his guest to sit down; and then, whilst they were together, drinking occasionally, the conversation proceeded. "Has your son anybody in view now?" inquired Liaoteming.

"We have had several propositions from rich and desirable quarters, but intellect and disposition are wanting. I have just learned that Pe has a daughter incomparably gifted with talent and beauty. Within these few days back I dined at Pe's, and after dinner we set ourselves to write verses. Pe, in consequence of having drunk a little too much, was incapable of composing; his daughter undertook the task secretly, and composed a piece of verse, the best and most elegant that it is possible to conceive, insomuch that we veteran bards had not courage to go on."

"If the young lady possesses such a talent, she appears to be the paragon of her sex. But your

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son is an excellent scholar; heaven has sent them into the world for each other. Besides, you and her father are fellow students, your fortunes are equal:—why do you not get some mutual friend to break the matter?"

"Yes, the prospect is a good one; but then my old school fellow is so very singular a character; in the selection of a son-in-law he is the most difficult to please; and if you open the matter to him, he will evade the subject by a thousand excuses. It is this consideration that has induced me to abstain from applying to him myself on the business. I found out two days ago, that he was intent upon procuring a son-in-law. Now, if there were some mutual friend who would undertake to describe the merits and accomplishments of my son, and if he was favourably received by the good man, then we might have a mediator who would very soon settle the affair."

"An excellent thought. For my own part, I fear that what I should say could make no impression, and I should despair of gaining his confidence. However, if in the course of my interview with Pe to-morrow, I can find an opportunity for introducing something about the talents and qualifications of your son, depend upon it, I shall not fail to do so."

"You are infinitely obliging: I could not have had the presumption to ask you."

"I perceived your reserve, but it is not merely the benefit of your son that I consult, when I am asking for this accomplished lady. No; to offer a son-in-law of so much merit to Pe, is, I conceive, doing him a very great piece of service."

In this manner Yang and Liaoteming carried on

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the conversation for some time, intermingling the pleasure of drinking with their discourse. The latter rose to take leave. "Where do you stop?" asked Yang: "for I have not yet had the honour of calling on you."

"I have taken an apartment at the hotel Tchetchinhoei, but I should be sorry to give you the trouble of calling on me."

Yang politely saw him to the door, and as he departed, assured the astrologer that if this project succeeded, he would feel under infinite obligations to him.

Liaoteming, full of the affair that had been intrusted to him, retired to his hotel to pass the night. Next day, having completed his toilet, and despatched his breakfast, he gave to his servant his letter of recommendation from Wang, and proceeded to Pe's. He first sent in the letter, and in a little time was ushered into an apartment of the house, where he took a seat. Pe soon appeared; and the first salutations being over, Liao stated the object of his journey. Tea was then brought, and as soon as they partook of it, Pe addressed his visitor.

"Seigneur Wang has spoken very highly of your supernatural talents; but how can an humble man of letters, like myself, be of any use to you?"

"Your excellency," rejoined Liao, "is so distinguished for brilliant qualities, and your eminent virtues are so generally acknowledged, that you have obtained the confidence of the whole empire. It is not the good fortune of one so little skilled in his art as I am, to behold such shining qualifica-

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tions; but yet, if you will condescend to do so, let me beg that you will turn your face in this direction, that I may endeavour to read some traces of your destiny."

Pe turned his chair in front of his guest, and observed—"The seer cannot know so much of the happiness, as he can of the calamities, that are to befal a person."

Liaoteming, intently looking at Pe, seemed to contemplate his countenance with the deepest attention, and then said, "Yes, I behold a set of features quite celestial—awfully severe as the sacred mountains: those brows that, as they rise, appear to hide themselves under the temples on both sides—those eyes which sparkle like stars in freezing weather—there is formed a countenance of pride! It is the indication of primitive disinterestedness in public, of a noble elevation in adversity, of an honesty of purpose tried by events. What is better still, there is a straight line in which five others converge: it is the line of riches and honours. Nothing is to be feared for, save an excess of happiness in the present, and too great disinterestedness; for when carried to this extent, purity of soul becomes an injustice to our posterity; at least, such is the opinion. But lo! in the midst of this unbounded happiness I behold the lines of some undefined want—a son, I should say, or a son-in-law; and here it is necessary that there must be some extraordinary encounter, altogether different from the usual course of events."

"With respect to a son," said Pe, with a sigh, "it is long since I gave up the hope of having one; my only wish now is to procure a son-in-law on

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whom I can lean in my old age; and as to the riches and honours you speak of, I regard them but as empty shadows, or as the insignificant thing I tread on."

"I give full credit to these exalted sentiments, but much as you may despise worldly advantages, you will do well to consider what I have just said. Some occurrence will take place which you have not the least notion of; and although you have not a son born to you, an extraordinary encounter is sure to happen that will produce what will be as much to you. Now, undoubtedly, the good here has an aspect towards evil, and unless you avail yourself of your good fortune, something bad will take place; that you may depend upon. You will impress this presage in your memory, and before long you will be able to determine whether or not I am an impostor."

"Sir, you are a guide in the midst of darkness; and I feel obliged to you."

Tea was again served, when Pe addressed his guest. "Now, sir, in repairing from Tchekiang to the capital, you have made a voyage of more than three thousand miles by water, and had an opportunity, doubtless, of observing a great variety of men. Pray have you met amongst the young men of the present day who have exhibited talents and acquirements, any one who was particularly to your fancy?"

"Why, as to the ordinary description of bachelors, they are to be met with everywhere; but if you allude to that rare merit which casts a lustre on the age in which it is produced, and which is famous from one end of the empire to the other,

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I know of no one superior to the young son of seigneur Yang." And having said this, the seer rose to depart.

"What seigneur Yang do you mean?" asked Pe, impatiently. "Is it Yang Tseuhian, my fellow student?"

"I mean Yang who comes from the province of Kiangsi, sirnamed Thingtchao; but I was not aware that he was your fellow student."

"It is the same; but he has only one son, who took out his license some years ago. I have seen him, and I confess he struck me as being only a very common-place person; and with respect to his examinations, I do not know that he made himself at all remarkable. What is it that gives you such a favourable opinion of him, sir?"

"Why, as to literature, I confess I do not pretend to any great judgment respecting it; but if I may believe his horoscope and the aspect of the stars, I should say that he possesses a degree of merit not very common amongst scholars; nay, that he would one day approve himself a man of the first order, that would take his seat in the Hall of Jasper, or mount the Golden Horse*. But I do not rely on his horoscope alone; he had some success at the provincial examinations. He is now twenty, lives in retirement for the purpose of perfecting himself, and as yet feels no inclination for marriage. This is the only thing against him; but your excellency I see, esteems him a mere common-place person."

* Figurative expressions, which mean the Imperial Academy and its honours.

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"I was ignorant of all this," replied Pe.

After some further conversation, Liao rose to take leave. "I should be very happy," said Pe, "to detain you for dinner, but that I am engaged to a friend at his country seat to-day. It is a great want of politeness in me indeed to allow you to go so soon." And he ordered a servant to fold up an ounce note*, and present it to Liao. The latter accepted it with an humble reverence; and after expressing his thanks two or three times, he left the house to proceed to Yang, and give him an account of his success.

Pe, meanwhile, was wholly occupied with what had just passed, and felt extremely anxious to know something positive about the younger Yang. He did not, however, wish to be communicating with strangers. As a lucky chance would have it, Gou just came in at the time, and Pe invited him to the library to partake of some refreshments. After they had been drinking a little time, Pe asked his brother-in-law a question. "Have you seen Yang's son?"

"Why do you ask?" said Gou.

"Because an astrologer, or physiognomist, who brought me a letter of introduction yesterday, when in the course of conversation I asked him if he knew in town any young men of birth, talent, and virtue, answered me by uttering a splendid panegyric on the son of old Yang. He declared it to be his persuasion that this young man would one day be a scholar of the first order, and that such was indicated by his horoscope. I feel too interested

* Being of the value of about six shillings British.

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in procuring an establishment for Houngiu, to let slip an opportunity which presses itself upon me. That was the reason I asked you the question. Do you know if he be really well versed in literature?"

"He certainly was admitted to examinations," said Gou, "in the second class, on the book of verses. I have seen him, but I am not aware of his proficiency in literature. It is very true, I have not attended much to it lately; but on deliberation, it does not strike me that he can be a person of very shining merit, for old Yang, his father, cannot certainly boast of much; and if he really had these wonderful talents, do you think the father would keep him buried as it were at home?"

"I participate in your suspicions; but this astrologer tells me that Yang Fang is only just twenty, that he never thought of marriage, and that he was determined to distinguish himself at examinations before he would give a thought on the perfumed taper of the nuptial chamber. If he is animated by this ambition, it is very creditable to the young man; but we are not sure that he is."

"It is the easiest thing in the world to ascertain it," said Gou; "I shall invite father and son to dinner to-morrow; then you shall have an opportunity of ascertaining, by personal observation, his manners and character, and whether or not he really possesses talents."

"That is well planned," said Pe.

After spending a little more time together, they separated, and Gou despatched two notes, inviting Yang and his son to dinner the next day.

Now it so happened that Yang, who heard all

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from Liaoteming, concluded that Pe was quite favourably disposed, and he even had thoughts of sending a friend to him to make overtures of marriage at once. When he saw Gou's invitation, he was transported with joy. "Why," said he, "if Pe was not well pleased with what Liao expressed, what motive could Gou have in inviting me and my son to dinner? I see the match will take place, the affair is in an excellent train; all that I am sorry for is, that my son, having really no talent, may by some unlucky expression or other shew the cloven foot. I should like very much to find some excuse for keeping him away; but I fear that Pe would thence entertain some suspicions. No," said he, after a pause, "nothing shall hinder my son from coming; his appearance is prepossessing, he has taken his license, and I presume that they will not ask him to undergo an examination at the table." Yang finally sent word that he and his son would accept the invitation.

When the servant was gone with the answer, Yang called his son and gave him certain instructions. "It is of importance," said he, "that you should demean yourself, where we are going, with the greatest modesty and humility: speak but little; and should you be called on to compose verses, simply to say in answer, 'in the presence of my father, how should I presume to take such a liberty?'"

Yang Fang promised obedience. This young man was adorned by nature with the best temper; but he was heavy and excessively stupid. He had obtained, no matter by what means, the degree of

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licentiate; but if he had been asked to call to mind any part of the theme which he had furnished on the occasion, he would have been at a loss to recover a single word.

At noon, on the day appointed, Gou sent a servant to remind Yang of the invitation. The latter, accompanied by his son, set out immediately on horseback. Pe had arrived some time. As soon as Yang and his son were announced, Gou went eagerly to meet them, and led the way to his apartment. Pe and Yang saluted each other first. The latter wished to yield the place of honour to the former, but Pe refused. "I am come here," said he, "only to have the pleasure of your company; I am in my relation's house, and it is right that I should be at your command."

Yang was thus under the necessity of taking the place of honour; and after Gou had made him the reverence, it was Yang Fang's duty to come and salute Pe. Pe wished to give him also the superior place; but Yang Fang refused, saying, "in presence of my father, how should I presume to take such a liberty?" Yang endeavoured to draw Pe to his left, and said to him, "No, seigneur, this must not be; young men should take their places as they ought." Pe, not being able to take a more humble place, seated himself in that which was assigned to him, and the compliments being over, everybody took his place. Yang occupied the first place on the eastern side, Pe the first to the west, Yang Fang opposite, and Gou on Pe's side, in a chair which he drew near the company. Tea was then brought. Yang, addressing Gou,

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said, "I was quite in arrear with you: to what am I indebted for the favour which you have done me?"

"Since your son," said Gou, "has arrived in town, I have not had the honour of his spending any time with me. The meeting of this day is in honour of him, and not of your lordship."

"Ought young men to receive such favours?" said Yang. "My son was so absorbed in his studies to-day, that he wished not to come. I said—When a father asks you, why should you refuse his invitation? Besides, you will see a highly-gifted person, from whose conversation you will learn more in one day, than from all you can study in ten years. This decided him, and he came."

"If it be thus," said Pe, "that your son employs his time, he possesses a rare degree of industry."

"He has been exactly the same from his infancy," said Yang: "his mother was always fearful that he would waste himself away, and strove to make him take exercise; but he would not listen to her; several offers of marriage have been made to him, but he refused them all. He spends his days in perusing a certain number of books, and I scarcely see him. I admonish him, I tell him that books are not to be pored over in that manner; but all to no purpose—he will have his way."

"So much merit," said Gou, "and so decided a preference for solitude and study, indicate a very superior mind."

In the meantime the dinner was served by the servants. Gou rose and invited his guests to take their places. The latter seated themselves at table

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precisely in the order they had already observed. They sat it out until night.

Both Pe and Gou attentively watched the deportment, and even the most trivial actions, of Yang Fang. They saw, however, that he never once opened his lips, and that when a question was put to him, his father answered in his stead; they were therefore a long time in doubt what to think of him.

At length Gou proposed to Yang one of those small plays which consist in putting a particular word in some sentence.

Yang, after some hesitation, agreed to choose the word. "We have," said he, "been by no means sparing of the wine hitherto: let us take the word 'red,' and each time that any of the company puts it in a sentence, let him take a cup."

"That is very easy indeed," said Gou: "lay down some more difficult condition than this."

"The word being given," said Pe, "we cannot alter it; only let it be observed that each sentence shall have an intelligible application."

"Agreed," said Yang.

As he had proposed the play, it was his duty to put the word red in a sentence once, and drink one cup. The servants handed the wine to him. "It is my first turn; here it is—'The frost-smitten leaves are more *red* than the flowers of the second moon.'"

They were then in that stage of the eleventh moon *, when the clouds are fleecy, and the leaves of the trees begin to assume a red tinge. Yang

* About the 1st of October.

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attempted naturally to describe the current season. He then passed the cup to Pe, who wished to decline it in favour of Yang Fang; but the latter decidedly refused it. Pe, on account of being second, had to put the word twice, in different sentences. He drank his cup, and uttered the first. "The bent-grass is distinguished by its *red* colour above the ten thousand blades of the meadow." By this verse he enigmatically alluded to the beauty of his daughter Houngiu. He then took off the second cup, and pronounced the second verse. "*Red* and purple never adorn vulgar garments." And in this verse he wished allegorically to indicate that his daughter was not to be sued by common-place pretenders. He then presented the cup, to Yang Fang, who seemed disposed to pass it to Gou.

"What!" said the latter, "do you want that the host should play the guest in his own house?"

Yang Fang made a thousand apologies. "In the presence of my father, how should I presume to take such a liberty?" said he.

"What say you?" asked Gou. "Nay, quite the contrary; for you ought to obey the rule he has laid down."

"Surely, among friends," said Pe, "one ought not to be so reserved."

Yang, seeing that his son could not escape, immediately interfered. "Come," said he, "you can't do better than obey."

Yang Fang, no longer without an excuse, rose to acquit himself of the task. It was very unlucky for him that, being third in order, he was under the necessity of putting the word in a sentence three

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times. Having taken the cup, he said—" The *red* flower of the almond tree can be distinguished out of ten thousand."

" Not very applicable this," thought Pe: " but he perhaps wishes to point out his extreme youth, and his views of advancement, by this allusion; if this be the meaning, it is tolerable enough."

Now came the second cup. Yang Fang had almost emptied it, and was rubbing his head as if to squeeze out some thought. He pretended he had not finished his cup; and after some time an idea came to his relief. " The imperial river wafts *red* leaves *," he exclaimed.

His father saw nothing ingenious in the quotation; but not wishing to condemn it, and unable to remain passive, he affected to smile. Pe was likewise silent, for it occurred to him that Yang Fang might be alluding to his pretensions to an alliance. This notion prevented Pe from observing the emptiness of the young man, who had in fact let fall the sentence by the merest chance.

But there was still a third turn; and Yang Fang, who had really exhausted his whole stock, begged to be excused, on the score that he could not drink another drop. But Gou, who had an object in it, persisted in pressing him. Pe, who sat next him,

* It will be seen that Pe gave Yang Fang credit for meaning something by this, although in fact there was no ground for the compliment. A princess, mentioned in Chinese history, flung upon the waves of a canal, in the interior of the palace, a red leaf, on which some verses had been written, " in order," said she, " that my wishes may not be long unknown." The person to whom she was afterwards married proved to be the fortunate finder of the leaf; and she concluded some verses on the subject by saying that the leaf had been the agreeable negotiator of her marriage.

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likewise exhorted and encouraged him to go on. Yang Fang, seeing there was no getting over it, took the cup, and began to con over the verses of all the poets he had read. The father was extremely mortified at seeing the embarrassment of Yang Fang; he would not on any account venture to suggest a passage from any book of verses, or from any poet of the dynasty of Thang, well knowing that his son would never remember it. The only expedient, therefore, to which he could have recourse on the occasion was to introduce, as it were inadvertently, into his conversation, a line from some obscure poet. Affecting then to resume the discourse, he began thus,—"Under existing circumstances, and surrounded as the emperor is with business, we magistrates, who are obliged to appear every day at court, have scarcely time to admire

'The moon o'ercast, the splendour of the stars;'

and yet nothing is pleasanter than to come and enjoy one's ease thus, as if in a shady grove—it is the most agreeable of all recreations."

Yang's object in quoting this line about the o'ercast moon was to recall to his son's mind a poetical composition which commenced with this verse; and he kept his eyes fixed on the young man significantly, whilst he uttered the words, in order, if possible, to make him comprehend his purpose. Pe and Gou, who could not make out Yang's immediate aim, answered with a suppressed laugh, "Yes, you are perfectly right."

But Yang Fang, who was struck with the remarkable expression of his father's countenance,

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soon discovered that he wanted to give him a hint; accordingly, during Yang's discourse, the son suddenly recovered his recollection, and, quite overjoyed, emptied his cup, and exclaimed:—"*Red* clouds are like the flowers which the king of heasows in handfuls*."

Pe, satisfied so far, could not help saying that it was very well; and Yang Fang, quite filled with joy to be praised by Pe, handed the cup eagerly to Gou, who, being the last in order, had only one cup to drink: he took it and said:—"This liquor, which runs through our veins, is a *red jasper* become fluid."

Everybody had now gone through his turn. Gou filled a large cup which he presented to Yang, to thank him for the word which he had proposed. Yang took and drank it, and turning towards his son, said "Poetry is a sublime art, which learned men cannot hold in too high estimation; but it often turns out to be an obstacle to advancement. After a man has made a character for himself by his services, and when he has succeeded in placing his fame on a secure foundation, then he may allow himself indulgence in these amusements; but young men like you should devote themselves to studies of a serious kind; and it is not because your ancestors, men of illustrious name, excelled in this art, as they did in everything else, that you are to suppose that it is in your power to maintain

* Here again Yang Fang made a most fortunate allusion, although he was perfectly unconscious of it. The king of heaven is called "the emperor of Jasper," and the latter word joined to *red* forms an expression which is a paraphrase of the name of Pe's daughter; Houngiu, in Chinese, signifying "red jasper."

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the succession of men of their rank. Once let this notion get possession of the head, and it is impossible for you to derive any benefit from your studies. It is the rage of a number of young men, and it is of the first consequence to warn you against it; and now, seigneur Pe, what is your opinion?"

"Your excellent instructions," said Pe, "are a mirror for young men; but your son is blessed by heaven with qualities of so solid a kind, that I am sure it will not be necessary for you to place any restraint on his inclinations."

Gou, perceiving that Yang had finished his cup, wanted to have another round of the play, and was going to propose it to Yang Fang, when the father rose in great apprehension. "It would be seigneur Pe's turn now," said he; "but really we have been a long time at the table, and for my part I require a little respite."

Pe also stood up. "Let us take a turn on the floor," said he; "and when they have cleared the table, we can resume our seats."

Gou did not wish to press his company, so he invited them to walk in a little pavilion, the walls of which were decorated with inscriptions, and the staircase ornamented with flowers. It was a remote, silent spot, where Gou was wont to come to court repose.

When they had gained the pavilion, the guests employed themselves for some time in contemplating the objects around them. Yang and Pe went down to the foot of the stairs, while Gou and Yang Fang remained standing together at one of

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the sides of the pavilion. The latter accidentally raised his head, and saw over the door an inscription in three characters, FE KOU HIAN, *pavilion of inward satisfaction.* He read it to himself, and kept his eyes some time fixed in that direction. Gou observed him, and said, "These three characters are the work of Ouiupi; the traces are bold and firm. It appears that he was an excellent caligrapher."

Yang Fang, affecting to understand the characters, said, "Yes, an excellent caligrapher. The word '*pavilion*' is, however, common-place enough; but the two characters, FE KAO, are divinely written." Now, in uttering the last word, he gave to it the vulgar pronunciation, not appearing to be acquainted with the fact, that the inscription was taken from a passage in a book of verses, where, on account of the rhyme, it was absolutely necessary to pronounce it KOU and not KAO *.

* It appears to be part of the genius of the Chinese language, to admit of great sacrifices for the sake of euphony or of rhyme. The ignorance of Yang Fang on this occasion, is as bad as that of an under-graduate would be, who, if called on to read a quotation from Horace or Virgil, should in the first place be unable to tell the author, and next should perpetrate a false quantity. The words of the above inscription, which indicate that the owner enjoys in that place inward happiness, are taken from an ode in the first book of verses, of which the following is a translation:—

"Happy the wise man who, in the valley where he lives retired, delights in the sound of the cymbal. Alone on his couch, and awake, he exclaims, 'Never, I swear it, shall I forget the happiness which I enjoy.'

"Happy the wise man who, behind the mountain, delights in the sound of the cymbal. Alone on his couch, and awake, he exclaims, 'Never, I swear, shall my wishes exceed my possessions.'

"Happy

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This simple word served at once to open Gou's eyes, and he contented himself with answering generally, "Yes, you are right."

Pe and Yang now returned; and after some conversation, Gou induced his guests to resume their seats at the table, and proposed a repetition of the small play. Yang Fang begged to give up his turn to Pe. Pe wished that it should remain with Yang Fang, and neither would yield.

The father, fearful of some unlucky result if the play proceeded, availed himself of the contentions now going on. "Well, since your lordship," addressing Pe, "declines to lead him, do you expect that my son shall be so indiscreet as to do it? Is it not better that we should sit and converse together? But as you like."

"Your advice is very good," said Pe; "but you know we must have something to stimulate us to drink!"

"At the board, with friends around, who is it that will not get drunk?" exclaimed Yang.

Gou then ordered a large cup for each of his guests, and the party began to drink and argue until they mutually perceived the first symptoms of intoxication. Yang now dreaded that Pe, being excited, would propose making verses. He therefore pretended to be further gone than he really was, and wanted, at last, to get up and go away with his son.

"Happy the wise man who, on the hill where he has his home, delights in the sound of the cymbal. Alone on his couch, and awake, he rests, and swears that the vulgar shall never know the source of his joys."

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Let us now leave Yang and his son, who took their leave and departed.

Gou still detained Pe, as he was impatient to tell him the anecdote about the inscription. "I had myself observed," said Pe, when he heard it, "the embarrassment under which he laboured to get over the three cups; but a mistake like this at once exposes his ignorance. Well then, in my opinion, the astrologer is not entitled to the least credit."

"What!" said Gou, "and have you put any faith in the words of this conjurer?—I'll pledge my life that it is old Yang, who, taken with my niece's composition the other day, has sent this man to you with these stories."

"Very likely," said Pe, shaking his head; "and, but for this day's experience, it is not unlikely that I should have fallen into the net."

After some further conversation on the same subject, the brothers-in-law separated.

Meanwhile it was Yang's belief that his son had not betrayed any symptoms of ignorance on this occasion. "Well then," said he joyfully, "the alliance is likely to take place; but who shall be the negotiator? That's an essential point." Then, after a pause, "This old man is positive and self-willed. If I send any person of rank to him, he will say that I only want to shew off my high acquaintances.—No; I shall send him Sse Fanghoei; they have been fellow students; they are friends; and Pe can have no objection."

His resolution being taken, Yang was proceeding to pay a visit to Sse, when a servant went to call

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him back, telling him that an express had arrived the evening before, summoning him to attend a meeting of the chamber of inspectors-general, to be held that day, and that he would be just in time. "True," said he, "I forgot;" but he quickly recollected that Sse would be at this meeting.

He repaired on horseback to the chamber, and found that several of the inspectors had already arrived, amongst whom he was happy to recognise Sse. After the usual reverences, the question for deliberation was made known to the assembly. The reigning emperor desired to despatch to his brother, who was in captivity in Tartary, some officer to bear a complimentary message, and also to carry him some winter clothes. The ministry of the personal had been delaying for a long time to return any nomination to his majesty; and hence the emperor thought fit to issue an imperial proclamation, commanding the presidents of the supreme courts, and of the judicial and executive bodies, to assemble together and deliberate on the subject. The chamber of the inspectors-general in particular was instructed to take the case into consideration, and carry up their resolution to the general assembly.

As soon as the subject was proposed for discussion, the inspectors-general, each of course being influenced by personal motives, abstained from making any proposition. They went in a body to the general assembly, and making a profound salutation, set forth, that since the imperial message, which they were considering, had required that the envoy proceeding to the captive emperor should

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repair to the Tartarian camp, it was absolutely necessary that he should be a person of acknowledged talent and tried prudence; that he should be possessed of courage; in a word, that he should be a consummate character. They further said, there was reason to apprehend that, in the short interval they had for deliberation, they were liable to make an unsatisfactory choice; and that it was expedient for them, one and all, to return to their homes, and there meditate seriously on the matter, with a view of ultimately proposing to the chamber some person deserving their confidence, whereby their president would be completely enlightened. The whole assembly, assenting to the proposal, separated.

As soon as the adjournment took place, Yang mounted his horse, and quickening his pace, soon came up with Sse. "I have a little request to make of you," said he: "I want to go with you to your house."

"What can it be? Why not make it at once?"

"If it were respecting any other matter, we could converse upon it as we go along; but it is of such a nature as requires that I should accompany you home. It is the most convenient thing."

They accordingly rode forward, and when they arrived at Sse's house, they were ushered into a parlour.

"Now," said Sse, "what is it you wish to communicate?"

"Nothing less than a project of marriage for my son; and I want you to interfere in it."

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"Why, your son was enrolled last autumn on the list of licentiates. How is it that he is not yet married?"

"My son is now twenty; my colleagues have been pressing me with proposals of marriage for him; but he is positively resolved to marry no one but a young lady of virtue and talent, and this is the reason why he is not yet married. When I was at dinner the other day with your lordship at Pe's, I discovered that his daughter was a young lady of great merit and address, from the verses which she composed in the place of her father. On my return, I informed my son of what had happened; and he was at once smitten with the desire of being allied to so distinguished a person. But then I reflected that Pe was a man of a proud, decisive character; and I fear, if I send any other person, that he would not listen to their proposals. Amongst all my fellow students, there is nobody but yourself who is intimate with him; besides, I am anxious to be honoured, I confess, with some testimony of your friendship for me; and I therefore make bold to request your interference. Will you be good enough to undertake the trouble?"

"In negotiating so very excellent a marriage for your son, I should be most happy to offer you my services; but you are aware how inflexible Pe is. Yet if he is disposed to the affair, surely it can matter little whom you send to speak to him; but if he is not, it will not be in my power, though I can boast of being his friend, to incline him to the match. The grand point in this matter certainly is, the youth and distinguished merit of your son. It

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is on that score you can do most with him; I do not anticipate an unfavourable reception. It is too late in the day to visit him now; but to-morrow morning I shall not fail to comply with your desire; and whether I find him disposed one way or the other, I shall still take care to call and let you know."

Yang said he was extremely obliged to his friend, and departed with the usual salutations.

They who do not know the result of Sse's interview, will learn it in the following chapter.

CHAPTER III.

PE, IN THE COURSE OF A DANGEROUS JOURNEY, MEETS WITH A PROTECTOR FOR HIS DAUGHTER.

"How delightful it is, in the vicissitudes of life, to have the support of a relation or friend! Virtue is ever, at last, its own reward. Good and evil are not distributed capriciously by chance. The best policy in this world is, never to do a dishonest act."

Sse did not hide from himself the difficulties of the commission which he had undertaken; but as he had now gone too far to recede, he went early the next morning to visit Pe, before he was up. Sse was conducted into the library, where Pe, after adjusting his person in the most careful manner, very soon joined him.

"What can it be that brings the seigneur out so early this morning?" was the first question of Pe.

"Why, a commission which I have got, and an

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application I have to make; that I think would induce anybody to be out early," said Sse.

"From whom have you received the commission, and to whom is the application to be made?" inquired Pe.

"Yang is the person that gave me the commission, and the application I have to make is to yourself."

Pe instantly perceived his object. "Now, seigneur," said he, "since it is Yang's commission, and as it is addressed to me, I have only to say, that upon any subject in the world, except marriage, I shall be happy to hear you."

Sse burst out laughing, and exclaimed, "You are absolutely as cunning as a spirit; you have just hit it. Old Yang came yesterday to the council to look for me, and after the sitting he accompanied me home to state the matter to me. He seems to entertain the highest opinion of your daughter's talents, from the verses which we saw the other night. He has been so struck with them that he longs to have the affair concluded, and has placed it in my hands. I have been thinking that the proposition would not be acceptable to you; but he pressed me so much that it was difficult for me to refuse him point blank, and I could not avoid having this interview with you. You may consent or not: I shall take your decision, whatever it is, and never trouble you on the subject again."

"I was very near having been his dupe in this affair," said Pe.

"How is that?" asked Sse.

Pe then recounted the story of the astrologer's visit, the dinner at Gou's, and the anecdote about

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the inscription. "Had my brother-in-law and I," he continued, "been less on the alert, how would it have been possible for us to avoid the net?"

"I am intimately acquainted with the whole history of his son," said Sse. "It was Louwenming, the under-governor of Kinkhi, that received this young man into the second section at the examination for poetry. Yang, on some former occasion, acted the friend of this man when he was near being denounced by the examiner-general of Kiangsi; and to repay the obligation, he shewed favour to Yang's son in his examination; and very lately old Yang wanted to get promotion for this Lou. You see very well that his son has no kind of merit. Why should he think of uniting himself with your daughter?"

"Say no more about it; do you return, and simply tell him that I do not accept his proposal."

"It is just what I expected," said Sse. After having breakfasted with Pe, he left him, and proceeded straight to the house of Yang.

He was met by old Yang, who hastily exclaimed, "A thousand thanks for the trouble you have been taking; I do not know how I can shew my gratitude to you."

"My trouble has been fruitless," observed Sse; "but I trust you will not take it amiss."

"What! has Pe refused my proposal?" inquired Yang.

"I went to-day to see seigneur Pe, and communicated to him the commission with which you intrusted me; he answered me that he was perfectly disposed to meet your wishes, but that the

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eminent talents of your son, and the inferior degree of merit of his daughter, would make this a disproportionate sort of alliance. He observed, in the next place, that being without a son, he and his daughter had been a long time accustomed to each other's society; and that your native province being so very remote, he would find it very difficult to bear a separation from her; in fine, that his daughter was rather young, and he would prefer postponing her marriage for awhile. Such were the grounds on which he declined accepting your proposal."

"All mere pretexts," said Yang; "but I can see into his mind: he looks upon my small fortune, and the inferiority of my office, with contempt. My family appears to be unworthy of an alliance with his;—but he has declined the proposal: very well, let us say no more about it. My son is a person of ordinary merit only, but he shall not want a wife on that account. Pe's daughter is sixteen, not so young neither. Kiangsi is a very remote province; but does he meditate keeping his daughter at home all her life? However, I know the sort of person he wishes to give her to; some poet, no doubt."

"Do not be angry," said Sse. "Pe's attachment to his daughter is the cause of his refusal; perhaps something of the failure is to be imputed to my want of address and power of persuasion. Perhaps he will accede when too late; who knows but he will revise his determination before long? Now, as you proposed for a virtuous and accomplished girl for your son, there is no reason why you

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should not, after an interval, make use of some other mediator."

"Why, since the proposal of which you have been the bearer has not been listened to, whom else can I employ? Let there be an end of it; I have made the first advance; he has refused; but the affairs of this world are subject to change; who knows but a time will arrive when it is he that will solicit me? All I am sorry for is, sir, that you should have so much trouble and inconvenience."

Sse observed that Yang was very much hurt. 'My efforts," said he, "have been unavailing; the obstinacy of this old man has led him away; and when I saw that nothing was to be done, I was obliged to leave him; but another opportunity may be easily had of returning to the charge."

"I have put you to a great deal of trouble," said Yang, "and I thank you very much."

Sse then took his leave and departed, leaving Yang to his meditations.

"The old wretch!" thought the latter. "If he had not intended to accept my proposal, what was the use of having my son and myself invited, some days ago, to Gou's? He wanted, I see, just to make fools of us. He stands upon his great knowledge, and shews his arrogance before me. I did not want to embroil myself with him, because he was my fellow student. Even on the very day when we dined with him, and were making verses on the queen marguerites, how often did he shew his temper! I bore patiently with him; and now I am the first to broach the project of an alliance with him. I do not know that I disgrace him so much by the

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offer. What can be his motive? But only let me have an opportunity of paying him back his trick, and then he shall know my resentment. Let me see."—(After a pause)—"I have it. The other day, when I mentioned the difficulty there was to get a proper person who would undertake the delicate mission to the captive emperor, Pe answered me scornfully, that he could not have the heart of a man who would find any such difficulty in the task. Now the reigning emperor has ordered our chamber to take the matter into consideration, and propose some one. I have not thought of any person yet; what is to prevent me from nominating Pe? Surely he that has the heart of a man will have no objection to make a tour into Tartary; then, as he has got no son, we shall see who it is that is to be intrusted with the guardianship of this young and amiable daughter. It is not improbable that he will then beg of me to renew my proposal, but it will be too late."

Having come to this resolution, Yang drew up a note, in which he represented that the master of the ceremonies, Pe Hiouan, was an officer to whom age had brought experience; that he was a man of distinguished talent and tried courage; that if he were selected to undertake the mission to the captive emperor, he would do honour to the trust; and finally, it was requested, if not better advised, that the emperor would be so good as to confer the appointment upon him. Yang deposited, secretly, this note in the chamber of inspectors; and as very great difficulty was felt in discovering a proper person hitherto, the proposition contained in this note was received with the greatest satisfaction.

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It so happened that the six directors-general were going to present to the general assembly the envoy of the state of Lichi. The assembly received the two presentations, and hastened to lay them before the sovereign for his approbation.

Next day an imperial decree had invested the two magistrates so nominated with the rank of first and second envoy extraordinary to the captive emperor, to inquire after his health, and to make a treaty of peace with the Tartars. They were directed to proceed in five days; and the promotions and rewards which were due to their merits, were postponed until their return.

A copy of the decree was despatched to Pe. As soon as he read it, he exclaimed, " Who can it be that has brought me into so dangerous a commission? It can be nobody else," he said, after a pause, " than Yang; that old knave who, on account of my refusal the other day, is become my enemy. However, though it is out of malice that I am involved in so dangerous a matter, still I am to remember that at this very hour the emperor is a captive amongst a set of barbarians. I, who am his liege subject, should not hesitate surely to go and inquire about his health; if I can avail myself of the occasion to enter into a treaty of peace, set the emperor at liberty, and, in short, perform the obligations of a faithful subject, I shall not then have been altogether useless to my country. But then this journey into Tartary is a sort of undertaking, the consequences of which cannot be immediately seen: the term of my absence is quite uncertain; and my poor Houngiu, how can she remain alone? This knavish old Yang has well presumed

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to injure me in this way; for, when I am gone, he will take care to raise the tempest and trouble the waves; and then nothing will be able to hinder him from getting her into his accursed hands."

At this moment Sse was announced, and Pe eagerly went to meet him. "Is it possible," exclaimed Sse, as soon as the first salutations were over, "is it possible, that because the other day you declined his proposal of marriage, he could have gone, without my privity, to give in your name to the chamber? The decree was issued this morning; and the very moment I saw it, I went to him; but he pretended not to be at home. As I could do nothing in that quarter, I prevailed on some of my colleagues to come with me to the house of seigneur Wang, and related to him the whole affair of the proposal and your refusing, and the trick which Yang had just played you. Wang appeared not a little astonished at the details, but said that as the decree was issued, there was no probability of recalling it, unless you could send in a petition pleading illness; in that case the chamber would sit again and choose some other person. There was no other way, he said, of getting out of the perplexity. This is what brings me now; you must take a speedy step; there is no time to lose."

"I am very much obliged to you for your kindness; but although it was old Yang that involved me in this dangerous business, the decree having been issued, the appointment is altogether the emperor's business. How can any man in office refuse a commission that is imposed upon him? If I pretended illness now, I should not only be guilty

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of an act inconsistent with my duty and my character, but I should draw upon me even the ridicule of old Yang."

"There is sense and reason in what you say; but then you are at a time of life when you will scarcely be able to endure the severity of a savage climate, and the fatigues of so long a journey beyond the boundaries of the empire."

"The emperor is in the midst of danger, and his only place of shelter a wretched hut; should the humblest of his subjects, then, presume to talk of fatigue?"

Sse was affected by these expressions. "Your heart," said he, "is all devotion and fidelity; it is of the very essence of the genii. But as to old Yang, unworthy brute as he is, he is not the only person to blame in this business: we who have contemplated you as a man possessing only the heart of a vulgar being; yes, we deserve to share the indignation which Yang's conduct inspires. An excellent friend is maliciously forced upon a dangerous journey. We are afflicted at it, but know not how to prevent it. What's to be done! What's to be done!"

Pe, with no less emotion, answered, "You shew all the tenderness of a relation, and I must be insensible as a tree or weed not to be affected by your friendship; but after having devoted a life to the study of what I ought to do, can I turn to the right or the left, and be wanting to myself? If I were to allow the storm to depress me, and to regulate my feelings of loyalty by a sense of danger in exercising it, in what respect should I be above Yang?"

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"Your sentiments are noble, and your resolution is worthy of you. How few of us are like you! But the good man is always under the protection of heaven; do not be cast down—you will overcome the danger. I own I have not this elevated character, but I feel that it becomes me to avoid the company of men so depraved; besides, the capital is too dangerous a place of residence; and when you shall have departed, it will be my care to obtain employment in some distant quarter."

"Whatever commission you solicit, it will be the same elsewhere as it is here," said Pe; and he requested Sse to go into the library with him; but the latter declined.

"No, not at this moment, when you have so little time to lose." He immediately rose and took his leave.

Pe now went to an inner apartment, in order to communicate these events to his daughter. As soon as Houngiu heard what had happened, she was filled with grief; her countenance assumed the paleness of death, and, bursting into tears, she said, "Can it be; can it be? Can I be the cause of all this misery to my father? I have heard that the poor prisoners made captive in the deserts of Tartary, undergo there the severest cold, and that they are still worse off when the snow and sleet block up the roads. A man in the prime of life could scarcely endure such a journey; but my father, at your age, how is it possible for you to undertake it? I see how it is: Yang, that wicked old man, because this marriage was declined, has involved you in this dreadful business; but, dear father, why cannot you petition the emperor, lay open the whole history

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of this business, feign illness, and send in your resignation ? His majesty will perhaps have compassion on you."

" Sse has been just here and proposed the very same thing ; he told the whole at court. He wanted me to write a petition and affect illness, and told me that he would undertake to free me ; but I reflected that on this event now depends my whole character. If I feign illness, no doubt those in the secret will be aware that it is Yang's revenge that has brought me into the predicament ; but those who do not know the circumstances will suppose that it is an evasion. When I was persecuted by Wangtchin, I threw up my employment and retired into solitude, and on that account I won general respect, and, finally, received my present office. I re-engaged in public affairs ; and at the moment when dangers are impending over the state, and when there is a necessity for sending ambassadors out of the country, am I to turn coward and give in my resignation ? Am I to play the double-faced knave, or shew a tiger's head and a serpent's tail ? Am I to be the sport of eternal ridicule ? What ! is it possible I could act so ?"

His daughter wiped away her tears. " Your sentiments are right," said she : " my father and I do not think that to pursue such a course would become a virtuous magistrate ; but at the same time I am your daughter, and I know that this expedition to the northern frontier will expose you in your old age to the severity of a barbarous climate ; that your life will be endangered amongst a savage race, accustomed like the wolves to a life of violence and murder. So little regard have they

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for the middle empire *, that they can scarcely tell if the emperor be living or dead; how then will they behave to an humble envoy? Oh, my dear father, you have fallen into the tiger's mouth—what a dreadful reflection"

"Yesian is barbarous in nothing but the name: although of Tartary, he is acquainted with the laws of justice and of courtesy. He knows that the empire is governed by a regent, and more than once has he shewn regret for the injury he has done us; besides this, the emperor has so impressed them with the greatness of his character, that the Tartars would not be inclined to add to the horror of his captivity. There has just arrived from the north an envoy to negotiate a peace, and apparently with sincere intentions of establishing it. I am the ambassador sent to carry back the answer to their propositions. The same rules are observed amongst them which are in force with us, and they will not be certainly disposed to fix on this occasion to perpetrate fresh excesses. But my poor Houngiu, will you remain behind me alone, at your age, at the mercy of an old knave like Yang? His scheme is not dropt; new plots will be got up; how can I have an easy mind?"

"You are one of the first magistrates of the empire, father; you are sent on an embassy by your sovereign; your family being here, your doors all closed, what harm can he effect? Let him do his worst."

"The heart of a wicked man is like a demon, or

* The Chinese empire.

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the Ju*; you cannot judge of it according to common notions; so that if you remain here, I can never be free from anxiety. Better for you to go back; and if you do not like the length of the road, you can stop at Chantoung with your aunt Lo. I shall then proceed with an easy mind."

"One or the other course is equally good, but in either case the road is very long; and if Yang finds out that I am gone to the south, he may wickedly and imprudently despatch some of his people after me, and no doubt raise some disturbance on the road that will have the effect of making me return, or undertake some other dangerous course. But a notion suggests itself to me; let the door of your house be shut as usual, to all appearance as if you left your family at home; whilst I can set out secretly for my uncle's. Thus all will be secure, and your Houngiu will have an opportunity of hearing constantly about her father."

Pe approved of the design; and as he was about to send a person to Gou's, with a view to carry it into effect, the doctor himself called, and was immediately shewn in. Pe requested him to enter the inner apartment, and asked Houngiu to go with him to meet her uncle.

"As I did not stir out these two days," said Gow, "I heard not one word of the affair until a few minutes ago, being at the office. I was asto-

* A species of animal (some say a preternatural one) that lives on the sea-coast. When a man approaches near enough to have his image reflected in the waves, the animal darts upon the reflection in the water, and thereby produces the death of the party.

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nished when I saw the decree. And is it possible that Yang can be this dangerous person?"

"It all proceeds from a little piece of verse," said Pe: "that is the root of the mischief; but, after all, this journey in itself is not a thing to be so much regretted; my daughter and I have just been talking together; and it is on her account alone, a weak and unprotected girl, that I feel any uneasiness."

"I should have thought that the severe climate of the country beyond the frontiers would have inspired you with apprehensions; but since your courage is equal to the task, your undertaking it will be a source of glorious recollection to all of us during the rest of our lives; and as for my niece, what have you to fear for her whilst I am here? You can set out with an easy mind. I am sure I can be confided in."

This gave Pe great pleasure. "This moment my daughter and I were conferring together, and her suggestions exactly corresponded with your offer; but I have still some apprehension from the extraordinary malice of Yang. I know that, when I am gone, he will recommence his plots; and though I confide my daughter to your care with security, yet I am afraid of involving you in some danger; but since you have shewn so much kindness, I shall forget all my fears, and set out with a mind at rest."

"Let Yang be never so badly disposed," said Gou, "yet this is the daughter of one of the principal magistrates of the empire. How could he presume then to violate the laws of society, especially when I am on the spot?"

"Now, father," said Houngiu, "that my uncle

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promises his protection, surely you can have no anxiety; you will therefore form your determination with respect to this journey."

"Knowing in whose hands I place you during my absence," said Pe, smiling, "my course will very soon be taken. If, during this expedition to the north, my person shall be in danger, it is my tongue that is the cause of it. The time fixed by the emperor for my departure, is within five days; and, willing or not, to-day or to-morrow I must depart. But go and order dinner; your uncle and I must have a cup or two together, to prepare us for a separation."

Houngiu accordingly went to see that a light repast was provided for her father and uncle. Pe made her sit near him, and after a few cups sighed heavily, and said, "How much misery is it in the power of a wretch to inflict upon a good man! Now I am happy, drinking at my ease, in the presence of my brother and my daughter; to-morrow I shall be on horseback, traversing the sandy desert, without being able to tell in what quarter of the world I am to live or die. When we think of this attentively, we must come to the conclusion that it is the wicked part of mankind that are sent to punish our offences."

"Doubtless," said Gou, "a wretch can sport with the fortunes of the best of men; but ultimate happiness is granted by heaven only to the virtuous man. This expedition to a terrible climate is certainly a calamity which you could not avoid; but then it is an opportunity by means of which the talents and virtues of a good man will be made celebrated; it will shew to the world that you are

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not one of those magistrates that have an eye to profit alone, and can change with circumstances."

"I entirely agree with what has just fallen from you," said Pe; "but it is sufficient to make me unhappy, to reflect, that in my old age, deprived of a son, and with only this poor girl, we should still be exposed to the storm. I am certainly consoled in having such a person as you are to protect her; but the mirror of jasper is not yet put in use; my daughter is not yet married; and I confess, that when I think of this, my attachment almost overcomes the heroic feelings with which I ought now to be animated."

Poor Houngiu, who was seated by the side of her parent, wept incessantly; his soothing language only increased her affliction. "Oh, my father," she cried, "it is your parental attachment to your daughter that has brought you into this miserable plight, and still your only thought is about her. It is I that deserve to suffer all the sorrows that agitate your heart; my crime ascends to heaven; would that I could die and rid you of all the miseries which I bring upon you! But, again, my death would but only increase them; and then, when you revisited this place, no more would Houngiu be at your side to attend you, and be the object of affection in your declining days. A thousand opposite thoughts rend my heart: now that my uncle takes me under his protection, I feel as if I were once more blessed with the presence of my mother. Compose yourself then; your strength will be equal to the journey; and after having worn out your life in your prince's service, you will come back to our village. But I entreat

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of you, dear father, to give yourself no more trouble about me—I am yet young enough—the season of marriage is not gone by—wherefore should you be in such a hurry? My father, if you thus afflict yourself on my account, what is to become of me?"

Whilst they were conversing, Pe repeatedly applied himself to the cup. He was very much afflicted; and his emotions became excessive, as soon as he observed the grief of his daughter. Amidst the tears which coursed down his cheeks, he said, "In the time of the dynasty of Han, Souwou was sent ambassador to the Huns; he was obliged to remain nineteen years, and by the time that he was able to return, his beard and hair were all white. Then, under the dynasty of Soung, Foupi went to Catai to treat of peace; and his detention there was so protracted, that on his return he found no trace of his family. I fear that the author of our disgrace intends to bring about some such issue as that which awaited the fortunes of these illustrious men. I can boast but of little merit; but I have devoted my life to the study of the ancients; I have, for the period of a half generation, served the emperor in quality of a magistrate; and now I leave this in obedience to his order. Why should I not imitate the conduct of these virtuous men? Why should I betray the weakness of a girl? Your father, Houngiu, abandoned solitude to come here, for no other end than that he might find an opportunity of procuring for you a suitable establishment; and little did he foresee that before his wishes would be accomplished in that respect, he would have fallen into the snares of a traitor.

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Since the moment you lost your mother, at eleven years of age, have you been for an hour, for even a minute, absent from my knees? But now that all on a sudden I must leave you, and take a long journey, my heart should be made of iron or stone, not to be melted with sorrow. To-morrow, when abroad on my journey, I shall surrender myself absolutely to the service of his majesty; and I must merge these considerations in the sense of my political obligations."

"Doubtless," observed Gou, "it is a very painful thing for father and daughter to be thus separated; but since it must be so, we cannot help it. My brother, you hold the rank of a high magistrate; my niece is skilled in letters, and knows how to uphold the dignity of her sex. In acting the part of the illustrious captive of Tsou, you may hear, perhaps, that Yang has not yet renounced his pretensions; but from the moment you intrust Houngiu to my care, from that moment she ceases to be my niece, and becomes my daughter: and if I can find a husband worthy of her, depend on my complying with your orders."

This consolatory language made such an impression on Pe, that he hastened to dry his eyes, and his features resumed their wonted serenity. "My brother," he said, "You have taken the thorn from my heart; and since you promise to procure a suitable husband for my daughter I am satisfied, and shall contentedly meet even death in the deserts of Tartary.—Then, Houngiu, to-morrow you go to your uncle's: the names of niece and uncle shall henceforth give way to the more endearing appellations

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between you of father and daughter; it is by this relation that he will be able to effect a suitable match for you."

Houngiu would have replied; but fearing that she would but add to her father's emotion, she remained silent; and it was only after some time that she allowed herself to say, " I respectfully receive the commands of my father."

The party continued at the table some time, and the evening now setting in, the servants lighted the lanterns. Gou drank some more cups, and then took his leave for the night.

Next morning, Pe had scarcely risen, when seigneur Tchang, of the ministry of the personal, was announced. Pe, remembering that the person was a counsellor of the senior class, charged with the nominations to civil employments, and that he was a countryman of Yang's, concluded that he came on some errand connected with the latter. He went out to meet the visitor, when a great many compliments and ceremonies passed between them. As soon as they were seated, the servants brought tea; after which, Tchang opened the conversation.

" Your excellency was yesterday promoted to a splendid trust, but nevertheless one which involves the necessity of making a long journey. This has been effected by the recommendations of two offices; our department having nothing to do with it."

" Being but an humble man of letters, " said Pe, " without skill or knowledge, I should have long ago asked permission to resign, by reason of my infirmities. I yesterday received the emperor's com-

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mands, not knowing who it was that recommended so very unworthy a person as myself to the confidence of his majesty."

"Do you inquire who it was that recommended you?"

"I do not know who it was."

"It was no other than your fellow student Yang-Tseuhian."

"If it were he, he must know my want of ability. Why should he carry his kindness to me so far? His friendship really overpowers me. All I fear is, that if on this occasion I disappoint the hopes which are entertained of me, it will not reflect much credit on Yang's recommendation."

"I knew nothing whatever of that; the emperor, however, has given orders to our ministry to consider the matter, and it is within my department. Yang has told me all that took place; I was aware that I could not have the honour of seeing you, except this day; and now I beg of you to inform me if you really have a desire to perform this journey, or entertain a repugnance to it, and are disposed not to go."

"How can your excellency speak thus? I am in the employment of the emperor, and if he commands me to set out, either to the north or to the south, to the east or to the west, it is his command and must be obeyed; there is therefore no wish or repugnance in the matter."

"I admire your disinterestedness, but it is the esteem I have for you that brings me here. You may open your heart to me, sir, and lay aside these unnecessary evasions."

"Then," said Pe, "I shall certainly not conceal

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my sentiments; but I ask of your excellency again to inform me what it is you mean by this allusion to any possible wish or repugnance that I can entertain upon this occasion."

" If you are inclined to the journey," answered Tchang, " we need say no more ; you will receive your letters to-morrow, and can take your departure. But in case you desire to stay at home, I am here to speak to your excellency with confidence. I now tell you that all this is the result of the refusal you have given to seigneur Yang ; it is he that has effected all ; and to use a vulgar expression, ' the hand that ties the bell, can untie it again.' But, in short, I am happy to tell you, that I am intrusted by him to arrange matters, only let your excellency once consent to this marriage : then we shall get a substitute for you, and you need not go. Besides, you must know that there is nothing in this alliance but what is perfectly unexceptionable. You and Yang have been fellow-students, you are equal in point of property, and you ought really to consider these matters attentively."

Pe laughed. " I was not aware," said he, " that my fellow student had so very long an arm."

" Although seigneur Yang holds a very high official situation," said Tchang, "still it is his very confidential intimacy with the viceroy Chi, and his friendly intercourse with Wang, one of the connexions of the imperial family, that enable him to move so many cords at court. Then Tchin and Wang take everything for granted that Yang tells them. Now, sir, remember you are here in office; you want each other's assistance,

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and it is impolitic in you to offend him; besides, it is he that makes the offer in this alliance. The match is exceedingly advantageous, and you should not be prevented from carrying it into effect."

"True," said Pe: "I am here in office; and the counsels your excellency gives me are incomparable; they are better than gold or jasper. But unfortunately, I am of an unambitious turn, and indifferent to honours. Let me keep my situation or lose it, I am not prone to solicit the patronage of powerful men. It is true that the idea of this journey originated with Yang; but ultimately the emperor caused his wish to be proclaimed on the subject: I am a magistrate in his royal service; I have received his commands, and I go. Whether or not seigneur Yang was actuated by a regard to the public interests, or by private motives, I do not trouble myself to inquire; and as to the proposed marriage, it is an honour, sir, which so humble a magistrate cannot think of accepting."

"Since your excellency esteems so little your employments, you would do well to think, at least, of avoiding the calamities that will be consequent upon this resolution of yours. To say nothing of the dangers attending a journey amidst so barbarous a people, you will find it very difficult to conclude a peace with the enemy; and even if you do succeed in that, there is still a more embarrassing task, namely, to effect the liberation of the captive emperor; but even let him return or not, you may depend on it, that the very best services you may have rendered on this occasion will, from the

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mouths of courtiers, be represented as the blackest crimes. Then again, your daughter, a young and utterly defenceless creature, must remain behind you. The leopard's glance penetrates far; how will she be able to protect herself from what may happen ?"

Pe turned pale. "There is a saying of one of the ancients," said he "to this effect—'*As long as my enemy exists, what shall become of my family ?*' Well, well—life and death, happiness and misfortune, are under the guidance of heaven, and we have only to submit to destiny. Now that I have received the order to repair to Tartary, what have I to think of beyond that ? What have I to do with the questions of services or crimes ; or what matters it, that I have a weak defenceless daughter ? Yes, they may take my head, if it please them ; but I am to be frightened by no man living."

"I only come to do you a service, as I thought," replied Tchang. "I was not aware that your determination was fixed ; I only fear that I have acted indiscreetly." He then rose and took his leave; Pe conducting him beyond the great door of the house.

Pe returned to his apartment, and gave himself up more than ever to melancholy reflections. "Yes," said he, "I see it is true that it is all a trick of that old knave Yang : and yet he sends me official persons to awe me by their authority. He pursues me sword in hand to effect this marriage. And is it possible that any one can be so perverse ? But if I were now to go and provoke an open quarrel with him, all the world would say that I have

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not courage for the journey into Tartary. I shall find time for revenge after my return; but now, without delay, let me put my daughter in safety."

He then despatched a note to Dr Gou, to apprize him of his intention to call on him. He next sought his daughter. "This old knave Yang," said he to her, "is a person of the most wonderful perversity, and it is absolutely necessary to lose no time in placing you in a state of security from him: but it is essential that no suspicion should be entertained of my leaving the house now: quick, and get ready some clothes; and this night I shall conduct you to your uncle's."

Houngiu did as she was ordered, and made the necessary preparations without delay. As soon as it was night, Pe ordered two sedans to be brought in the most secret manner possible; and having placed his daughter in one, and taking the other himself, they proceeded in this manner to Gou's residence.

Gou had already caused a trusty person to be on the watch against their arrival, in order to let them in by the back entrance. Pe now desired his daughter to make four reverences to his brother-in-law; and having performed his salutations in the same manner himself, he said to his host—"I now place in your hands the most precious possession I have in this world."

"Fear nothing, my brother," said Gou: "I shall prove myself worthy of the trust."

Houngiu's heart was ready to break, but she concealed her tears, and held down her head in silence. Gou proposed to keep Pe to supper, but the latter excused himself.

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"I dare not even sit down," said he, "lest any person should call to know if I am here. Now, Houngiu," said he, "your father is about to leave you, and heaven only knows when we shall meet again." He was about to go, but his daughter, in a transport of sorrow, still held him to perform the four reverences. Having acquitted herself of this duty, she sobbed violently, and her tears flowed afresh. Pe wept also, nor could Gou, who was standing by, repress his emotions. At length the father and daughter tore themselves from each other without a word.

Pe, for a time after his return home, continued to give vent to his grief; but he felt consoled in having provided so well for his daughter's safety; and having taken some refreshment, he retired, and slept until morning. His first care next day was to obtain his credentials at the proper office. He then formally gave the house into the care of his servants, ordering them to keep the door fast, and enjoining them to say that their young mistress was there. He caused two intelligent attendants to accompany him outside the city. After having bid adieu to the court, and arranged his luggage, he proceeded to the post-house, and there waited for Lichi, the principal envoy, with whom he was to set out. Pe, as filling one of the nine offices of the master of the ceremonies, should properly have been invested with the title of first envoy, and Lichi, who was but a state messenger, should have the second place; but the course which Pe had adopted the evening before towards Tchang, an officer of the ministry of the personal, had given him offence; and to avenge himself, he arranged

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that Lichi should have the title of counsellor to the ministry of ceremonies, together with that of first envoy; and that Pe should have an inferior title, namely, that of counsellor to public works, with the quality of second envoy; nevertheless Pe was not much annoyed by this arrangement.

At that time it was a pretty general custom that the officers who set out on any mission should receive at their departure two sorts of parting feast—the one provided at the expense of the state, the other furnished by private individuals. Those who assembled on such an occasion, spent two days in a species of revelry, which was inseparable from those entertainments.

After this custom had been complied with, Pe and Lichi set out for the north.

Now Yang's object, from the beginning, was to embarrass Pe, so as to compel him to have recourse to his own assistance, in order to get out of the difficulty, and thus, ultimately, to force him into the alliance which had been proposed to him. He had not foreseen that the inflexible character of Pe would induce him to prefer undergoing the risks of the mission, rather than make any compromise on this point; but when he found that the affair took a different course, he began to reflect.

"Here is a disappointment," said he; "and when old Pe comes back, after the trick I have played him, we cannot see each other. It is a vulgar saying 'If you don't knock down with one blow, dont't fail to give two.' The best thing I can do is to take advantage of his absence, and to strain every nerve in order that the marriage may be effected,

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one way or another, before his return. We shall then be relations. Let his passion be never so furious, he can do nothing. Let us just see how we can bring it about?"

After a moment's deliberation, he said, "I have it. A few days ago Tchang and Sse both undertook the office of mediator. Though he refused both of them, I have only to request them to say that they have had a verbal promise from him. I shall send Yang Fang to Wangtsiouan's to choose a lucky day for the celebration of the marriage at his house; and as old Pe is not on the spot, who is there to interfere?"

When his project was thus framed, he forthwith set out privately to impart it to Tchang, who was a person of similar character with Yang. He consented to everything, and undertook himself to have an interview with Sse, with a view of prevailing on him to accede to whatever would be asked of him to do. Sse wanted neither to decline nor agree positively, and spoke rather ambiguously.

It happened at this time that the inspectorship of the province Houkoueng was vacant. Sse solicited it privately from the president of the chamber, and having succeeded, he made preparations for setting out.

As soon as Dr Gou was informed of the departure of Sse, he immediately ordered a repast outside the town for the occasion. "Seigneur Sse," said he, "how does it happen that you have been so suddenly promoted, and that you are in so great a hurry to depart?"

Sse sighed, and then said, "To any other person than yourself, I should hesitate to explain

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myself; but your excellency is no stranger, and there is no reason why I should affect concealment." He then related to him how Yang wanted to make Tchang and himself act the part of mediators in the violent proceeding which he had projected, and how he wished, by means of his son, to induce Wangt-siouan to get the court on his side. "You know very well that I did not wish to serve him in this matter; but Pe is gone, and who is it now that would dare to confess himself the opponent of Yang? This is the motive that has led me to seek this mission. I had no other means of getting rid of his persecution."

"What," said Gou; "and are things come to this pass?"

But here several persons came up to accompany the travellers. Sse could not drink more than four or five cups, when he rose and set off.

In the mean time Gou returned home full of unpleasant reflections. "Since this old knave Yang is capable of such wicked conduct," said he to himself, "and as he has so many powerful friends at court, he need only ask an authority from the emperor to make the minutest search. My niece is at present in my house, and I do not fear him; but it will be necessary to oppose him; and after all the injunctions I have received from Pe Thaihiouan, if I neglect the most trivial precaution, repentance will be of little use to me. Sse's course is by far the safest. I can do nothing better than obtain leave to-morrow morning to set off before any mischief can be done."

And he accordingly made his application next day to the college of doctors at the academy, which,

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fortunately, is never very particular; and as, at this very time, their literary labours were not very considerable, Gou found it easy to obtain their permission to depart. He next procured a passport; and taking with him some attendants, he chose a lucky day, and sent his household outside the city.

Gou originally brought to the capital with him only one female of the second rank. On the present occasion she accompanied Houngiu, the one under the character of his wife, the other as his daughter. The servants did not exceed ten persons, men and women. He himself left the city at an early hour, without any one being aware of his departure.

The further adventures of Dr Gou, the academician, may be seen in the following chapter.

CHAPTER IV.

DOCTOR GOU DISCOVERS A POET IN A SHRUBBERY.

"Fine talents are as precious as gold. Why do we fatigue ourselves in searching everywhere for this metal? The sword of true temper is known by its brightness. The lyre is not less pleasing in the midst of dark shades."

We have just seen how Gou, in order to avoid the machinations of Yang, had secretly conducted his niece outside the capital. He flattered himself that he had thus escaped the leopard's mouth. By easy journies they safely arrived, in less than a month, at his place at Nanking.

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Gou had himself a daughter, whose name was Wouyan*. She had attained her seventeenth year, and was of course one year the senior of her cousin Houngiu. Although she had been betrothed, she had not yet left her father's house; and for the daughter of so distinguished a person, her merit was not of a superior order.

Gou, who was wholly bent on the fulfilment of his trust, began to be uneasy lest Yang should still carry on his inquiries. He proposed that Houngiu should assume the name of Woukiao†, and pass as her younger sister. All his people were, accordingly, enjoined to speak of them as the elder and the younger, and they were strictly forbidden from mentioning the name of Pe.

It was almost the middle of winter when the party arrived at Gou's. The time was spent in visits and entertainments, which were absolutely unavoidable.

The days passed by imperceptibly until the first approach of spring. Gou now began to think intently on the propriety of looking out for a husband for Woukiao (Houngiu); but his most sedulous inquiries in the city failed to bring any pleasant tidings to him on this interesting subject.

One day several magistrates from Nanking made a party together to the temple of the *Valley of Immortals*, to see the plum-trees in blossom. This was a favourite pastime of the inhabitants of Nanking. For several miles before you reached the temple, the road was planted on either side with

* *Id est*, without beauty.
† *Id est*, without attractions.

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plum-trees, some with white blossoms, others with red blossoms, and the air was impregnated with the strong perfume which they yielded. Within the temple, the close bowers were beginning to put on leaves and flowers; and every spring the walks were crowded with poets.

On the occasion just mentioned, Gou formed one of the party. They first proceeded to the interior of the temple, to admire the flowers, which were in abundance.

An old poet, named Kaokiti, had composed two pieces to celebrate the beauty of the plum-tree blossom, which are literally rendered as follows:—

"Thou ruby, worthy to be the ornament of a throne, who is he that has planted thee everywhere in the province of Nanking? Whilst the scholar betakes him to the snow-covered mountain, the damsel comes by moonlight to wander amongst these thickets. In the winter's cold, my flute is my only comfort;—in the spring, I tread on a vast carpet of scented moss. What lover would not take delight in breathing forth his song, when the east wind has betaken himself to his melancholy cave?"

The second sonnet was as follows:—

"The frost has left its moist traces on the flowers. Who will prepare a canopy to shelter their light and balmy texture? My song asks that the reign of spring may be restored. My sad soul contemplates the midnight moon as it hangs over the village. In my melancholy, I ask from the clouds a companion. In my solitude, I feel the want of some spirit to sympathize with mine. In the spring I shall betake me to the delicious landscapes of Lofeou.

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At the fall of leaves, I shall shut myself up devoted to study."

Doctor Gou, and the other magistrates of the party, spent much of the day in drinking and recreation. When the wine had made them somewhat gay, they ordered the cloth away, and leaving the table, went each in different directions, to vary their amusements. Gou stopped to read the verses which were attached to two pannels on the wall. Here might be seen pieces taken from old poets of celebrity, as well as the compositions of modern poets. Gou ran through them all, and thought that he observed in none of them any striking indication of genius; but in passing into a neighbouring gallery, he perceived on a wall a piece of verse as lightly traced as if it had been written by a flying dragon. He approached, and read as follows:—

"With his body at ease, and his mind tranquil, moderate in his wishes, the poet filled this gallery with the fruits of his fancy. The scent of the flowers delighted and betrayed away my soul. No language can impart the illusion which they have breathed over me. Their whiteness awakens a thousand vague thoughts. The faint light of the moon makes me think of marriage. This moment methinks I behold a troop of damsels before my eyes. My mistress is the blossom of the peach-tree, and her companions the branches of the willow.

"By Sse Yeoupe, of Nanking."

Gou read these verses over and over, and in a transport of admiration exclaimed, "What beautiful verses! What purity and elegance! They are in the style of Poothsankiun, and the poet of Jukhai."

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He observed that the traces of ink were not yet dry, which led him to say, "This must be some modern author, and certainly he is a man of no ordinary talent."

He impressed the name of Sse Yeoupe on his memory ; and whilst he was yet undecided what course to take, one of the community from a monastery came to offer him tea. Gou, shewing him the verses, asked him if he knew whose they were.

"There was a party of young men here just now, drinking," answered the other; "and I have no doubt they wrote them."

"And where are they gone?"

"When your party arrived to take some refreshment, fearing that the young men should be troublesome to you, I requested them to go into the chapel of Kouanyin, to continue their entertainment there."

"Are they there still?"

"I do not know."

"Then go and see; and if you find them, I request you will inform the gentleman of the name of Sse, the author of these verses, that I should be glad of a moment's conversation with him."

The priest went accordingly, but quickly returned, and told Gou that the young man had just departed, but that they might be sent after, as they could be soon overtaken.

Gou was disappointed at this intelligence. "This young man is possessed of distinguished talent," said he; "but I have not seen what is his appearance. If I were to be very quick, I might come up with him now ; but it would not be polite to send after him and ask him to return."

The day began to close, and the magistrates sat

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down to take advantage of the last moment that remained for them. They soon, however, separated, and returned to the city. Gou got into his sedan, and directed the porters to draw back the curtains, in order to enable him to enjoy the beauty of the evening, and to lose none of the scent breathed from the blossom of the trees which lined the road. He had not proceeded above one or two miles*, when he beheld, on the side of the way, in a bower formed by plum-trees, a scarlet carpet spread with wine vessels, and a party of young men, seated, enjoying the sight of flowers, and playing music. Gou, suspecting that Sse Yeoupe was amongst the party, stopped his chair; he got out, as if to admire the flowers, and, without being perceived, observed the company.

There were five or six young men in all, from twenty to thirty years of age. He saw nothing particularly pleasing in their appearance; they were just such persons as one meets with every day. There was, however, one amongst them distinguished from the rest: his cap and clothes were simple, but he was as beautiful as the jasper in a crown, and brilliant as a ruby. He seemed to have been formed of the air of the mountains and the rivers. His mind, like a glittering ornament, was worthy of his features. He had the elegant height of Weikiai, the noble bearing of Pangang, and nothing of the arrogant demeanour of a purse-proud upstart; everything about him bespoke a man of genuine merit.

"If that be Sse Yeoupe," said Gou, after having

* From a quarter to half a mile British.

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looked at him for a short time, " he is a man distinguished by intellect as he is by appearance, and therefore the best husband a father can give his daughter." He called one of his servants, in whose knowledge and address he confided. " Go," said he to him, " and find out, without being perceived, which of these gentlemen it is that bears the name of Sse Yeoupe." The servant, in compliance with his master's orders, gently approached the person who carried the wine, and having ascertained the object of his inquiry, informed his master that it was the young man in the small cap and plain robe.

Gou was delighted. " This young man is unexceptionable ; and if I can bring about his marriage with Woukiao, I flatter myself that it will not be badly performing my trust to Pe Thaihouan." He called his servant again. " I shall return first," said he: " do you remain where you are until this gentleman is on the point of retiring ; you will then follow, and find out who he is, where he resides, if his father and mother are still living with him, and if he is married or single. You will take care and get me the surest information on all these points." The servant promised to be faithful ; and Gou, entering his chair, continued his way, enjoying the perfume of the blossoms as he passed.

The next morning the servant came to give an account of the result of his inquiries. " I yesterday followed this gentleman," said he, " as soon as he retired, and found that he lived in Black Clothes Lane : I have had the minutest information about him ; he is a student of the city college, and has lost his father and mother ; he has but little fortune, and is yet unmarried ; his family is not inscribed

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on the rolls of the city of Nanking, and he has neither relation nor connexion here."

Gou's satisfaction was now complete. "Since this young man," said he to himself, "is poor and unmarried, the affair is accomplished at once. He is without relations. I have full authority from Pe; there can be no impediment to it. His exterior is good; he has a ready talent for poetry; but still we do not know in what stage of his studies he may be at present. If he addicts himself only to composing poetry and to drinking *, and if he neglects his own advancement, he can do no good. It would turn out then that he was only one of those enthusiasts who can find nothing better to do than spend their time in the solitude of the mountains: he would certainly not turn out to be the treasure which we are seeking."

He then again called his servant. "You must," said he, "go once more to the college; find out if Mr Sse is known there as a man possessed of talent, and if he has obtained any distinguished rank at the examinations."

The servant spent part of the day making those inquiries, and on his return related all he had heard to his master. "Mr Sse," said he, "entered the college in his seventeenth year; he was scarcely settled there, when he lost his mother; the three years' mourning kept him back until last season, when he attained his nineteenth year. His mourning being over, he presented himself this winter at the annual examination, at which seigneur Li presides; it was his first examination; the list has not

* Drinking and composing verses are inseparable from each other in the minds of Chinese poets.

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as yet appeared, so no one knows what place he has obtained; he is now twenty, and he is reputed to be a young man of merit."

"That's well," replied Gou; "the lists of the principal ought to have appeared by this."

"One of the proctors of the college told me they would appear in four or five days," said the servant.

"Do you go then, and make fresh inquiries; when the lists appear, you will take care and let me know what place he has obtained."

Ten days had elapsed, and Dr Gou lost sight of this affair, when his servant, who had been to the college, brought him the list: Gou opened it, and saw that the name of Sse Yeoupe was the first on the roll of the city college. This circumstance filled Gou's heart with joy. "What a happiness," said he; what a blessing that there should be amongst the young men of the day one of such pre-eminent merit! This is the one that appears destined by fate for this marriage." He immediately sent for an old woman, named Tchang, who was by profession a go-between * for making marriages; when she came, he informed her of his intentions. "I have," said he, "a daughter named Woukiao, who has just attained her seventeenth year. You must take on you the charge of bringing about her marriage."

"Will you have the goodness to tell me who is the great gentleman to whom I am to make your lordship's proposals?"

*A *go-between*, either male or female, is a distinct profession in China, and the exercise of this branch of domestic diplomacy is there honourable and lucrative.

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"He is no great gentleman," replied Gou; "but a simple student of our city college: his name is Sse; he lives in Black Clothes Lane; he has recently gained the first place at the examination."

"I have heard," replied the old dame, "that a few days ago the president Tchang had made propositions of an alliance to you, and that you did not accept them."

"I do not care much about riches or honours," said Dr Gou. "I wish to have for my son-in-law a man of talent; this young Sse is gifted with all the advantages of mind and figure, and that is my reason for giving him a preference."

"Your lordship is perfectly right," replied the old dame; "I shall be there in a moment, and settle the matter with a word; but you must allow me to go into your house and see the young lady."

"Nothing is more fair," said Gou; and he desired a young servant to conduct her into the inner apartments. Gou's wife, who observed Woukiao continually grieving about her father, had taken her into the garden at the back of the house to try and divert her thoughts. They were not of course in the apartment to which the servant conducted dame Tchang; he asked the waiting woman where the ladies were.

"The ladies," replied she, "are gone into the garden to enjoy the sight of the flowers."

The servant then led the go-between into the pavilion in the garden: the lady Gou was there with the young Woukiao, leaning from the window

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of the pavilion, contemplating the beautiful amethyst colour of the blossoms with which the peach trees were laden.

The go-between instantly made her obeisan to the ladies.

" Who are you ?" demanded the lady Gou.

" I am," replied the old woman, " a person whom your husband sent for, to treat about the marriage of this young lady."

" It is Mr Gou that sent for you ?" said the lady. " True, he told me yesterday that there was a Mr Sse, a young man of merit and good appearance, who would certainly be one day a very great man. If you will negotiate this marriage for the young lady, we shall feel much obliged to you."

" I will do all in my power to acquit myself to your's and the doctor's satisfaction," replied the old lady; and while speaking, she took care to look attentively at the young lady, and admired the great beauty with which nature had endowed her. Struck with her extraordinary charms, she exclaimed: " Can this really be the young lady ?"

" It is the very one," replied the lady Gou.

The go-between began to laugh. " I want neither to flatter nor exaggerate," said she ; " but really, amongst the great number of young ladies of distinction of this city that I have seen, I never found one so truly beautiful. What has this Mr Sse done to merit such an alliance ?"

" Many persons of quality, and magistrates, have proposed for her," replied the lady Gou ; " but my husband would not consent. One day, walking

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outside the city, he met this Mr Sse; he says he is an extraordinary young man, and wished to introduce him into his family. This is what put this marriage in his head, and you must lend us your assistance."

"When such a connexion and a lady so handsome are offered, how is it possible that any young man can hesitate?" said the go-between. "In fact, I look upon it as a settled matter."

She rose to depart, after saying these words; but the lady Gou ordered one of her women to fetch a little tea for Mrs Tchang. The latter accepted it; after which, she wished the two ladies a good day, and descended from the pavilion. She wished to go out at the front of the house, the same way as she had entered; but the servant told her that it would be too long a way to go through the front door, and that it was better to go out at the back."

"Very well," said the dame, "let us go the shortest way."

The servant conducted her along a passage, and let her out by the back door which opened on the pleasure garden. This garden was situated quite near the avenues of the city, a place little frequented, and planted with large trees. Outside the city were hills covered with verdure. The beauty of the prospect, and the tranquillity of the place, had induced Gou to build a pavilion there, where he was in the habit of spending his leisure hours.

The old go-between, having gone out by the back door, turned round her head, and saw the two ladies still in the pavilion. Though far off, she could perceive the regular features and charming figure of the young lady, who appeared like a celes-

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tial being; she could not help praising her, even in her own mind. "The lovely creature!" she exclaimed: "Can this bachelor be worthy of her?" She went on by the great street, and immediately proceeded to Black Clothes Lane. She soon found out the habitation of Sse Yeoupe: chance would have it so, that just at that moment he was conducting to the door a person who had been visiting him. This person, whose name was Liansian, was of the family of Sse Tscutcheu of Meichan, who, when Kaotsoung went into the south, came and settled on the left bank of the great river, and founded a family in the city of Nanking. At the age of thirteen years, Sse Yeoupe lost his father, Sse Hao. Notwithstanding this misfortune, the widow of Sse Hao, whose name was Tchin, an enlightened and highly gifted woman, took the greatest care of her son's education; it was her occupation from morning until night. Sse Yeoupe, on whom nature had bestowed so many outward advantages, possessing a fine countenance, and a well-proportioned figure, was not less distinguished by wit, understanding, and penetration; he entered the college at seventeen, but in a short time had the misfortune to lose his mother.

Thus Sse Yeoupe was left an orphan, isolated in the world, without any support. It was true, Sse Youan the inspector-general was his uncle; but as he was only a temporary resident in the province of Honan, they rarely had any account of each other, and at the moment we now speak of, each was ignorant of what had become of the other. By degrees Sse Yeoupe became accustomed to live in honest poverty, happy and contented with his

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humble lot, entirely given up to study and composition: he knew no want. At first he bore the name of Liangthsai (which signifies clever,) but his admiration for the genius of Lithaipe (a celebrated poet) induced him to change his sirname to Yeoupe. Following this great man's example, he composed in his leisure moments pieces of poetry which obtained for him the approbation and praises of all his fellow students. This same year, having finished his term of mourning, he attended the annual examination, which was opened by the principal of the college; and he gained the first place unexpectedly. Many came to congratulate him on his success, and it was one of these visitors he was at that moment conducting to the door.

He was just withdrawing when the go-between came up, and seeing such a fine looking young man, instantly thought it was Sse Yeoupe, and following him in, said—"Mr Sse, it's lucky that you are at home; I am just in time."

Sse Yeoupe turned round his head, and seeing the old woman, "Who are you?" said he.

"I am a messenger of joy," replied the old woman, laughing.

"Why, what other good news can you have to tell me about my examination?" asked Sse.

"Mr Sse," said she, "the brilliant success which you had at the examination, is but a poor subject of joy, and that has been already announced to you; but the news I have to tell you, is in truth a blessing from heaven, really the happiest thing in the world for you."

Sse Yeoupe began to laugh. "If it is so," said

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he, " come in, I pray you, and sit down, and tell me all about it."

The old woman followed Sse Yeoupe into his room, and sat down.

When she had taken some tea, Sse Yeoupe again questioned her. " What other subject but his examination can a poor bachelor like me have to rejoice in?"

" Mr Sse, you are in the flower of your age, and you are still single; if I offer you a rich and noble young lady, of extraordinary beauty, for your wife, will not that be a heavenly thing, and one of the happiest in this world?"

" Good woman," said Sse Yeoupe, smiling, " if I may rely on your words, it would indeed be a subject of joy to me; but is the thing really as you represent?"

" All you have to do is to thank me; I will answer for the truth of it."

" Well then, tell me to what family the young lady belongs, and what gifts nature has bestowed on her?"

" It is not one of those magistrates who formerly held high offices that I have to call your attention to; but it is a great person, no other than seigneur Gou, the member of the academy, who now holds a place at court, but is here on leave; his riches and rank are well known. Mr Sse, it would be useless for me now to go into any details; I have only to tell you that his daughter, named Woukiao, is now seventeen, and that she is so beautiful, that if in heaven there are beings like her, on earth there certainly never were such;—no, not even in

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painting is there anything to be compared to her. The only thing I fear is, that when you behold her, you will be like one bewitched."

"If it is Dr Gou's daughter, and if she is such a perfect beauty, why has he not given her to some great personage, distinguished like himself with the sash of honour? Why should he come to seek a poor bachelor like me? There must be something at the bottom of all this. I fear this young lady is not the wonderful beauty you say."

"Mr Sse, there is one thing with which you are not perhaps acquainted: the seigneur Gou has received from heaven a most singular character. All the magistrates and great people of the city have proposed for her; he refused them all. There have been several young men, either sons or nephews to the first men in the country, who have been repulsed in this manner. A few days ago, he saw, I know not where, some verses of your composition, which he said shewed great talent; he has been so much delighted with them, that he wished to send for you, to make you his son-in-law. This is a happy effect of your destiny; it was fated for you from your birth; it forms part of that happiness promised you in your pre-existent state *. Why do you doubt the young lady's beauty? Your suspicions are really ridiculous. In point of rank, there are amongst the magistrates and great people of the city many equal to Dr Gou; but as for beauty, there cannot be found either in this city, or in the whole empire, a young lady so accomplished in every respect as his

* It should be remembered that the go-between speaks as a firm believer in the metempsychosis.

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daughter. Do not, sir, suppose me capable of deceiving you ; but if you think that you are misinformed on the subject, you have only to make the necessary inquiries yourself."

Sse Yeoupe began to laugh. " My good mother," said he, " I understand you very well, yet I cannot place entire confidence in all you have said. But cannot I judge for myself? I shall then be perfectly satisfied."

" This is more of your fun, Mr Sse! How can you think that a young lady, the daughter of a magistrate of distinction, would let herself be seen by a man?"

" Well then, my good mother, if that is not possible, you may go back to her again," replied Sse Yeoupe.

" Half my life have I followed the business of a go-between, and never did I meet with anything so strange. Seigneur Gou has a daughter possessed of exquisite beauty, for whom he has refused the richest and most distinguished alliances ; he makes the first advances, gives the preference to you ; and you are the person who, when such an unexpected blessing falls from the heavens on you, make difficulties about accepting it. Now tell me candidly yourself, do not you think it is exceedingly ridiculous ?"

" I really am not disposed to make any difficulty about it ; but marriage is a great and important affair, on which subject people too often let themselves be easily deceived ; this is the reason I do not hastily give credence to what people tell me. If, my good mother, you have really any regard for me, do not be so harsh—let me only convince myself

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by one glance, that all you have been saying is really true; I shall not then confine myself to useless thanks; I shall owe to you an obligation which, while I exist, shall not be forgotten."

The old woman reflected for a moment. "Well, Mr Sse," said she at last, "you are suspicious to an excess; if I cannot procure for you an opportunity of seeing her, you will tell me that I wanted to impose on you. Well, be it so; I will do all in my power for you."

"If you will be so kind, I will be very grateful," said Sse Yeoupe."

"Behind Dr Gou's house," replied the old lady, "there is a garden, which joins the avenue on the eastern side of the city. In this garden stands a pavilion, which rises above the surrounding walls, commanding a delightful view of the city and its environs: the pavilion can be easily seen from the avenue. Now that the peach-trees are in full blossom, the lady Gou and her daughter take great pleasure in looking at them from the top of the pavilion. Since you absolutely make it a point to see this young lady secretly, you can pretend to be taking a walk under the pavilion; in going or returning, perhaps chance may favour you with a sight of her; but take the greatest care not to speak to any person whatsoever; if the seigneur Gou was to hear of such a thing, it would be impossible for me to be of the least use to you in future."

"Good mother," said Sse Yeoupe, "you render me an essential service; do you think I would dare to bring you into trouble by being guilty of such indiscretion? But while the affair is in this train,

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you must not go to seigneur Gou's; wait a day or two, then come, and I will tell you what I have been able to do."

"Let it be so," replied the old woman. "You are very busy to-day; but when you have seen her, and come begging to me, how do you know that I may not be very busy in my turn? If that should happen, you must not find fault."

"No, no," said Sse Yeoupe, laughing; "I only ask you one request, and I shall be indebted to you for my future happiness."

"Well then, since you are determined how to act, I will leave you, and return in two or three days to know the news."

"Yes, yes," said Sse Yeoupe; "that will do." The old woman rose and departed.

This conversation had inflamed Sse Yeoupe's curiosity. The next morning, without telling any one, not even taking his servant with him, he went quite alone, and secretly, to walk behind Dr Gou's garden. He instantly knew the pavilion, which appeared above the walls; the windows were shaded from the heat of the sun by gauze curtains and red blinds, half drawn down. He had come too early; everything was quiet, there was not a voice to be heard: he stood some time in this place, but fearing to remain too long, he again began to walk up and down; having waited in vain some time further, he returned to dine, and afterwards came back to renew his walk, his mind still filled with what had been told him.

This time he was more fortunate, for as he was passing the pavilion, he heard voices from within as of persons laughing and chatting together. He feared

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he might be observed looking that way, and in order to conceal himself, he walked into a narrow lane, shaded by the branches of elm-trees. Here he pretended to be gathering some wild herbs that grew near the walls of the city, but all the time had his eyes fixed on the pavilion. A few minutes after, he saw two waiting women draw up the curtains and open the shutters; the sun was then near the meridian, and a gentle breeze, blowing at intervals, bore the most delightful perfumes to his senses. The noise he had just heard only increased his emotion, and when he rose up, he perceived two swallows descending from the top of the pavilion, and perch on the casement. They wandered here and there with that pleasing animation which the genial influence of spring never fails to produce. At that moment, one of the women who was at the window was heard to call with a loud voice to her mistress, "My lady, come quickly and look at these swallows, how gracefully they fly about." She had scarcely finished speaking, when a young lady, who seemed to wish to hide herself, came near the window.

"Where are these swallows?" said she.

Here the swallows, perceiving persons approaching, took flight, and hid themselves amongst the willow leaves. The waiting-maid pointed them out with her finger. "It is not here," said she; "look, there they are."

Her young mistress advanced hastily and looked out of the window. As the swallows skimmed from one side to another, it gave Sse Yeoupe an opportunity of minutely seeing her person. Her headdress was ornamented with pearls and the feathers of the king-fisher; she was clothed in a robe of

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white satin ; her figure was regular and elegant ; and although she might be said to possess the grace and attractions of a virgin, still there was nothing remarkable about her, and neither her features, her eyes, nor eyebrows, appeared capable of expression. An assumed air of modesty was observable on her countenance ; her lips and cheeks were covered with paint ; in short, everything about her was artificial.

Who would have supposed that two young ladies, possessed of such different attractions, should live in the same house ; one at the eastern, the other at the western side ? Who would suppose that a dove and a magpie should have dwelt in the same nest ? Now this young lady was not Woukiao, but it was Wouyan, Dr Gou's own daughter ; yet how was Sse Yeoupe to know the mistake ? He had only heard of one daughter. Before he saw her, his heart was in a state of agitation ; but the moment he beheld her, he was utterly confounded.

" I was very right," said he to himself, " to insist on a sight of her. Had I given credit to the reports of old mother Tchang, what would have become of me on this occasion, where the happiness of the remainder of my life was concerned ?"

He came gently out of the thicket where he had been concealed ; and the young lady, hearing some one under the trees, retired precipitately from the window into the pavilion. Sse Yeoupe now become quite indifferent, would not wait to see any more of her, and returned by the same way that he had come.

Two days after this adventure, the old dame Tchang came to inquire what had taken place : " Well, seigneur Sse," said she, " have you yet seen the person we were speaking of the other day ?"

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Sse Yeoupe began to reflect. "Dr Gou," said he, "is a great man in the literary world; he enjoys a high reputation. If I say that I have seen his daughter, and that, finding her ugly, I do not wish the connexion, my conduct will appear improper, and he may be offended. I must soften my refusal, and conceal my motives." Then, addressing himself to dame Tchang, "I have not been to the place you mentioned the other day yet," said he; "how then could I have seen the person you speak of?"

"And what reason had you for not going?" asked the old woman.

"It was because I have been thinking over the affair:" said Sse Yeoupe. "This member of the academy is a great man, a person of eminent rank; if I went to look at his daughter in secret, and if I were surprised by any one, it would be very disagreeable both to me and to him; besides this, I might be walking there from morning until night before chance would favour me with a sight of her. My good mother, you must take the trouble of conveying back my answer."

"You have or you have not seen her, sir; no matter, I have told you nothing but the truth. Will you again think on the subject?"

"But that even is not my only motive; there is a learned man of the first order, as this doctor certainly is; and here am I, a poor bachelor:—how is it possible for us to be on an equality?"

"It is not you that make suit to him, but it is he that comes to you; then how can there be any difficulty in the matter?"

"I feel highly honoured by the singular pre-

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ference he wishes to grant me; but I am not disposed to avail myself of it. I should be rather humbled by it; and I tell you firmly, that I will not accept this proposal."

The old woman tried several times to make him alter this resolution, but her advice did not produce any effect. She was obliged to take her leave of Sse Yeoupe, to return and give an account of what had passed to Dr Gou.

On that day, Dr Gou not being at home, the go-between went into the interior apartments, and inquired for the mistress of the house. When that lady perceived her, "Well!" said she, "what news of the alliance which you have undertook to bring about?"

"Well, well, we should never make sure of anything beforehand in this world," answered the old woman, shaking her head. "Not once in ten instances would you meet with a failure like this. Who ever would have thought that a poor bachelor should hesitate a moment about accepting such a proposal?"

"The doctor told me that this young man was a very worthy and accomplished person. What can be the cause of such obstinacy?" demanded the lady Gou.

"Do not take offence now, if I introduce the name of another party," replied the go-between. "That young man may have a great many merits, and a good countenance; but take my word for it, he is a man abandoned by heaven. I have an excellent match to propose to you in the person of the son of governor Wang; he is nineteen years of age, and for talent and exterior he yields in no-

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thing to this young bachelor Sse: besides this, his fortune and family will just suit; so that if you are rejected on the part of Sse, you will have no cause to repent."

"Very well," replied the lady Gou; "I will speak to my husband when he returns."

The go-between then retired, and in a little time after Dr Gou came home: his lady told him all that the old woman had stated. This account made the doctor sigh, and he remained some time without speaking. "What," said he at last, can "be his motive for refusing me? It must be that old go-between, who did not know how to explain herself; but another course is open to me yet."

He immediately called a servant. "Take one of my visiting cards," said he: "go to the college, and invite young Mr Lieouiutching to come and see me."

The servant soon performed the orders given him. Upon his return, he announced that the gentleman was on his way.

This young man was another student of the college, also distinguished for talent. He had been for some time a disciple of Dr Gou, when he received the invitation, and of course gladly complied with it. After the usual ceremonies had been gone through, he thus addressed himself to Dr Gou: "Honoured master, you sent for your pupil: what are your commands?"

"No other than these," replied the doctor. "I have a daughter named Woukiao; she is now seventeen years of age, she is possessed of some beauty, and a great deal of talent. She is not

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only superior to the rest of her sex for the elegance of her appearance, but she has an admirable taste for poetry and literature: she is the object of all my wife's tenderness and mine. Many gentlemen of quality have asked for her; but I am of opinion that real merit is seldom found amongst the young men of rich and great families. A few days ago, I met the young man who obtained the first place at the last examination; his name is Sse Yeoupe. I was struck with his appearance, his knowledge, and the great talent he has for poetry; and I thought I should be happy to give him my daughter in marriage. I accordingly sent a go-between to him, with a proposal to that effect; but he refused it, I know not on what grounds. I imagine it to be the old woman's fault, whose conversation was not calculated to inspire him with sufficient confidence. I wish then, my young friend; that you would take the trouble of speaking to him, and find out what are his intentions."

" The seigneur Sse is in reality, both for his figure and talents, the jasper which gives brilliancy to our college. When the inspector proclaimed the result of the examination, every one broke forth into eulogies on him. The preference which you give him above those possessed of honours and riches, is a mark of that general benevolence in which you delight, and that purity, unsullied as the snow, which distinguishes your character. I feel much honoured by the choice you make of me to conduct this negotiation; to-morrow I shall comply with your commands. I am certain that young Sse will be delighted with the opportunity of having you to look up to, my respected master;

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you will be unto him as the sacred mountain, or the polar star: who would not be proud to have the protection of such a man?"

"If you will be so kind," said Dr Gou, "my efforts shall not be wanting to prove my gratitude. But, my young friend," continued he, "at the last examination you undoubtedly obtained some distinguished rank?"

"I have no great ability," replied Lieouiutching. "I was only put on the second list."

"But you are possessed of eminent talents, my young friend, and worthy of being placed on the first list: how did it happen that you were not? The first time I see his lordship, the inspector Li, I will speak to him about it."

"The result of the examination," replied Lieouiutching, "is, in the eyes of the examiner, a thing of great importance and general interest. I have submitted to his decision; but if you would cast a favourable eye on your pupil, and procure for him some advancement by your recommendation, it would be a mark of particular kindness."

After this conversation, Lieouiutching arose and took leave of Dr Gou.

If the gentle reader wishes to know how Lieouiutching acquitted himself of the commission intrusted to him, he has but to take the trouble of perusing the following chapter.

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CHAPTER V.

A POOR BACHELOR REFUSES TO MARRY A RICH YOUNG LADY.

"A prying curiosity is sure to produce uneasiness. An able man will be delighted with the emanations of genius. In the conduct of the wisest men there is always something to be filled up. Their language, be it ever so cautious, will give room for misconception."

Sse Yeoupe had gained considerably in character, since his success at the examination. It was extraordinary to meet, in one so young, such maturity of talent, united with so prepossessing an appearance; and every parent who had a daughter unmarried, secretly wished for him as a son-in-law. But Sse Yeoupe's meditations were far from being agreeable.

"Of the five sorts of obligations which regulate the life of man *," said he to himself, "the two first no longer exist for me; premature death has snatched away both father and mother; and I have no brothers. With respect to two others, namely, the duty which a subject owes his prince, and that due from one friend towards another—why, I must wait until an opportunity arrives, to enable me to fulfil them. If I do not marry an accomplished and beautiful woman, worthy to be my companion, what will Sse Yeoupe be in this world? Of what use will be all the time I have devoted to study, and to poetry—nay, even to have become a poet my-

* These five obligations are, those of a child to a father; of brother to brother; of husband to wife; of loyalty to one's prince; and of friend to friend.

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self? Haunted by vain fancies, a prey to feeling; whither shall I betake myself? Death even offers me no consolation*." Such were the thoughts that occupied his mind: and when proposals of marriage were offered to him, he made the necessary inquiries, and not finding them very favourable to the parties proposed, he did not hesitate a moment in refusing them. Dr Gou was the only one who, on account of the charge left him by Pe, dreaded missing this opportunity of obtaining for that relation a son-in-law possessed of so much merit. It was with this motive that he desired Mr Lieouiutching to go and speak on the subject to Sse Yeoupe.

Lieouiutching lost no time in obeying Dr Gou's orders; he called on Sse Yeoupe, and, after some preparatory conversation, explained the motive of his visit.

"A few days ago, an old woman came to speak to me on the same subject," replied Sse Yeoupe, "and I gave her my positive refusal. How is it then that you, sir, should take the trouble of coming about the same affair? I would certainly pay much deference to your prudent advice; but I have already formed my resolution. I absolutely cannot comply with your wish."

"The seigneur Gou is one of the most respectable inhabitants of the academic gardens," rejoined Lieouiutching. "As for wealth, he ranks first in

*The consolations which death offers to a Chinese, consist in the belief, that the children which he leaves after him will scrupulously perform those funeral rites, on the due execution of which depends the tranquillity of his manes.

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the city. He loves his daughter tenderly, he cherishes her as a pearl or precious stone. Several young men, belonging to the first families in the city, who have already attained the sash, have proposed for her: her father has refused them all. But struck with your merits and appearance, he has a strong wish to succeed with you. It is in fact a most advantageous match in every respect: how can you still refuse it with so much perverseness ?"

" Of all human affairs," said Sse Yeoupe, " the first and most important is matrimony. For if real talent and exterior qualities are not combined, it is in reality but a state of slavery, to which one is condemned for the remainder of his life. Ought one then lightly to undertake such an engagement ?"

Lieouiutching began to laugh. " My good brother," said he, " do not be offended at what I am going to say to you. It is certain that you have just been extremely successful at the examination; this however is but the triumph of an hour, and is by no means a security that you will not remain a very poor bachelor. How is it that the daughter of a member of the academy is not, in your eyes, a suitable match for you ? I speak not of her beauty, nor shall I say that she resembles a flower, or is like the jasper. Her rank, sir, and riches, if you will but take possession of them, will prove a species of seasoning to the matrimonial dish, which you will relish more and more every day."

" It is quite unnecessary for you to talk to me about her rank and wealth," impatiently interposed

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Sse Yeoupe ; " I have already made some progress in the garden of literature, and I flatter myself I shall not long remain poor and unknown. And in fact I do not know that I shall ever be fortunate enough to meet with an accomplished woman, who will be really worthy of being beloved."

" Well, this is still more laughable," said Lieouiutching ; " but as you seem to be quite sure that riches and rank await you, let me ask you, have you ever seen a man possessed of opulence and distinction seek a lovely wife, and not find one ?"

" Now, brother," replied Sse Yeoupe, smiling, " do not give such weight to riches and rank, and make so little of the beauty of woman. Formerly, as well as at the present day, every man who distinguished himself by his talents, was able to acquire fortune and high rank ; but when did there ever exist a great number of amiable and perfectly beautiful women ? If talent is unaccompanied by beauty, I do not consider the woman who possesses it accomplished ; if there be beauty without talent, it is nothing like perfection for me ; but if talents even and beauty be found united in the same person, and if her tastes, her sentiments, do not accord as pulse to pulse with mine, the possessor of them still is not the amiable woman that Sse Yeoupe desires."

" You are mad, brother !" exclaimed Lieouiutching, bursting into a loud laugh. " If it be a beauty of that kind you are looking for, away at once to the singers and courtezans."

" In this instance I think with the prince of literature," replied Sse Yeoupe, " that the union which is formed by the sympathy of hearts, is such

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as ensures felicity to two beings, even unto grey hairs: and the close of life shall still find them occupied in watching over each other*. When I cite the wholesome maxims of antiquity, why allude to courtezans and singers?"

"My brother, do not thus lose your time, repeating these useless maxims of antiquity, whilst you neglect the real good that is before your eyes," said Lieouiutching.

"Make yourself easy, brother," answered Sse Yeoupe. "I have already sworn, that if I do not meet with an accomplished woman, such as I have just been describing, I will never marry; this is my determination."

Lieouiutching again began to laugh. "So I presume," said he, "if his majesty were to offer you one of the princesses of his house, you would decline the honour. This is truly the most prudent course in the world. My brother, take care how you adopt such a resolution; take care how you miss this opportunity, and abandon yourself to a course which you may repent having taken, before you get half way."

"I shall not repent, most assuredly," replied Sse Yeoupe.

Lieouiutching was at last obliged to take leave. He went to give an account of his proceedings to Gou.

When the latter was informed that Sse Yeoupe obstinately refused his proposal, he flew into a rage, and vented his passion in invectives. "What! does this insignificant animal give himself such

* An expression of Confucius, who is referred to in this passage.

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airs? Because he obtained the first place at the examination, he thinks he can act in this unbecoming manner, contrary to all the laws of politeness! Well, we shall see if this rank of *bachelor*, on which he prides himself so much, is a thing that will terminate so advantageously as he imagines."

When he had finished speaking, he sat down to write to the examiner, and, after having informed him of what had happened, he begged him to dismiss Sse Yeoupe from the eminent place which had been given to him at the last examination. This examiner, whose family name was Li, and sirname Meouhio, was of the same age as Gou, and had been educated at the same college. He wished to comply with the doctor's request; but when he reflected on the merits and qualifications of Sse Yeoupe, against whom he had no complaint to make, he did not wish thus to mortify him. Yet, completely subservient to the wishes of Dr Gou, he sent for the principal of the college, and secretly requested him to apprize Sse Yeoupe of the intentions entertained with respect to him, and if possible oblige him to yield to the proposals of marriage which Dr Gou had made, as it was by this course alone he would do away with all obstacles to his future promotion.

The principal, having received these orders, immediately sent to invite Sse Yeoupe to come to his closet, and told him of all that had taken place.

"I return my worthy masters many thanks for the kindnesses they have shewn me," replied Sse

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Yeoupe ; " your pupil ought certainly to execute the orders which his master is pleased to give him ; but I have some very particular reasons which I cannot explain to Gou ; all I dare ask of you is, that when you see the examiner, you will tell him, let the consequence be what it will, that I decline the marriage. By taking this trouble you will do me the greatest favour."

" You are wrong, my young friend," replied the principal. " You are now twenty years of age ; this is the time to think of establishing yourself. The seigneur Gou has shewn a great deal of kindness in seeking this alliance with you, and in making the first advances : it is the most lucky thing in the world for you. I do not speak of Dr Gou's riches and rank ; your distinguished merits may perhaps make you view them with indifference ; but I have heard that his daughter is gifted with every kind of attraction, and possesses great talents. Even if you did violence to your inclinations by submitting to his wishes, I do not see what great injury can result to you from it. What can be your motive for refusing so decidedly ?"

" I do not wish to impose on my much respected master," said Sse Yeoupe ; " but I have already made the strictest inquiries concerning his daughter, and the result makes it absolutely impossible for me to submit to Dr Gou's wishes."

" If you thus refuse, my young friend, it would be hard indeed to compel you ; but seigneur Gou is a contemporary and fellow student of my lord the examiner, and consequently has much influence over him. If the affair is not terminated to his

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liking, I fear, my young friend, that something unfavourable to your promotion will happen."

Sse Yeoupe began to smile. "What promotion do you mean? Is it this green collar?* It is not surely for such a consideration that I would engage in an affair so serious that its consequences are to spread themselves over the rest of my life! All I can do in the matter is, to submit to the examiner's decision;" and in saying these words, he rose, took his leave, and left the apartment.

The principal, seeing the matter thus ended, went and told the examiner what had occurred. The latter was much chagrined, and said to himself, "Since this young man is of so intractable a character, I must take from him his present rank." New reflections however presented themselves to his mind: "And yet another bachelor," said he, "would have eagerly grasped at such a brilliant offer, even had it presented itself to him but in a dream: but this Sse Yeoupe would meet death rather than accede to it. Notwithstanding this, he is a young man of great promise, and it is with regret that I am thus obliged to act towards him."

His meditations were now interrupted by the sound of one of those hollow sticks with which the watchman announces the arrival of the gazette; and one of the officers, entering the apartment, laid a gazette before him. In looking over it, his attention was caught by a passage in the list of promotions and rewards granted to those magistrates who had rendered important services to the state: from which it appeared that a master of the

* Marking the rank of bachelorship.

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ceremonies, in consideration of the way in which he had fulfilled his duties, was promoted to the rank of member of the board of public works. This was Pe, who, having been despatched beyond the frontiers of the empire, on a mission to the camp of the Tartars, and to compliment the captive emperor, had acquitted himself with honour of this two-fold commission. When he returned to court, his services were acknowledged; and they accordingly conferred on him the above-mentioned rank. At the same time, the bad state of health in which he was, obliged him to solicit leave of absence; and they granted him permission to take the situation, and then return to his own country to establish his health, his services not being required at that time in the capital.

In another paragraph he saw that Yang, who was amongst those that were recommended in consequence of length of service, was promoted to the rank of minister of the second class. A third paragraph concerning the imperial college stated that those who superintended the literary assemblies holden there, at which the emperor attended, had been promoted; and that Gou was amongst the persons appointed as their successors. The decree respecting these arrangements was already executed by the emperor.

The moment examiner Li discovered that Gou was called to court, and that his relation Pe was in favour there, it struck him at once, that neither the one nor the other would ever cast their eyes again upon Sse Yeoupe; he did not hesitate therefore to despatch the following notice to the college:—

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"Whereas I, Li, inspector of the college, and examiner, have made inquiries respecting the pupil Sse Yeoupe, and I have ascertained that he is a person of intractable and obstinate character, over confident, vain, proud and uncivil; and whereas it is my duty to adopt severe measures with him; but, in consideration of his youth, I shall restrict myself merely to the erasing of his name from the list of candidates, and excluding him from the examinations. This is the course that seems expedient for me to take."

As soon as this notice was made known to the students, it excited great agitation amongst them, and soon became the subject of general and anxious conversation. One party ridiculed the folly of Sse Yeoupe; another eulogized his noble disinterestedness; whilst those of his immediate acquaintance reprobated strongly his conduct.

"Why not accede to this proposal of marriage?" said they? "What can be your motive for refusing so excellent a connexion? There now—you have, in consequence, lost your bachelor's place. Go at once, and give in a written retractation to the examiner."

"So, then, it is the first place on the list of candidates that has cost me all this," cried Sse Yeoupe. "Well, well—if the bachelor's cap is to go, why, I don't know that my ears will look the worse for it! What harm then is done? Gentlemen, let me tell you, your advice is altogether useless."

And the students, seeing that there was no good to be got of Sse Yeoupe, left him to himself. Thus

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Three parts of obstinacy, and seven of imprudence,
Ferment together to form the character of a poet.
He disdains to explain himself to every day people;
A friend alone can pierce the veil of his silence.

We shall now leave Sse Yeoupe for awhile, to return to Dr Gou. Though very angry at first with the young student, Dr Gou determined, when he heard how the former had been deprived of his place, to reinstate him in a few days. But in the meantime he had intelligence of Pe's promotion and his return, as also of his own appointment and summons to court. He eagerly ran to Woukiao, to impart the news to her; and in the midst of the general joy the affair of Sse Yeoupe altogether escaped his memory. Gou wished at once to repair to the capital, but he thought it better to have an interview with Pe first, and restore to him in person Woukiao, who had been entrusted to his care.

He therefore resolved upon staying at home, and sending, at the same time, a proper person to meet Pe on his approach. The latter, now raised to the dignity of a member of the board of public works, started from the capital without delay. He preserved a strict *incognito* on the road, and in less than a month arrived at Gou's residence at Nanking, where he was received with every demonstration of attachment.

After the first compliments were over, the two friends entered the inner apartments, when a message was sent to Woukiao to come and salute her father. It is impossible to describe their mutual joy.

Gou had already provided a repast, and after having proffered to Pe the traveller's draught, " *to*

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*wash down the dust**," he began to drink with him. He then inquired into the details of his brother-in-law's mission into Tartary.

Pe, with a melancholy air, observed, "I could do nothing to serve the captive emperor. When I received my commission a long time ago, I expected to have heard something about going to the royal prisoner; but my credentials contained only instructions to inquire about the prince's health, and to present him with winter clothing: there was not a word about his return. The emperor was exceedingly mortified at this circumstance, and Yesian, having pressed me with inquiries, placed me in a very awkward situation. All that it was in my power to say was, that the return of the captive emperor was naturally the wish of our government, but that as it was not known whether or not the Tartar prince would agree to it, the subject was not alluded to in my credentials; and therefore that I was instructed merely to communicate verbally upon it with the general. This reply was by no means satisfactory to Yesian; and though he agreed to treat of peace, he still observed, that he was not warranted in treating verbally upon the point alluded to: that as my credentials contained no mention of the return of the captive emperor, he could not take upon himself to permit that royal person to depart; that if he acted upon a different footing he would be the laughing-stock of the middle kingdom; and finally, that a fresh envoy must be sent with full powers as to this point, but that, for him-

* The literal Chinese expression.

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self, he should be always found in the same disposition. When I had stated the result of my mission at court, they appeared to be much disconcerted; but it was impossible for them to avoid sending Yangchen with powers to supply the deficiency in my embassy."

"And do you believe that Yesian's real intention was to permit the enlargement of the captive prince?" inquired Gou.

"So far, at least, as I can see, it certainly was his intention: and if Yangchen goes to Tartary, the captive emperor is sure to return to court. But I have my doubts that this restoration may not place the reigning emperor in rather an awkward predicament: and the apprehension of being myself involved unpleasantly in the affair, has prompted me to apply for leave of absence, on the ground of ill health. It is not out of any anxiety about my own safety that I wished to retire, but I really feel that things are now brought to such a crisis, that it is not in the power of any single man to apply the necessary remedy."

"My dear brother," said Gou, "you have endured both wind and weather, and exposed yourself to danger and fatigue; but the manner in which you have executed your commission does honour to your character, and stamps your reputation. I, unfortunately, am summoned to court. I must walk into the net: how to get out of it, is the question.

"Indeed, brother, you are almost a plant in the academical garden: *there* you should remain and grow. You have a resource, besides, in the general

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examinations ; and sooner or later you will be entrusted with some mission."

"I hope so," said Gou; "but how are we to treat old Yang?"

"That heartless, weak man!" exclaimed Pe. "I had scarcely arrived in the capital when he came running to me with a set of apologies; and I remarked, that he grew warmer in his expressions of zeal and attachment towards me, as soon as the emperor's decree in my favour had made its appearance. He persecuted me with his invitations; and at last, when I was leaving the city, and was to participate of the public farewell feast, Yang was not satisfied until he prepared for me a private feast of his own. When I saw how he was determined to conduct himself, I could not help joining him, as I used to do, in drinking and mirth; but I was determined to mortify him by avoiding every subject of a serious nature."

"It was a good way enough," rejoined Gou, laughing ; "but the proper way to mortify him would be, to beat him well with a stick."

The two friends thus conversed together during a part of the day. Pe remained to sleep at Gou's, but determined to take his departure the next day. "I have," said he, "pleaded illness, as a reason for wishing to return home : I am afraid, if I waited longer, that some tale-bearer or another would inform against me."

"You are very right to avoid that," said Gou ; "but surely there can be no danger in your remaining here two or three days. Remember that when we part now, we know not when we shall see each other again."

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"Well, well—I shall remain this day," said Pe; "but I must positively depart to-morrow."

"By the bye, brother," exclaimed Gou, laughing, "rather an odd occurrence took place a few days ago, which I have not had time to relate to you yet."

"What is it?" eagerly inquired Pe.

"One day, I took it into my head to go to the temple of the Valley of Immortals, for the purpose of admiring the plum-trees in blossom. There I fell in with a young bachelor of the name of Sse Yeoupe, of tolerably good appearance, a very fair poet, and possessing, in short, great merit and capacity. Upon inquiry, I found that the examiner Li had given him the first place on the list of the examinations. I bethought me that this would be a good match for my niece. I first of all sent a go-between to him; next, a mutual friend: I have sent to him two or three times; and I cannot divine his reasons, but he has distinctly refused to agree to my proposal. Unable to overcome his resolution, I wrote to examiner Li to interfere. He spoke to the principal of the college, who had an interview with Sse Yeoupe, during which he exhorted him to comply with the offer; would you believe it, the obstinate fellow would listen to none of them? When the examiner saw that he was intractable, he removed his name from its place on the list; and yet this young man shewed not the least symptom of uneasiness. Did you ever know anything so ridiculous?"

Pe heard this statement with surprise. "This," said he, "is very singular; but whatever be the capacity and personal recommendations of this

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young man, his firmness only makes him more respectable in my eyes. Men of genius have each their own mode of viewing a matter, and they ought not to be harsh with each other. You should not let to-morrow pass, brother, without applying to the examiner Li for the purpose of having this young man restored to the rank of which he was deprived."

"Nothing is easier than to replace him on the list," observed Gou.

In this way the brothers-in-law passed their time for some hours. The third day being come, Pe took his departure, with his daughter Houngiu, for Kinchi. Gou made preparations to set out for the capital.

Sse Yeoupe employed himself, ever since his attempted disgrace, at home, in drinking, making verses, and commemorating the beauties of willows and flowers. He was not either desirous of fame on the one hand, or dejected by poverty on the other; but when he contemplated some scene of natural beauty, his mind was excited to a painful sense of the loneliness of his situation; and by degrees he relapsed into a fit of melancholy. He had frequently been spoken to on the subject of marriage; but he had now made up his mind, that an object worthy of his love could not be found in the city.

One day, in the height of spring, Sse Yeoupe proposed to take a solitary walk; and just as he was leaving his own door for the purpose, his attention was drawn towards several persons, who were dressed in blue, with immense caps, and mounted

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on post-horses. As they advanced up the street, one of them inquired of a passenger, in which house Mr Sse lived.

"There," said the person spoken to; "and that is Mr Sse himself."

The riders descended hastily, and going towards Sse, they inquired if he was Mr Sse, the son of lord Sse Hao.

"The same," replied the youth, somewhat surprised; "but, gentlemen, what is your business?"

"We are sent hither by his excellency, inspector-general Sse, of the province of Honan."

"It is of my uncle by the father's side, I presume, that you speak." said Sse.

"It is," said the messengers.

"Then, gentlemen, be so good as to walk in."

The men accordingly entered the apartment. Here they were preparing to offer those marks of respect to Sse, which befitted the rank of inferiors, when they were stopped by Sse Yeoupe.

"One moment, gentlemen, if you please," said he. "Are you my uncle's domestic servants, or are you employed in the service of his department?"

"We are couriers of the government, charged by him with despatches."

"Then, gentlemen, you are in effect employed in the public service, and under such circumstances the ceremony of a formal salutation is not required. You are bound to make only the usual obeisance."

He then made the party sit down, and inquired of them where his uncle then was.

They replied, "He has just returned from a

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visitation * to the province of Hou Kouang; he is going to court to take the emperor's farther orders, and is at this moment actually on board in the river. He is anxious to bring you with him, and has given us a letter for you to that effect."

They then handed the letter to Sse Yeoupe, which he instantly opened, and read as follows:—

"A poor old uncle sends a thousand salutations to his dear nephew, and addresses to him this letter.

"State affairs have given me constant employment, and now oblige me to keep journeying from east to west, without stopping. They have occasioned a separation between you and me, who are, as it were, the same flesh and blood. This reflection is to me a source of grief.

"When I learned, some years ago, that my good sister-in-law departed this life, I felt the utmost affliction; but it was very consolatory to learn, that you had made as much progress in your studies as could be expected at your time of life. I am now sixty-three years of age, and I cannot but feel that I am making a near approach to my grave. To me it will be a night that knows no morn: for, alas, I have no children. You that will one day be celebrated in literature, you have lost both father and mother; you are an orphan, and condemned to lead a solitary life. Why do you not come and live with me? I shall be to you as a father, and you, I doubt not, will behave towards me as a son; thus shall we be to each other mutually a help and a comfort. It is the fondest wish of my heart that you should do so: I think I hear the voice of your

* It will be remembered that he was an inspector-general.

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dear parents from their tomb, ratifying the union. Tarry not, then, my nephew, but come away.

"The bearers of this will take care of your luggage, and will accompany you. I expect you on board my vessel without delay. More when we meet."

A thousand reflections agitated the mind of Sse Yeoupe in reading this letter. A little while ago he had to lament the downfal of his family—the degree of bachelor violently taken from him—all hopes of marriage destroyed. These circumstances were calculated to make his present residence sufficiently unpalatable. How much better would it have been, he thought, to join his uncle, and go to court; not that he valued the riches and the rank which might be the consequences of such a step, but that an opportunity might thereby, be afforded him of discovering that long-sought object, a woman, worthy of being beloved. This consideration at once decided him. "Gentlemen," said he to the persons before him, "my uncle, your master, has made a request of me; he wants to bring flesh and blood together: I can't well refuse him: but the mouth of the river is at a considerable distance, and I am afraid that we shall not get there to-day."

"His lordship is in a hurry," said the men, "and only waits for you, to weigh anchor. It is but sixty miles* from this; we have a horse for you; and if you will set out at once, we can be there in good time."

"Gentlemen, do you go on. I shall pack up my luggage, and follow you." Sse Yeoupe took an

* Fourteen or fifteen English miles.

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ounce of silver, and offered it to them, saying, "We should set out without delay, and therefore I cannot give you any refreshment; but this will answer as well."

The messengers refused it, saying, "You are one of our master's family, and we cannot think of taking anything from you."

"It is only a trifle, gentlemen," said Sse Yeoupe. "Come, let us not lose time."

The men consented to accept the present, and leaving an excellent horse at Sse Yeoupe's disposal, they took their leave, and departed. The young student then, calling an old servant whose name was Sse Cheou, charged him to remain in the house and take the greatest care of it. He then selected some clothes and other necessary articles for a journey, and having arranged them in two parcels, he sent a servant on with them to the mouth of the river. He took with him, himself, only a young servant named Siaohi; and having given some necessary directions, he mounted his horse to begin his journey: but, as unlucky chance would have it, the animal, finding out that his rider was by no means an expert horseman, and that he was without a whip, became very restive, and refused to move a step. Sse Yeoupe pulled the reins unskilfully now to the left, now to the right, and the only effect he thus produced on the horse, was to provoke him to rear and prance about, so as to put the rider into very serious alarm for his own safety. "If he goes on this way," thought Sse, "how are we to get to the end of our journey, I wonder?" His servant Cheou now came up to him, and said, "Sir, if you do not beat the horse, how do you think he will go?

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You used to have a whip formerly, with a coral handle: why not get that? Nothing but fear will ever make an animal move."

"You are right," said Sse Yeoupe; and having sent and obtained the whip, he laid about the animal in such a way, as to make him perfectly tractable. "I see," said Sse Yeoupe, "that this animal will not move unless he is beaten. It is exactly the same case with some men in this world, if they are only one day freed from restraint."

It was now the middle of spring. The genial mildness of the atmosphere, and the beautiful appearance of the blossoms, did not prevent Sse Yeoupe from indulging in anxious reflections. "Well," said he, "I was not long about giving the go-by to Gou's family, at all events; and had I fallen in with their proposals, then farewell for ever to that charming unknown object on whom my heart is set. If I should discover thee, thou darling object of my hopes, in the capital, my happiness is sealed for ever; if not, I shall be always miserable. If my search for thee, amidst the gay circles of the town, be disappointed, then I shall leave my uncle, and fly in quest of thee, by sea and land, to the utmost verge of the horizon. Thee I must possess, be it at whatever price; and then only shall I give up the pursuit, when success shall have crowned my labours."

Sse Yeoupe was too intently engaged with these thoughts, to perceive that he had arrived at a spot where several roads met, until an interruption of rather an unpleasant nature brought him to his recollection. On a sudden, a man stood before the traveller, and surveying him wildly, exclaimed, "Yes, yes, 'tis he," and seizing the reins, bade the

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rider stop. Sse Yeoupe, as soon as the first emotions of surprise were over, examined the person of the stranger, and saw much in his appearance to excite alarm. His hat was torn, and placed awry upon his head; his waistcoat reduced almost to shreds; and the old pair of buskins which he wore was covered with dirt. The perspiration rolled down his face, as if it had been drenched in rain.

"Who are you?" inquired Sse Youpe, somewhat alarmed: "and why do you stop my horse?"

The man could scarcely recover breath enough to enable him to speak distinctly, and all that could be heard from him was, "Well, I have just plumped upon him!"

At these words Sse Yeoupe raised his whip, and was about to strike when the man cried out, "Sir, sir, do not strike me: if I do not get back my wife, it will be your fault."

These words threw Sse Yeoupe into a great passion. "What madman is this!" said he; "what have I to do with getting back your wife? I never saw or knew her. How have I injured you in the least?"

"I don't mean that you took away my wife," answered the man; "but all I know is, that it is in your power to restore her."

"Nonsense, nonsense, sir," said Sse Yeoupe: "I am passing on the public road, about my own business: why should you ask me to find your wife for you, and say, that it is in my power to restore her? I suspect, friend, that you are nothing better than a highwayman. How dare you thus interrupt me, in the open day, on the high road? I am the son of lord Sse, the inspector-general; and I warn

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you of the consequences of this conduct." With this, Sse Yeoupe struck the man several blows across the head and face. Siaohi (his servant) also commenced belabouring the unfortunate intruder, who continued still to vociferate an almost unintelligible jargon, the only words of which that could be comprehended, were "Good sir, have mercy on me, pity my affliction—indeed I am not a villain." All the while, however, he retained the bridle firmly in his grasp, as if he would sooner die than let it go.

By this time several passengers and peasants from the adjoining hamlet, attracted by the noise, began to crowd to the spot, inquiring what was the matter. Sse Yeoupe loudly and boldly demanded an explanation of the man. "Was there ever anything so strange in this world?" said he. "If you have lost your wife, what have I, a casual passenger, to do with getting her back for you?"

"I should be very sorry, sir, indeed," answered the supposed maniac, "to stop you; but I have only to request that you will give me your whip; and my wife that moment will be restored to me."

The persons present set up a laugh. "What sort of fool," said they, "must this fellow be, to talk of his lost wife being brought back by virtue of a whip!"

"My whip," replied Sse Yeoupe, "has a coral handle worth several ounces of gold; why should I give it to you?" And, yielding to an impulse of anger, he raised the whip to strike at the man again.

"Forbear, sir, one moment;" interposed the latter: "before you strike, hear me explain one thing to you."

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The by-standers interfered with Sse Yeoupe, and begged of him to restrain his anger for an instant, in order to hear the proffered explanation; "and if he does not explain himself fully," said they, "we will let you beat him if you wish." They then required of the man to give full particulars as to who he was, where he came from, and what was his business. He answered, "I am from the village of Yang-Kia, near the town of Tanyang, and my name is Yang Ko. A few days ago I sent my wife to town, to get some things out of pledge; as she was going, some persons unknown carried her off. I searched for her all day, and could get no tidings of her; but this morning I went to Keouyang, where I fell in with a doctor, skilled in the art of magic prayers. I begged that he would offer one on my behalf, and he has promised me that at three quarters past three o'clock this day I should get back my wife. I asked him in what direction I was to go in order to find her: he desired me to proceed to the north-east, and said that at a distance of about forty miles * I should come to a cross road; that there I should meet a young lord in a coat of yellow-willow colour, mounted on a speckled horse; that I should stop him, and ask the whip which he held in his hand; and that forthwith I should find my wife. I was to make all the haste I could, because, if I was one moment behind, and happened to miss him, then I was never to recover my wife. I started off, and arrived here out of breath, and without having broken my fast. I have run the forty miles to get here, and I have to thank

* Ten miles British.

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my own exertions that I just came in time to catch this young lord, whose dress and appearance answer exactly to the description that had been given to me. There can be no doubt that it is the very person. Let me entreat of him then to do an act of humanity, and give me his whip, that my wife and I may be brought together again, since it is in his power to work such a wonderful thing."

"My very good friend," said Sse Yeoupe, laughing, "you altogether sadly bewilder yourself; there never was in the world a doctor gifted with these wonderful faculties. After having carefully examined my dress and countenance, as well as the horse I rode upon, you have fabricated this tale just to trick me out of my whip. How can you think of imposing such nonsense upon any one?"

"I should not think of imposing on you," replied Yang Ko; "for I know that you are not to be imposed upon; but perhaps you may not disbelieve all the doctor has said, when I tell you that he also mentioned to me, that the object of your journey was to look out for a marriage. Now, sir, is that true or false? You best know, young gentleman, what you are about."

Sse Yeoupe was fixed with astonishment at hearing these words. "I thought," said he to himself, "that this matter had been so completely buried in my own breast, that the very gods themselves would not be able to discover it. How is it that this man could find it out? There must be some truth in all this." "Well, well," said he, after a pause, to Yang Ko, "here is my whip for you; it is of no great consequence; but I must use the utmost expedition to get to the mouth of the river this day;

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and if I have no whip, my horse will not go on. What am I to do?"

The spectators, who were very much struck with what they had just observed, became exceedingly curious to know in what manner the whip of one party was to restore the wife of the other. Seeing that Sse Yeoupe was inclined to comply with the man's request, they suggested to Yang Ko to go and pull a bough from one of the willow trees, to serve as a whip for the young gentleman.

Yang Ko would very willingly have gone to do what was required of him, but he dreaded that Sse Yeoupe would take advantage of the opportunity, and escape. The latter, seeing the cause of Yang Ko's hesitation, at once threw him the whip. "There," said he, "I have promised it to you, and I shall not break my word. Now, go and cut me off a branch of willow; for I am very anxious to pursue my journey."

Yang Ko received the gift with a thousand protestations of gratitude. "How many thanks do I owe you, sir!" said he. "You may depend upon it, that if I find my wife, I shall not fail to let you have your whip back." He then looked about for a tree, from which to cut a small branch for Sse Yeoupe.

It was now the second decade of the second moon *. The willow-trees that stood on the road side had yet sent forth only small weak shoots, such as would be of very little use as a substitute for a whip. But at a little distance from the road on the south-eastern side, at the opening of a shady walk, and close to the ruins of a chapel, three or

* The beginning of March.

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four larger willow-trees were seen, with their tops rising above the old walls. Yang Ko repaired to this spot; but scarcely had he clambered up one of the trees, and was about to pull away a bough, when he heard the cries of some person in distress issue from the interior of the ruins. He put aside the intervening branches, and gaining a view of the chapel, he saw distinctly three men surrounding a female, and forcibly keeping her between them. She appeared to be resisting their violence, and this was the cause of the cries which had been heard.

No sooner had Yang Ko beheld this spectacle, than he exclaimed, "Robbers, villains, it is here then you come to hide yourselves, after having carried off another man's wife!" He then jumped from the tree, and ran to the door of the chapel, at which he knocked several times. The crowd on the road, hearing the words "it is here, then," ran a to the spot, to see what was the matter. Yang Ko, by this time, finding that the principal door, at which he had knocked, was strongly barricadoed, and not wishing to wait to break it open, went round the building to look for another entrance. But before he could get to the back of the chapel, the three villains had succeeded in effecting their escape through a breach in the wall, leaving the female behind. The husband and wife were so transported with joy at being thus restored to each other, that they melted into tears. The spectators were petrified at the sight, for they now were convinced that all Yang Ko had told them was perfectly true.

When Sse Yeoupe heard that Yang Ko had found

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his wife, he was struck with inexpressible surprise. Leaving his horse in care of Siaohi, he went to the chapel, in order to witness the fact with his own eyes. When Yang Ko saw him, he said to his wife, "If I had not come here to cut a willow bough for this gentleman, that he might give me his whip, you and I never would have seen each other again in this life." He then gave back the whip to Sse Yeoupe. "I thank you for it, a thousand times," said he: "I have now no further use for it."

"Did ever any body in this universe see such a strange affair as this!" exclaimed Sse Yeoupe. "I have done you some wrong, my friend," addressing himself to Yang Ko; "but let me know, I beg of you, the name of this doctor, who says the magic prayers."

"No one knows his name, sir," answered Yang Ko; "but he carries a paper in his hand, with the words 'Sai-Chin-Sian' written upon it: he is usually called 'Sai-Chin-Sian,' or the *Hermit of Gratitude* *."

Yang Ko renewed his expressions of thanks to Sse Yeoupe and to the spectators; and after taking leave of the party, proceeded with his wife on their return home. Sse Yeoupe left the chapel, and remounting his horse, resumed his journey, his mind being filled with contending emotions arising from the recent extraordinary events which he had witnessed.

"Doubtless," said he to himself, "the old proverb applies exactly to my case. '*A life of good*

* These words have reference to a Chinese ceremony, which takes place at the close of the year, to thank the gods for their bounties.

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sense, and an hour of blundering.' The journey I am upon, in compliance with the will of my uncle, has at bottom, certainly, the object of seeking an accomplished woman. This hermit who could find out that I left my home in pursuit of marriage, can as easily tell me, I dare say, where that marriage may occur. Now if, without any clue to guide me, I go about from place to place, seeking the object of my wishes, it will be only like attempting to pursue that which has neither shadow nor trace; besides, I run the chance of having nothing for all my pains. I see it is yet early in the day; I think I had better take the direction of Keouyoung at once; I shall see this hermit, beseech him to throw some light upon this affair of my marriage, and even still I shall be in time to repair to the place where my uncle expects me."

This resolution being formed, Sse Yeoupe directed his horse to the south-west, taking the same road by which Yang Ko and his wife had a little before proceeded homeward; a course, on the part of this young gentleman, that subsequently gave birth, as will be seen, to a number of events. We shall see, by-and-by, how a damsel, placed in the midst of a thousand perplexities, becomes the object of the tenderest regard, and of the unwearied pursuit of a poet.

Now to understand truly whether Sse Yeoupe found the hermit or not, and consulted him respecting his marriage, it is necessary only to peruse the following chapter.

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CHAPTER VI.

A WORTHLESS LOVER TAKES TO HIMSELF THE MERIT OF VERSES WHICH HE DID NOT COMPOSE.

"Let a man patch up his character, let him give a colour to his conduct: but in literature, at least, there should be no petty thefts. A poetical expression, as a stream, will run through a course of ages: ten years of uneasiness may be the consequence of only a few lines: fine verses are as precious as the relics of a saint."

We have just seen how Sse Yeoupe, in determining to go to consult the hermit, also fully intended to keep the appointment which he had set out for the purpose of fulfilling with his uncle, the inspector-general. He briskly pushed on in the direction of Keouyoung, but had not proceeded more than fourteen or fifteen miles *, when the sun began to descend towards the west. After the traveller had accomplished four or five miles more on his journey, the shadows of night began to fall; he threw his eyes around anxiously, and not being able to distinguish a habitation of any sort, he felt considerable alarm. But his servant Siaohi, whose power of vision was far more acute, said to him, "Do not be uneasy, sir: do you observe those trees that stand at the side of the path yonder towards the west? There must certainly be a village there."

"How do you know?" inquired his master.

"Is not that the clock of a convent," asked

* About four British miles.

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Siaohi, "which appears through that clump of trees? If that be a clock, there must also be a temple; and near that temple there must certainly be some houses."

"You are right, it is a clock," said Sse Yeoupe, looking to that side; "but I see no houses. We must only ask a night's lodging at the convent."

He turned his horse's head towards the shaded walk; and when they arrived at the clump of trees, a village presented itself to their view, consisting of about two or three hundred houses scattered up and down, four or five together, at certain distances from each other.

Night had now come on; the doors of all the houses were closed, and it would have been useless to knock at any of them. Luckily, it was the night of the thirteenth of the moon; and that planet shone out in all its effulgence in the midst of an unclouded sky. The travellers had now only to take the direction where the clock stood, in order to find the door of the convent. Just as they passed a sheet of water, they heard it striking, when Sse Yeoupe exclaimed—"Well! we shall not be under the disagreeable necessity of passing this night, at all events, without shelter."

A few further paces brought them to the convent door. Here Sse Yeoupe giving his horse to the servant, went into the temple. The edifice was not on a large scale; but it was elegant and well proportioned. Its site was the foot of a mountain, and on two sides it was protected by a row of cypress-trees. Sse Yeoupe did not dwell upon the beauties of the structure very long, but proceeded at once to the

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inhabited part of the place, where he found two or three of the religious reciting their evening office. One of them stepped forward hastily, and inquired the stranger's business.

"I am a student," said Sse Yeoupe, "from town, on my way to the chapel of Keouyoung. I have been benighted on the road, and am obliged to stop; I should like to pass the night in your monastery, and I trust you will grant me the permission to do so."

"Nothing is more easy," answered the religious;" and he ordered one of his people to go and conduct Siaohi, with the horse, behind the convent, while another bore a lantern, and led Sse Yeoupe into the interior of the temple.

After the usual compliments, Sse Yeoupe and the religious sat down. "May I ask you, sir," said the latter, "to inform me of your name, and the name of your family?"

"The name of my family," answered Sse Yeoupe, "is Sse."

"And what, in the name of wonder, brings master Sse to Keouyoung?"

"My uncle," replied Sse Yeoupe, "is going to court to get some orders, and is now on board a vessel at the mouth of the river; he has sent for me to bear him company. When I got half way, I accidentally heard that there was a person called the '*Hermit of Gratitude*' at Keouyoung, who has an extraordinary talent in magic prayers. I took it into my head to go and ask him to say one on my behalf: and that is the business that has brought me this way."

"What office has your uncle?" inquired the host.

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"My uncle," said Sse Yeoupe, "has just finished a tour of inspection in the province of Houkouang, and he is now going to court to take fresh orders."

"What, then, I have been speaking to a person of your rank all this while, and have not paid him the respect due to his station!"

And saying this, he ordered supper to be brought.

"Allow me now to ask your name, sir," said Sse.

"My name is Tsingin *," replied the religious.

"And this handsome monastery is, doubtless, the village chapel?" asked Sse Yeoupe. "Is it an ancient or a modern construction?"

"It is called the temple of Kouanyin †," replied the holy man; "and it is neither an old edifice, nor the chapel of the village. It is a house of prayer, erected some eighteen years ago, by a magistrate of Kinchi, of the name of Pe."

"And what could be his motive for raising such an edifice in this place?" inquired Sse Yeoupe.

"The fact was, that Pe had no male issue," answered Tsingin; "and as both himself and his wife were very religious and devout to Buddha ‡, he built this temple, and dedicated it to *Kouanyin of the white garment*, in the hope of having a son. He has purchased, in addition, tracts of lands, and laid out here a couple of thousand ounces of gold."

* This word signifies *tranquil heart*, and is one of the names assumed by the Chinese on entering a religious house.

† The name of one of the superior divinities of the Indian worship imported into China.

‡ A deity of the Indian mythology also.

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"And did he succeed in obtaining a son?" asked Sse Yeoupe.

"No, he had no son; but he built this temple one year, and the following one he had a daughter."

"A daughter, indeed!" cried Sse Yeoupe, ready to die with laughter. "Why, if he had ten daughters born to him, instead of one, they would not be worth one boy."

"You must not talk in that way, young master," said Tsingin. "Ten boys are nothing compared to such a daughter as Pe's."

"How is that?" said Sse Yeoupe.

"This damsel," answered the religious, "possesses a degree of beauty that is capable of charming the fishes out of the sea, and drawing down the very cranes from the heavens; her face outshines the brightness of the moon, and brings to shame the tints of the flowers! This is not her only merit: she excels at her pencil and her needle; she is well read in ancient and modern history; and she is very generally and thoroughly informed. She writes verses, songs, odes, in a superior style to all the ancient poets; and Pe submits to her judgment most of his compositions. Find me out, if you can, any young gentleman worthy to be compared with her."

Sse Yeoupe was quite enchanted with this description, and his whole frame became agitated with the emotions which it produced in his mind. "Pray, tell me," said he, eagerly, "is this young lady married?"

"And pray, whom do you want her to marry?" rejoined Tsingin.

"In these cantons, surely, there are no wanting

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young men of wealth and family: her father could easily find a person of equal rank with himself—why has she not been married?"

"If rank and wealth were the only considerations to be attended to, the case might be easily settled," replied Tsingin; "but these are points to which lord Pe is perfectly indifferent: he looks more to merit, to accomplishments, and distinguished capacity."

"Well!" said Sse Yeoupe, "these are still more easily found."

"Not so easily, young sir," rejoined the holy man. "When a suitor presents himself with an offer of marriage to this young lady, he must, first of all, compose a piece, either in poetry or prose, which he must submit to the opinion of Pe and his daughter. She will not be allied to anybody but the person who shall succeed in obtaining their approbation in this way. Now the young critic, you must know, is extremely fastidious; none of the pieces that have been hitherto submitted to her judgment, found favour in her sight; she has attained now her seventeenth year, and has not yet had the opportunity of entering into a desirable engagement."

"If that be so—but—" said Sse Yeoupe, checking himself suddenly; "yes, the destiny of my marriage is to be fulfilled here. I see it."

Supper being now brought, the companions sat down to the table. When they finished the repast, Tsingin proposed to Sse Yeoupe, that as he must be fatigued after his ride, it would be proper for him to retire soon to rest. He then took a lantern and conducted the student into an elegantly-furnished

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apartment, which was destined for the use of visitors. He ordered a fire-pan to be brought, in which some perfumes were thrown, and then he desired a kettle of excellent bitter tea, which had been left on the table, to be placed over the fire. After taking leave of Sse Yeoupe for the night, the host retired.

The young man's thoughts were entirely engrossed by what he had just been listening to; and he burned with curiosity to behold this beautiful young lady. His fancy was so engaged with the subject that, instead of going to sleep, he tossed himself about in bed; and finding that he could not close an eye, he determined fairly to get up and dress himself. He went towards the window and looked out. The moon was now shining in mid-heaven, with an effulgence equal almost to that of day. Sse Yeoupe called up Siaohi, and directed him to follow to the door of the monastery. The brilliancy of the moon, and the state of abstraction in which he had been involved, prevented the wanderer from perceiving that he had now passed through a grove of cypress-trees, and that he was the distance of an arrow-shot from the convent; but he was suddenly recalled to himself by the sound of voices. He looked around, and distinguished, just near the spot where he stood, a country-house, situated in the midst of a plantation of peach and plum-trees. He proceeded forward, and went up to a pavilion where he saw two men occupied in drinking and composing verses. He stood on tip-toe to reach the window of the pavilion, in order to catch their conversation. One of the party, who had on a white dress, said to the other, "I am afraid, Tchang, that you are at a loss for a rhyme to the word 'branch.'"

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The other, who had on a green robe, replied. "It is by no means the word 'branch' that gives me any trouble; I find the word 'thought' the most difficult to procure a rhyme for. And yet, who besides myself understands the matter sufficiently?"

"Doubtless, you are not to be equalled," said the person in the white dress; "and for a poet, I know not the man that should be preferred to you. As soon as these two pieces of poetry are finished, consider your marriage as an event that cannot fail to take place."

The other young man hung his head, and after a pause, during which he muttered a few words, he burst out into these expressions: "There! there! excellent! admirable!" He then seized a pen, and committing his invaluable thoughts to paper, submitted them to his companion. The latter, clapping his hands, and shouting in a transport of admiration, exclaimed, "This is most excellent! It is quite in the style of old Touchi *. Not only are your rhymes perfectly accurate, but there is an admirable force and elevation in the composition; you possess quite a superior degree of talent, sir; and I assure you that I can appreciate the extent of it."

"I have finished my composition," said the young man in green. "Now if the young lady should happen to fall to my lot, can you give her up without a sigh?"

"My composition the other day, I own, encouraged me a little; but I am obliged to say, that by your verses this night you have thrown me into despair; I actually have a distaste for the em-

* A celebrated poet of the eighteenth century, whose works are extant.

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ployment now. Let us take a few cups to inspire us; I shall then endeavour to write something, and boldly enter the lists with you."

"You must first hear me read my composition, and tell me how you like it," said the young gentleman in green.

"All fair," replied the other;" and the former proceeded to read as follows:—

The willow feels the breath of gentle spring,
And branches now in quick succession rise.
They seem like grassy wreaths together set,
Or filaments of gold arranged on high.

The youth in white did not allow his friend time to finish the whole composition, but interrupted him with an exclamation: "Admirable! excellent! Let me pour you out another cup, and then you can go on to the end."

The young poet, quite overjoyed, took the cup, and proceeded to read out these lines:

How blest the angler when he kills his prey!
How sad his lot who guides a restive horse!
In one short day the parch'd-up tree will die,
And all its boughs be pulled for vilest use.

He had scarcely concluded the last line when his companion broke out into an ecstasy of admiration and praise. Sse Yeoupe, who was concealed in a corner of the window, listening to what had passed, could no longer contain himself, but burst into a loud fit of laughter. The two friends jumped up in alarm, and, going to the window, discovered Sse Yeoupe. "Who are you?" said they. "And wherefore have you come thus to secrete yourself here, and make sport of us?"

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" Mere accident : as I was taking a moonlight walk," said Sse Yeoupe, " happening to hear some person declaim a piece of beautiful poetry, my very hands and feet were agitated with pleasure ; and by an irresistible impulse I uttered an expression of admiration, by which you were interrupted. I have a great many apologies to make to you for my want of politeness."

The two young men saw at once, in the person of the intruder, a gentleman of address.

" Since you are conversant with poetry," said the youth in white, " and have a taste for the art, we are friends."

The poet himself added, " As you appear to be a person of merit, come and sit down with us ;" and taking Sse Yeoupe's arm, he led him into the pavilion.

" I am sorry, gentlemen," said the latter, " to give you all this trouble."

" Why so ?" asked the youth in green. " Are not all those who live within the four seas, brethren ?"

Sse Yeoupe was then requested to sit down, and some wine was ordered to be brought. The stranger was then requested to state his name and sirname.

" I am of the family of Sse," replied SseYeoupe ; " my sirname is Liansian. Will you now permit me, gentlemen, to ask your names ?"

The young man in white answered : " My name is Wang, and my sirname is composed of the words *Wen* (literature) and of *Hiang* (to look). This gentleman with me is called Fanjou, and his family name is Tchang. He is the richest gentleman, and

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the best poet, in our town. He has his flower-garden in this place. It is also his retreat for study."

"I now see that I have been a very great intruder," observed Sse Yeoupe: "but the composition which I have just heard read is intended, if I mistake not, to celebrate the spring willows."

"You must have an exquisitely quick ear, indeed," said Tchangfanjou, "to have been able to distinguish so well through this casement. It certainly is on the subject of spring willows, and a very difficult one it is, I promise you."

"How! difficult?" exclaimed the visitor.

"Because," answered the other, "the rhymes are prescribed to me. I have bestowed a great deal of pains on them, for I am determined that this shall be a finished piece."

"Whose is the original?" asked Sse Yeoupe.

"You may be sure," said Tchangfanjou, "if she had not been a very distinguished authoress, I would not have taken so much trouble about them."

"Come, gentlemen," said Sse Yeoupe, "as we are to be friends, let me hear the whole secret."

"Why it is rather an odd sort of matter, altogether," replied Wangwenhiang, "and cannot be so easily told. However, since you are curious to hear it, take off three large cups first, and you shall have the whole story."

"Right, right!" exclaimed the poet; and he ordered the servants to fetch some wine.

"My head is rather a weak one," said Sse Yeoupe: "and I cannot bear much wine."

"Well, but you must make a little sacrifice, if

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you intend that we should indulge your curiosity," replied Wangwenhiang.

Sse Yeoupe took the cups, when Tchangfanjou said to him, " You are a very worthy fellow, seigneur Sse; let me tell you that much. Now you are to know, that the original piece, containing the particular rhymes which we are to adopt, has been composed by a young lady, the daughter of a man of rank living in the neighbouring town. Her endowments outshine those even of Sichi and of Maotsiang; and her personal charms are unrivalled. She has made a vow against marrying a man of the ordinary sort: she is resolved upon having no one but a poet of distinguished talents; a person who can vie with herself in literature, both prose and poetry. She will wait until she meets with a suitor of this description. A few days ago, as she was going to burn some perfumes in the temple, she saw some willows which had then just put on their foliage: she was quite captivated with their beautiful appearance, and she composed some stanzas upon them. She then offered up a prayer to Bouddha, that she might he married to the person who could write another piece to the same rhymes. Here is the plain reason why this gentleman and myself are toiling to death in this place. Now if I can only succeed in completing a piece conformably to the conditions that have been thus laid down, I shall look upon my marriage as a very probable event; and I am sure, sir, you will allow that that would be no small advantage."

Sse Yeoupe was not at a loss to discover, from this communication, that the lady in question was

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no other than the daughter of the minister Pe. However, he thought it better to say nothing of her at present; and he merely requested that the original composition might be shewn to him.

"If you want to see that, you must first take three more cups," observed Tchangfanjou.

"I shall drink after I have seen the verses," replied Sse Yeoupe.

"Very well then, but you will be as good as your word," said Tchangfanjou; and going to a chest, he brought out a paper which he handed to Sse Yeoupe. The latter unfolded it, and saw that it was a manuscript composition on "The Willows of Spring," which was in these terms:—

Light green, and golden yellow, are the colours of the second moon;
The branches of the willow impend over the surface of the lake,
And like silk films gently wave in the breeze:
The moon's light will soon come to brighten their soft texture.
Thus a maiden, 'ere the time of marriage arrives,
Lets her uncertain thoughts wander over the subject.
The prince of the east has called forth this vernal foliage;
Which, brilliant as the silken tissue, charms the fancy.

Sse Yeoupe was enraptured with these verses, and in a transport of admiration exclaimed: "Is it possible that there can be in the world a girl of such wonderful talent? Should not such a piece as this make every poet we have of the other sex blush for his inferiority?"

He read the manuscript over and over again, and appeared as if he would never take his eyes off the paper. "Young gentleman," said Tchang-

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fanjou, "methinks you have had time enough to read these verses: do you remember that you have to take three cups yet? You are not going to decline fulfilling your contract with us, I hope."

"I should not object to drink three hundred, for such a composition as this!" said Sse Yeoupe; "but what can you make of such a miserable drinker as I am?"

"I perceive," said Wangwenhiang, "that your taste inclines more to poetry: what if you compose some verses to these rhymes? We will excuse you then the three cups."

"A piece of verse for three cups! How could you think of making such a bargain?" exclaimed Tchangfanjou.

"I certainly am not able to drink," replied Sse Yeoupe; "and if I have no other alternative, I should prefer attempting the verses."

"Very well," said Wangwenhiang "we shall now have a specimen of Mr Liansian's talent for poetry, for he seems to be quite in the vein."

They then placed pen and ink before Sse Yeoupe. The latter took up the pen; and, after casting his eyes over the original piece once more, he wrote these lines to the same rhymes:—

Now is the time when the breeze is softest, and the shower is lighest:
When the small buds shoot forth into branches in a morning's brief hour.
Like the mists that cling to the arch of yonder bridge, are the thoughts that now issue in light verses.
How I pity the man that is condemned to dig gold from the bowels of the earth!
The unsubstantial snow-drop descending from the heavens, is as worthy of our thoughts!

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Should the wandering dove seek to bear to thee the feelings of my heart,
I would say to her—" Go and count the silken fibres that hang from yonder tree."

As soon as Sse Yeoupe finished his verses, he handed them to the two young men, saying—" It was certainly only to please you, and with great reluctance, that I have composed these verses; but, mind, you must not laugh at me."

The two friends were astonished by this effort; for they observed that Sse Yeoupe, without once stopping or reflecting for a moment, had rapidly written on, and completed the piece almost in a twinkling. They read the two stanzas, and were struck at once with the easy flowing style which characterized them, which was so decidedly superior to the harsh and embarrassed lines of their own compositions. They could not refuse their commendations. " Young gentleman," said they, " you certainly are a genuine poet, and we must pay you the homage that is due to your talents."

" My talent, gentlemen," answered Sse Yeoupe, is very trifling, and the composition I have submitted to you is indeed but a middling performance. I cannot expect to approach the gold and jasper of Mr Tchang."

" There is no occasion for this modesty," observed Tchangfanjou. " It is not my character to be prone to panegyric; but I must say, that your verses are not the less superior for having been composed with so much expedition."

" It is the noble and elegant style of your own verses, gentlemen," said Sse Yeoupe, " that has in-

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spired me. But I have, I think, a claim upon Mr Wang for a sight of his performance."

Wangwenhiang, laughing, said—" Excuse me, but to-day I am not in the vein. To-morrow perhaps, after I have seen the young lady, I may feel more inclined to the task."

" So you have your plans arranged," said Sse Yeoupe; " but can this fair maiden be easily seen ?"

" If you want to get a sight of her," answered Wangwenhiang, " you will find no difficulty in gratifying your curiosity: but she is a girl of such intellect, that even your composition, I am afraid, would scarcely have a chance of pleasing her. If any portion of your poetical ardour remain, set about composing another piece, and we shall proceed, all three, to visit her together."

" Shall I rely upon your word ?" said Sse Yeoupe.

" Our friend Wang," interposed Tchangfanjou, " is the very paragon of honest sincerity; I shall be his security on the occasion. But come, you are to make some new verses."

Sse Yeoupe's imagination was now excited by wine, as well as by the hope of making himself acceptable to Miss Pe. The thoughts rushed upon him with rapidity; and seizing pen and paper, he struck off a fresh composition on the " Spring Willows," adopting the same rhymes as before.

The two friends were perfectly amazed at his quickness; they said nothing, although they were internally convinced that this was a poet of the very first order. The stanza ran thus :—

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Now is the time when the willow puts on its verdant covering;
Ye apricot blossoms! hang down your heads with shame; wither and fall down with spite;
For ye must envy those beauteous branches that, aloft in air,
Wave their luxuriant honours with the grace and freedom of nature;
They whose tints and bending heads invite to meditation,
Do they not attract the thoughts of the lovely one that is near them?
Would ye that this tree should wait till the silk-worm shall give to it its vernal clothing?
Every leaf, every bough, forms the garment in which it is enveloped.

After they had read the verses through, each struck the table in a transport of admiration, and exclaimed, "What beautiful verses! how poetical! how truly exquisite!"

"Gentlemen, I do not deserve those praises," said Sse Yeoupe; "for my mind is confused by all you have made me drink; but I rely upon you now to give me an opportunity of seeing this young lady?"

"We have agreed to do so," said Wang; "but you forgot to tell us one thing: you do not seem to be a native of this place; you will have no objection to inform us what country you come from, and what is your business in this quarter?"

"I am from Kinling," answered Sse Yeoupe; "I am going to Keouyoung on business. I happened to be benighted on my way, and was under the necessity of asking shelter in yonder convent.

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Enjoying just now a moonlight walk, I wandered thither by accident, and had the good fortune to form your agreeable acquaintance."

"From Kinling?" said Tchang. "That town is but a few miles off; we are townsmen then; you presented yourself, I think, at the provincial examination this year; so we are fellow students. Do you happen to know, sir, in your town, one doctor Gou, sirnamed Kouei?"

"You mean Gou Touian," said Sse; "but why do you ask me that question?"

"I have heard a great deal about him," answered Tchang, "and I entertain the highest respect for his character. My motive for asking you about him is, that I wish to make him a visit."

"I only know him very slightly," said Sse Yeoupe; "but we are not on good terms."

"What is the reason?" inquired the other.

"He has a daughter," replied Sse Yeoupe, "that he wanted me to marry; but finding that her pretensions to beauty were of a very moderate description indeed, I begged to decline the proposal; and ever since a coolness exists between us."

"I am satisfied, sir," said Wang, "that the capital is the only place fit for you; you will not be able to meet anywhere in the smaller towns and villages the meritorious person that would be worthy of you. For the present, I am happy that you are accommodated at the convent of Kouanyin; to-morrow we shall all go and visit this fair lady."

It had been Sse Yeoupe's intention to set out, next morning, for Keouyoung, there to procure a prayer to be said in his behalf, and then to return

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with despatch to the place where his uncle's bark was moored; but the prospect of having an opportunity of seeing Miss Pe was quite sufficient to make him change his purpose; and forgetting every engagement, he thought only of her, her charms, and her genius. The three companions could think of nothing, could speak of nothing, but this charming maiden; and thus drinking and discoursing together upon a theme so congenial to all, they remained sitting until the moon had nearly disappeared. Wang and Tchang then led Sse Yeoupe to the garden door. "Remember," said the latter, as he took his leave, "remember our engagement to-morrow!"

"We shall not fail," said they, as they retired.

It was now about the third watch *, and the moon was approaching the horizon. Sse Yeoupe, as he slowly sought the convent, was agitated with various thoughts. "I believed," said he to himself, "that it was a difficult thing to discover an accomplished woman; I would have readily gone to the ends of the earth to have found one: now, I have but just walked out, and the very first thing I stumble upon is this long wished-for object. What a happiness! It is almost sufficient for the period of three lives. And yet, let me pause awhile; true, she is found; but is it quite so certain that I shall have an opportunity of seeing her to-morrow? What if I am made only the prey of vain fancies? Well, but then she is in existence! Though flood and fire oppose me, I am resolved to see her, or perish in the attempt."

* Midnight.

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Absorbed in reflections such as these, Sse Yeoupe remained awake until the fifth watch *, and then he fell into a profound sleep.

In the tranquil enjoyment of a refreshing slumber we now leave Sse Yeoupe, and return to his uncle Sse, the inspector-general, whom we left, as it will be remembered, in expectation of his nephew's approach. The servants whom he had sent with the message, the purport and results of which have been already unfolded, had returned with the news that master Sse Yeoupe was following them, and would very soon arrive. The old man was quite overjoyed; and as soon as he saw the baggage of his nephew, he told the servants not to bring up supper until the latter arrived. The time for lighting the lanterns came, without bringing any tidings of Sse Yeoupe. The guards had already struck the eleventh hour, and the first watch had begun; but still no news of the expected visitor had come to dissipate the apprehensions of old Sse. "Doubtless," thought he, "it must be business that detained him; to-morrow I dare say he will be here without fail." He quietly proceeded to despatch his supper, after which he retired to bed.

The inspector, finding that his nephew did not arrive next morning, ordered one of the grooms who had waited on Sse Yeoupe the preceding day, to go back to the same place. The servant galloped almost the whole way; and on his return, informed his master, that upon inquiring of the person who had the care of master Sse's apartments, where the young gentleman was, the old man declared that he

* About four o'clock in the morning.

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had set out the evening before, at the same time as the baggage, and that he could not divine what was the cause of his not arriving before that time at his uncle's.

The inspector-general now became very much alarmed, and inquired if his nephew might not have been detained by improper company. He called the servant who had brought the baggage, and minutely examined him. "Pray," said he, "my man, when your master stayed at home, and when he was not engaged in business, what sort of company did he keep? Was he addicted to gambling and loose society?"

"My young master," replied the servant, "liked neither. His only pastime was reading, unless he occasionally went to look at some flowers in the morning, or at night to enjoy the light of the moon. With the exception of now and then composing verses, and indulging in a few cups of wine, these were the only amusements in which he ever took any pleasure. He used to be fond of the society of two young fellow-students; but since his degree of bachelor was taken from him, he has given up even the society of his friends."

"How is it, if your young master is so given to study, and has no taste for gambling and company,—how is it," inquired the uncle, "that he has been deprived of his bachelor's degree?"

"Some time ago," answered the servant, "the examiner came and placed my young master, after the examination, at the head of the list. Now there was a certain great gentleman quite taken with my young master's abilities, and he wished to make him his son-in-law; but he, for some reason or

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another, refused. The great man got vexed, and complained to the examiner. It unfortunately so happened, that this gentleman and the examiner were old acquaintances and fellow-students; so that the examiner put himself also into a great passion, and without more ado he struck my poor young master off the bachelor's roll."

This intelligence caused old Sse to sigh frequently, and utter exclamations of anger.

Messengers were now sent, in various directions, in quest of Sse Yeoupe. Five days of fruitless pursuit were already spent, when the inspector-general, mortified at the disappointment, was obliged to set sail.

They who are curious to know what befell Sse Yeoupe, will learn it in the following chapter.

CHAPTER VII.

A FALSE NAME OCCASIONS THE LOSS OF A PEARL TO A POET.

"This marriage is a devil of an affair. Who is it that can produce concord without a world of trouble? The flower has but a moment to blow; and the full moon herself shews spots on her disk. Pleasure as well as genius is allied to love; but jealousy and anger raise up tempests. In truth, it is not man that creates obstacles: it is heaven; and how can we help it?"

UNDER the influence of wine, Tchang had thoughtlessly imparted to Sse Yeoupe everything about Miss Pe; but when he called to mind, next day, the marked interest which the young gentleman appeared to take in her behalf, and especially when

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he remembered the superior verses which the latter had written to the prescribed rhymes, he began to reflect on the consequences of what had passed, and saw reason to repent his indiscretion. He repaired to the pavilion with the view of consulting Wang. As he entered the garden, he saw this young man walking at a little distance; and his disturbed appearance and manner announced the inward conflict by which his mind was agitated. "My friend Wang," said Tchang, accosting him, "why so thoughtful?"

The latter made no reply. Tchang now stood before him in his path. The countenance of Wang was red with passion. "Well," said he, "for a pair of intelligent folks, I think we have committed a sad blunder!"

"How is that?" inquired Tchang.

"Why, last night, what reason had we to unbosom ourselves to this young man, this Sse? He was neither friend nor relation; nothing to us beyond an acquaintance of the moment. He is, remember, both young and handsome, and as for verses, his compositions are excellent. Now, if we permit him to come with us, I doubt that he may not supplant us."

"It was only this moment," observed Tchang, "that I was lamenting what had happened; and I came to know from you what is best to be done."

"A word once uttered cannot be recalled," said Wang.

"Last night," replied Tchang, "my head was somewhat confused, and I can scarce tell how his verses read in comparison with my own. Just take

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them, and let us examine their merits a little more closely."

They proceeded to peruse the verses; and the more they examined them, the more beautiful they appeared. Alternately they looked at each other, and then at the verses. "Well," said Tchang, "after sifting the piece thoroughly, I confess I think they are a little better than my own. Let us then take each one of the compositions; and if any glory is to flow from them, let us take advantage of the opportunity, and appropriate it to ourselves. Should this Sse come to inquire for us, it will be easy to desire the servant to tell him that we are not at home; and there will be an end of it."

"When I asked him yesterday to compose the second piece," said Wang, "it was with a view to this very plan; but I see, upon reflection, that this course will be attended with some inconvenience."

"What inconvenience can there be in it?" asked Tchang.

"I perceive," answered his companion, "that this Sse Liansian is a young man of an ardent temperament, and fond of pleasure. If we do not take him with us, it is not likely that, having once got the scent, he will give up the pursuit. He will doubtless make inquires, and ultimately will gain access to the young lady by himself. Suppose he succeeds thus far, these two pieces of verse will be forthcoming; and an exposure of the truth, you must admit, would be extremely unpleasant."

"You are perfectly right," observed Tchang; "but listen to my expedient: what is to prevent us

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from prevailing with the old door-keeper Toung to repulse Sse Liansian, in case he should come there, prevent him from seeing any one within, and refuse to give him back the verses? Will he get wings, do you imagine, to enter the house?"

"This is an excellent plan," replied the other; "but if he does not recover back his verses, and if he finds all avenues closed against him, his determination will still continue. Better to bring him with us, and act openly."

"How act openly?" cried Tchangfanjou.

"You and I will take these two copies," said Wang. "Let your name be upon one, and mine on the other; we then put Sse Liansian's name upon the verses which you composed yesterday. We must take care to go beforehand to the old porter, and arrange with him to say, when we all come, that his master Pe is not at home. He will then keep the verses altogether; and whenever afterwards Sse Liansian shall call, the porter will give him the same answer, still retaining whatever the young man may deliver to him. Thus, as he is a stranger, the recurrence of the disappointment may have the effect of causing dissatisfaction and disgust in his mind. But now we must transcribe the verses."

Tchang was quite overjoyed at the proposal. "This is most admirably projected," said he; "but it requires to be carried into execution without loss of time. Whom shall we send to the old porter?"

"This is a confidential affair," said Wang; "whom should you employ? I must go myself;

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but this old fellow is fond of money, and I should have with me some cash."

"In a great undertaking like this, expense is no object," observed the other: "here are two ounces* for him; and promise that, when the business is over, his services shall be handsomely acknowledged."

"Two ounces are a good deal," said Wang; "but the old rascal has covetous eyes. If he do not take up the matter heartily, we cannot expect to succeed: let him have three ounces at once for a gratuity. We may have occasion for his assistance by-and-by."

Tchang, finding that he could not escape from this demand, very reluctantly set about weighing three ounces, which he enclosed in a sealed paper. He then copied one of Sse Yeoupe's compositions very accurately on a handsome sheet of flower paper, and signed it with his own name. He next made Wang transcribe the verses which he himself had written, and subscribe the name of "Sse Liansian" to them. He finally formed the whole into a packet, which he placed in his sleeve, and proceeded on the way to Kinchi.

It may be convenient to state, that the porter Toung had been long a domestic in Pe's family. His name was Toungyoung, and he was sirnamed Siaothsiouan. Money was his god, and wine the joy of his soul. He would give his heart's blood for gold, and his head for a cup of wine, at any time. Let but a person approach him with a pitcher

* About four shillings British.

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of wine and a little money, and there was not an incident connected with the house that he would not freely communicate. It was to his kindness that Wang was indebted for a copy of Miss Pe's verses on the "Spring Willows."

On the present occasion, when Wang went to look for him, he found the old man before the door, secretly counting down some money to a little boy whom he was sending for some wine. Wang came behind him unperceived, and tapping him gently on the shoulder with his fan, accosted him thus: "There you are, my jolly old fellow!"

The porter turned round hastily, and recognising Wang, began to laugh; "Is it you, my master?" he exclaimed. "Jolly indeed! so well I may, when master Wang condescends to come and see me."

"To be sure you are jolly," replied Wang; "and I am come to be merry with you too."

The porter, now perceiving from the tone of his voice, that Wang had something to say to him, sent away the little boy. He then accompanied the young man along the street some distance, when they turned into a bye lane together, and proceeded to a small house, where they sat down to confer. "Now, Mr Wang, what is your business with me?" inquired the porter.

"Why," replied the other, "it is about some verses to the same rhymes as those you remember, the other day, on the Spring Willows. I have just a slight favour to ask of you respecting them."

"Certainly, certainly," said the old man. "As the rhymes are filled up, if you want to see my

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"Yes, and all is right," exclaimed Wang in reply. "I just met him as I came to the door. But how is it that young Sse has not yet been seen?"

Wang had scarcely uttered these words, when he saw Sse Yeoupe approach, accompanied by Siaohi.

Sse Yeoupe had been kept awake during a considerable part of the night by the conflicting thoughts which agitated his mind; it was not until the approach of morning that he was enabled to procure any sleep, and hence he did not rise until the day was somewhat advanced. As soon as he had finished his breakfast, and made his toilet, he repaired to Tchang's garden, where he found the two friends. After they had saluted each other, Tchang inquired the reason why Sse Yeoupe had been so late.

"Gentlemen," said the latter, "your kind reception of me, last night is the cause; you made me drink too much, and that has made me break my appointment with you this morning. I beseech you to excuse me."

Wang began to laugh. "Oh! I presume," said he, "that you feel no longer any curiosity about seeing Miss Pe?"

"Why, gentlemen," said Sse Yeoupe, "if you have no wish yourselves upon the subject, I do not want to see her."

"But if we are to go at all," replied Tchang, "the hour is come: let us not lose time in unnecessary conversation."

"My rhymes are not yet completed," said Wang; "so that I have nothing to give. Hasten, gentle-

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men, with your copies. If either of you come back with favourable news, it is right that we should have plenty of wine provided against your return."

The party entered the pavilion, when Tchang and Sse Yeoupe each transcribed the verses which they had composed respectively the evening before, after which they placed them in their sleeves. Tchang then put on a robe of a colour suited to the season, and ordered his servant to bring out three horses. The young men mounted, and leaving the garden, proceeded in the direction of Kinchi.

The distance of that town from Pechi, where they then were, did not exceed three or four miles. The party very speedily, therefore, accomplished their short journey, and stopped before Pe's gate. They descended from their horses, and walked up to he entrance, where they were met, as had been previously arranged, by the old porter Toung. "What is your pleasure, gentlemen?" said he, accosting them.

Wang stepped forward. "These gentlemen," he answered, "Messieurs Tchang and Sse, are come to visit your master."

"They should have been here," returned the porter, "a quarter of an hour sooner: my master is gone to dine in town; but if you have any commands for him, you may leave them with me."

"We have no occasion to speak to him," observed Tchang; "but having learned that he wishes to obtain verses on the Spring Willows, this young gentleman and myself have composed some

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on the subject, and we are desirous of having his opinion upon them."

"If it be verses that you bring," answered Toung, "you have only to leave them. When my master returns, he shall have them; and no doubt he will then make an appointment with you."

Tchang asked Sse Yeoupe what they should do. "Shall we leave the verses now," said he, "or wait until we can see Pe himself?"

"An interview would be better, certainly," replied Sse Yeoupe; "but can we not return here?"

"My master dines abroad to-day," said the porter; "and I am afraid that he will come back too late to be able to receive your visit."

"Then leave the verses," said Wang. "What occasion is there for an interview?"

The other two then gave their verses into the porter's care, requesting of him, when his master returned, to recommend them to his attention.

"Most certainly," replied Toung. "But, gentlemen, where is it you live? For undoubtedly, when my master has read your verses, he will want to know your address."

Wang informed him that Tchang was an inhabitant of the town of Tanyang, and that the flower garden where he had set up his study was down in the village of Pechi. Mr Sse, he said, was for the present residing in the convent of Kouanyin in the same village.

"At Pechi?" said the porter. "That is not far off; we shall now know where to send to you when you shall be wanted."

The three young men then remounted their horses,

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and after repeating their injunctions to the old man, set off for the village of Pechi; and there, after having seen them safely arrived, we shall take leave of them for the present.

The porter returned to his lodge, and put aside the compositions which had been just placed in his hands: he then took the verses which had been previously left with him by Wang, and went with them to his master.

Pe little thought, when he had affected indisposition in order to retreat to the country, that he would have found, in the obscurity of this village, the description of son-in-law which he had so long anxiously sought. His daughter had produced a little piece on the Spring Willows, and he thought it would be a good way of finding out some person of merit, if he were to receive verses on the same subject with the same rhymes.

It happened about this time that a distant relation had brought to him a nephew whom Pe consented to bring up as his own son. This boy was just fifteen, his name was Kitsou, and his sirname Yinglang; but in point of understanding his pretensions were very feeble indeed: he would do nothing but mope about, and waste his time. When a book was placed in his hands, he forthwith fell sick, and remained indisposed the whole day. Pe entertained towards him no other regard than that which a person can scarcely avoid feeling for a relation. He had nevertheless kept the boy with him, and thought it useless to take any pains about him.

At the precise period of which we speak, Pe was seated in the pavilion of *rural dreams*, to enjoy the

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sight of flowers, when he saw the old porter approach with the two compositions on the Spring Willows. He unfolded one; and after having cast his eyes over it, he exclaimed laughing, "Is it possible that there can be such a blockhead under heaven, as to compose verses like these, and address them to me?" He looked at it again, and seeing that it was signed by Sse Liansian, he threw it away. He took the next paper, and perused it; when, surprised at what he had read, he broke out into expressions of admiration. "What exquisite verses!" said he. He read the composition again. "This shews extraordinary talent," said he: "it is a long time since anything like that, has come before me; whose can this be?" And hastily looking towards the signature, he observed the words, "composed by Tchang Outche of Tanyang."

The appearance of such an inscription tended to increase very considerably the astonishment of Pe. "Tanyang," said he, "is but a little town close by; how is it possible that such genius as this indicates could lie buried there?" He hastily called a waiting-maid, and desired her to go and call Miss Pe.

The young lady quickly obeyed her father's directions, and as she entered the pavilion, he met her with a smiling air. "What do you think, my child?" said he. "I have to-day found out a husband worthy of you."

"Who is he, and where have you met him?" were the eager inquiries of Houngiu.

"A couple of young men have just left two compositions on the Spring Willows: the first of them is nonsense; the other shews the hand of a superior

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poet." He then gave to his daughter the verses bearing the signature of Tchang.

The young lady having read the two stanzas, said that it certainly was a composition that betrayed an exquisite taste and genius. "No one but a man of extrordinary talent," said she, "could have written it: but have you, my dear father, yet seen the author?"

"I have not seen him," answered Pe; "but judging from the verses, he must be a person of very unusual merit."

Houngiu again looked at the verses. "The more I consider them," said she, "the more I am convinced that the author must be a distinguished and accomplished person, a poet equal to Litaipe himself. But his writing is very inferior: it is heavy and vulgar. It appears to me to betray different hands, and my only fear is that it is the transcript by a blockhead of some other person's composition. It is necessary that you should look carefully to this circumstance."

"Very proper," said Pe. "I shall invite the author to-morrow to visit me, and try him upon some other subject. We shall then be able to discover the truth."

"That is the surest way," said Houngiu.

Pe then sent for Toung, and desired him to take at an early hour the next morning a visiting card, and go with it to invite Mr Tchang to his house."

"And Mr Sse, am I to invite him too?" asked the porter.

"Invite him, indeed!" said Pe, laughing. "What nonsense the old man talks."

Toung precipitately left the pavilion; and Pe,

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giving the verses with Sse Liansian's name to his daughter, said "Cast your eyes over this, did you ever behold anything so impudent?"

Houngiu could not read them without laughing; and for some time they formed a subject of amusement to father and daughter.

Meanwhile, upon the return of the three young men from Kinchi, Tchang prevailed upon Sse Yeoupe to remain and dine with him in his garden. When the latter returned to the convent at night, he was accosted by Tsingin. "And where is it that master Sse has dined to-day?"

"I proposed to return this morning at an early hour," replied Sse Yeoupe; "but last night, taking a moon light walk, I encountered two young gentlemen Tchang and Wang, who kept me to compose verses with rhymes furnished by Miss Pe, on the subject of the Spring Willows. This morning we all went with our compositions to Kinchi; and I know not how it was, but the day slided away imperceptibly."

"With your accomplishments and capacity, sir, you are worthy of the hand of Miss Pe: and doubtless you will fully realize the expectations which her father would wish to see verified in the person of his son-in-law."

"I am rather indifferent as to people's opinions about my appearance," replied Sse Yeoupe. "All I know is, that whilst in your house, my good master, I put you to great inconvenience and trouble; and that, I assure you, gives me much uneasiness."

"How can you talk in this strain? If you were to stop for a whole year, it would produce no in-

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convenience whatever. I am only concerned that the limited means of our convent do not allow us to entertain you in a suitable manner."

"I am grateful to you for your kindness," said Sse Yeoupe, "as indeed my thanks should be unbounded; if it should be my lot to obtain the least promotion, my first care will be to repay your goodness."

"Hear me, master Sse, it may be your fortune to-morrow to contract an alliance with his excellency Pe—then the two families shall be united in one; wherefore should you not be an acceptable guest here? You must sup with us to-night."

"No supper for me," replied Sse Yeoupe. "I shall have one cup of tea, and then go to bed."

Tsingin ordered tea to be served up to Sse Yeoupe, after which they separated for the night.

Next morning, when Sse Yeoupe rose, his mind was entirely occupied in expecting an answer to his verses. He finished his toilet without delay, and was just setting out to look for Tchang, when Tsingin entered, accompanied by his two companions of the former day. "Here, gentlemen," said Tsingin, "is master Sse's apartment."

Sse Yeoupe advanced to meet the party.

"What master Sse," said Tchang laughing, "you look quite blooming this morning; your verses then have succeeded, have they?"

"How should I expect to be so fortunate?" said Sse Yeoupe. "The prize ought to belong to you, master Tchang."

"Gentlemen," interposed Wang, good humouredly, "your language on both sides is certainly marked by the greatest modesty; but heaven only

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knows what is passing in your hearts; that, however, I leave to yourselves."

They all began to laugh, and whilst they were thus pleasantly conversing together, a messenger arrived to say that one of Pe's servants was waiting in Tchang's garden with an invitation to that gentleman.

Tchang, on hearing this intelligence, was not more agreeably surprised than if an imperial envoy had been despatched to tell him that he had obtained the first place at the general examination of learned men. Almost overcome with joy, he said to the messenger: "And has not master Sse been invited too? Rascal that you are, you must not have taken your message properly."

"The servant stated particularly that he came to invite master Tchang only," said the messenger.

"I am satisfied still," observed Tchang, "that he came to invite us both."

"He certainly said nothing of an invitation to master Sse," declared the servant.

Sse Yeoupe was perfectly confounded at this news. "How can it be," said he to himself, "that this man should be invited? It is very strange." But putting on a feigned appearance of tranquillity, he addressed Tchang: "It must be to you alone that the invitation was sent; if there were any commands for me, it is to the convent they would have been directed."

"If there be any doubt in the matter," observed Wang, "let us all go at once to the garden, and we can learn the truth without a moment's hesitation."

The companions proceeded to the pavilion in

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Tchang's garden, where they found old Toung seated; and after they had bid him a good morning, he said to Tchang, "I yesterday fulfilled your commission, sir; when my master returned, I gave him the verses, and he read them twice or thrice with my young lady in the pavilion of *rural dreams*. He praised exceedingly your talents, and said that they could not be equalled in the empire; he finally caused me to come here and invite you to visit him."

The porter then presented Tchang with a visiting card, on which was written, "Pe Hiouan has the honour to present his respects to you." Joy sparkled in the countenance and eyes of the young man, and he ordered breakfast to be brought.

Wang maliciously inquired of the porter, if his master had yet seen Sse's verses.

"Certainly: I gave them to him, and he read them first," replied Toung. "See them! why not?"

"Well, but if he has seen them, has he said nothing of them?" inquired Tchang.

"I suppose," answered Toung, "that he was very much delighted with them; for as soon as he read them, he burst out laughing."

"If he was so pleased then," observed Tchang, "why did he not invite master Sse to see him?"

"I put the question to him, if I was to ask master Sse; but I only got a very good scolding for doing so. It may be his wish to invite the young gentleman some other day; I cannot tell, I am sure."

Tchang wanted to keep the old man to breakfast; but the latter refused, saying, "My master is very strict, and I should be afraid to keep him

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waiting. If it be in your power, I should be very glad, master Tchang, that you would accompany me as soon as possible."

"Your advice is best," replied Tchang; "but, my good old friend, this is your first visit here; will you go away without taking something?"

"I am exceedingly obliged to you, sir," said Toung: "I shall certainly at some future opportunity take the liberty of troubling you; at present I cannot stay."

"You are very right, my old friend," observed Wang. "Master Tchang is an excellent fellow; but at present we must cut short our meal."

Tchang retired for a moment, and folding up an ounce, gave it to the porter. "Here," said he: "time presses; we must yield to necessity."

Toung made a shew of refusing the compliment, but ultimately accepted the silver.

Sse Yeoupe then rose to depart. "You must not leave us," said Tchang; "I am only going to see Mr Pe for a moment, and shall be back immediately. I dare say I shall not be kept long. His excellency, I presume, only wants to put us both to the test: who knows?"

"You are right," observed Wang. "I shall keep master Sse company until your return; so set off quickly, and do not be long."

Sse Yeoupe agreed to stay. Tchang dressed himself in a new robe of rich stuff; and having loaded himself with a number of little articles as introductory presents, he ordered two horses to be got in readiness, the one for himself, and the other for the porter. He then bade farewell to his two companions, and took the direction of Kinchi, secretly

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rejoicing at his good fortune. Truth requires it to be stated, that he certainly did assume a variety of airs which were not observable in his conduct the evening before.

What happened upon the visit of Tchang to his excellency Pe, may be learned in the following chapter.

CHAPTER VIII.

A WAITING MAID AT A SIDE GLANCE DETECTS THE COARSE STUFF.

"It is difficult to protect ourselves against being imposed upon by falsehood, particularly when it is got up on a basis of truth. But the precious flower is known by its perfume. The sparkling colours of the imitation stone may take for a short time: but the glow of the ruby can never be mistaken. Rich clothes cannot conceal a clown. Beauty should ever be the reward of talent. Of what use to a fool is all the trouble he gives himself?"

A VERY short time brought Tchang and his companion, the old porter, to Pe's residence. As soon as they alighted, the young gentleman was introduced by Toung into the reception-room, where he begged of him to take a seat. Toung then proceeded to apprize his master of the young gentleman's arrival; and Pe waited not a moment to make his appearance, and give a suitable reception to his guest. As he entered the apartment, and surveyed the person of his visitor, he felt not a little disappointed. The countenance and general appearance of Tchang were decidedly of the vulgar cast. He

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seemed to be wholly wrapped up in himself, whilst a mingled expression of lurking cunning and bold assurance sat upon his features. He certainly had anything but the air of a person who was capable of composing verses. His ill-formed shoulders and disproportioned corpulent frame, shewed that he belonged to some other than the well-bred classes of society: and the most indifferent spectator could not fail to see a very rascal depicted in his haggard eye and contracted brow.

Suspicion instantly flashed across Pe's mind. "Surely," thought he, "this person has nothing of the appearance of a poet." However, after having invited the young man, Pe could do no less than give him the best reception. As soon as Tchang observed him come into the apartment, he advanced in haste to make his reverence: and then taking out the presents which he had brought with him, he offered them to Pe. The latter, having chosen a couple of articles of different sorts, laid them on one side, and begged of his guest to take a seat, which the latter, in his excessive modesty, made a shew of declining for some time. At length they both sat down in those relative places which custom assigned to them on the occasion. "I yesterday," began the host, "had the pleasure of receiving the beautiful composition which you were so good as to send me. Every word in it is gold or jasper. It gave me such delight, that I could scarcely drag myself from it."

"My studies have been very limited," replied Tchang; "and my talents are but middling. But I had the good fortune, in this instance, to have had a *sable* for my model. I am inexpressibly alarmed

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indeed: for I must have had a heart* the size of a bushel to have sent you such paltry verses as these."

"I observed by your manuscript, yesterday, that you are an inhabitant of Tanyang. This place is in the neighbourhood; how is it that, possessing such merit as you do, your name has never reached me?"

"My house is at Tanyang," replied Tchang; "but just opposite to the village of Kinchi I have a small garden, where I retire to devote myself to study; and I spend but little time in the village. I am naturally disinclined to keep up any intercourse with the world, and hence my name has not been able to reach you."

"Oh! I see that you are a determined man of letters, wholly bent upon perfecting yourself. There are very few indeed like you."

Tea was now served by Pe's orders, after which he resumed the conversation. "My young friend," he continued, "when I invited you to come and visit me to-day, it was entirely on account of the very great pleasure which I derived from your verses. My only regret is, that I have not more specimens of them. Will you have the goodness to write a piece or two before me? I trust that you are not too chary of that jasper, and those pearls which have so taken my old fancy." And having uttered these words, he ordered pens and paper to be brought.

Tchang had hoped that by loquacity and a bold

* The original word is "gall:" for with the Chinese it is the organ of courage and magnanimity, as well as of presumption and impudence.

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tone he would have been able to produce an impression; but the moment Pe mentioned the proposal to write verses in his presence, the unfortunate young man felt like one who was struck suddenly with a thunderbolt. His spirit seemed at once to have vanished from his body, and for a few moments his tongue was absolutely palsied with fear. He would have refused, but the servants had already set down the writing-table. Pens, ink, paper, and every necessary accommodation, were now placed before him in the most convenient manner possible. Tchang was perfectly stupified, and even after a little time was only able to drawl out, "A poor scholar like myself would not presume to yield to his inspirations before such a person as your excellency. I could never get on with the seven syllabic metre before you: and I am certain that I should only make you laugh at my expense."

"Well, but surely," said Pe, "to try one's pen a little before company, is an amusement of which literary men are very fond. Had I a subject in my mind, and if I were once moved by it, I assure you I should not so easily let it escape. Come, you must not really be so excessively modest."

Tchang saw that his evasive excuses were utterly ineffectual. His cheek burned, his senses were bewildered; and after stammering a good deal, it was with difficulty that he was able to articulate these few words: "I must make an essay, I see—will your excellency be so good as to give me a subject? And after that, I must be an humble suitor to you for instructions how to proceed."

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Pe took a moment to consider. "Ay," said he, "we cannot have a better theme than what you have already written upon, the Spring Willows. You have complied in the most agreeable and ingenious manner with the conditions that were prescribed. So, unless you have any objection yourself, let this composition be upon the same subject and with the same rhymes."

Tchang's heart leaped with joy at this proposal, for he luckily remembered the words of the second piece which Sse Yeoupe had, with his accustomed rapidity, written in the pavilion. His mind being thus placed at ease, he resumed all the airs and attitudes of a literary man. However he still affected to wish to decline the task. "I am but a very awkward artist, I can assure your excellency, at best; nevertheless, since you do me the honour to press me so far, I do not think myself at liberty to resist your orders. But I feel exceedingly embarrassed."

"Will you be so kind, sir, as to comply?"

Tchang replied, "I suppose I must be so rash." He then seized a pen, and took a sheet of paper, which he spread before him. He next put on a frowning look of momentary reflection, nodded significantly twice, and began to write. When he completed the transcript, he rose, and carrying the paper in both hands, presented it to Pe with a profound reverence. The latter cast his eye over the composition: he read it a second time, and was not a little delighted to find that, in elegance and poetical expression, it far outshone even its predecessor. He remarked, nevertheless, that Tchang did not allow himself a moment of reflection, and

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that the piece had been completed with wonderful rapidity. All the suspicions which had been suggested in his mind by the clownish appearance of his visitor, and the doubts which he had before that entertained, were now entirely dissipated by a proof of skill which could not be controverted. "What an exquisite genius!" broke out Pe. "What freedom, what glowing thoughts and expressions! And above all, what expedition! You are the very being I have been in quest of through the empire; and how nearly had I missed you!"

He returned again and again to the verses with fresh admiration; and having called a servant, he, unperceived, desired that they might be carried to his daughter. He then ordered dinner to be served in the garden behind the house, and requested Tchang to stay and drink two or three cups with him. The latter, with a great many acknowledgments, wished to decline the honour. "You have already sir," said he, "overpowered me with marks of benevolence: your kindness has far surpassed my most sanguine expectations. It is not becoming in me to abuse in this way your friendly dispositions towards me."

"Poh, poh!" said Pe, "come along, let us know each other better; you are far too formal:" and taking Tchang by the arm, he led him towards the garden. The young visitor's mind was divided between pleasure and dissatisfaction. He had occasion for congratulation in the prosperous train in which his matrimonial speculation appeared to be placed; but then it was possible that some such calamity might arise in the course of the evening as an interesting subject for poetry, upon which his

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powers might peremptorily be put in requisition. This formidable anticipation, like an uncontrollable demon, haunted his bosom, until they had been some time in the garden. The mingling varieties of tints which presented themselves in this place, made it a truly charming retreat. Here the peach-tree unfolded its crimson hues, and the willow its golden pendants. Here might be seen the plum-tree with its various blossoms, and the piony with its unnumbered petals: and here the calyx of every flower cherished its treasure of countless diamonds. The screaming magpie, and the skimming swallow, likewise united in the scene: the busy bee, and fantastic butterfly, disported around. Spring reigned in all her verdant splendor, and every breeze that sighed along was laden with richest perfume.

Pe courteously led Tchang to those spots that were most agreeable to the sight: and a stranger might have inferred, from the elaborate politeness which had been extended to this young man, that his marriage was no longer a speculation, and that the father at once admitted him to the confidence of a son-in-law. The party now proceeded to where the wine had been served, and began to drink and converse together beneath the cooling shade of tall flowers.

Whilst the gentlemen were thus engaged, Houngiu, who had been apprized of her father's intention to invite this young gentleman, as well as that his purpose was to put his pretensions to the proof, took care to employ a trusty woman of her own to take an opportunity of making a sly observation in the parlour. The name of this confidential person

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was Yansou; she was brought up from her infancy in the service of Miss Pe; she was naturally shrewd and intelligent, and had just attained her fifteenth year.

On this day, as soon as she had received the instructions of her young mistress, she proceeded to execute her commission. She placed herself in a convenient spot within sight of the apartment; and thence, without being seen herself, she enjoyed an opportunity of thoroughly observing the person of Tchang. Nor did she quit her hiding-place until the young man accompanied her master to the garden. As soon as they retired, she went to her young mistress, bringing with her the verses which had been secretly given her by Pe for Houngiu's perusal. "Well, well," said she peevishly, "this good man is to be sure plain enough; his features are vulgar and disagreeable: how can he be worthy of you? Take care of him, Miss; that's all I say."

"Has my father made him compose any verses?" inquired Houngiu.

"As for his verses, I believe he has composed some: here they are," handing them to her mistress.

The latter read them attentively, and said, "Certainly these are very charming: no one but a poet of the first rank could write so well. How is it that his appearance and his style correspond so badly?"

"Take my word for it, Miss, there must be some knavery in this business."

"What knavery can there be?" asked Houngiu.

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"Here are the verses written under my father's very eye, and they are quite as beautiful as those of the other day."

"Well, Miss, there is no accounting for people's thoughts sometimes: but his are not the eyes, I swear, that would make a body wish to go back and see them again. He a man of talent, indeed! Why, not to mention such a lady as you are, if he was to offer to marry myself, I would not have a bit of him."

"Did you hear if my father said anything when he read the verses?"

"Your father," replied Yansou, "looks to the verses, and not to the man. He said a great deal about them. But my dear young lady, this is a very serious business; your whole life is concerned in it; and you should follow your inclinations."

The ill-shapen and vulgar penmanship of the copies which she read had staggered the mind of Miss Pe with respect to Tchang; but Yansou's rhetoric completed the unfavourable impression. She involuntarily breathed a heavy sigh. "I am particularly unfortunate," said she, addressing her maid. "From my earliest childhood, it has been my father's care to obtain a suitable husband for me; and up to this hour not a single suitor has presented himself that answers to his expectations. Yesterday we thought, when we beheld the verses, that our happiness was on the verge of being completely secured: who would have anticipated such a mortifying disappointment as the appearance of this young man must excite?"

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Yansou only laughed. "My dear lady," said she; "why do you make yourself so unhappy? Don't you know the proverb, 'the maid that waits for marrying, will be happier far for tarrying?' Heaven has given you talents and beauty: and some time or other it will send a young man who in person and mind will be worthy of you. You must not then be disheartened; you are not surely so advanced in life. Why on earth are you in such a hurry?"

At this moment Pe appeared, after having parted with Tchang, coming to have an interview with his daughter. As soon as she saw him, Houngiu ran to meet him. "Well, child," said he to her, "you have seen, I dare say, the verses which Mr Tchang has composed with such expedition."

"I have, sir," was the reply.

"I own, yesterday," said Pe, "I had my suspicions of him; but to-day I put him to the proof under my own eyes, and I observed that without hesitation or reflection, as fast as the pen could go, he composed his verses; he is a man of genuine talent, no doubt."

"With respect to his talent, sir, I believe it to be unexceptionable; but does his person correspond?"

"Now, that is certainly a singularity," replied Pe; "his person is not to be compared to his talent."

Houngiu, at these words, held down her head and was silent. Pe paused a moment, and then addressed his daughter. "My child, if there be the least reluctance in your mind, it would be in

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vain to strive to overcome it. All I fear is, that if we reject a man of such intellect as this, we shall find it very difficult to meet with another."

Houngiu was still silent. At length Pe continued: "My Houngiu, if there be any suspicions still lurking in your mind, I have a plan in view which I can have recourse to; that is, to propose to this young man to undertake the education of Yinglang. That is the most effectual and decisive way of coming at once to the truth, and ending the matter one way or other."

"That will be the best way, sir," replied Houngiu.

Pe saw that he had now succeeded in tranquillizing his daughter's mind, and sending for Toung the porter, he gave him these directions: "To-morrow you will tell my secretary to write a private letter, and you will provide the customary presents, with which you will go in my name to Mr Tchang, the gentleman who has just departed, and propose to him to come and superintend my son in his studies."

Toung went as had been ordered, to get the letter and the presents ready.

In the mean time Tchang was raised to a pitch of enthusiastic joy by the reception, and by the proofs of friendly regard, which Pe had given him. By the time he had returned home, the sun began to assume a yellowish hue; he found before him Sse Yeoupe and Wang, engaged together in argument. "Gentlemen, gentlemen," said he, "I have forfeited my word, I fear, with you; I have a thousand apologies to make."

The two young men replied that the delay was perfectly natural. "But," said they, "as Pe kept you

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with him, something decisive, no doubt, has taken place relative to your marriage ?"

Tchang, whose manner indicated the most complete self-satisfaction, explained to his friends the way in which he had been received, and how he had been detained for dinner. He gave them a particular account of everything that had happened, sinking the solitary circumstance of his being called on to compose a second piece on the Spring Willows. " As for the marriage," said he in conclusion, " no formal promise has certainly passed ; but I flatter myself that I have had decided evidences of a very strong partiality."

" Then your marriage," returned Wang, " is more than decided."

Still some doubts clung to Sse Yeoupe's mind. " Well, well," said he to himself, " if it be to such a piece of verse as this man has composed, that the prize is awarded, the young lady cannot certainly be considered as very peculiarly endowed with poetical instinct. But how is it that she is capable of composing such verses as she does, and yet that she should not have succeeded in her choice of a husband by this time ?"

However, Tchang appeared to be unfeignedly happy at his success ; and Sse Yeoupe, finding his situation become more unpleasant every moment, begged permission to retire, which was soon accorded to him by his host.

" A capital hit I have made to-day," said Tchang in great glee to Wang, as soon as Sse Yeoupe was out of sight ; and he then confided to his friend the whole history of the suppressed incident, namely, that Pe had requested of him to exe-

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cute a composition in his presence, and by what means he had the luck to be able to acquit himself with such decisive advantage.

"You are a most lucky dog," exclaimed Wang; "after such a trial, your marriage is determined on, I take it for granted. Everything turns out to the best advantage. Was it not an excellent thought of mine, to keep the second piece?"

"I may well say," observed Tchang, "that heaven has been auspicious to me this day. But I feel a little alarmed lest the old fellow should subject me to another ordeal. Well, it will be either life or death to me."

"I think, that in what has taken place already, you have a good security for the future," said Wang.

"That is but a transitory security," replied the other; "and how shall I be able to keep the thing up?"

"Very easily—see Sse Yeoupe, make a shew of friendship towards him, keep him here, and if any difficult task be proposed to you, get him to perform it in your stead; will not that be a relief to you?"

Tchang was quite pleased with the thought. "That is an excellent idea," said he. "To-morrow I shall go and see him, and I shall prevail upon him to come and live in my garden."

Early the next day he made haste to pay a visit to Sse Yeoupe for he apprehended that this young gentleman, disgusted with his failure, would take his departure rather abruptly. But Sse Yeoupe was still in bed when he called, and starting up in surprise, when the announcement was made, he said,

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"What, Tchang, is it you? Why, what brings you out so early?"

"When I came home yesterday," replied Tchang, "my head ached, and my limbs were wearied; and I remember that I did not even keep you to take anything with me. This was certainly a want of politeness; and I began to apprehend that you would have stood upon ceremony with me, and have imagined, that because I had made a little progress in this matrimonial affair, I would think no longer of my friends. This is plainly and candidly my only reason for coming, and I beg that you will accept my apology."

"Feeling," said Sse Yeoupe, "that I am indebted altogether to accident for the happiness of your acquaintance, and yet remembering that I have received from you testimonies of kindness which are engraved upon my heart, it would ill become me to stand upon ceremony with you."

"If you are not angry with me, I shall be happy to bring you to spend some days in my garden. I shall look upon your compliance as a proof of friendship not to be forgotten."

Each circumstance, as it presented itself in succession before Sse Yeoupe's mind, only tended more and more to add to its perplexity. He confessed his inability to see clearly before him. However, he had not formed any resolution as to leaving his present quarters, and the invitation which he had just received suggested a project to which his thoughts had immediate reference when he addressed these words to his visitor:—"You have already overpowered me with kindness; you have acted towards me so handsomely in

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every respect, that I could not bear the idea of merely bidding you good morning, and going away. But I am afraid that by residing in your garden I shall become troublesome to you, and I do not wish to do that."

"If you entertain for me the feelings of a friend, you must not talk in this way. Such language is quite out of place."

Tchang then desired Siaohi, Sse Yeoupe's servant, to get ready his master's luggage, in order to remove it."

"The fact is," said Sse Yeoupe, "accident brought me here: I have but one horse, which is below, and I am without any luggage."

"That is still better," said Tchang.

Sse Yeoupe soon finished his toilette, and took leave of Tsingin his host. He then gave the reins of his horse to Siaohi, and followed Tchang to his garden, where he was to sojourn for a short time. Tchang spared no pains in providing tea and every necessary accommodation for his guest.

During the progress of an argument in which the three young men were ardently engaged, a servant came to announce the arrival of Pe's old porter. Tchang could not repress his joy at this intelligence, and ran out to meet the old man. "My master," said Toung, "presents his respects to you, and begs to apologize for the unworthy reception which he gave you yesterday."

"Why, he overpowered me with his kindness," replied Tchang; "insomuch that I was resolved to call on him this day to express my gratitude to him. But, my old friend, what is your business now?"

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"My master has a little boy who is now fifteen: struck with your talents and vast acquirements, he hopes that you will be so condescending as to bestow instructions on him for about a year. Here is the written agreement which he has prepared, and here are also some presents which he sends; and he trusts that you will have no objection to his proposal."

Tchang was so confounded at what he had heard, that he was altogether unable to say whether he would decline or accept the offer: but, taking the agreement and the presents, he returned with them to the pavilion, to have the opinion of Wang and Sse Yeoupe as to what course he should take. "What can be the meaning of this?" said he to his friends.

"Nothing else," replied Sse Yeoupe, "than that he is impressed with your merits, and he desires to have you near him."

"But between a preceptor and a son-in-law," observed Tchang, "there is a considerable difference. Is there no old woman about the good man whose influence might change the fortune against me?"

"By no means," replied Wang laughing; "he tenderly loves his daughter, and he is naturally afraid that she would not be happy in his choice if he concluded the affair without farther deliberation: his object evidently is to become thoroughly acquainted with you, and hence he has invited you to reside with him as his guest. He wishes to ascertain whether you are steady or otherwise; and whether you are industrious or idly disposed. You will now have an opportunity of insinuating yourself into his good graces, and completing your

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own purposes. It is a most fortunate proposal: why do you hesitate a moment what you will do?"

Tchang was quite pleased with his friend's advice, and returned without delay to the porter. "If it had been any other person in the world," said he, "I should scruple to go and live in his house. But to your master I find it impossible to deny any sacrifice: I have no alternative but to accept his proposal. One thing, my dear Toung, I beg of you to mention to him; and that is, that I shall want to have a study in some retired, quiet spot, where no one can disturb me, and where I can devote myself to books without fear of interruption."

"That can be easily arranged," replied Toung, who then took his leave, and returned to Kinchi.

The satisfaction with which Pe had heard of Tchang's compliance was considerably enhanced, when he understood that the young man had wished to stipulate for a quiet, retired place, to study in. He instantly gave directions for the preparation and complete fitting up of a convenient place behind the garden; and after having selected a lucky day, he sent for Tchang to come and take up his residence in his house.

Scarcely had the latter been installed in his new situation, than he began to affect the man of importance, and to give himself all the airs of an ardent student. Sitting or standing, he was never without a book in his hand: and when anybody approached, he began to murmur some indistinct words, like a person in the act of getting off by heart. He was quite delighted at finding in Yingling a pupil quite worthy of his master. A perfect sympathy of disposition subsisted between them.

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There were two or three persons in the house who might have been able to see into his character: for Tchang was not like the ordinary race of tutors—he had not the least taste for books; but he was acquainted with the art of blinding a prying eye, and silencing a busy tongue, with money. In addition to this, Tchang was pleasant and affable: he had a civil word for everybody; and people of almost every grade in the house were fond of occasionally chatting with him: hence it was that when unfortunately he left anywhere the print of the cloven foot, every person was anxious to do all they could to conceal it.

It happened that a cluster of red-leaved pear-trees, whose branches drooped over the pavilion of rural dreams, was once covered with a profusion of blossoms, which attracted the admiration of Pe and his daughter. "To-morrow," said the father, "I shall have a repast in this place, to which Tchang shall be invited, to enjoy the sight of these pear-trees. I shall take an opportunity of prevailing on him to compose a song of various metre upon them, to be set to music. This will answer the double object of putting his talent to a farther test, and of furnishing us with agreeable entertainment."

Scarcely had Pe pronounced his intention, when a secret messenger conveyed its purport to Tchang, who felt not a little alarmed at the communication. The only course he had was, to despatch a note with the rapidity of lightning to Sse Yeoupe, begging of him to come and see him.

Sse Yeoupe happened at the moment to be quite alone, and experiencing the irksomeness of solitude: he was anxious to find out what was going on, but

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he knew not where to inquire. Tchang's invitation was therefore precisely what he wanted. The day was too far advanced to allow him to go immediately, and he was therefore under the necessity of stating, in a note to Tchang, that he should be happy to wait on him at an early hour the next morning.

Tchang's mind was on the rack during the night, lest some accident might prevent Sse Yeoupe from keeping his appointment; and he did not close an eye. As soon as morning appeared, he despatched a messenger to Sse Yeoupe to remind him of his promise: and he himself stood at the garden door to watch the approach of his friend.

Luckily for him, Sse Yeoupe had an object of his own in view, which he had too much at heart to require any importunity to fulfil his engagement with Tchang. He had, in fact, already set out for Kinchi. The moment Tchang descried him at a distance, he ran towards him with as much satisfaction depicted on his countenance, as if heaven itself had come to his assistance. He first saluted Sse Yeoupe, and then taking him by the hand, led him into the study. "Ever since I have been shut up in this place, my dear friend," said Tchang, "scarcely a quarter of an hour has passed without my thinking of you."

"It has been exactly my case with respect to you," replied Sse Yeoupe; "I have been more than once tempted to pay you a visit here; but I was afraid that it would not be easy to get in."

"I am perfect master here: what difficulty had you?"

Whilst they were thus conversing, Yingling came in to take his lesson. "I have a friend with me,"

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said Tchang to the boy; " you may have a holiday." Yingling bounded off with joy at the news, and Tchang and Sse Yeoupe resumed the conversation. " It is a long time since we saw each other," observed the tutor. " I suppose since you went to my garden you have composed a great number of verses ?"

" None, I assure you," returned Sse Yeoupe; " I feel too lonely for composing verses. But you who are in the neighbourhood of such skilful poets, have doubtless, done something in that way."

" I am occupied every day with this pupil of mine," said Tchang ; " how is it possible for me to devote any time to such an employment ? But it so happened that yesterday, as I was walking towards the pavilion, I was struck with the appearance of a pear-tree, the red blossoms of which were in full bloom. I was tempted to make them the subject of some verses; but I thought that it would be better, at last, merely to write a little song upon them. I have been ever since thinking of the subject, but I have committed nothing yet to paper."

" Do not suppose that a good song is so very easy a matter to compose. In ordinary verses there are only two sounds used, the even and uneven ; but in a song we must have four, the even, the increased, the long, and the reflective: then you are to distinguish between the true and the doubtful consonants according to the intonations that belong to the masculine and feminine genders. If a single syllable be wanted, or an improper accent interposed, there will be a disagreement with the notes of the air, and you expose yourself to the

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ridicule of connoisseurs. Hence compositions of this sort are called ' premeditated pieces,' because they cannot be written expeditiously."

" In that case," said Tchang, " I shall give up attempting a song, for I do not want that people should laugh at me. But you, my friend, who need not care about lavishing the gold and jasper of your fancy, write one, I entreat of you: I shall take all due pains to mark the consonants and accents with the greatest accuracy. Will you have the goodness, my dear friend, to give me a lesson ?"

" As for verses and songs, they are the pastime of literary men when taking tea or drinking together:—why should I not be inclined to gratify you? But where is the red-blossomed pear-tree? If you can let me just glance at it, that will be enough to inspire me."

" There is a cluster of those trees about the pavilion of rural dreams," said Tchang. " To see them, we have only to ascend the gallery of flowers and thence we shall be able to have the full command of them."

The young men then, taking each other's hand, crossed the garden, and ascended the gallery of flowers, whence they had a view of the red-blossomed pear-tree, the foliage of which hung over the wall. The blossoms were all blown, and appeared as if they had been stained with blood, so deep and at the same time so beautiful was their hue.

" What delicious blossoms!" exclaimed Sse Yeoupe in a transport of admiration. " These are truly worth celebrating; but it is a pity that we should be separated from them by this wall: we cannot have the full command of them. Could we not contrive

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to enter the pavilion for the purpose of seeing them to greater advantage? It would be infinitely more agreeable."

"We must not go there," said Tchang. "This pavilion is the private study of Mr Pe; and it has a communication with the apartment where his daughter works her embroidery. You could not expect that he would suffer strangers to walk there."

"Oh, if this place communicate with the apartment of the young lady of the house, it is perfectly plain," said Sse Yeoupe, "that we must not presume to go there."

The two friends did not remain long in the gallery of flowers, but they returned to Tchang's study. The latter had only one object in view, and that was to prevail on Sse Yeoupe to write a song. He was filled with apprehensions lest, in the first place, his friend should not have sufficient time to write the verses; or, in the next place, lest he himself should not have time enough to get them by heart. He therefore pressed Sse Yeoupe to proceed with the composition, who, to say the truth, was so filled with the imagination of Miss Pe, that he wanted no stimulus to urge him to the task. He took a pen, and yielding to the inspiration of the moment, poured forth his thoughts in harmonious numbers.

We must leave for a distinct history an account of the sly and cautious opening of her perfumed apartment by the young beauty, as well as the power of remorse over the detested pretender.

The following chapter will resolve the problem whether or not Sse Yeoupe composed the song which was expected of him.

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CHAPTER IX.

THE PLUM IS REMOVED, AND A PEACH IS SOUGHT FOR IN THE GALLERY OF FLOWERS.

"The heart of man, cold or fervent, hardened or soft, still preserves, some way or other, a sense of harmony. One time it is the snatch of an old drinking song, at another, it is the vision of a lover, that thrills us. Who is it that would deliberately tarnish the purity of the alabaster, or abandon a pearl upon the way? The timid dove will die struggling to protect her nest. But the chosen subject of commemoration, for embroidery, is a pair of faithful birds."

Sse Yeoupe, being thus importuned by Tchang, and animated at the same time by his own conceptions, yielded, as we have related, to the united impulse, and threw off a succession of stanzas. It was perfectly wonderful to see with what rapidity the ink was transferred from the marble to the paper. One quarter of an hour was quite sufficient to enable him to finish his song. "I am sorry," said he, as he handed the manuscript to Tchang, "to have so badly answered your expectations: do not laugh at me, my friend."

Tchang took the verses, and read them with the utmost attention, as follows:—

Song.

ON THE RED BLOSSOMED PEAR-TREE.

(An Evening Walk.)

You seek the shade: what is sweeter than a fine night,
Abroad in the moonlight, with a beloved object beside you?
Who would have thought the Spring was so prodigal?

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He clothes the branches of trees in rubies,
Which glitter on all sides like glowing lamps.
Is this an almond or a peach tree?
To my mind it bears the sanguine traces of two beings who died thinking of each other.

THE INEBRIETY PRODUCED BY THE EAST WIND.

Those sweet purple tints penetrate the hoar frost which crowns the grove.
The half of these petals are carried away by the current, whose surface they make red.
Raising aloft their crimson heads, these flowers clothe the branches which issue from a bed of snow.
A damsel, it is said, at the foot of this gallery,
Gathers together countless garments of silk.
Fleecy clouds, and condensed mists,
Lend their lively hues to the blossoms,
And the cuckoo's voice is heard from amongst its branches.

THE YOUNG BEAUTY.

What is it that my soul seeks here, darkened as it has been so long by the clouds of melancholy?
With transport does it court the Spring on two beautiful cheeks.
Amidst this shower of roses, this sweet smelling bed of snow,
May the drone and the busy butterfly never come to disturb our calm!

THE MOON ABOVE THE JAPANESE PEAR-TREE.

Thou graceful union of various hues,
It is Spring that has modified thy soft proportions!
Whence are those delicious perfumes
Which thy blossoms exhale from grove and by fountain?

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Whence those beauties which bear away every thought?
Take pity then on thy poet,
Oh thou who can'st fill his heart with never dying gratitude!

THE FIVE OFFERINGS.

These white petals and red filaments are like brother and sister.
Their thick tufts, their glowing hues,
The soft down which covers them,
Enchant the eye.
How must the wandering visitor feel delighted at the prospect of thy beauties!
Charms that steal away our senses!
Sweets that overcome the heart!
Fear ye the nuptial breeze?
When the sun is shaded with yellow mists,
And the moon is wont to shine o'er thee,
Then I shall see the beloved object near thee
Spread o'er thy head the transparent veil.

THE HEART OF JASPER.

I love to think o'er thy splendid traits,
Thou emblem of unsullied purity!
I know what merit is necessary to him that would pretend to such charms;
But trust not to the prince of the East, whose beams would parch up thy sweets.

RED BLOSSOMS ON THE SURFACE OF THE WATER.

Beauties that announce the death of Spring!
The god of flowers seizes you with his fingers.
The fresh breeze alone is acceptable to you.
I who am guided by sincere affection,
Would keep you in blossom the whole year round.
But your large leaves, that droop towards the ground,
Represent to my sight a nuptial robe, Yelo!

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CHORUS.

Shall we rejoice at the sight of this beauty which repairs itself?
Here are grief and repentance in its train.
Surely the twelve gates of the year will open other pleasures to us.
Strange, that they should leave us but a brief joy.

FINAL COUPLET.

We see and feel the beauties of those boughs,
And poetry gives its charm to their attractions.
But is it possible adequately to celebrate
The red-blossomed pear-tree?

When Tchang had read the song, he could not avoid expressing the utmost satisfaction. "You are," said he, "a genuine divine poet, and you are entitled to my respect and homage."

"A song thus hastily composed," said Sse Yeoupe, "cannot possibly merit your eulogies."

Tchang still held the manuscript in his hand, and occasionally read or recited it. "From the way in which he seems pleased with it," said Sse Yeoupe to himself, "one would imagine that he wished to get it off." Then he addressed Tchang. "Can such a trifle engage you so? You promised that you would give an imitation; will you not let me see how you get on?"

"When I compose," replied Tchang, "I must take a great deal of time to reflect and to choose my words. I cannot succeed without such a process. I do not boast the same facility as yourself; only give me the indulgence of one sleepless night, and then we may consult together on the attempt which I shall have made."

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Again Tchang gave a glance at the song, and then he rolled it up and put it into his sleeve.

Whilst the two friends were thus conversing together, a servant came to inform Tchang that his master wanted to speak with him in the pavilion of rural dreams.

" I have a visitor with me," replied Tchang : " I cannot go at this moment."

"It is your host that invites you," said Sse Yeoupe, proposing to take leave.

Tchang would have willingly allowed him to depart, but he dreaded that some subject would be proposed with respect to which he would require assistance ; he therefore decided upon detaining Sse Yeoupe. " My brother," said he, "where is the necessity for your retiring ? Stay where you are for a few minutes; I shall just see my host, and then return to you. This place is quiet and retired, nobody will disturb you. You can walk about here at your ease."

Sse Yeoupe's primary object had been to learn some news ; and seeing that Tchang wished to keep him, he agreed to remain.

" I feel that I have a thousand apologies to make to you," said Tchang : upon which he left his friend, and followed the servant to the pavilion of rural dreams. When he had ascended, Pe received him with kindness. " Several days have passed since we have been with each other," said he. " I am delighted to see you at last. I was this morning struck with the beauty of these flowers, and I have taken the liberty of inviting you here to enjoy them for a few moments."

" I have been so occupied," replied Tchang, " with the education of your son, that I never

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imagined that spring had already matured such beautiful flowers. I have to thank your excellency for the opportunity of enjoying such an exquisite spectacle. Nothing surely can be more delightful."

"Those," observed Pe, "who give themselves up to study, should certainly be guarded against excessive application. The mind is liable to be at last worn out. When flowers present themselves of a morning, or the moon at night, we should allow ourselves to indulge in the contemplation of those beautiful objects."

He then directed the servants to spread a repast beneath the branches of a pear-tree, that Tchang and himself might enjoy the pleasures of drinking and contemplating the blossoms at the same time. After they had taken a few cups, Pe observed to his guest, "Doubtless, since you came here to reside, you have given birth to some exquisite compositions. Will you do me the favour to shew me one or two?"

"Since I was received into your house," replied Tchang, "I took advantage of the undisturbed quiet of this retreat, to court a more intimate familiarity with our ancient authors. I have not been able to write a line of poetry in the time."
"Well, well," said Pe, "embosomed as we are amid these blossoms, we should not let slip the present occasion."

Tchang was delighted to perceive, that the subject for which he had anticipated preparation, was that one which would in reality be proposed to him: and as he had his composition in his sleeve, he assumed a corresponding degree of confidence and

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ease. "As your excellency," said he, "does not disdain to notice what is so humble and unworthy, I am perfectly ready to afford you fresh materials for mirth."

"I dare say that so skilful a poet as yourself can compose without difficulty some charming songs. A few days ago a relation of mine, a gentleman of the name of Gou, sent me a couple of young singers. Their voices are agreeable enough, but the words are old, and I find them monotonous. If you be in the vein at present, you can take this red-blossomed pear-tree for your subject, and compose a song upon it. I will teach it to my singers, and it will be jasper and pearl to our ears. Will you have the kindness to begin?"

Tchang was infinitely pleased at the proposal, and gladly replied, "That since his kind friend had ordered, he could not hesitate to comply; but he feared that his song would not answer the purpose he proposed to make it."

Pe now ordered the servants to get pen and ink, and to fill a cup of wine for Mr Tchang. The latter drank it; and taking up the pen, he threw up his head in the attitude of one that was fixed in thought. He transcribed in a very short time the three or four couplets of the first part; but when he came to the concluding ones, he found that he had altogether forgotten them. Here he laboured to recall them; but he could not succeed. Upon some pretext or another, he left the table, and retiring behind an arbour, he secretly drew forth the manuscript from his sleeve, and perused it several times, to impress its contents with more certainty on his mind. He returned as quickly as possible

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to the seat he had left; and as soon as he finished the transcript he handed it to Pe.

The latter considered the piece for a short time, and then broke out with enthusiasm in these terms: "This is an exquisite song indeed! It has depth and great delicacy of expression. Your talent, sir, was formed for the academy; and some day or other you will outstrip me in fortune and honours."

"My dear sir," replied Tchang, "what comparison can there be between a poor student like myself, who am but as the stubble of the field, with the brilliant cloud that floats in the firmament? Your praises fill me with confusion."

The party continued conversing in this manner and drinking together. It deserves to be mentioned that Houngiu, finding it impossible to reconcile herself to the *writing* of the two pieces on the Spring Willows which had been sent to her, took some flower-paper, and made a careful transcript of them in her own hand in the most elegant characters possible. This copy she kept in an embroidered silk bag, and carried it with her to read night and morning. She could not avoid dwelling on the idea, that a poet of such superior talent as the composer must be, would crown all her hopes and wishes: and yet she felt that something would undoubtedly be wanting to her happiness, when she understood that this young man, who appeared to be endowed with such distinguished talent, was destitute of the advantages of person. The latter thought produced the deepest uneasiness in her mind: she became more dejected every day, unconscious of the cause of her melancholy.

On the day to which we have already drawn the

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reader's attention, having finished her toilet, Houngiu gave herself up to reflection. "Yansou tells me," said she, "that this young man is so plain: but where there is so much genius, there surely must be something pleasing even in his plainness. I am glad that Yansou is now away: I shall go secretly, and have an opportunity of judging for myself of his appearance. If he be this deformed work of nature, I am determined to break off at once. The result of this secret visit shall fix all my wavering."

And proceeding without a moment's delay to carry her project into execution, she gently opened the western side-door, and descended, unseen, into the garden. As she approached the gallery of flowers, she heard some one cough within. She then hid herself in a neighbouring bower, whence she was enabled to have a full view of the handsome student who was then pensively walking up and down the gallery. He had the

Carriage of a student*:
The delicacy of youth:
The calm air of autumn:
A garment like the mists of spring:
The glow of a precious stone:
Spring breathed from his cheek:
And his countenance bore the stamp of a poet.
His eye shone with love:
His limbs were well proportioned:
If you ask what he was like,
It was some god issuing from the lotus.

When she saw this young man, whom she mistook for Tchang, Houngiu could not resist an exclama-

* This is a quotation from the poet Litaipe.

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tion of delight: "What a fine face! How could Yansou think of telling me that he wanted a prepossessing appearance?" She little thought that the person who stood before her was really Sse Yeoupe, who had just come from the study, where he was left to take a walk in the gallery. After she had secretly viewed the young man for some time longer, Houngiu, fearing that any one might discover her, slided from her place of concealment, and gained the door by which she had entered the garden. Yansou was just coming to meet her at the moment. "My lady," said the girl, "dinner is ready: where have you been walking alone? I have been looking for you everywhere, and could not find you."

Houngiu, a little displeased, made no reply.

"Why is my dear young lady angry?" said Yansou.

"Wicked girl!" exclaimed Houngiu, "what have I done that thou shouldst presume to deceive me in this manner? I was very near being the victim of your falsehoods all my life."

"What can all this be?" said Yansou. "I have been attached to you from my childhood: you have never found me false to you. When did I deceive you?"

"If you have not deceived me, tell me what it is you find to complain of in the person of Master Tchang, my suitor?"

"And is it for this you talk to me?" said Yansou. "Well, you may not only scold me, but you may kill me if you please; yet I never will say, contrary to my opinion, that he is a good-looking man."

"Ungrateful creature that you are! What fables

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are those you have been telling me? I have seen the gentleman with my own eyes."

"What! you have seen him, have you?" replied Yansou.

"Yes, I have; and his person is agreeable beyond description: there is not amongst the learned class in the empire any one like him. What could be your motive for lessening him in this manner?"

"Well, this is the most wonderful thing I ever heard in my life," said Yansou. "You used, my dear lady, to look up so very high: how is it that you can let yourself down so low now? Take care that you are not deceived by this suitor of your's, and that you do not mistake a Lieou for a Youan."

"Who else than he could have entered the garden from the back, near the gallery of flowers?"

"I cannot imagine," replied Yansou; "but perhaps there is a second young man there: wait until I have seen him myself." And without a moment's delay she tripped into the garden.

Sse Yeoupe had just descended from the gallery, and was walking amongst the flowers. Yansou, not finding any person in the gallery, began to look about. Sse Yeoupe perceived her suddenly; and getting into an arbour, he had an opportunity of observing her unperceived.

Her shoulders were like the pear-tree's branches,
She was tall as the willow.
Hers were the charms of grace and gaiety,
And not the proud bearing of haughty beauty.

Sse Yeoupe examined her for some time; and fearing that, if he shewed himself abruptly, she might run away, he allowed her to descend from the gallery; and coming up close behind her, he

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whispered, " My pretty maid, for whom are you looking so anxiously?"

Yansou immediately turned her head, and seeing Sse Yeoupe, a young student then in the flower of his age, she felt an emotion of pleasure mingled with some apprehension. " Who are you?" said she. " And why do you hide yourself in this place?"

" I am that Sse Yeoupe, whose verses on the Spring Willows have been so unsuccessful, and whom fate has conducted hither: take pity on me, pretty maid!"

" To judge by your appearance, sir, you are not destitute of talent: how is it that you have been neglected?"

" My poor undeserving verses were not worthy of pleasing your young mistress; but my wonder is that, gifted as she appears to be with such talents and discrimination, she should fix her choice on a person who is only worthy to be laughed at."

" You must not speak so slightingly, sir," said Yansou, " of Mr Tchang: it is true he cannot bear any comparison with you in personal appearance; but there is a grace and an elegance in his composition, which render him truly agreeable. My mistress looks rather to merit than person, and hence she has given him a preference."

" Nay," replied Sse Yeoupe, " if she had even preferred him on the score of person, I should not be so much surprised; but that she should have been taken with his verses, is indeed an extraordinary thing."

" I have been informed that his verses are remarkably beautiful: tastes differ, no doubt."

" What a victim have I been all my life," ex-

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claimed Sse Yeoupe, sighing, "to a fatal predilection for beauty and talent! How many storms and tempests have I buffetted! I presumed to raise my eyes to a young beauty, gifted with every sort of talent and charm; I was transported with the hope that she was still free: and yet what consideration has she for real merit? An unhappy pre-engagement compels her to despise me, to reject my ardent love! Well, well," said he, profoundly sighing, "poor devoted young man—thy lot is to be unhappy, and there is no use in complaint."

Yansou was considerably affected when she heard Sse Yeoupe giving vent to these expressions of grief and despair, and the tears almost stood in her eyes.

"I have listened to your complaints," said she soothingly, "and you seem to attach blame to my young mistress for having entertained so bad an opinion of your verses. I know, however, that she is so very partial to talent, that in discovering it she has the penetration of a rhinosceros's eyes. But since you object to her decision, what do you think if you copy your first verses again? I shall take them to my young mistress to reconsider them; and who knows but the pearl which she has cast away at first, may be found acceptable on a second view?"

Sse Yeoupe expressed the warmest gratitude for this offer. "Such a favour, my charming maid," said he, "death itself shall not efface from my memory."

"Well then, there is no time to be lost—write the copy, and I shall take it at once."

Sse Yeoupe ran to the study, wrote out the two pieces on some flower-paper, and folding them into

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the form of a square packet, came back with them to Yansou. "There," said he; "be so good as to bear this to your mistress: beg of her to read it with as much attention as she can, and at least not to entertain any bad opinion of Sse Yeoupe."

"I shall comply with your directions exactly," replied Yansou.

Sse Yeoupe was about to say, something further to her, when they suddenly heard the voice of Tchang, who had just parted from Pe, and who, in approaching the place where they then stood, was heard crying out, "Liansian, my friend, where are you?"

Yansou now made the best of her way behind the gallery to the door of the apartment by which she had entered. Sse Yeoupe went forward to meet Tchang. "Here! I am walking here," said he.

"I beg your pardon, my friend, for having been so long away."

"It could not be helped," rejoined Sse Yeoupe.

"The old gentleman wanted to have some farther conversation with me, but I mentioned that you were waiting for me, and he proposed that you should come and join us. But, as the repast was over, I did not think that it would be quite polite to do so: he then allowed me to retire, and bring the wine-chest with me to entertain ourselves.

Tchang took Sse Yeoupe by the hand, and led him to the study, where they remained together drinking and conversing until the sun began to grow pale in the western horizon. Tchang having called to a servant to accompany Sse Yeoupe, the latter took his leave and retired.

Whilst these occurrences were taking place, Yansou and her mistress were not unoccupied.

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The servant having, as we stated, taken the packet from Sse Yeoupe, returned running to her mistress, and with a laugh of triumph said to her, "So I knew, Miss, that you were mistaken."

"How mistaken?"

"Undoubtedly," replied Yansou. "If master Tchang was as handsome as this gentleman, you would not have been mistaken."

"And if it be not Tchang, who can it be?"

"A friend of Mr Tchang's, a Mr Sse," replied Yansou.

"And what business has he here?"

"He says that he came for the verses on the Spring Willows; and that not having been able to gain your approbation, he is chained to the place by a sort of fatality."

At these words the willow-leaved brows of Houngiu were contracted, and the blossom on her cheek assumed the hue of autumn. She breathed an involuntary sigh. "Alas, how unfortunate," said she, "that Tchang with so much mind should be so devoid of personal recommendations, and that this other youth should unite with so prepossessing an appearance, so small a portion of talent! What a severe dispensation is mine!"

"To tell you the truth, my dear young lady, I do not know that this other young gentleman is so unworthy of you, because forsooth he cannot write these little bits of rhymes!"

"I must confess, Yansou, that I have been a little taken with those advantages of person with which nature has endowed him. But what a pity that he should be the sort of man he is! Why does he not devote himself to study?"

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" That is exactly what I said myself," replied Yansou. " But he seems to think that his verses are not so bad : on the contrary, he says you have very unjustly condemned them."

" Both my father and myself hold talent in as much veneration as we do our very existence : and had we detected even a single good expression in his verses, we should have readily remarked and admired it. How could we have been unjust in our opinions then ?"

" I certainly should not have supposed so," said Yansou ; " but I observed the elegance of his manner, his genteel air, and his interesting figure : every word he uttered made an impression on my mind : and I own I concluded that he must be a sensible and intelligent gentleman. I therefore told him to copy out his first verses, and that I should present them to you again. It is really a pity for you to lose such a fine gentleman as this." She then took the packet from her sleeve, and handed it to her mistress.

How is this ?" cried Houngiu, casting her eyes on the manuscript. " Why, they are word for word Tchang's verses !"

Yansou, not less surprised than her mistress, said— " If that be the case, he has certainly stolen them."

Houngiu read them again and again. " I have a strong suspicion," said she, after considering them attentively, " that it is Mr Tchang who has stolen them from this youth."

" What makes you think that ?" asked Yansou.

" Mr Tchang, on the recommendation of these two compositions, has been able to establish himself here in the capacity of our guest : every one

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knows that; this young man is his friend, and consequently is aware of the circumstance. Now would it not at once be exposing himself to immediate and unavoidable disgrace, if he were to copy Tchang's verses and endeavour to pass them here for his own? Then Tchang's writing is the very worst and most vulgar that can be; whilst that of the other young man, though carelessly and rapidly executed, reminds one of the delicate touches of the flying dragon. Is it not perfectly clear therefore that Tchang must be the thief on this occasion?"

"Very likely indeed, ma'am; why not go at once to your father, make him have an explanation with Mr Tchang, and send him away, that you may marry this young man without delay. La! ma'am, when you are man and wife, what a very fine, handsome couple you will make, to be sure!"

"That is all very well in imagination," said Houngiu, despondingly; "but how am I to mention such a thing to my father?"

"What is to hinder you?"

"These two pieces have been communicated to me through a private channel. If I shew them to my father, and if he asks me how I came by them, what am I to say? Besides, we have no very certain proof of this young man's talent; and should we hold him up as a person of genius, my father doubtless would insist upon examining him: then if he was found to fail, it is plain that our opinions must be said to differ. How many suspicions, in that case, may not arise in my father's mind?"

At this moment a servant entered the apartment and delivered a paper to Miss Pe, saying that her master had sent her with some verses which had

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that moment been composed by Mr Tchang, in his presence, in the pavilion of rural dreams.

Houngiu opened the paper, and saw that it was a song on the red-blossomed pear-trees. She read it with the greatest pleasure and admiration. "The verses on the Spring Willows," said she to herself, "were said to have been stolen from their real author: now here is a song composed at the moment upon a subject which was suddenly proposed. Could this have been robbed likewise?"

"My dear young lady," said Yansou, interrupting her reflections, "do not abandon your first impressions; do not, I beseech you, give up this fine young man."

"You little know the struggle in my heart at this moment. Should the mind of this young man not correspond with his appearance, and should I take him for my husband, I shall not only frustrate all the pains which my father has so long been taking to chose a worthy son-in-law, but I myself, to whose existence the pleasures of poetry are so necessary, I shall not be able to disclose to my husband all my secret thoughts. No—I must not unthinkingly give him encouragement."

"To take his own word for it," observed Yansou, "he does not want talent and information: he quite laughs at Mr Tchang."

"Upon any other occasion I should know how to act; but in an affair of this importance, which concerns my whole life, I must not be precipitate or heedless. In short, unless I put him to the proof myself, my mind will never be easy."

"That is not at all difficult," said Yansou. "I see that this young man has conceived for you

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a violent affection. He vows that he thinks of nothing but you. He is sure to return here, and then it will be easy for you to propose some difficult subject to him. He shall be obliged to compose on the spot, and then we shall learn whether or not he possesses talent."

That is quite practicable," said Houngiu. " But be secret—see that no one observes you: all will then go on well."

" No doubt it will, my dear young lady." And the result of this deliberation appeared to communicate the greatest satisfaction to both.

Scarcely a morning or evening now passed without Yansou being sent to see if Sse Yeoupe yet appeared. Twice or thrice she met him, but either Tchang or young Yingling accompanied him: under such circumstances she could do no more than glance at him from a distance, and then hide herself. She had not an opportunity of speaking to him for a considerable time.

One day, when Pe was at home, the news came to him that Yang, the inspector-general, who had been promoted to the rank of governor of the province of Tchekiang, was then on his way to Kinling, and that being so near, he could not avoid turning out of his way, to have the pleasure of visiting Pe. He had sent a messenger to announce his approach, and was now stated to be not far off. This piece of intelligence had no other effect upon Pe, than to provoke his laughter. " Why," said he, " from this to Kinling is at least sixty or seventy miles; and this good gentleman must come thus far out of his way to see me! Perhaps he wants to make up for his former misconduct. If

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I were now to give him a cold reception, it would be only putting myself on a level with his contemptible mind."

Pe then ordered the study to be got ready without delay for his expected guest, and commanded a magnificent entertainment to be provided against his arrival. He sent for a company of players; and in order to do Yang still further honour, he was about to go and invite some of the neighbouring magistrates to meet him; but remembering that they were of an inferior rank, and that he was not on terms of intimacy with them, he resolved to dispense with their company, and to limit his invitations to Tchangfanjou alone, whose rank of bachelor fully entitled him to that honour. The necessary preparations having been completed, governor Yang arrived early in the afternoon. The customary ceremonies were observed, and the two old men sat conversing together for some time. A feast was served up in the grand parlour: a play was performed; and Pe did everything in his power to entertain and amuse his guests, Yang and Tchangfanjou.

In the mean time, Sse Yeoupe, who had heard of this interruption to the usual course of affairs in the family of Pe, came secretly to wander about in the garden. The porter of the back entrance, who saw Sse Yeoupe go and come so frequently, never thought of disturbing him; and on this day, when the confusion in which the family were involved, might have justified his interference, he left Sse Yeoupe at full liberty to enter the garden as usual. The latter, encouraged by this freedom, advanced as far as the gallery. He ascended the

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steps, and inquisitively threw his eyes around. Now it so happened that Yansou was prompted to go to the very same spot exactly in time to encounter Sse Yeoupe, who, when he saw the servant, could scarcely repress his joy. "Since the happy moment that you were good enough to do me so great an act of kindness," said he to her, "I have scarcely taken my eyes off this place; but I could get no opportunity of seeing you. I can neither eat nor sleep; my heart is ready to break. I learned that your master had company to-day in the front of the house, and I came here in the hope of being so fortunate as to meet you. I shall never forget your kindness in thus keeping to your promise. But tell me about these horrible verses the other day: has your young lady condescended to look at them?"

"She has seen them; but, sir, your two compositions, and those of Mr Tchang, are literally the same. When my mistress read them, she was not a little astonished, and she would be glad of an explanation from you."

"Is it possible?" cried Sse Yeoupe, quite confounded. "You astonish me indeed. My dear girl, you must go at once to your mistress, and tell her, that I am the real author of these verses; that Tchang has stolen them from me; and that I am incapable of such a fraud."

"Which are we to believe, sir? How can we tell which of you speak the truth?"

"Very easily, my good girl. If those verses were written by Tchang, what a dolt must I be, after they have been conned over by your master and mistress,

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to steal them for the purpose of serving them up a second time to the same parties!"

"So my mistress says," quickly rejoined Yan-sou; "but there is a song on the red-blossomed pear-trees, which has been suddenly composed in my master's presence; is that by the same hand? Is that one of your performances which has been stolen too?"

Sse Yeoupe burst out laughing. "This song on the pear-trees, I pronounce to be another robbery on me likewise."

"But how can that be?" asked the incredulous servant. "For it was whilst they were sitting together in the pavilion, that my master started the subject. Those trees are seldom to be met with; how should you have known of them before, and been able to compose a song upon them?"

"There is nothing in this affair of the song that I cannot explain. The day I met you, Tchang had sent for me at an early hour; he brought me into the gallery, shewed me those trees, and importuned me to compose. I, who was full of love for your mistress, became inspired at the sight of such a beautiful object, and hastily composed the piece. Who could have dreamed that I was then weaving his wedding garment for Mr Tchang? Here is a monstrous business! But, my good girl, if you do not choose to credit me, Tchangfanjou is not yet dead: to-morrow morning, at furthest, I shall challenge him face to face; and then it shall be made manifest to all where the truth and falsehood exist."

"Well, this is a very mysterious business! How

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shall my master and mistress be able to clear it up, I should like to know? It is possible that but for this explanation they would have fallen into the net of a deceiver. Do not give yourself up to grief good sir; I shall communicate a full history of the affair to my mistress; and I do not doubt but that she will have as much reason to esteem you for your good qualities, as she is prepossessed in favour of your person."

"Thou art indeed my only hope!" said Sse Yeoupe ardently; "and you have a claim to my eternal gratitude."

Yansou ran to her mistress, and after a short interval returned. "My young lady," said she to Sse Yeoupe, "bids me say that the conduct of Mr Tchang is certainly very suspicious; but she says that your declarations are not altogether satisfactory. However, not to waste time, since you possess such a fund of genuine talent, here is a subject upon which she wishes you to write. Are you in the mood to submit to this trial in my presence?"

Sse Yeoupe was transported with joy, and in a tone of eagerness replied—"If your mistress will condescend to confer so great an honour on me as to put me to the proof in this way, it will be to me happiness enough for a period of three lives. Give me the subject, my good girl, and then watch till I finish the piece."

"You need not be so very merry, good sir; the subject you will find is not so easy as you may imagine."

She then took out of her sleeve a sheet of flower

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paper, and a speckled-handled pen, which she gave to Sse Yeoupe. She also presented him with an antique standish, a vessel of water, and a stick of ink which she laid upon a large slab. " My mistress," said Yansou, " tells me, that the old poets reached the seven syllabic verse without any difficulty. Now, as you think so highly of your powers, you will I dare say spare no trouble in composing this piece."

Sse Yeoupe opened the paper and took up the pen with the greatest self possession. He was now to shew whether or not he was a true poet and a man of talent.

The tricks of successful folly
Exist but for an hour.
Time alone will expose them,
And the fool that uses them becomes the laughing-stock of mankind.

In the next chapter we shall see in what manner Sse Yeoupe executed the verses which he had been required to write.

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CHAPTER X.

THE DEPARTURE OF THE CRANE, AND THE RETURN OF THE SWALLOW.

"The career of this world is a subject the reflecting upon which should be commenced at an early hour. It cannot be got through in the course of an evening and a morning. He who aims at success, should be continually on his guard against a thousand accidents. How many preparations are necessary before the sour plum begins to sweeten! Joy nevertheless sometimes springs from the bosom of sorrow, and bitterness itself becomes a sweet. But if supreme happiness was to be attained in the space of an hour, of what use would be in life the noblest sentiments?"

Sse Yeoupe, holding in his hand the paper that had been given him, unfolded it, and saw that it was a blank sheet, and that no subject had been written upon it. "Since your mistress desires to put me to the proof," said he to Yansou, "why has she not written upon this sheet the subject that she wishes I should treat?"

"My mistress thinks that the hand-writing of a maiden should not be indiscreetly produced beyond the interior apartment; and as for the subject, she charged me to communicate it to you verbally."

"That is a proof of great reserve and circumspection on her part: have the kindness to inform me what the subject is."

"There are two," replied Yansou; "the first is the *Farewell to the crane*, and the second, the *Welcoming of the swallow*. The farewell to the crane must rhyme with the word *nothing*, and the

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welcoming of the swallow with the word *nest*. Each stanza must be written in verses of seven syllables."

"The subject is not a difficult one," exclaimed Sse Yeoupe; "but your young mistress is very kind, and possesses infinite wit!"

"How does your lordship see that?" asked Yansou."

"We are at present in that season when the summer is about to succeed the spring. It is exactly the time when the cranes depart and the swallows return. But the metaphorical sense which she gives to the *Farewell to the crane*, alludes to the desire that she feels to dismiss the lord Tchang; and that of the *Welcoming of the swallow*, denotes her willingness to give me a favourable reception. The farewell to the crane should rhyme with the word *nothing*, because the lord Tchang is a *man of nothing*. The welcoming of the swallow should rhyme with the word *nest*, which is the emblem of the establishment she is desirous I should form here. If she had not an infinite deal of wit, how could she have designated all these things? On my side I do not wish to lose myself in vain imaginings; I must approach your young mistress; and since she has condescended to give me this subject to treat, I see open before me all sorts of unhoped-for blisses. O Sse Yeoupe! thy life shall not pass away uselessly!" And after having mixed the ink, he seized a pen, placed the paper across a large stone of an irregular shape, and was about to commence writing.

"A moment, sir, if you please! Moderate your joy a little," said Yansou to him. "There still re-

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mains a little difficulty upon the subject in question."

"What more is there?" asked Sse Yeoupe.

"Each verse," replied Yansou, "must commence with one of these eight words: *metal, stone, cord, reed, gourd, earth, skin, wood* *. My mistress says, that marriage is an affair of great importance, and that its commencement ought to be regulated by rites and music; but that as in fact the present proceeding, which is a little or so irregular, will not

* The eight substances mentioned here are those with which musical instruments are constructed. Of *metal* are formed bells, and those basins to which Europeans have given the name of *tam tams* or gongs. Sonorous *stones* form chimes more or less complicated. *Silk* or *cords* are adjusted to various kinds of lutes, lyres, and guitars. The *reed* is transformed into flutes, pandean pipes, and portable organs. The *gourd*, very ingeniously worked and pierced with holes, furnishes an instrument similar to the *musette*, and of a very harmonious effect, it is said. The *earth* or porcelain is made into urns in the shape of a goose's egg, which are made use of as diapasons. The *skin* is employed to cover drums, and the *wood* is made into sonorous barrels and tablets intended to mark time. From the mixture of these eight kinds of sounds, results a perfect harmony, a concert which represents in a marvellous manner all the operations of nature, which should be the object of every well-organized system of music. But besides their general application, there are others of a more particular and delicate nature connected with feastings, marriages, and conjugal sentiments; and it is to allusions of this kind that the tender Houngiu sought with such extreme delicacy to lead Sse Yeoupe, and which were caught with such astonishing sagacity by her intellectual lover. There is also an allegorical sense relating to the employment of each of these sonorous substances; an account of which will be found in the *Memoires du P. Arniot sur la Musique des Chinois* (Memoires des Missionaires de Peking, tom. vi. p. 35). But I should warn those readers, curious enough to consult it, that the theoretical part of this memoir offers still more obscurities and enigmas than even the verses of Sse Yeoupe, which are to follow.

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permit having recourse to these, the present condition must be taken in lieu of them."

Sse Yeoupe shook his head several times. " She is right, she is right," said he: " so much purity must procure her universal respect." As he spoke thus, his mind became suddenly elevated; the source of his poetical thoughts overflowed ; and impelled by the desire of shewing off the brilliancy of his imagination, he seized the pen. As dragons are seen to bound along as they run, or as the wind drives the rain impetuously before it, in like manner, and in a very little time, was he seen to cover the paper with pearls and precious stones strewed about as if by chance.

Nourished by the study of ten thousand different works,
The pen in hand, one is equal to the gods.
Let not humility take its rank amongst virtues :
Genius never yields the palm that belongs to it.

Sse Yeoupe in the space of a few moments composed, upon the double subject proposed, two pieces of verse, which he wrote one half in running characters, and the other half in regular, and when he had entirely filled the sheet of paper, he took it in both his hands, and presented it to Yansou, saying to her, " Be kind enough to give this to your young mistress. I hope it may be found that I have not shewn myself unworthy of executing her orders."

Yansou, who had observed that Sse Yeoupe's pencil had never stopped for an instant, and who saw that he had written two pieces of poetry in so short a space, was at the same time surprised and en-

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chanted. "I know not," said she, "what your verses contain, but this prodigious promptitude effaces the lustre of the blue nénuphar. It inspires me with the most profound respect for you. For several years the object of my mistress's vows has been talent; it may now be said, that she has found him who possesses it."

"Sorry verses composed in haste, and merely through obedience, will be far from satisfying, I fear, the delicate taste of your young mistress. But, youthful maiden, I still reckon upon your assistance on this occasion. Until the end of my days I shall consider myself indebted to your good offices."

"My lord, I am going to take your verses with me, but it is already somewhat late. I fear that I shall not be able to come back to take your orders to-day. I entreat you to return home; as the company who are in the front part of the house will not depart to-morrow, the lord Tchang will consequently not be able to dispose of his own time. Contrive to meet me here. I shall without doubt have some good news to tell you."

"The lateness of the hour obliges me to retire; but might I not take advantage of the darkness, and whilst there is no one in the way, endeavour to see, at least in profile, your young mistress?"

"That is a strange proposal, sir," replied Yan-sou. "Miss Houngiu is a person of no less virtue than merit, and her whole conduct is exactly regulated according to the rules. What she is doing at present, relates to the most important affair of her life. No one can blame a young girl for the care she takes to choose a husband worthy of her.

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But what your lordship has asked, would prove that you have a great deal of talent, but little virtue; you would thereby force my mistress to think the less worthily of you, and all your pains would be thrown away."

Sse Yeoupe, a little disconcerted, hastened to make an excuse. "I have been guilty of an indiscretion," he said: "young maiden, your reply is full of reason; it is gold and jasper. I shall follow most scrupulously your advice. But in taking leave of you, permit me to remind you of your engagement for to-morrow. I entreat of you not to fail in it."

"I shall certainly not fail to keep it," said Yansou.

Sse Yeoupe made her a profound bow; and after having taken leave of her, he went out by the garden gate, and got away without being perceived.

Yansou put the paper containing the verses in her sleeve, took up the ink-stand and the pens, and with a laughing and a contented air returned to find her mistress. "This young Mr Sse has a great deal of penetration," said she to her.

"How dost thou know that?" asked Houngiu.

"I told him your subject, and at the first view he comprehended all that you had wished to say; he explained it to me word for word, and seemed as if he could never be tired of praising your wit. If he had not had himself twice as much as was necessary, how could he have guessed all that?"

"He may have some penetration; but as to his poetical talent, what am I to think of it? The two copies of verses, the commencing and concluding

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words of which are arbitrary, are too difficult to have been written in so short a time. Why hast thou returned so soon? Is it the darkness that has prevented him from continuing to write, or has he gone home to finish them?"

Yansou began to laugh. "If he had not finished his verses before going away," said she, "he would not only have been unworthy of your esteem, but he would have lost mine."

"If he has not carried them away, why then has he not finished them?" asked Houngiu.

"And who told you that he has not finished them? He unfolded the sheet of flowered paper, he took the pen, and without stopping a single instant to reflect, he let his hand run on. I was close to his side observing him: he did not even turn his eyes away once; and his two pieces of poetry were written in less than no time. He will certainly make people die for love of him: he is really an accomplished young man, and the best husband that any one could choose. Endeavour, Miss, by some means or other, not to let him escape."

"And where then are these verses?" said Houngiu. Yansou took them from her sleeve, and presented them to her young mistress. "Are not these the verses?" said she. "Did Miss Houngiu suppose that I should dare to jest with or impose upon her?"

Houngiu took them, and at the first glance remarked an elegance and perfection in the writing that struck the view, and favourably predisposed the reader. She then read attentively what follows:

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FAREWELL TO THE CRANE.

(Rhyming in Chinese with the word nothing.*)*

Autumn with its golden tints conceals from us the dreariness of the later season;
The fern of the rocks, the rushes of the sands, have less force in spring than at this moment;
The silky willow, covered with its full-grown leaves, appears, O Crane, to announce thy departure!
And the cool zephyr, as it waves the branches of the bamboo, whispers us that happy dreams will precede thy return.
The gourd, still free, has attained the extremity of its stalk,
And the seeds of thy native land recall thee to the countries of the north.
The dark visaged Tartar awaits thee to exercise his arrows.
The keeper of the magnaleas has his eye open to thy stratagems.

THE WELCOMING OF THE SWALLOW.

(Rhyming in Chinese to the word nest.*)*

The golden-branched Cytisus awaits the nest that is to be the retreat of a happy couple;
A path set with pebbles will lead to it by a winding way,
The silky foliage adds its shade to the thickness of the trellis work.
But already the scorching wind has strewed the earth with flowers.
Black robed bird, the gourd does not console thee in thy affliction;
But do not shed a torrent of tears, when thinking of thy country:
If they should even still wish to enclose thee within a double wall,

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From the top of the gallery, perfumed by these shrubs,
Thou would'st plunge into the mysterious retreat where
thy mate awaits thee.

Houngiu read these two pieces of poetry one after the other, and when she had finished them, she could not repress her admiration. "What a fine talent!" she exclaimed; "what admirable talent! Not only the arbitrary words at the beginning and end of the verses seem to have placed themselves there without any effort, but the sentiments and thoughts to which they relate are natural, and the expression and phrases are fraught with a charming delicacy. Truly, all the elegance of person remarkable in this young man seems to be tranferred to this paper. The esteem with which he inspires me will not be absent frem my mind either sleeping or waking. But this brute Tchang has thrown an obstacle in the way of our wishes by introducing himself here. How shall we get rid of him?"

"That is not very difficult," said Yansou. "If you go to your father, and speak to him on the subject, you fear perhaps that he will suspect that there is some intrigue going on. But why do you not order my lord Sse to call upon him, and explain all that has taken place? Should he once be confronted with this animal Tchang, the truth will soon discover itself."

"Yes, that is true; but it is better to let things go on quietly, and thus avoid new sources of dissension. Dost thou not remember, when my father was at court, to what storms he found himself exposed for having refused to form a connexion with the family of the inspector-general Yang? We have in this odious being a man skilled in all kinds of knaveries,

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and totally devoid of principle. Should we force him to expose his stupidity, it might be the cause of some misfortune to young Ssé, who, as an unprotected orphan, would in all likelihood become the victim."

" Your reflections are perfectly just ; but I dread that if you thus endeavour to guard against the head and the tail, that you never will attain the end of your wishes."

" A thought strikes me. The best thing to be done is to engage young Sse to set out immediately for the capital. When he shall be no longer here, that fool Tchang will have nobody to hold the pen for him. I shall then beg of my father to put him again to the proof: the fogs will be dispersed, and he will quit the house. In the mean time we shall tell young Sse to call upon my uncle, and ask him for a letter of introduction to my father. In this manner everything may be admirably well arranged."

This decision fully satisfied Yansou. " Miss Houngiu," said she, " your idea is an excellent one ; the lord Sse was perfectly right, when he praised your wit and penetration. You will make a truly perfect couple, a beautiful woman and a man of talent! It is heaven that has made you for each other ; but it is Yansou who has discovered all this!"

After the two young girls had thus laid down their plan, Houngiu again took up the copy of verses, to read them a second time ; and Yansou went to listen to what was going on in the front part of the house. She there learned that governor Yang was to remain another day, and that Tchang-

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fanjou would be obliged to keep him company—so that he consequently could not find time to come into the garden behind the house.

Sse Yeoupe, informed of this circumstance, waited till the hour of noon was past, and then in the same manner as before entered the garden and made his way up to the gallery, where he concealed himself. He had been there but a short time, when he saw Yansou running towards his hiding-place with a laughing and contented air. She immediately came up to him, and said, "You are a man of your word, sir."

Sse Yeoupe replied to her smile, and hastened to salute her. "Entirely filled with the idea of your young mistress," he said, "I have run hither, impatient to receive her orders. Have you really anything favourable to tell me? Ought I to give credit to your words? What obligation I shall be under to you, young maiden! You exert yourself with untiring zeal—you have not been a minute behind your promise—you merit a gratitude that should have neither end nor limit."

"When a wise man seeks a virtuous girl, why should the virtuous girl not be sensible to the love of the wise man?" said Yansou. "And when we see such well-assorted sentiments, why should we not be zealous in seconding them?"

"Young maiden," resumed Sse Yeoupe, "tell me what you have to say, promptly: give new force to my heart, already filled with love and hope."

"What need is there of vain discourses?" said Yansou. "My mistress has read and re-read two or three times, with the greatest possible attention, the two beautiful pieces of poetry that you gave

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me yesterday. She cannot put them out of her hands even for a moment. She is convinced that though you are but a man, you will one day or other surpass the Genii."

"Your mistress then has condescended to approve of my poor compositions," exclaimed Sse Yeoupe; "but what orders has she sent me relative to the humiliating pieces of knavery of which I have been the dupe?"

"Miss Houngiu and myself were for a long time in consultation upon that point yesterday," replied Yansou. "We at first thought of disclosing all to my master, but we feared that the affair would have the air of an intrigue, and that fear closed my mistress's mouth. She was then of opinion that you yourself should go to her father and clear up the affair, but again she became alarmed lest you should thereby make an enemy of the lord Tchang, and bring yourself into a thousand troubles. These two plans appeared to her subject to too many inconveniences; and at length, after having reflected upon it, she finds that there is but one safe path to follow, and that is, for you not to remain here, where you are surrounded by eyes and ears. She therefore requires you to set out with all diligence for the abode of her maternal uncle, and beg of him to come hither and make a proposal of marriage on your part to her father. By this means there will be no obstacle to your success. As for that insupportable personage Tchang, after your departure, my mistress will entreat her father to send him away, and then all will be one between you both."

"Your mistress's plan appears to me excellent," replied Sse Yeoupe, "and it may be said that she

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has forgotten nothing. But there is one thing that afflicts me: whilst I am afar seeking a protection, many a day will pass away; and if in the interval there should come some man of merit, more prompt in his courtship than I have been, and obtain her, what would become of Sse Yeoupe? And in what place could he make his complaints be heard?"

"Sir," resumed Yansou, "beware of insulting my mistress. She has a heart filled with rectitude and great firmness of character; she yields in nothing to the heroines of the ancient times. She has this day given her word—gold and jasper never change. You may, sir, set out on your journey with a mind perfectly tranquil: be fully assured that until your return the oriental bed * shall be guarded with inviolable fidelity."

After this assurance, youthful maiden, I shall set off this very day, and seek this lord, the maternal uncle of your young mistress; but tell me, who is he?"

"The maternal uncle of Miss Houngiu is the lord Gou, one of the members of the academical college. In whatever place you may inquire for him, there is no person who does not know him."

She had not done speaking when all of a sudden were heard the voices of persons who were approaching the garden and crying out, "Gardener, sweep upon this side here; for the lord Yang is coming to take a collation in the garden." On hearing these words, Yansou said hurriedly to Sse Yeoupe, "Our conversation is now at an end; go away quickly, sir; it will be useless for you to return hither, for you will not be able to see me."

* The nuptial bed.

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And as she spoke, she darted into a grove of flowering willows and disappeared.

Sse Yeoupe did not dare to remain any longer ; he retired in all speed, and quitted the garden. As he returned home, he gave himself up to his reflections. " She has just told me," thought he, " that the maternal uncle of her mistress is the lord Gou, member of an academical college. It appears to me that there is not at Kinling any other doctor of the grand academy, of the name of Gou, but Gou Touian ; if it should prove to be the same man, behold me again in the midst of difficulties and embarrassments. It is not long ago that he wished me to marry his daughter, which I refused to do over and over again. He then deprived me of the degree which I gained at the examinations. Should I now call upon him, and ask him to be my intercessor, I may be sure beforehand of meeting with a refusal. But even supposing he would grant my request, how could I have the face to go in person and make the demand ?"

Thus communing with himself upon the road, he arrived without perceiving it at the garden of Tchangfanjou. Wangwenhiang, who had at this time some affairs in the town, had not been there for several days. The gardener and Siaohi met him at the gate : he sent them to supper, and then retired to bed.

When he rose the next morning, he wrote to Tchangfanjou and Wangwenhiang, informing them of his departure ; and as fortunately he had no baggage, he ordered Siaohi to bring him a horse, and he took the road leading to the convent of Kouanyin. He wished to bid farewell to Tsingin

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and learn from him at the same time if Dr Gou was the same person as Gou Touïan.

Chance so willed it that he found Tsingin at the great gate of the convent, occupied in looking at a young novice sweeping the ground. As soon as Tsingin saw him, he advanced eagerly to meet him, and while saluting him said, "I have seen but little of you, lord Sse, these last few days. What makes you abroad so early this morning?"

"I am going back to the city, and am come only to bid you farewell, my master, and return you my thanks."

"In that case," replied Tsingin, "I pray you to enter our cell and have something to eat before you set out."

"I have already breakfasted, and have need of nothing in that way; but I have a question to ask of you. Can you tell me if the brother-in-law of the counsellor of state Pe, who is called Gou, be the same person as Gou Touïan, doctor of the grand academy?"

"It is the same. A short time back he returned from office under what pretext I know not; but I have heard that he has been recalled and has returned to the court. Had he been living at home, you would have seen him here continually."

This information gave Sse Yeoupe not a little dissatisfaction. He immediately took leave of Tsingin, re-mounted his horse, and rode off towards the extremity of the village leading to the capital. On the other hand, seeing that it was impossible for him to address himself to Dr Gou, he was tempted to return to the garden of Tchangfanjou, and endea-

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vour to obtain some further explanations from Yan-sou. But that girl had told him that he should not again be able to see her. Besieged and tormented by these thoughts, he let his horse take his own way, and the animal sometimes hastened forward, and then slackened his pace, as it pleased himself.

The wisest man, deceived in his hopes, is like a dog that has strayed from his master's house*;
The reprobate, who succeeds in concealing himself, is like a fish escaped from the net;
The wise man, seeing himself on the point of losing a happy marriage,
Exhausts himself, no matter what path he may choose, or what expedient he may adopt, in useless agitation.

Sse Yeoupe mounted upon his horse, pursued his journey, a prey to all sorts of irresolute and afflicting ideas, when a reflection sprung up in his mind. "On coming here some time ago," said he to himself, "it was my intention to go to Keouyoung, and consult the Hermit of *Gratitude*. The adventure which brought me acquainted with Miss Pe has kept me here a long time, and made me lose sight of the project; but since this hermit was aware that my motive in quitting home was relative to a marriage, now that that marriage is fixed upon, and yet that a difficulty lies in my way that I cannot surmount, why should I not go and consult him?" And he immediately turned his horse's head towards the south-west, in which direction lay the road to Keouyoung.

He had not proceeded more than two miles†,

* Allusion to a passage in the Life of Confucius.
† The fifth part of a league.

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when a new reflection made him pause: "The other day, when I wished to consult the hermit, it was about a marriage, with regard to which nothing was then determined; but at present there is nothing uncertain upon that point. Miss Pe exists, and if I do not obtain her for my wife, I shall never marry any one else; I have no other person in view—all I seek is the means of approaching her. Yansou told me in the most explicit manner possible, that she wished that I should go and see Dr Gou. It is myself alone I have to consult as to the conduct that I should adopt. What need have I to question this hermit? Supposing I should consult him, and he should tell me that the affair will terminate happily, I must nevertheless go in person and make the proposal. Surely he could not do it for me; and if he should tell me that the marriage was impossible, ought I for that reason renounce my intentions? It is much better that I follow the advice of Yansou, and present myself before the old man. The first and most important step is to call upon Gou Touïan. Probably he himself has changed his mind with regard to the marriage he proposed to me." This new determination obliged him again to change his route, and follow that which he had already travelled. He had not rode more than ten miles *, when he perceived that much time had been wasted during his irresolutions, and going backwards and forwards, for the sun had already attained the middle of his career. He felt himself hungry, and having stopped his horse, he looked about on all sides. He perceived to the south-west of the high road a village, to which he had some idea of going, in order

* A league.

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to buy provisions, but he was not certain if he should find an inn there. As he was yet deliberating with himself, he saw a man on horseback, followed by four servan's on foot, approaching him. As they came nearer, both perceived, with equal joy and surprise, that they were acquaintances. The traveller was the first to speak, exclaiming " What brings you here, brother Liansian?"

" I was asking myself," quickly replied Sse Yeoupe, " who you might be, and I find that you are my brother Yantsoung. It would require more than one word to tell you—"

" It is now a long time since I have seen you," interrupted the new comer; " but yet you have never been absent from my thoughts. Now that we have met, this is not a very commodious place to converse together. Fortunately my residence is close by. Do me the favour to accompany me thither."

" Where is your house ?" asked Sse Yeoupe.

" There," replied the other, pointing with his finger to the middle of the village.

" Not to tell you a lie," resumed Sse Yeoupe, " myself, my servant, and my horse, are at this moment in want of some refreshment; and it was upon this subject I was deliberating when you came up. Since your residence is not far distant, I fear I shall be obliged to cause you some trouble."

The traveller, quite satisfied, brought his horse along side that of Sse Yeoupe, and they took the road leading to the village.

Tchingtchouang, alone upon a journey,
Is invited by Ssema to take a moment's repose.

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But it is not by merit and renown that the world is affected.
Is it prudent to accept of hospitality in all places?

The family name of the new comer was Sse *, his little name was Yeoute, and his title of honour Yantsoung. Though he bore the same family name as Sse Yeoupe, there was no relationship between them, but they had been fellow-students in the same college. The new comer had not made any very great progress in literature, but he was very rich. He was now twenty-five years of age, and very much addicted to wine and pleasure. He possessed, it may be said, but one good quality, which was to spend money with profusion, when he had his house filled with company. As he was free from all restraint, he passed the greater part of his time in the city, where he had a numerous acquaintance. He was returning from it the day he met Sse Yeoupe and invited him to his house.

On arriving before the door of the house, the two friends dismounted from their horses and entered the middle hall, After the usual compliments, Sse Yeoute ordered his servants to serve up immediately whatever was ready, for lord Sse was hungry; and that when he should have satisfied his appetite, he himself should wish to drink some cups with his friend.

* This personage bears the same family name as our hero, but he is not related to him. There are in China only four hundred family names for two hundred millions of individuals; consequently on an average there are five hundred thousand persons of the same name, whom the law prohibits from intermarrying with each other. The similarity of the family names is here another fortuitous circumstance, which gives rise to mistakes of which such an abundant use is made in romances.

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The servants obeyed; and when dinner had been brought in, Sse Yeoute, addressing his guest, said, "It is now several months since I have seen you: in every place where I have been, I took care to inquire about you. What have you been doing with yourself, my dear friend; and how happens it that you are here?"

"Some time after I had been deprived of my degree," replied Sse Yeoupe, "my paternal uncle, on his return from an inspection which he had been making in the country of Tsou *, brought his bark to anchor at the mouth of the great river, and sent to inform me that he desired to take me with him to court, where he was going for further orders from the emperor. Having nothing to attach me to this country, I accepted his proposal: but I have met with so many obstacles on my road, that it has been impossible for me to join him at the appointed time; and my uncle, being unable to wait any longer, has proceeded on his voyage. I then called at the house of one of my friends, where I stopped several days. A little affair required my presence in the city, whither I was going when you met me. Is it long since you have been there, my dear friend, and what business took you there?"

"I obtained the third place at the last examinations; but I do not wish to impose upon you, my friend: I have no chance of succeeding at the provincial examinations next autumn. I must hit upon some expedient, I must go and visit a little at the examination-hall: although I have no hope of tri-

* Name of an ancient kingdom, now called Houkouang. The word Tsou is here employed to designate this province, through a kind of affection very common to the Chinese.

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umphing, yet it is always of use to close up people's eyes and ears. This is what took me to the city, where I have been staying seven or eight days. The business, however, is not yet properly arranged. I have not your eminent talent, my friend, and have no right to expect to be placed at the head of the list. You, who are so joyous and contented, and who only want to be designated as first candidate, to entitle you to take your seat at the banquet of the *Song of the Stag* *, cannot form an idea of the torment I suffer."

"You are jesting with me, my dear friend," said Yeoupe: "I have no longer even a green collar †; how then can I become first candidate?"

"You must have been a long time absent from the city, since you do not as yet know what has happened there," replied Sse Yeoute. "Within the last few days the examiner caused an announcement to be made in the college that you had been restored to your degeee."

"Can that be true?" demanded Sse Yeoupe.

"I heard it with my own ears. Do you think I should dare to impose upon you?" said Sse Yeoute.

* The banquet of the *Song of the Stag* forms part of the ceremonies that take place at the reception of the licentiates. The viceroy or governor presides at the table upon this occasion; and two young boys, dressed as wood-nymphs, and holding in their hands branches of the odorous olive-tree, sing this ode taken from the book of verses: (Siaoya, first ode.)

> The stag makes his melodious voice heard,
> As he crops the herbage of the forests.
> We have here the most honourable guests;
> Let the guitars and oboes resound, &c.

The first verse of this strophe has given rise to the proverbial expression made use of in this passage.

† The distinctive mark of a bachelor's degree.

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" How could a man so subservient to the great and persons in place as is the examiner, shew me such a mark of kindness?"

" That is in no manner whatsoever the effect of the examiner's kindness. I have heard it was at the solicitation of a doctor of the grand academy, the lord Gou, that the thing was done ; your refusal to marry his daughter had irritated him for the moment, and he revenged himself by depriving you of your degree : but the goodness of his heart soon resumed its influence, and he considered that a refusal to marry was not so great a crime. Besides, he remarked that you had modestly retired without making any noise about the matter, and that you did not indulge in any disrespectful expressions against him. His resentment was not proof against your conduct; he spoke to the examiner, who immediately reinstated you in your degree."

Sse Yeoupe was not less astonished than pleased by this intelligence. " Friend Yantsoung, have things really happened as you say?" he asked.

" This is the account given of the affair," replied Sse Yeoute, " by the examiner, the keeper of the books, and the other officers of the college: it is not on my authority alone that it rests."

The joy that Sse Yeoupe felt at the news shewed itself in his countenance. He had just finished dining: he took in his hand a large cup of wine, and drank it off at a draught. Sse Yeoute, seeing what he did, said, " My brother, this is but a small cause of joy for you; the great one will be next autumn."

" Think you," said Sse Yeoupe, " that I attach so much consequence to a degree obtained or with-

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drawn? I have a very different cause for satisfaction."

"I cannot perceive that you have any other than that," said Sse Yeoute.

"Not to conceal anything from you," replied Sse Yeoupe, "it is not because they have restored me my degree that I rejoice; but what delights me is, that it has been done at the solicitation of Gou Touian."

"Why so?" asked Sse Yeoupe.

"It is because I have," replied Sse Yeoupe, "a little affair, in which I wish to get the lord Gou to interest himself. I had good reason to fear that his resentment was not yet assuaged, and I therefore felt unwilling to call upon him. Now that I perceive that he still entertains some affection for me, I shall go to-morrow and request his good offices, and shall not feel at all embarrassed in speaking to him: such is the cause of my satisfaction."

Sse Yeoute began to laugh. "May it not be," said he, "that you have changed your mind with regard to his proposal, and that you are now going to ask for the hand of his daughter?—But his daughter has been married since."

"Not by any means," replied Sse Yeoupe.

"If that be not the case, then your reason for going to him is because you know that he has influence with the examiners, and you wish to have the advantage of being taken for his pupil."

"You are farther than before from the fact," said Sse Yeoupe, laughing.

"What then can your motive be?" said Sse Yeoute.

Sse Yeoupe made no answer, but continued to laugh.

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" I have told you some good news," continued Sse Yeoute, " and now that you have cause to rejoice, why do you not inform me what it is? Are we not intimate friends? In what way could I disconcert your projects? Probably, if you acquaint me with their nature, I may be able to assist you*. Who knows?"

Sse Yeoupe was in a state of great excitation, not only from joy, but from the wine he had drunk, and felt himself disposed to be communicative. " It is," said he, " my dear friend, a business upon which I had determined to consult you; for why should I conceal anything from you? I have a marriage in view, and I wish to get lord Gou to use his influence with the family in my favour."

At these words Sse Yeoute, struck with an idea, said, " Is it not the daughter of Pe Thaïhiouan for whom you wish him to propose?"

Sse Yeoupe, seeing that he made so good a guess, could not refrain from bursting into a loud laugh. " You are one of the Genii, my brother," he exclaimed.

It must be known that Sse Yeoute's residence was close to the counsellor of state Pe's country house, and that, for a long time back, he had been perfectly aware of the beauty and talents of Miss Pe, as well as of the extreme caution which her father was determined to use in the choice of a son-in-law. He had often regretted not having been able to gain access to the house himself; and now, seeing that Sse Yeoupe, who had come directly from the village, wished to get doctor Gou to take upon himself the office of a go-between, he had

* Literally, *to lend you a shoulder.*

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little difficulty in guessing, at the first attempt, the name of the lady in question. But, with an eye to his own interest, he said, " It is useless to speak of the beauty of Miss Pe; but her father is a most intractable man: he has refused I know not how many proposals for his daughter. Even should Gou Touïan speak in your favour, he will not be able to win him to consent. Besides, I understand that he has brought into his house, to live a certain Tchang. Your only chance of succeeding in this affair is to carry on a communication with the interior of the house."

When Sse Yeoupe perceived that he was so well acquainted with the state of things, he told him how he came to know Tchangfanjou—of his having composed verses upon the vernal willows—of the deception practised upon him by Tchangfanjou—and how he had afterwards met Yansou. Sse Yeoute listened with the greatest attention to his story, and then said, " If things are at this stage, the best you can do is to confide the matter to lord Gou: it is very unfortunate that he has been recalled to court."

" To court!" exclaimed Sse Yeoupe, " were he in heaven, I should go seek him there."

" If you wish to find him in the capital," resumed Sse Yeoute, " why do you not set out immediately? You can cross the great river a little distance from this; there is no necessity for your returning to town. You should go there speedily, and return without delay; and you will still be in time for the provincial examination."

" Certainly, it would be better to set out immediately," replied Sse Yeoupe: " but it is a long way from this to the court; and when I quitted home,

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some time back, I made no preparations for so long a journey, and did not even bring sufficient money with me. I must therefore return to town to provide myself with whatever is necessary, and it is only then that I can commence my journey."

"I am overjoyed," said Sse Yeoute, "at the prospect of your good fortune. The money and baggage necessary for your journey are of no great consequence. I can procure you them; so that it will not be necessary for you to return to the town, and lose days and months."

"If you will be kind enough to lend me what is necessary," said Sse Yeoupe, very well pleased with the offer, "I shall set out immediately for the north, and shall have no occasion to go back to the town; but shall I ever be able to shew you my gratitude for such an essential service?"

"Between friends," replied Sse Yeoute, "there should be a community of goods. Formerly, as at present, all those who were united by mutual affection acted in this manner. Why should you suppose that I should not act in the same way towards you? Let us drink and converse joyously together, and to-morrow I shall see you commence your journey."

"Those are the sentiments and language of a true friend," said Sse Yeoupe; "besides, were I to quit your house at present, I should be forced to apply at some cottage for a night's lodging."

The two friends continued to talk and drink with great cheerfulness. Sse Yeoupe wrote down the verses upon the vernal willows and the red-blossomed pear-tree, to shew them to Sse Yeoute, who praised them highly. The two young friends re-

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mained drinking till their heads became completely warmed. They then separated—Sse Yeoupe remaining in the library, where he passed the night. This evening, as will be seen hereafter, brought about an exchange of a peach for a plum, and a dispute between a magpie and a ring-dove.

The fox lies still;
The two teals are calling each other with harmonious cries.
People drink together out of the same cup,
And each one derives a benefit from it.

It will be seen in another chapter how the two friends separated.

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SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES,

SUPPLIED BY

J. H. PICKFORD, Esq.,

Member of the Asiatic Society of Paris.

Page 5, line 22.

We are informed by Du Halde, that in the almanac or calendar published annually by the emperor's authority, the days and hours are divided into *lucky* and *unlucky*, by judicial astrology: the time to marry, send invitations, undertake journeys, &c., are also pointed out in it. This calendar is composed by the *tribunal of mathematics.*

Page 6, line 16, "*queen-marguerites.*"

Chrysanthemum odoratum.

Page 14, line 7, "*a couple of leagues,*" (erratum)

Read, "*twenty miles,*" (in text *.)

Page 31, line 10, "*humble means.*"

The Chinese always affect to speak meanly of themselves, and consider it only polite to use magnificent terms to those whom they address. Thus they say, *the servant of your lordship, his excellency's humble slave, &c.;* even the

* Very nearly six English miles.

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illness of a superior, must be called *the noble indisposition*.—Du Halde and Semedo.

Page 32, line 8 "*host and his visitors.*"

Literally in the Chinese text, "*masterly and guestly.*"

Page 35, line 16, "*refreshments.*"

The word *collation*, in French, corresponds exceedingly well to the Chinese expression, as they take all their meals cold. Their drinks however, even their wines, are always warmed.

Page 40, Note, "*imperial academy.*"

The analogy between the Chinese grand imperial academy, and the French institute is very complete, since the latter enjoyed something of the same influence in the government, which the former does. It may not be considered irrelevant if I here give a sketch of the French institute.

At the commencement of the revolution, the three principal academies of France were suppressed, but were soon afterwards revived by the government under the name of the *institute*. The institute upon its formation was composed of three *classes*, the word *academy* being abolished as savouring too much of the *ancien regime*. These classes were:—1*st*. *Classe des Sciences Physiques et Mathematiques*. 2*nd*. *Classe des Sciences Morales et Politiques*. 3*rd*. *Classe de Littérature et de Beaux Arts*. These were reckoned among the constitutional powers of the commonwealth; nothing literary or scientific being undertaken without their sanction. Upon Napoleon coming into power, he consulted them only at his own discretion, thus, to a certain extent, abridging their influence; he also increased the number of the

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classes to four, and altered, in some respects, their form. They were in his time as follows :—

1st. Classe des Sciences, Naturelles et Mathématiques. 2nd. Classe de Langue, et de la Littérature Française. 3rd. *Classe de l'Histoire et de Littérature Ancienne. 4th. Classe de Beaux Arts.* Upon the restoration of Louis XVIII to the throne, the institute remained in exactly similar circumstances, as far as power was concerned, undergoing, however, another alteration in the names of the classes, which again became *academies.* This form it still retains, and is,—1st. *Academie Française;* or, academy of French literature. 2nd. *Academie des Inscriptions et de Belles Lettres,* or, academy of ancient or oriental history and philology. This academy was established by Louis XIV, for the express purpose of writing inscriptions for his monuments, coins, *&c.*, 3rd. *Academie des Scienccs;* or natural philosophy, physics, and mathematics. 4th. *Academie de Beaux Arts;* or, music, painting, architecture, *&c.*

Each academy, which is perfectly distinct from the others, and consists of from forty to fifty members, has an annual president, chosen by ballot. Vacancies are filled up by election, subject to the approval of the sovereign. The meetings of each academy, are held once a week; and once a year there is a public meeting of each academy, and also a general one of all four at the same time. The king is the patron of the institute.

Page 83, line 2, "*ministry of ceremonies.*"

The province of the *ministry of the rites,* is to see that the ancient rites and ceremonies are observed throughout the empire; to inspect titles of honour, and marks of distinction, to receive, entertain, and dismiss foreign ambassadors, *&c.*—Du Halde.

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Page 83, line 4, "*public works.*"

This court superintends all the emperor's buildings, and takes cognizance of all the towers, bridges, rivers, canals, highways, &c., throughout the empire.—DU HALDE.

Page 85, line 24, "*minutest search.*"

An order similar to a search warrant, by virtue of which he could enter Pe's house.

Page 86, line 4, "*passport.*"

A stamped paper of this kind, empowers the bearer to demand and obtain post-horses free of expense; it is also his security in the event of being stopped and interrogated by the proper authorities. Great respect is everywhere shewn to this official document.

Page 86, line 9, "*female of the second rank.*"

The laws of China, though they allow a man to have but one wife, strictly so called, yet permit him to have several second wives, or wives of the second rank, who are by no means disreputable persons. They are, however, greatly dependant on the first wife, who alone is mistress of the house: their children are considered as children of the first, inherit equally with her own, and dine at the same table, whilst their mothers, the second wives, are excluded from this last.

Page 93, line 3 from the bottom, "*his mourning being over.*"

For a father, mother, or the emperor, the Chinese mourn three years, during which period they wear coarse white garments, and retire from all public employments, &c.

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Page 124, line 22, "*remedy.*"

The emperor Yingtsoong ultimately returned from his captivity, but was compelled by the reigning emperor, his younger brother, to abdicate the throne.

Page 131, line 1, "*ounce of silver.*"

Six shillings and three pence.

Page 58, line 8, "*Wen,* (literature) *and of Hiang,* (to look.)
Erratum—should be "*Wan, literature, and King, magistrate.*"

Page 159, note, "*midnight.*"

The Chinese divide the night into five watches, of two hours each, and the natural day into *twelve hours;* their first hour begins at our eleven at night, and terminates at our one in the morning, and so of the rest.

Page 166 note (erratum)

Twelve shillings and sixpence.

Page 171, line 15.

One English mile.

Page 205, last line, "*yelo.*"

Tol de rol.

Page 221, line 32, "*miles.*"

Seventeen or twenty English miles.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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IU-KIAO-LI:

OR,

THE TWO FAIR COUSINS.

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IU-KIAO-LI :

OR, THE

TWO FAIR COUSINS.

A CHINESE NOVEL.

FROM THE FRENCH VERSION OF

M. ABEL-REMUSAT.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

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IU-KIAO-LI:

OR, THE

TWO FAIR COUSINS.

CHAPTER XI.

TWO MUCH EAGERNESS WILL SOMETIMES CAUSE US TO TURN OUR BACKS UPON THE OBJECT WE ARE IN SEARCH OF.

"The most inaccessible retreat will not secure a beautiful flower from being gathered. To the ardour inspired by a charming object nothing is unattainable. The delicate lily is exposed to the insults of the wind and the rain, and the odorous bud to the attacks of the butterfly and the wasp. Do not let yourself be guided by an unbounded confidence in all situations. A true poet should avoid indiscreet frivolity. The complaints of an unfortunate lover are listened to with an interested ear; but a few broken branches cannot obscure in him the brilliancy of talent."

Sse Yeoute had been greatly mortified at learning that an understanding existed between Sse Yeoupe and Miss Pe, and he resolved to meddle with the affair. The next morning, after the two friends had breakfasted, Sse Yeoute gave orders to get ready the provisions necessary for the journey, and then, taking twenty ounces of silver *, offered them to Sse Yeoupe, saying, "Here is a little sum for the

* About one hundred and fifty francs.

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expenses of the road; take it, my brother, and be sure to go and return with all possible speed; you have not a moment to lose. The lord Pe is a man not easily prevailed upon. I should dread that, if he has any other plan in view, his daughter even will have no little difficulty to bring him to accede to her wishes."

" Your aid and advice are equally precious to me," replied Sse Yeoupe; " they impose upon me the most unbounded gratitude. I shall make no stay at the court; but the instant I obtain the letter from the lord Gou, I shall set out on my return, and travel night and day: should I succeed in my projects I shall entirely owe it to your generosity."

On saying these words, he ordered Siaohi to take the baggage, and rose up. Sse Yeoute called one of his servants, and said to him, " The lord Sse is not acquainted with the roads in the neighbourhood of this village; you will conduct him to the mouth of the river, and do not return till you have seen him cross it." After the servant had received this order, Sse Yeoupe took leave, mounted his horse, and set out at a quick pace for the capital.

Now it is necessary to be known, that doctor Gou, as soon as he had received the decree recalling him to court, immediately made choice of a fortunate day upon which to commence his journey: but at the moment of his departure, he felt himself seriously indisposed at the conclusion of a farewell banquet to which he had been invited by the prefect. He felt a coldness in the stomach, and the malady became so alarming, that he was obliged to be taken back to his own house, where he was confined for a month, and was only beginning to reco-

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ver at the period of which we are speaking. Sse Yeoute had learned this circumstance during his visit to the city, and fearing that Sse Yeoupe might also become acquainted with it, should he make any inquiries after doctor Gou, and thereby be enabled to counteract the plans he had in view, he invented the story he told Sse Yeoupe, and lent him twenty ounces of silver, in order to induce him to go direct to the capital. During this fruitless journey, which left the field open to himself, he resolved to execute the project he had imagined.

The reprobate laughs till he finds some one more wicked than himself:
By his knaveries he takes advantage of the innocence of the upright man.
But who knows if Heaven will not send forth one still more knavish,
Who will cause his intrigues to favour the triumph of innocence?

Sse Yeoute, quite delighted at having persuaded Sse Yeoupe to take a journey into the north, said to himself, "I had myself directed my views towards Miss Pe: she was the object of all my thoughts, but I could see no prospect of success. It scarcely ever occurred to me that so fortunate a combination of circumstances as the present should offer itself: this is one of the instances in which it may be said that heaven conforms itself to the desires of man."

Without loss of time he provided himself with a card of grand ceremony, and proceeded to the town to pay a visit to doctor Gou. On coming to his door, he first sent in a servant, who was to give to the porter a little packet containing five pieces of

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money *, before presenting him the visiting card, and to say to him, "Mr Sse, my master, wishes to see his lordship: will you be good enough to take the trouble to announce him?"

To this request the porter replied, "The lord my master is but just recovering from sickness; he has as yet seen no one, and I fear that he is not in a state to receive visitors."

"We shall be satisfied with what your master shall decide upon that point," replied the servant: "there is a message which you will take the trouble to deliver him."

The porter having received the little packet, and seeing that there was also a card of ceremony, no longer refused. "I shall take your message to my master," he said; "in the mean time beg the gentleman to enter the saloon and sit down."

The servant brought back the answer to Sse Yeoute, and enjoined him to change his head-dress before entering the saloon; he then took the usual presents and placed them at the foot of the staircase. The porter, holding the two tickets in his hand, carried them to his master, who was in a saloon at the back of the house.

At this period doctor Gou, who had only begun to be convalescent, had quitted his bed, and was at the moment in a pavilion at the bottom of the garden, breathing the fresh air and endeavouring to recover his strength, being resolved, as soon as he was perfectly recovered, to repair to court. On the cards being handed to him, he first cast his eyes upon the one which bore the name of the visitor, and read these words: "*Your very much obliged*

* Three francs seventy centimes.

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disciple Sse Yeoute *presents you his respects and salutations.*" He then read the card of ceremony, and saw that the list of presents consisted of stuffs, wonswong tablets, trimmings for clothes, and other similar objects, amounting in value to a hundred ounces of silver*. " I am not acquainted with this young man," said he to himself; " he must have some particular motive to shew me all at once such a great demonstration of politeness."

Then addressing himself to the porter, he gave him his orders in the following words: " Go tell Mr Sse that I am but just recovering from a fit of sickness, and am not yet capable of fulfilling the duties of hospitality, and cannot therefore receive visits;—that since he has deigned to honour me with a visit, he must have something to communicate to me;—that if it be not a very pressing business, he can see me another day; but if it be of a very urgent nature, there is no obstacle to his communicating it to me in person;—that as to the presents, I cannot permit myself to accept them, and on that account I send him back the list."

The porter returned with this answer, and repeated it word for word to Sse Yeoute. The latter, having heard it, replied, " If that be the case, go and tell your master that his disciple came to speak to him about a marriage which his younger brother Sse Yeoupe has in view;—that there are some difficulties in the way that may be removed by the interview which I solicit; but that, as he cannot receive any visits at present, I must of course return another day;—that as to these trifles, he must at least

* Seven hundred and forty-one francs.

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accept some of them. Take the trouble to go back and repeat these words to your master."

The porter returned to doctor Gou, who, on hearing the name of Sse Yeoupe and the word marriage, said, "Go instantly, and ask if this Sse Yeoupe is the same who recently obtained the first place at the examinations held by the examiner Li."

The porter went to ask this question, and returned with the answer, "It is the same person, master."

"In that case," said doctor Gou, "go and beg Mr Sse to come to me here in the garden."

The porter hastened back to Sse Yeoute, and said to him, "My master invites you, sir, to come into the garden, where you will find him;" and he led Sse Yeoute through the great gate, and round the house, to the garden at the rear. There he ushered him into a hall, and begged him to sit down. A short time after, doctor Gou appeared, leaning upon the arm of a little valet. As soon as he saw him, Sse Yeoute quickly brought an arm-chair to the upper end of the hall, and said, "My respectable and excellent master, deign to be seated, I pray you, and let your disciple present you his respects."

"I have been extremely ill," replied doctor Gou, "and cannot yet bear any fatigue: it will not be shewing me any real affection if you insist upon the strict observance of the usual ceremonies; it will be better to confine ourselves to a simple salutation *."

* It may be necessary to state that the first compliments between well-educated persons are of so fatiguing a nature, as to justify doctor Gou (in the state of health in which he then was) in wishing to dispense with them. The usual ceremonies are, for the parties, standing or kneeling alongside each other, to make three obeisances, more or less

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"My respectable master, if such be your pleasure, I shall not attempt to disobey you; but it will be on my part a want of respect and a serious fault:" and so saying, Sse Yeoute made the desired salutation. Doctor Gou prayed him to lay aside his outer garment (*habit de ville*), and they both, after the usual compliments *, sat down.

After tea had been brought in, the doctor, addressing his guest, said, "The person of whom you spoke some time back, and who bears the name of Yeoupe, is your younger brother?"

"We are not of the same blood by the mother," replied Sse Yeoute; "but he is in fact my younger brother. He is an ill-bred and arrogant young man, who knows nothing of the world. By refusing the marks of goodness which you, my respectable master, bestowed upon him two or three times, he has opened the door to sin. When, afterwards, the honourable examiner condescended to punish him, it was nothing more than the merited fruit of his works; and yet you were unwilling to aggravate his position, and your pity even came to his assistance; for that reason you are entitled to the most unbounded gratitude. Since then you have obliterated all traces of his humiliation, he has long been desirous of putting his head in the dust † at the foot of your staircase; but not being able to assume

profound, according to the respect necessary to be shewn or the degree of good breeding the actors are desirous of displaying. The *simple salutation* alluded to by the doctor, is performed by crossing the hands upon the breast, and gently shaking the head with a grave and affable air.

* That is, after reciprocally inviting each other by voice and gesture to sit down first, each endeavouring to get the better of his antagonist in this polite struggle.

† Literally, *in the mud*.

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courage enough, I have come in his stead to make you his excuses."

" There was a moment," replied the doctor, " when, in order to prop up the feeble stalk of a gourd, I wished for the support of a wise man. I had not then considered that a house which had only the walls, was not fitted to receive your brother, who, though so young, has such remarkable talents and lofty hopes. It was with pleasure I remarked in him qualities equally amiable and honourable, and that was what made me think of him. It is I alone who have been guilty of a fault; your brother has nothing to accuse himself of. But tell me, I pray you, what is your intention in now alluding to this marriage ?"

" My brother refused in a moment of blindness and stupidity. But he soon repented of what he had done, and he now deplores having closed the path to heaven upon himself. Since he learned to appreciate your goodness, my illustrious master, that goodness high as heaven, and deep as the earth, he has conceived the desire of taking root at the foot of the wall of your house; and since he has lately been informed, that the young lady your daughter has, conformably to the decision of fate, united her voice to the concert of the phenix, his road through life has no longer any prospect to cheer him. Thus disappointed in his hopes, he has thought of transferring them to another object. Having learned that his excellency, the intendant of the public works, the lord Pe, your relation, had a daughter, your niece, whose youth and beauty lend each other mutual charms, he has had the temerity to think, that if he could obtain this new

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trunk of a tree for a support, he might still aspire to the advantage of uniting the plum to the peach of your house; for the threshold of your door is for him the line that separates heaven from the abyss. These perhaps are the foolish imaginings of a poor student. But he has already been inundated, by his respectable and excellent master, with marks of goodness that have so surpassed his merits, that he does not blush to solicit a continuance of them. I know not, my respectable master, if you are still disposed to overlook his former errors, and if in this circumstance you are willing to support or overthrow him."

"Such being the case," said Dr Gou, very much delighted, "I will not allow you to remain any longer in error. The person whom I proposed to him some time back was not my daughter, but my niece herself."

"The young lady your niece!" exclaimed Sse Yeoute, very much surprised.

"Yes, my niece," replied the doctor; "the object of my relation Pe's tenderest affection. He had been ordered to repair to the camp of the Tartars, and fearful of some unforeseen misfortune, he confided his daughter to me, with a request to choose a husband for her: chance having made me acquainted with the talents and external advantages of your brother, I thought that my niece and he would make a well-assorted couple, and I therefore put not a little ardour in my solicitations. I wished to prove myself worthy of the confidence placed in me by my relation. If it had concerned a person of such ordinary merits as my own daughter, should I dare to importune a wise man about so trifling a

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subject? But since your brother has condescended to think better of the affair, and that you, my dear sir, are willing to give me your opinion about it, my niece is still unmarried, and it is right that I should again seize the handle of the hatchet. If two persons so justly formed for each other should be united, it will be allowed that what I have heretofore said upon the subject was not devoid of reason."

"My respectable master, we were entirely ignorant that the project you had formed, which evinced so much kindness towards my brother, was founded upon such generous motives. Our conduct has been ridiculous in the extreme. If at present you will benevolently finish what you have begun, you will fill up the measure of your kindnesses; and it may be said of such an affection, that it is as close as the union of the flesh and the bones, and that it will last through life and death. For the time to come, should my brother turn himself into a horse or a dog to serve you, it would not repay the ten thousandth part of the benefits you have heaped upon him."

Then, taking up the presents he had brought, he made a profound bow. "These valueless trifles," continued he, "are but very insufficient marks of my sincere attachment. Your refusing them will be the same as forbidding your disciple to cross the threshold of your door. I venture to hope that you will condescend to accept them as a pledge of remembrance."

"I ought not," replied Dr Gou, "to accept such valuable marks of your courtesy; but since you express towards me such affectionate senti-

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ments, I cannot refuse, though I blush to do it, taking one or two of these presents :" and he chose out four articles of different kinds. Sse Yeoute renewed his entreaties; but Dr Gou positively refused to accept of any more.

After tea had been brought in, Sse Yeoute rose up. " I am troublesome to you," he said, " and I prevent your recovery. I shall now go away, but permit me to return another day to offer you my respects and receive your orders."

" I ought to detain you, and profit by your conversation," said Dr Gou ; " but you will excuse me on account of my health. Another day I shall have the honour of your company to dinner." He then led his guest to the door, who instantly departed. As he implicitly believed everything that had been told him, he flattered himself that the good intentions which he had formerly entertained, would now be realized. This thought gave him great satisfaction.

Sse Yeoute on returning home, meditated with great delight upon what had taken place. " This is an affair," thought he, " that runs forward of itself. Let me only get possession of a letter, and the important point shall soon be settled."

A few days after, a messenger from Dr Gou came to him with two cards of invitation. " My master," said the man, " requests both the messieurs Sse to come and dine with him in his garden at noon precisely."

" Your master is too kind," eagerly replied Sse Yeoute. " I shall certainly not fail to comply with his invitation, but my younger brother is in the country, reposing himself after the fatigues of study; it

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is far from this, and I fear that he will not be able to come."

The messenger went away, and at noon Sse Yeoute arrived at the house of Dr Gou, who was ready to receive him, and after the salutations said—"It would be still better, if your brother were here also."

"Since my brother has become culpable in your eyes, he has retired to the country, where he is entirely occupied with domestic affairs. Now that he has experienced so many proofs of your generosity, shame prevents him from appearing in the city, or frequenting his friends' houses. But should he obtain through your kindness the object he desires, it will be for him a favourable occasion to make his acknowledgments to you."

"Men of talent have their eccentricities; but they inspire respect, even in those things in which they act differently from the rest of mankind."

Dinner being served, the doctor and his guest took their seats at the table, and continued to converse together during the repast, which lasted until the approach of night.

When Sse Yeoute expressed a wish to go away, Dr Gou handed him a letter. "It would be fitting," he said, "that I should accompany you in your route, but the orders of his majesty are imperative. I must set out to-morrow or the day after. This letter must be my substitute. When my relation shall have read it, I have every reason to believe that he will put no obstacle in the way of your wishes. Watch for a favourable moment to present it to him."

"In spite of every obstacle," said Sse Yeoute,

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"the jasper will be brought to perfection. My respectable master, there are no terms sufficiently strong to describe your goodness. When I shall make known to my brother this joyful intelligence, he ought to come and strike his forehead against the threshold of your door." And so saying, he took the letter, and after having thanked his host two or three times, he retired.

Some days after, Dr Gou finding his strength returned, and his health re-established, set out for the capital.

Sse Yeoute, having now obtained possession of the letter, quitted the town that evening, and returned home. Then he cautiously unfolded the letter, and read what follows:—

"Gou Tiouïan your humble relation has the honour to offer his respects to the venerable lord his brother-in-law, by laying this letter before his seat.

"Immediately after our separation, I turned my horse's head towards the north. But suddenly, as I was about to quit the town, an accident interrupted the farewell banquet that was offered to me. A sudden sickness attacked my stomach, the effects of which subjected me to more than one species of danger. I have been sensibly affected by the various inquiries that you condescended to make after me, and which were a proof to me of the excess of an affection close as the union of the flesh and the bones. Now that I am happily recovered, I must repair with all speed to the court. I have already spoken to you with regard to marrying my niece to a young man named Sse, whom I had met, and whose real merit and shining qualities promise to

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make him an accomplished son-in-law. For a long time, my resolution had been fixed upon this point. I had the subject mentioned to him two or three times by means of a go-between; but as he is possessed of a firm and somewhat obstinate character, he refused my proposals, and thereby incurred my resentment. He is, my dear brother-in-law, the same young man of whom I spoke to you at our last meeting; he has now quite suddenly repented of his refusal, and has of his own accord addressed to me the most vehement entreaties. This circumstance has filled me with the most unutterable joy, and the purport of this letter is as it were to seize the *handle of the hatchet*, and present him to you for the oriental bed*. You have now, my dear brother-in-law, been a long time exercising your extraordinary penetration in search of a son-in-law. If, not judging my advice unworthy of your confidence, you introduce him into your house†, the pavilion of the phenix‡ will contain a better assorted couple than it has ever had before. A family formed under such happy auspices will powerfully contribute to the consolation of your old age, as well as the felicity of your daughter. Obliged to commence my journey without delay, I beg you to excuse me if for the moment I confine myself to the present *private missive.*"

Sse Yeoute, on reading this letter a second time, perceived that the writer had mentioned only *the young Sse* without adding the sirname of *Yeoupe.*

* That is to say, *as your son-in-law.*
† Literally, *behind your curtains.*
‡ The nuptial bed.

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Delighted with the discovery, he said to himself "My first idea was to find out some expedient that would enable me to pass by the name of Sse Yeoupe; but since the letter makes no mention of this latter name, why should I not present myself in my own name? Should any one recognise me, that will prevent any suspicion being entertained; besides, Dr Gou is about to repair to court; and he being out of the way, who is there that I have to dread? Should I be fortunate enough to succeed, and conclude this affair, it will be of little consequence should the truth be discovered, as I shall have no reason to fear that they will attempt to undo what has been done."

Having thus arranged his plan, he took care to refold the letter, and give it the same appearance that it had before.

He then ordered a certain number of presents to be got ready, and having fixed upon a fortunate day, he put on a dress of ceremony, and taking a numerous retinue of servants along with him, set out for the village of Kinchi, with a lofty and resolute air.

In order to pass more completely for a well bred man, he dismounted from his horse before arriving at the lord Pe's gate; and having asked permission from one of the inhabitants of the village to repose himself for a moment in his house, he sent before him one of his servants, with Dr Gou's letter and one of his own visiting cards, ordering him to give them to Toung, the porter of the lord Pe.

The porter, on receiving the letter and card, immediately carried them to his master. The lord Pe

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was at that moment conversing with Tchangfanjou in the pavilion of *rural dreams*. It will perhaps be asked how it happened that Tchangfanjou was still in the house after what had happened—after Yansou had been informed of all that had taken place by Sse Yeoupe, and had revealed it to her young mistress. It must then be stated, that the day the governor Yang was prevailed upon by the lord Pe to remain and dine at the bottom of the garden, the company amused themselves in writing verses upon the agreeable objects by which they were surrounded. The most fortunate chance favoured Tchangfanjou upon this occasion. During Sse Yeoupe's visits to him, they used sometimes to walk in the garden, and on several of these occasions Sse Yeoupe's lively imagination gave birth to some pieces of poetry, which he left through carelessness in Tchangfanjou's apartment. The latter appropriated them to himself, and on the day in question made a very skilful use of them. The lord Pe, who could have no suspicion of such knavery, was profuse in his praise of each of these compositions, and immediately sent them to his daughter to delight her. Houngiu, seeing that even after the departure of Sse Yeoupe, Tchangfanjou still continued to give proof of his poetical talents, began to conceive some distrust of what she had heard before, and therefore did not venture to speak to her father about the tutor in the manner she had first determined on. Thus Tchangfanjou, supported by these additional proofs of his talent, maintained his position in the house, where everything as yet appeared to favour the accomplishment of his wishes.

The lord Pe was then in the midst of a conver-

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sation with Tchangfanjou, when the letter of the lord Gou, his brother-in-law, was brought to him. Pe opened it, and seeing at a glance its purport, he remained for a moment divided between surprise and satisfaction; but not wishing to explain himself before Tchangfanjou, he put the letter into his sleeve. He then took the visiting card, and read these words: "*Your very humble and very submissive disciple and servant*, Sse Yeoute, *has the honour to offer you his respects.*"

Pe immediately rose, up and said to Tchangfanjou—"My relation Gou has given a letter of recommendation to one of his disciples for me; he is here. I cannot defer going to receive him."

"Most undoubtedly," replied Tchanfanjou, who instantly rose, took his leave, and returned to his apartment behind the garden. Pe went to the front part of the house, and sent a servant to request the lord Sse to come to him. On receiving this invitation, Sse Yeoute changed his cloak and cap, and came on foot to Pe's house. Pe, standing up at the other end of the saloon, fixed his eyes upon Sse Yeoute, to see what kind of person he was, and perceived that his clothes and head-dress were new and curiously chosen. His deportment was free and noble; he had a very portly figure, and a haughty countenance; but still the air rather of a wealthy man, than a man of talent; his hale complexion, red nose, and the aspect of his features, spoke of wine and good cheer. He looked more like an opulent lord than a man who had come to ask a favour: his garments, covered with gold and jasper, dazzled the sight. The folds of his robe

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fell before him, and followed him behind; all his merit was in the *five externals.*

On entering the saloon, Sse Yeoute presented the card of ceremony to Pe, and was about paying him a complete salutation. Pe refused repeatedly to allow him; but at length yielding, he requested Sse Yeoute to put off his outward garments (*habit de ville*) before he made his obeisance. After the salutations they sat down, having first gone through the usual ceremonies. Pe then began the conversation. "It is a long time ago," said he, "since my relation Gou spoke to me in high terms of praise of your rare merit, and inspired me with a sincere esteem for you. Now that a fortunate plant rises up to shed its benign influence upon my roof, a sweet consolation reanimates my sentiments benumbed by old age."

Sse Yeoute hastened to make a bow. "I am," said he, "only a poor student, who have as yet made but little progress. I have no capacity, and my talent is of the very lowest order. But the lord Gou has deigned to honour me with his notice, and it is under his auspices that I have had the temerity to present myself at the house of an excellent lord, who is for me like the sacred mountain or the stars of the north. I bow down my thoughts while I raise up my eyes. Nothing can equal my trouble and confusion."

"I am nothing more than an old man debilitated by years," replied Pe. "But I consider it a most happy stroke of fortune to be allowed to see a young man in the flower of his age, such as you, and like unto jasper and precious stones." He

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then asked his guest where he resided, and whether the paternal ash-tree, and the hemerocallis *, were in a flourishing state.

"I have had the misfortune to lose my father," replied Sse Yeoute, "and have only my mother, who is a widow. My habitation is seventeen or eighteen miles † from this, at a place called Matchun."

"Ah! you live so near this," replied Pe. "On account of my age, I go but seldom abroad; but I am not the less deeply struck by the brilliancy of a mirror that is as clear as ice."

As they were conversing in this manner, the servants brought in tea. A short time after, Sse Yeoute rose up to go away.

"After the trouble you have taken to come such a distance to see me," said Pe, "I ought to offer you a little collation; but I dare not at the commencement of our acquaintance conduct myself in a manner so little conformable to the rules of politeness. You will permit me to choose a more fortunate day on which to beg you to do me that honour."

"The favours you have already heaped upon me," replied Sse Yeoute, "have surpassed my utmost hopes. It would be an excess of ambition in me to desire anything more."

He then made his bow and took leave. Pe accompanied him outside the great gates, and after

* The ash, a tree which attains a great age, designates poetically the father of the person addressed, as the hemerocallis does his mother. The above question means, in common parlance, *are your father and mother in good health?*

† A little less than two leagues.

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new demonstrations of courtesy, they separated. The servants then displayed the presents which they had brought. Pe chose out six sorts, which he accepted, and the remainder were taken away. The extreme deference which Pe had shewn to Sse Yeoute persuaded him that his affairs would proceed prosperously, and this assurance gave him great satisfaction.

Pe had but just re-entered the interior apartment when his daughter came to see him. "What visits have you received to-day, father?" she eagerly asked.

"The only visit," replied Pe, "that I have had to-day has been that of a young man named Sse, who brought a letter of recommendation from your uncle relative to his marrying you;" and he took doctor Gou's letter, and gave it to his daughter. She received it, and, on throwing a look over it, recognised the name of Sse. This delighted her, as she was convinced that Sse Yeoupe was the person meant; and her joy was increased by learning that this same Sse Yeoupe was the young man whom her uncle had formerly fixed upon to be her husband. Full of this idea, she asked with great earnestness, "And what is the sirname of this young man? Does he really justify all that my uncle says of him?"

"His surname," replied Pe, "is Yeoute; it was of him that your uncle spake to me some time ago, as having gained the first place at the examinations —a young man of talent and merit. He also praises him very highly in this letter. I have myself just seen him; his appearance is prepossessing, and his

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conversation not devoid of charm. But whether he is possessed of great merit or not, I am not yet perfectly sure."

"When her father named Sse Yeoute, Houngiu's mind was preoccupied with the name of Sse Yeoupe, so that she paid no attention to the difference; but, a little surprised at her father's adding that he was not yet perfectly sure that young Sse was a man of great merit, she said, "When my uncle made choice of this young man for your daughter, he did not form his decision in the space between morning and evening; he must have found something recommendable in him: how comes it, father, that you and my uncle are not of the same opinion upon this point?"

"I have seen him only for a moment," replied Pe, "and it is possible that I have not penetrated deep enough into his character. But I shall not fail to invite him to dine another day, and then I shall examine him with the most scrupulous attention. There is but one thing to remark: we have Mr Tchang here still, with regard to whom I know not well what to do."

"There must be no undue preference," replied Houngiu; "your choice, father, should be determined only by talents and accomplishments."

"As to appearance," said Pe, "though young Sse be not as perfect as the jewels of a crown, yet I think he has the advantage of Tchang; but with regard to talent, here are several pieces of poetry written by young Tchang, which I have read with great pleasure. Sse has in his favour only the recommendation of your uncle: I have not yet put him to the proof, and am therefore still undecided."

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Houngiu, giving way to her reflections, thought to herself that Sse and Tchang were as different from each other as heaven from the abyss. How happened it that her father, so celebrated for his knowledge of men, could fall into such an error? There must, no doubt, be a film over his eyes for the moment: it was only necessary to see the two young men together, to distinguish at once the jasper from the pebble. Then addressing herself to Pe, she said, " The waters of the King and the Weï do not mingle together, and black can never be taken for white. If you are still in doubt, father, what prevents you from bringing these two suitors together in the same room, and putting them to the proof, by giving them a subject to write upon? By this means you will succeed not only in discovering the man of merit, and the man devoid of it; but afterwards, when you shall have dismissed one, by giving the preference to the other, neither of them can have any cause to complain of you."

" You are perfectly right," replied Pe. " To-morrow I shall send an invitation to young Sse, and also request young Tchang to give me his company; I shall this very moment seek for some rather difficult subject upon which to try them: in this manner we shall be able to ascertain upon which side is strength or weakness."

When the wind and the rain come on at the same moment,
The swallows and the hawks fly together from the storm.
If the spring did not announce its reign by the return of the leaves,
The moss, with its greenish tints, would find favour in men's eyes.

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We shall leave the father and daughter occupied in deliberating. Tchanfanjou, as is already known, was on a footing of perfect intimacy with Pe's servants. The morning of the day that Sse Yeoute came to make his proposal of marriage, one of the household came immediately to inform Tchanfanjou of it. This intelligence confounded him. "Who is this personage?" he asked.

The bearer of the news replied that he was a bachelor of the college of Kinling, named Sse Yeoute. On hearing these words, Tchanfanjou, deceived by the similarity of the pronunciation, paid no attention to the difference of the orthography, and had no doubt but that it was Sse Yeoupe. "The little coxcomb!" said he to himself. "I now see why he went away without taking leave of me: it was to go to doctor Gou, and get him to be his mediator and write in his favour; and he must now come and interrupt an affair almost concluded. How odious he appears to be! And though marriage is my object, I am established here only as a guest, and under a different pretext; while he comes openly, and without any subterfuge, to make a proposal of marriage. Should we be confronted, I shall not be able to get the advantage of him: in personal appearance I am not superior to him; moreover, my verses upon the vernal willows, and my song upon the red-blossomed pear-tree, were written by him. Should Pe have an hour's interview with him, he will discover all that; his proposal will be accepted, and I shall be ruined, in spite of all my resources. In order that things should fall out according to my wishes, I must imagine some expedient to drive him from the house."

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After a moment's reflection, a thought struck him —" This young Sse told me that doctor Gou had offered him one of his daughters, whom he refused; and that the doctor conceived a great animosity against him in consequence. How happens it then that he should take an interest in bringing about his marriage? There is something extraordinary in all this."

He was in the midst of this incertitude when the porter Tchoungyoung entered with a card of invitation. " Sir," said the porter, " my master prays you to come and dine with him to-morrow, to meet young Mr Sse, who has arrived at Kinling."

" Your coming here at this moment, my friend," replied Tchanfanjou, " is most *apropos:* I have something to ask you. What business brought this Mr Sse to see your master yesterday?"

" Mr Sse," replied the porter, " is a young man whom the lord Gou, the uncle of Miss Pe, has sent here to be married to her."

" And what fine qualities has the uncle of your mistress discovered in this young man, to induce him to recommend him in this manner?"

" It is a long story to tell. When my master was at court, my young mistress came to pass some time in the house of the lord her uncle: it was then that the latter, who knew that young Mr Sse had obtained the first place at the examinations, and who besides had seen, I know not where, some fine verses of his writing, wished that he should marry Miss Pe; but Mr Sse refused, and the project failed. I know not how it is, but within a short time he has changed his mind; and that is the rea-

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son that Miss Pe's uncle has given him the letter of recommendation which he brought here."

Tchangfanjou smiled disdainfully, and said, "If things are as you say, it was then a vain boast of your master and his daughter to announce that their choice should fall upon a man of talent only. All that is necessary, is for a suitor to have the recommendation of some high personage."

"What is that you say?" replied the porter. "It is because my master has found Mr Sse to be a man of genuine talent, that he gives him the preference: it was not a vain boast by any means."

"My old friend, how dull your eyes must be! You have already seen the personage; it was he who came with me the other day, and brought some verses upon the vernal willows, which your master and his daughter thought so little of and turned into ridicule."

"He, Mr Tchang!" replied the porter. "Oh, I recollect perfectly well the person who came with you the day you mention; he was a well-made man, but very young. But Mr Sse, of whom we are now speaking, without being very old, is a strong and vigorous man. He is certainly not the same."

"He is not the same person!" exclaimed Tchangfanjou, very much surprised. "How happens it, then, that he is also called Sse Yeoupe?"

"There is upon his card Sse Yeoute," replied the porter.

"How does he write his sirname?" asked Tchangfanjou.

"There is," replied the porter, "*Yeou*, which signifies to *have*; and *te*, which means *virtue*."

Tchangfanjou heard this explanation with joy and

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surprise. "This is very extraordinary," he exclaimed. "What! there is still another?"

"Sir," said the porter, "you will meet him to-morrow, and you will see how the matter is. You have received a card of invitation: I must now carry this card to Mr Sse;" and so saying, he laid the card down and went away.

Tchangfanjou remained for a long time plunged in reflection. "If this be not Sse Yeoupe," said he, "I am still firm upon the soles of my feet. I recollect that the person whom doctor Gou wished to have married to his niece, was the student who obtained the first place at the examinations; and young Sse assured me that it was himself who had gained that advantage: how then could this other have asked for a letter of recommendation? There must be some trick under all this. To-morrow I shall observe him at my leisure; I shall take to pieces the most trifling expressions; and if there be any knavery in the business, he will find it not a little difficult to hold himself upright." This idea gave him some satisfaction.

In the mean time Toungyoung went to Matchun, to the house of Mr Sse, with the card of invitation. Sse Yeoute took the card, and kept the porter to dine. "Will there be any company at your house to-morrow?" he asked.

"There will be only the lord Tchang, who lodges in the mansion, and keeps my master company," replied the porter.

Sse Yeoute knew who Tchangfanjou was, and he made no further inquiries. When the porter had dined and returned thanks, he said, "To-morrow, sir, do not fail, I beg of you, to come in good time:

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it is a long distance hither, and you will spare me the trouble of coming to seek you."

"I should be very sorry to give you that trouble," said Sse Yeoute; "I shall come early, you may be sure."

The porter went away, and Sse Yeoute remained floating betweeen incertitude and satisfaction.—"Should Tchangfanjou be even one of the genii, he cannot see to the bottom of my project, and he will never be able to suspect that I am well acquainted with his manœuvres: should he become restive, I shall completely unmask him, and reduce him to such a pass that he shall have no place to hide himself in."

The effect of the plan will be, that one will miss the treasure he sought to find, and the other will lose what he thought he had already made sure of.

"Whilst the man prepares to kill the tiger,
The tiger thinks of devouring the man;
But the struggle between the crab and the cormorant
Turns to the advantage of the fisherman."

The following chapter will shew what happened the next day at the interview of these two personages.

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CHAPTER XII.

FOLLY AT BAY FAILS ON THE VERY SPOT WHERE IT WAS TO BE PUT TO THE PROOF.

"You boast of your prowess too soon, who have nothing to justify your daring. Feeble champions, you depend too much upon the indifference of heaven; because the mistakes of others have been for a time favourable to you, you forget the mass of suspicion that is insensibly augmenting. Once you are found out, a wall will rise up against your wishes; and without their thinking of it, the spirit of harmony will bring together those who ought to be united. The maxim of the sage has long taught the art of knowing mankind; see upon what foundation they stand, and what is the cause of their tranquillity."

THE next day, Pe, after having prepared everything necessary for the dinner, came about the hour of noon to request Tchangfanjou to accompany him to the pavilion of rural dreams, that they might enjoy the pleasure of conversation. Amongst other things Tchangfanjou asked him if Mr Sse, the young man who had the day before been recommended to him by his brother-in-law, the lord Gou, was formerly known to him, or if he had but recently become acquainted with him."

"He is not a very old acquaintance," replied Pe. "When my brother-in-law went to the temple of the Valley of Immortals, to enjoy the sight of the plum-trees in blossom, he saw upon a wall some verses written by this young man, which pleased him very much: this was what first fixed his attention. He afterwards learned that the lord Li, the examiner of the college, had conferred upon him the first place at the examination; and this made him think of marrying him to my daughter. Contrary to his

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expectation, the young man listened only to himself, and refused my brother-in-law's offer. Doctor Gou became irritated, and complained to the lord Li, who deprived young Sse of the place he had obtained at the examination. My brother-in-law informed me of these things on my return from the capital; I paid but little attention to the story, and soon entirely forgot it. I know not how the thing has happened, but within the last few days I received a letter from my brother-in-law, in which he informs me that the young man has changed his mind: and he recommends him most earnestly to me for a son-in-law. I saw him yesterday, but I could not in an hour's time satisfy myself as to his possessing great talents; so that I am still in great doubt upon this subject. Nevertheless I cannot, after my brother-in-law's letter, avoid receiving him politely, and therefore I have invited him to come and dine with us to-day. I must claim the exercise of your talents, be it in verse or prose, in order, during the intervals of the repast, to make him speak. Should he not shew himself a man of real merit, it will be a sufficient excuse for me with my brother-in-law."

"If such be the case," replied Tchangfanjou, "you will easily see it with your own eyes: no further examination will be necessary. But how is the surname of this Mr Sse written in the letter of the lord your relation?"

"The letter announces him only as Mr Sse, without mentioning his surname. But by his visiting card, which I saw yesterday, I learn that he calls himself Sse Yeoute."

Tchangfanjou began to laugh, and remained

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silent. "Master," said Pe to him, "what makes you laugh? Have you learned anything relative to this young man?"

Tchangfanjou continued to laugh. "Whether I have or have not learned anything, I beg your lordship not to question me; for I cannot permit myself to tell you anything. Your lordship is possessed of penetration and information, and it is only necessary for you to apply the powers of your intellect to those things that come under your observation."

"We are on intimate terms," said Pe. "What is it then that prevents you from explaining yourself clearly? If you will not tell what you know, you must be withheld by some weighty reason."

Tchangfanjou assumed his usual expression of countenance. "Why should you expect me to explain myself?" said he. "I may have heard something without being certain of its truth. If I remain silent, it may be the cause of a misunderstanding in a very important affair; and if I speak, I run the risk of being thought a detractor. This alone is the cause of my silence."

"Truth and falsehood are discussed in public," said Pe; "but here there can be no question of detraction. Have the goodness, I pray you, to acquaint me with the fact."

"Since your lordship insists," replied Tchangfanjou, "I can no longer refuse satisfying you. What I have heard is, that the young Sse recommended to you by the lord your relation, is certainly a Sse, but not the same as the person who has come here."

"I am endeavouring to recollect the surname

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made use of by my relation, when speaking to me of him. As well as I can recollect it was Yeoute. Who can this other person of the name of Sse be ?"

" There is a similarity in the pronunciation," said Tchangfanjou ; " but they are written differently. The person upon whom your relation's choice fell, is Sse Yeoupe, and not Sse Yeoute."

" What ! there are two ?" exclaimed Pe, in great surprise. " Now that my brother-in-law has set out for the court, how shall we be able to distinguish them ?"

" Without much difficulty : your lordship has only to send to inquire if he who at the last examination obtained the first place, is called Sse Yeoupe or Sse Yeoute ; that will clear up the matter."

" You are right," said Pe ; and he immediately sent one of his servants to verify the fact. At this moment he was informed of the arrival of the young lord Sse. Pe sent to request he would come in. It was Tchangfanjou who first made an obeisance to him ; Pe then did him the same honour ; and the civilities being concluded, they sat down in the order befitting guests and a master of the house : Sse Yeoute on the left side, Tchangfanjou on the right, Pe also towards the right, and a little lower down.

These preliminaries obliged them to converse for some time only on indifferent subjects, till Pe, addressing them, said, " My disposition leads me to esteem talent above all other things. Formerly, when I directed my steps towards the court of the sovereign, I was continually occupied in seeking for it, but my efforts were fruitless. How happy am I now to be able to

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bring together within the narrow precincts of this house two sages such as you!"

" Venerable master," replied Sse Yeoute, " your words may be justly applied to the rare talents of the lord Tchang; but as for me, your disciple, I am unskilled in the great art of usurping a merit foreign to me, and decking myself in the eyes of men with brilliant qualities to which I have no title. I have no intention of exhausting my powers in such an undertaking; for I should dread, had I to erect an edifice in common with the lord Tchang, to mix vile materials with jasper and pearls."

" I am but a student of the humblest order," replied Tchangfanjou, " and it was only the indulgence and extreme goodness of your lordship, which could inspire me with confidence to come here and assume a title and perform functions which honour me *. Such is not the case with the lord Sse; he is really destined to march at the head of and surpass all his rivals; he is worthy in every way of the preference that your lordship and your illustrious brother-in-law may give him."

" You are both men of talent, gentlemen," said Pe. " One of you is like the dragon that makes his way through the clouds, and the other like the stork that makes the meadows resound with his melodious voice. Rivals worthy of each other, and animated by a laudable emulation, if a prize worthy of your merits were proposed to you, never, I think, *could it be said by which hand the stag fell* †.

* Literally, make *the horse of the weight of a thousand ounces of gold.*

† This proverb is made use of to signify that two objects are of equal value, or that it is difficult to distinguish them, and give the preference to one over the other.

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Let me turn my eyes to the right or to the left, I am equally filled with the most unutterable respect."

The conversation continued for some time in this tone, when the servants came to announce that dinner was on the table. Pe invited his guests to come and take their seats; and as before, Sse Yeoute was placed on the left, Tchangfanjou on the right, and Pe at the lower end.

After the wine had been passed round several times, Pe resumed the conversation. "Formerly," said he, "when the lord Li was at court, every one pointed him out as a man whose merit gave great hopes, and in consequence he was appointed examiner-general of the province of Nanking. But since he has been enabled to inscribe upon the list names such as yours, Mr Sse, it may be said that the hopes conceived of him were not ill founded."

"After the manner in which you speak of your disciple," observed Sse Yeoute, "we might say that you would take the eye of a fish for a pearl: I can only dull the brilliancy of the mirror of our illustrious master. But it may be said that he is the equal of Kiahou in the art of discovering and rewarding men of merit."

"Lord Sse," replied Tchanfanjou, "you have made yourself known from the very outset as a distinguished student; and if the lord examiner should find many such in the course of his autumnal circuit, it would shed a new lustre upon literature. But in the present corruption of manners, the sun has scarcely shone upon a man of real merit, but there appears a shadow that follows him like the sprites of the mountains or the demons of the rivers. It is

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scandalous that such abuses should take place, probably in open day and in the light of heaven."

Sse Yeoute felt the meaning of these expressions, and was convinced that Tchangfanjou applied them to him: he therefore replied, "Those who have eyes can easily discover the persons of whom you speak. But what is truly shameful, is to see a class of wretches who pilfer the compositions of others, and make them pass for their own, in order to get access to the great and advance their fortune. Even if possessed of only the smallest degree of penetration, would it not be ridiculous to allow one's-self to be the dupe of such frauds?"

"The things of which you speak," said Pe, "may have happened, but infatuation is limited in its duration, and cannot last long."

The conversation was carried on for some time in this sharp tone, the two adversaries reciprocally aiming concealed blows at each other. Pe listened with attention, and noted all that he heard in his memory.

They had been a long time drinking, when the servants came to clear the table. Pe invited his two guests to accompany him to the pavilion of rural dreams. After washing their hands, Tchangfanjou went to his own apartment at the bottom of the garden to put on other clothes. Pe remained alone with Sse Yeoute, and changed clothes in the pavilion. They then amused themselves in looking at a flowered arbour that stood opposite the staircase, and in reading some inscriptions that were hung up against the walls of the pavilion. Amongst the number were the verses upon the vernal willows, and the song upon the red-blossomed pear-

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tree, in the hand-writing of Tchangfanjou. When Sse Yeoute came to these inscriptions, Pe, pointing to them with his finger, said, " These are some compositions of the lord Tchang, upon which I set a great value; examine them a little, my dear sir, and give me your opinion of them."

Sse Yeoute immediately complied; and seeing at the first glance that they were the very same pieces of poetry which had been written by Sse Yeoupe, he began to laugh, and carelessly replied, " Yes, they are fine verses."

Pe, seeing Sse Yeoute laugh, judged that he had some motive for doing so, and questioned him, saying, " I have requested you to let me know your opinion. What you have just said is not all you think: you are, sir, a man of rare acquirements; if you find any fault with these verses, I see nothing to prevent you from telling it to me."

Sse Yeoute hastened to reply by a profound bow. " Your disciple could not permit himself to do such a thing," said he; " these verses are perfectly fine and ingenious, and nothing could be added to them. What fault can I find with them? But the fact is, that ——" He here interrupted himself, and remained silent.

" You will be kind enough to inform me," said Pe, pressingly, " what it is you have on your mind; no harm can result from your making me acquainted with it."

" It is no great secret," replied Sse Yeoute; " but the fact is, that I had already seen these verses."

" And where did you see them?" asked Pe.

" One of my friends shewed them to me: he told me that he had sent them to you in the second

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moon of this spring, and that you, my respectable master, had never acknowledged their receipt. Indignant at seeing that his talents had been of such little service to him, he retired, a circumstance that afflicted me not a little on his account. I have no intention whatsoever to depreciate the treasure that you possess; but how comes it that the compositions of the lord Tchang are exactly the same, word for word, as those of my friend? This is a most extraordinary thing."

Pe, very much astonished, said, " For the last month I have seen no one here but the lord Tchang."

" I suppose," said Sse Yeoute, " my friend came here at the same time as the lord Tchang. You have only, my respectable master, to examine the lists kept at your gate."

" Who is the friend of whom you speak?" asked Pe: but before Sse Yeoute had time to answer, Tchangfanjou returned, after having changed his clothes. Both remained silent on seeing him approach, until Pe begged his guests to take their seats at table. After having drunk for some time longer, Pe said to them, " Such poor entertainment and so frugal a repast do but little honour to the master of the house; but it would have been very foolish in me, when chance brought together at my board two illustrious literati of the province of Nanking, to have let so fair an occasion escape. I have a desire, gentlemen, to make choice of a subject upon which you may display your jasper and pearls: I shall be most happy to witness the brilliant fruits of your poetical fervour."

Messieurs Tchang and Sse, entirely occupied in regarding each other with looks of distrust and

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envy, after the cutting allusions they had reciprocally made use of, were confounded on hearing Pe suddenly propose to them to write some verses.

"When your lordship condescends to lay your commands upon me," replied Tchangfanjou, "it is my custom to obey; but I am not sure that the lord Sse finds himself in the poetical vein at this moment."

"Being under the roof of your lordship, my most excellent master," replied Sse, "it is natural that I should comply with your request, even though the offering I should present might be of the most ordinary description; but at present, since you have made us drink to excess, the wine has confused my ideas, and I fear that I am in a state not by any means fitted to receive your instructions."

"Truly," said Tchangfanjou, "to take things in this light, I have drunk much more than you."

"A vase of wine gives birth to a hundred pieces of poetry, and the cup of blue nenuphar is the source of fine verses. With such distinguished talent as you possess, gentlemen, there is no occasion for this excess of modesty."

Pe then called his servants, and told them to bring the four precious articles made use of by men of letters *. A sheet of paper being placed before each of his guests, Pe indicated the subject, which was to celebrate the evening they had passed together. "Gentlemen," continued he, after proposing the subject, "I leave to yourselves the choice of the rhymes; but when you shall have finished, I, in my turn, will compose a piece of poetry upon the same rhymes. If I dictated to

* Ink, paper, pens, and the vessel in which the ink is made.

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you the final words, you might suppose I did it with a view to my own triumph. What say you, gentlemen?"

" With talents worthy of heaven, my respectable master, how can you think of measuring yourself with us?" said both Messieurs Sse and Tchang at the same time. But whilst their lips held this language, their hearts were sinking for very fear within them. They sat trembling all over, and could not remain quiet for a moment. It became equally impossible for them to write, or to answer that they did not wish to write. They turned from the right to the left, uttering inarticulate sounds. Sse Yeoute excused himself particularly on account of drunkenness; Tchangfanjou pretended to be in a profound reverie. Pe, seeing that the affairs of his guests were in a sad plight, rose up. " Gentlemen," said he, " I shall leave you for a moment; I fear that I interrupt your poetical meditations." And he went out and placed himself behind the pavilion.

Imposture can scarcely endure through a day;
Suspicion is not long in penetrating it.
He who risks himself upon an open stage,
Must soon have his defects discovered.

The sun was now beginning to verge towards the west. Tchang and Sse, placed face to face, threw furtive and angry glances at each other: no stratagem could now help them, and they had but little liking to take counsel from each other. After a moment of confusion, Sse Yeoute rose up, descended to the foot of the staircase, and leaned upon some trellis-work, pretending to be seriously indisposed. Tchangfanjou, pretending a cramp in the stomach, retired to his own apartment, and did not return for

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a considerable time. Pe, concealed behind the pavilion, observed what had taken place. Though feeling resentment and indignation at the conduct of these two personages, he could scarcely refrain from laughter. Judging it proper however not to push to an extremity this humiliating ordeal, he determined to return to his guests, and relieve them from this embarrassment. He ordered some hot wine, and requested these gentlemen to resume their seats at table. Being thus invited, they could not refuse, but seated themselves. "Gentlemen," said Pe to them, "have you written your verses?"

Tchangfanjou, pushing impudence to the last degree, took care not to mention that he had not commenced them. "I had nearly half finished mine," said he, "when I was attacked by a most acute pain. There are still some rhymes wanting to complete the task."

Sse Yeoute, imitating the effrontery of Tchang, also replied — "I had determined to finish my poem, but after the overflowing cups you have poured out to us, the meadow is still too much inundated. As there are still a few defects in the composition I dare not present it to you."

"As you have made a beginning, gentlemen," said Pe, "the rest of the evening must not be lost. I trust that the ardour of composition has not disabled you from replying to my pledges. Another day I shall receive your instructions. I see the hot wine is ready: let us deeply drink, to fill up the measure of our joy."

When Sse and Tchang heard him say that they might finish their compositions another day, they began to take courage. "If I had been asked to

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continue writing," said Sse Yeoute, " I might still do so much violence to myself; but to drink any more is quite impossible."

" A good drinker is often a wretched poet," observed Tchangfanjou. " I am not in the habit of allowing myself to be overcome in this way, as my lord Pe very well knows. This day's excess has already very much incommoded me, and my poetic fire is completely extinguished. I am not in a state to fulfil my duty towards our host. My lord Sse, what can I do ?"

" Having but such poor liquor to offer you, I must not insist. But as it is still early, I must profit to the very last moment by the advantage of your presence."

If there had been no consideration but that of drinking, the two guests might still have very safely emptied two more pitchers; but as they had so repeatedly alleged that as an excuse for not writing, they thought it prudent not to accept as much as they were capable of containing. After a few cups, the day beginning to close, Sse Yeoute rose up to take leave. Pe, though pretending to wish to detain him, rose up also, and accompanied him to the gate. He afterwards separated from Tchangfanjou, who returned to the library, while he himself retired to his own apartment.

Truth is like a fine-flavoured wine,
While imposture resembles an insipid beverage.
Shew respect to true merit,
And treat with indifference men without talent.

When Pe entered his apartment, he found his daughter there waiting for him. " My child," said he, " I have seen to-day the manœuvres of Tchang

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and Sse; your suspicions both of one and the other were not ill founded. We have very narrowly escaped becoming their dupe."

This intelligence gave Houngiu some surprise. "As for Tchang," said she to herself, "there were some grounds for suspicion; but with regard to Sse, what could have given rise to it? What" continued she, "have you been able to discover, father?"

"I recollected that your uncle had told me that young Sse had obtained the first place at the examination. Well, Tchang informed me that he who had got that place was Sse Yeoupe, and not the person who was here."

"But, father, did you not tell me yesterday, that this young man was Sse Yeoupe?"

"He calls himself Sse Yeoute. The names resemble each other—but he is not the person; first cause of suspicion. I pointed out to Sse Yeoute the verses and song of young Tchang, when he told me that they were written by one of his intimate friends, and that they did not contain a single word belonging to Tchang;—is not this a second cause for suspicion? I then gave them both a subject to write upon, but they excused themselves on account of drunkenness and indisposition; in fine, under the most ignoble pretexts, they avoided writing a single word during the whole of the time since dinner. They are two knavish usurpers of reputation."

The young maiden was for a moment mute with astonishment. At length she said, "If such be the case, it is very fortunate, father, that you bestowed so much attention upon this examination, for other-

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wise we should have fallen into their snares. I do not see how we could have escaped them."

"I have sent a person to the college," replied Pe; "and to-morrow we shall know the truth."

The father and daughter remained conversing in this manner some time longer, after which they retired to their respective apartments. The next morning, when Pe had finished dressing, he went and seated himself in a hall, and ordered Toungyoung to appear before him. "About two months ago," said he to him, "a young lord left some verses upon the vernal willows for me. How happens it that you did not bring them to me?"

"I am charged with keeping the gate," replied Toungyoung: "when letters, books, poetry or prose, are left with me, that moment I bring them to you. How could I permit myself to do otherwise?"

"It was," said Pe, "a young man who came here at the same time as the lord Tchang."

Toungyoung had from the commencement been very culpable in this affair; and finding himself now unexpectedly questioned upon the subject, he became confounded; and his excuses and change of countenance betrayed the confusion of his mind. He at length said—"If it was at the same time as the lord Tchang, I do recollect that a gentleman came along with him; and I gave to your lordship the two pieces of poetry that he left for you."

"What was the family name of the gentleman?" asked Pe.

"It is now a long while since that time," said Toungyoung, "and at the moment I paid but little attention to the matter."

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" Let me see the registries of the gate for these last two months," said Pe.

On being ordered to bring in the registries of the gate, Toungyoung ran out in great haste; but Pe, remarking his embarrassment and precipitation, had him called back. " Do not you go," said he; and he ordered another servant to go to the porter's lodge, and bring the registries. The servant went, and finding a great number of registries, he put them under his arm, and brought them to his master. Whilst Pe was looking over the registry of the second moon, Toungyoung hastily put some of the others aside. Pe, in going over the one he held, discovered that the young man who had come at the same time as Tchangfanjou, was called Sse Yeoupe. Endeavouring to recall the details of the affair, " I now," said he, " recollect that a young man of the name of Sse sent me some verses, which I thought perfectly ridiculous. How could he ever have passed for a distinguished student? He throws great uncertainty upon the matter." Then, continuing to question the porter, he said, " Whenever a name is inscribed upon the register, the country of the person leaving it should also be noted down. Why has not Sse Yeoupe's country been written under his name?"

" I suppose," said the porter, " that as it was merely that of a traveller, whose visit you did not receive, it was neglected as unnecessary."

" Even in the case of a traveller," replied Pe, " the place from whence he comes should always be noted down."

" Probably it was written upon his visiting card," said the porter.

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" Shew me that card," said Pe.

" As the card was not of much importance," replied the porter, " I fear that it may have been mislaid since that time. Permit me to seek for it at my leisure."

Pe, having observed that the porter had put under his arm the other registries, and that there were between the leaves a great number of visiting cards huddled together, ordered him to let him see them immediately. " These cards," said the porter, " are all of a recent date: there are none of the old ones amongst them."

This confusion and unwillingness to shew the cards, made Pe more anxious to see them; and in despite of his obstinacy, Toungyoung was forced to produce them. Now this man was a drunkard, and of a careless and inattentive disposition. He had at the time of Sse's visit put the first two pieces of poetry into an old registry, where he forgot them; and being now called upon so suddenly to produce the registry, he had no time to remove the pieces of poetry, which was the cause of his present embarrassment. Pe, conjecturing there was something extraordinary in all this, examined the registry with great attention, and found between the leaves the two pieces of poetry, the envelopes of which had not yet been opened. Upon one of those was written the name of the person who had sent it, Tchangfanjou; upon the other that of Sse Yeoupe. Pe opened them, and at the first glance became convinced that Sse Yeoupe's piece of poetry was that which had been presented to him under the name of Tchangfanjou; and that the composition of the latter was that which had made

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them laugh so much. On discovering this, Pe fell into a violent passion, and fixing his eyes upon the porter, said—"What is the meaning of all this?"

Toungyoung, seeing that the two pieces of poetry were discovered, was struck with terror; and instantly falling on his knees, he prostrated himself with his face against the ground. Pe, extremely irritated, began to reprimand him most severely.

"So then, miserable slave," said he, "this exchange has been the work of thy knavery, and it has nearly led me into an error in one of the most important of affairs!"

"Should I have ever of myself dared to do such a thing?" said the porter. "No, it is the lord Tchang's doing; it was he that directed me. I should not have listened to him; I ought to have preferred death."

Pe, becoming still more angry, ordered his servants to seize Toungyoung, and give him twenty blows of the cudgel. He afterwards turned him away, and put another porter in his place.

The commission of an evil action
Gives birth to misfortunes that will be one day its just punishment.

After having caused the porter to be punished, Pe questioned the servant whom he had sent to inquire the name of the person who had obtained the first place at the examinations. The man answered him in the following terms: "I have been to the college. The student who obtained the first place was Sse Yeoupe, and not Sse Yeoute. The latter, who is the

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sixty-fourth of the third class, has never had a degree."

" Is this statement perfectly accurate ?" asked Pe.

" I saw the list in the college," replied the servant :" nothing can be more certain."

As soon as Pe learned these facts, he went to acquaint his daughter with them, and at the same time shewed her the two pieces of poetry. " Is it possible that there are in the world two such wretches ?" he exclaimed. " And was there ever so extraordinary an adventure ? Had it not been for the caution I made use of on this occasion, my child, we should have been led into an error in this the most important circumstance of your whole life."

" If things go on in this way," replied Houngiu, " men, indeed, are very much to be feared. I see how difficult it is to escape danger in the unmarried state. It is not without good reason that the first of our classical books bestows so honourable a classification upon her who refrains from entering any engagement during ten years *."

" These two brutes, Tchang and Sse, gave themselves out impudently for what they were not. They are shameless wretches. But now that their machinations are discovered, let us talk no more of them. It is now certain that he who obtained the first place at the examination is Sse Yeoupe ; that he whom your uncle recommended is Sse Yeoupe ; and that he who composed the two pieces of verse

* The Yiking gives the title of *pure virgins* to those who shew themselves capable of the effort here spoken of.

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upon the vernal willows is Sse Yeoupe. It is therefore evident, that Sse Yeoupe must be a young man full of accomplishments and merit. I at present see no reason whatever to doubt it. But it unfortunately happens that he is not here, and we know not whither the storm may have blown him at this moment. This is a most thwarting circumstance."

"Since this young man has so much cleverness," said Houngiu, "I do not suppose that he has allowed himself to fall into an abyss: besides, he has been here already with his verses upon the present rhymes, and he cannot have entirely forgotten the circumstance. Although he did not present himself in person to you, yet a true poet knows well what he is about. He is probably not far off. Should he learn that the evil designs of these two men have proved abortive, he will certainly reappear. But the first thing necessary to be done is to get rid of these two knaves, Tchang and Sse, and their almost incredible stratagems."

"That will be easy enough," said Pe. "We have not entered upon the subject at all with Sse Yeoute; and as for Tchangfanjou, who is lodged here, all that is necessary is to thank him, and break off any further negotiation."

"It is a very good way," said Houngiu; "but I fear, after the disposition they have shewn, that they will return to the charge."

"Now that I am on my guard, you need have no fears upon that head. But another thing occurs to me: your uncle told me that after the project of marriage had failed, he caused young Sse to be deprived of the rank he had obtained; I know not

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if he has been restored to it. The time for the provincial examination approaches; and should he not be yet reinstituted, he would find himself in no trifling embarrassment *. I shall send immediately to inquire about this; it is rendering him a service; besides we may by that means learn the place of his retreat."

"That is an excellent idea, father," replied Houngiu.

Pe sent immediately an intelligent servant to Kinling, to ascertain the fact. He was absent three or four days, and on his return gave this account. "I inquired what had become of the young lord Sse's promotion, and was informed that the lord Gou had engaged the principal of the college to restore him his degree; but soon after he had been deprived of it, an uncle of this young lord, who is in the employment of government, sent for him to accompany him to court; and he has not returned since. I also heard that for some months back they could not tell where he was; that his uncle, who wished to take him to the capital, had not been able to meet him. I made inquiries also at his lodgings, where I was told the same thing. So that it would appear the intelligence is perfectly true."

Pe paused a moment to reflect, and then said to his daughter, "Since he has been restored to his degree, he will come back of his own accord about the time of the provincial examination. There is therefore no reason to be alarmed."

* Not being inscribed upon the list of bachelors, See Yeoupe could not present himself at the examination for the licentiateship that is held in autumn.

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An error of the thickness of a hair
Leads you a hundred miles from the goal.
The opportunity once missed,
Disappointments start up in crowds before you.

Pe, after allowing some days to elapse, made preparations for replying to the politeness of Sse Yeoute; and as he knew, that Dr Gou was from home, he wrote him a letter containing a refusal of the proposed marriage. Sse Yeoute, on seeing all his snares broken through, felt in himself sufficient confusion to prevent him from renewing his importunities. With regard to Tchangfanjou, somebody having informed him of what had happened to Toungyoung, he began to fear for his own safety; and after consulting Wangwenhiang, he resolved to take advantage of the approach of the provincial examination, and to pretend that he should be obliged in consequence to return to the capital to prepare himself by a course of severe study. Pe allowed him to launch his bark upon the current, and took very good care to make no effort to detain him.

Tchangfanjou and Sse Yeoute thus threw away all the trouble they had given themselves to attain their ends. But Pe, who had brooded over these crosses, at length fell sick, and was obliged to keep his bed. His afflicted daughter became a prey to continual alarms: her sole occupation was consulting doctors, and making her father take the remedies they prescribed. She interrogated the destinies, offered up her prayers to the gods; a thousand various cares incessently absorbed her; she no longer put off her girdle, but passed her days and nights in weeping and moaning. This

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continued during a month, at the end of which the patient began to recover his health.

Whilst Pe was thus confined to his house by illness, Sse Yeoupe, after having taken leave of Sse Yeoute and crossed the great river, was proceeding along the road to the north. His mind was intent upon only one idea—that of seeing Dr Gou. He travelled with speed during entire days without being conscious of fatigue.

One day he arrived at a little town of the province of Chantoung, which is called Tseou *: as the sun was going to set, he looked about for an inn to stop at, and the next morning he rose at an early hour. As Siaohi was getting together the baggage, he found at the head of the bed a white linen sack, that appeared to contain something, which he hastened to take to his master. The latter opened it, and found that it contained four large parcels of silver, amounting to more than a hundred pieces. On seeing this, Sse Yeoupe immediately tied up the sack again, and after a moment's reflection, said to Siaohi, "This money belongs undoubtedly to some traveller who slept here the night before last, and left it behind him. If this be the case, I ought to wait till he comes back to seek it, and restore it to him: such would be the conduct of an honest man. But my thoughts fly with the rapidity of an arrow—I cannot endure the idea of losing a quarter of an hour, and much less of remaining here; so it is better to place it in the hands of the innkeeper with an injunction to restore it to the owner."

* This was the native country of Confucius; an allusion to this circumstance will be found further on.

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"My lord," said Siaohi, "you are wrong. There may, by possibility, be still some honest persons in the world; but if after our departure the innkeeper should not restore it, where can the owner seek for redress? It is true the unfortunate man will be indebted to you for a good intention; but if you wish to put it in execution, and merit the protection of heaven, the only way is to stop here at least for half a day."

"You are right," said Sse Yeoupe. "It will retard the moment of my arrival, but that cannot now be helped."

When he had finished dressing and had eaten his breakfast, the innkeeper was going to get his horse ready. "Do not hurry yourself," said Sse; "I must wait for some one here, and shall not set out till the afternoon."

"If you are waiting for any one," replied the innkeeper, "you would do well to remain till to-morrow."

Sse Yeoupe had determined to wait, but still he felt not the less impatient. He walked about the hall of the inn, went out, and came in. Towards noon, and just after he had dined, he saw a man in a blue dress, with a large cap upon his head, who had the appearance of a government courier. This man was on horseback, and came galloping along at such a rate that he seemed to fly; he stopped at the inn door, and dismounting from his horse, with a bewildered air cried out, "Where is the innkeeper?"

The master of the house came out to him. "Mr courier," said he, "it was you who passed by here yesterday; what brings you back to-day?"

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" A bad business," said the courier, " and one which may prove so for all of you. I am the courier of the tribunal, and am charged with despatches from the lord the criminal judge. On arriving at Tseou, I received a hundred and twenty ounces of silver *, belonging to the public treasury, to be employed in repairing the tombs; and yesterday, as I was setting out in haste, I left them behind me in your inn: if any part of the money is missing, all your lives are in jeopardy."

The innkeeper, alarmed at what he had heard, said, " Why come you here to trouble me and my guests? A thousand persons come into the inn, ten thousand go out of it—if you neglect your own business, why should that concern me?

" I have no time to talk to you," replied the courier: " let us instantly go and see if we can find anything."

They both entered hastily the room, and going to the bed, shook it and turned it upside down; but to no purpose, as may be easily conceived. The courier, seeing that his money had disappeared, lost all patience, and seizing the innkeeper with one of his hands, said, " It is in your house the money has been lost, and you must be accountable for it. You must come along with me."

" When you came here," replied the innkeeper, " you did not tell me that you had money about you; when you went away, you left none with me to keep. What colour is your money? You came here empty-handed, and you will go away in the same way, Why do you come here to insult me in the face of heaven and earth?"

* About nine hundred francs.

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"I am one of those employed by the government of the district," said the courier. "I had four parcels of silver, each containing thirty ounces; there were in all one hundred and twenty ounces, which I put in a white linen sack, and tied round my loins. The night before last I took it off, and put it under the straw at the head of the bed. I have here my commission: you will perhaps be convinced that I do not impose upon you;" and so saying he drew from his sleeve a sheet of paper written upon with red ink, and handed it to the innkeeper. "Is this a forgery?" said he. "If you do not come along with me, I shall go to the city and denounce you." He then pushed the innkeeper outside the door, and began dragging him forward, the latter crying aloud in a great rage, "I am insulted—I am outraged!"

Sse Yeoupe, now well convinced of the truth of the matter, hastened to place himself before them, and obliged them to stop. "Let him go instantly," said he; "there is no occasion for all this violence. I have found the money, and it is forthcoming." He then made Siaohi bring him the silver, which he put into the hands of the courier.

On the money being thus recovered, the courier and the innkeeper lost no time in returning their thanks and compliments to Sse Yeoupe. "It would be difficult to meet any one else who would have the same goodness," said they. "Had the money fallen into the hands of a person who would have taken it away, all our lives would have been but of little value."

"It is money belonging to the government," replied Sse Yeoupe. "What thanks do you owe me?

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See only, I beg of you, if the amount be correct, for I am very anxious to set out."

"You have rendered me an important service," said the courier. "How can I shew my gratitude for it? I beg of you, sir, to stop for half a quarter of an hour, and partake of a little collation as a testimony of my respect."

"Some very pressing business requires my presence in the capital," said Sse Yeoupe. "Wishing to restore you your money, I had no other way left but to wait for you here. Now that I have put you in possession of what belongs to you, I wish to set out immediately. I really have not time to receive the testimonies of your affection."

"Drink, I pray you," said the innkeeper, "a cup of wine with us. There is nothing here precious enough for you. But it is now very late; you will not be able to travel far, and besides the road is not safe. It will be more prudent to set out to-morrow at an early hour."

"I am only a student," said Sse Yeoupe, "and my baggage consists only of the most indispensable articles. I have no object of value about me. Why therefore should I be afraid?"

"Your not having any object of value, is no reason why you should not be molested," said the innkeeper.

Sse Yeoupe persisting in his intention to depart, the innkeeper was obliged, though reluctantly, to place his baggage upon the back of his horse. Sse Yeoupe told Siaohi to settle the bill with him, and then quitted the inn; the courier and the innkeeper renewed their thanks and good wishes, and

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accompanied him to his horse, which he mounted and then rode off.

A lost treasure is restored to its owner;
It would have been useless to have demanded its restitution from any other traveller.
Do not say that this young man does not understand business,
He is more surely on the road to wealth than you would suppose.

The courier having regained possession of his money, went away about his own business. As for Sse Yeoupe, he urged his horse towards the north. He had not gone above ten miles *, when suddenly a furious wind arose, the heavens became obscured, and the clouds, gathering together from all parts, seemed to announce rain.

Sse Yeoupe then found himself not a little embarrassed where to find a shelter. For on looking to each side of the road, he could see nothing but a grove of willows and a vast heath, without a single habitation.

In this state of uncertainty, he was about spurring his horse, when a great lusty fellow, armed with a bludgeon, rushed from out a thicket upon him, and without saying a single word, struck him a violent blow on the head. Sse Yeoupe could only say, "I am lost," when he fell senseless from his horse, and measured his length on the ground. The robber, seizing the favourable moment, vaulted upon the horse, and by two or three blows of the bludgeon upon the flank made him dart forward as if

* A league.

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he had wings, and was soon out of sight in the grove of willows.

Siaohi, who was at some distance behind, ran up to assist his master to rise. The robber had carried away the baggage along with the horse, and it was impossible to say whither he had gone. Sse Yeoupe, having got up, was happy to perceive that he had received no injury in his fall; but he had no longer either horse or baggage. The master and the servant looked at each other, having nothing else to do but to bewail their misfortune.

We had made up our minds to the fatigues of a journey,
When behold a brigand comes to add to our misery.
The season of happiness is not yet at hand:
What a misfortune is such a rencontre!

Sse Yeoupe now found it equally difficult to go forward or retrace his steps. In the next chapter will be seen how he relieved himself from this situation.

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CHAPTER XIII.

THE TALENT OF THE YOUNG BACHELOR ENABLES HIM TO SURMOUNT THE OBSTACLES TO HIS JOURNEY.

"Let it not be said that literature is a feeble resource against hunger. A time comes when skill in the use of the pencil may be turned to advantage. Some rich lord will pay the reward due to talent. Sumptuous cheer in a splendid saloon shall be offered to him. The resources of a scholar are more abundant than is generally thought. A fragile instrument becomes in his hand the source of profit. Touched with love, another fair one will take an interest in his success at the autumnal examination. And until death she will entertain for the poet the sentiments with which a single piece of his poetry had inspired her."

Sse Yeoupe, thus plundered in the midst of a desert country, having neither horse nor baggage, alone and destitute of everything, and that at a time when the heavens were becoming every instant more threatening, said to Siaohi, "The end of our journey is still a great way off. Even could we hasten forward, we should now scarcely reach a shelter in time. Here we both are pillaged, and without money to continue our route. Where is the innkeeper that would wish to receive us? The best we can do is to return to the last inn we were at, and to make some stay there."

"In the present posture of affairs, that is the only thing we can do," said Siaohi; and offering his arm to Sse Yeoupe, he assisted him in retracing the road they had before travelled. When they had set out, Sse Yeoupe was full of ardour and impatience; but in returning he was devoid of strength

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and courage. Having no horse, and being scarcely able to walk, he did not reach the inn till it was very late, and after the lanterns had been lighted. The innkeeper, very much surprised at seeing him, said, "Well, sir, what has brought you back? Have you met with any accident?"

Sse Yeoupe told him how he had been robbed. The innkeeper stamped with his feet. "I strongly recommended you not to go. You were not willing to listen to me, and now there are your horse and baggage lost. What a deplorable event!"

"As to my baggage," replied Sse-Yeoupe, "I had but very little, and it is no great cause of complaint. But after the misfortune that has happened to me on the road, and destitute as I now am of everything, how can I pursue my journey?"

"Sir," said the innkeeper, "come in, I pray you, and take your supper. I shall get ready for you the bed you slept in before; you will pass the night here, and in the morning you will see what you can do somewhere else."

Sse Yeoupe accepted the proposal. He passed the night in the inn, and having risen early the next morning, he was consulting in the hall with the master of the house, when an old man with a white beard appeared at the door and came towards them. "It seems to me," said he, "that this is the young lord who yesterday restored the courier his money. He had set out on his journey: why has he returned?"

"Why should such great crimes be committed in the empire?" said the innkeeper. "This young lord, having found yesterday one hundred and

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twenty ounces of silver, had probity enough to restore them to the owner. Who could have thought that heaven would have shut its eyes upon such conduct, and that the same young lord would have been afterwards robbed of his horse and baggage on the road? He is now destitute of everything, and as much at a loss how to return as to go forward."

"If such be the case," said the old man, "it is a good action very badly recompensed. Permit me, sir, to ask you your family name, the place of your birth, and the place to which you are going."

"My family name is Sse," replied Sse Yeoupe. "We are natives of Kinling, and I was going to the capital to see a person of my acquaintance. I little thought I should have met with the misfortune that has befallen me. The money for the expense of my journey is all lost. What should you advise me to do, sir?"

"My lord Sse, since such is your name," said the old man, "it is but eight or nine days' journey from hence to the capital, and the expense of such a journey cannot be very considerable. But it would require more to replace your baggage, and support you during your stay at court."

"There is no necessity for so much expense," replied Sse Yeoupe; "I want but a few things for my journey, a few trifles for my baggage. If I had ten ounces, they would enable me to reach the capital; and once there, I should find other resources."

"This gentleman has rendered me an important service," said the innkeeper. "I ought to lend him

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these ten ounces of silver; but I am a poor man, and could not make up the sum in so short a time. If you have so much, my lord Tchang, and if you will be kind enough to lend them to Mr Sse for his journey, I shall endeavour to put some ounces aside from time to time, and I will return them to you without your suffering the least loss."

"I see," said old Tchang, "that the lord Sse is a man of merit and probity. He is besides a native of Nanking, and he should therefore possess distinguished literary talents. If by chance he should excel in poetry, I could point out a way to find what he is in want of."

"I am not possessed of distinguished literary talents," replied Sse Yeoupe. "But as to poetry, it is the amusement of all my evenings. If that can be turned to any account, I beg of you to render me that service."

"This is excellent," exclaimed old Tchang. "I have a relation of the name of Li, a very rich man, and who has been recently elevated to the dignity of counsellor *. He is particularly anxious to be on good terms with the principal magistrates. A few days ago, the judge of the province † arrived: my relation, whom he received with great kindness, wished to offer him some considerable presents, but the judge disinterestedly refused to accept them. But my relation, still desirous of shewing him some mark of consideration, has thought of

* Vice president of a petty tribunal of judicature in the provinces.

† The judge of the province is a very important personage, being inspector of all the provincial tribunals.

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sending him a skreen covered with silk, and on which he will have four handsome subjects painted by some skilful artist. He would also wish to add four poetical explanations of these subjects by some scholar of note, so that the eight folds of the skreen might be filled up. If you, my lord Sse, would exert your rare talents in the composition of these verses, it would be easy to procure you the money necessary for your journey."

"It is not very difficult to write verses," said Sse Yeoupe. "But is it because there are no men of distinguished talent amongst the inhabitants of a town which is the native place of literature, that you are obliged to have recourse to me?"

"Not to tell you an untruth, my lord Sse," replied old Tchang, "there is no lack of scholars in the province of Chantoung *; but I know none who, after they have got places under government, devote their leisure to the study of ancient literature, and the culture of poetry. The only one capable of writing verses is a certain licentiate Tsian; but he is a man full of self-love and vanity, and from whom it is very difficult to get anything. This last spring, my relation had requested him to write some verses upon the anniversary of the sub-prefect's birth-day. He invited him three times to dinner, and made him presents to the amount of twenty or thirty ounces †; but all this was not enough—he is continually coming to borrow, now one thing, then another. Lately my relation applied to him to write these four pieces of poetry, which

* The birth place of Confucius and his principal disciples.

† One hundred and fifty or two hundred francs.

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he promised to do as soon as he should find himself in a moment of poetical fervour. He puts off from day to day my relation, who is continually inviting him to his table, but as yet nothing has come of it. If you, my lord Sse, could compose these verses, you would relieve my relation from all the trouble he has with this personage."

" If this be the case," said Sse Yeoupe, " it is easy to render this service to the gentleman your relation; but I am very anxious to continue my journey: if I write these verses to-day, I should wish to set out immediately after. We must therefore go to the house of your relation without delay."

Old Tchang began to laugh. " Some time back," said he, " the single copy of verses on the anniversary cost licentiate Tsian more than fifteen days: will it be so easy for you to compose these four pieces of poetry in so short a time? My lord Sse, if you have talent enough to enable you to finish them, my relation will not neglect offering you a present; and most certainly he will not attempt to retard your departure."

" I trust entirely to you, and I beg of you to have the kindness to arrange this business," said Sse Yeoupe.

" In that case, Mr Sse, let us go instantly," said old Tchang.

" Is it far from this?" asked Sse Yeoupe.

" It is not very far," said the innkeeper. " The house of the lord Li is at the end of the eastern extremity of the city. It stands next to the house of the vice-intendant Lo."

" Since it is not far," said Sse Yeoupe, " I

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shall go there immediately; and if you have any good horses, host, take the trouble to get one ready for me."

"That will not be difficult," said the innkeeper.

As he spoke, old Tchang went away with Sse Yeoupe, followed by Siaohi; all three taking the road that led to the city, and to the house of the counsellor Li.

One is exposed to danger in traversing mountains and high roads.
The fish fall into the nets, seduced by the brilliancy of the waves.
The white clouds are of themselves incapable of feeling;
It is the wind that moves them about as it lists.

Old Tchang and Sse Yeoupe arrived in a short time at the house of counsellor Li. "My lord Sse," said the former, "be good enough, I pray you, to wait here a moment. I shall go in first, to announce you to my relation, and shall immediately return for you."

"I shall wait for you," replied Sse Yeoupe. Old Tchang went into the house, and Sse Yeoupe remained standing before the door. As he threw his eyes around, he saw two houses that stood close to each other. At the door of one were placed eight banners, which had not the appearance of being very old. Above the other doors were these words:—

"DIRECTION OF MANNERS."

The exterior had somewhat of a dilapidated look: it was easy nevertheless to perceive that it was the house of a retired magistrate, a man of rather singular humour.

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On the other side there were no banners. The inscription over the door was :—

"SECOND DEGREE OF THE GRAND COLLEGE."

There was an appearance of great order and arrangement about this house, and everything indicated the residence of a man invested with high administrative functions.

Sse Yeoupe had not yet concluded his observations, when he saw a servant come out from the house, who said to him, "The lord my master is in the saloon; he begs you, sir, to be good enough to come to him."

On coming to the door of honour, Sse Yeoupe saw counsellor Li descending the staircase to meet him. He cast his eyes upon him, and beheld a high crowned cap like the peak of a mountain; the grave countenance and hollow voice of a magistrate now freed from any further literary ordeals; the arrogant air of an officer decorated with the girdle. His age was between forty and fifty years; his place was between the eighth and ninth class. He had several yellow bands upon his garments, and streamers that descended below the medal he wore upon his breast, above which was a piece of black gauze. His affected air, and pompous deportment, did not prevent people from laughing at his expense.

The counsellor came forward to meet Sse Yeoupe, and led him into the saloon. There, after the usual salutations, they sat down in the places appertaining to them. Then the counsellor, addressing Mr Sse said, "My relation, Sir, has been talking in high terms of your talents to me; but I have not yet been able to learn by what fortunate chance

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you have been led to shew us so much condescension."

"It is very irregular to commence my acquaintance with you in so unceremonious a manner," replied Sse Yeoupe; "but it is the misfortune which I met with in being completely plundered of everything on the road, which brought me by chance into conversation with your relation, and which has conducted me into your excellency's presence. I have been told that you wish to have a little literary work executed; I am under great obligation to your relation, who has not considered me totally devoid of talent, and who has been good enough to present me to you for that purpose. He has given me from the very first moment cause to remember him a long time. It is in order to execute this business, that I have had the boldness to present myself before you; and I have to ask you many pardons for my temerity."

"Yes," said the counsellor; "the provincial judge arrived here some days ago. I have had the honour of drawing his attention. I wish to shew him my respect by presenting him with a silken skreen, and I have already got painted by a celebrated artist four subjects, which I have here. I wish to join to these, four explanations in verse, so that the skreen may have eight folds. I had at first thought of writing myself some humble poetry, but I have not been able to find a moment's leisure. Now that I perceive in you so much talent and complaisance, and that you consent, my dear sir, to take in hand the pen, I feel infinitely grateful to you. But can I at the very commencement of

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our acquaintance take such an unfair advantage of your kindness?"

"The only thing I fear," said Sse Yeoupe, "is that my feeble talent does not render me worthy of writing under your name. But since you do not disdain to employ me, I hope that you will make me acquainted with the subjects in question."

"Well," said the counsellor, "since you treat me with so much complaisance, let us go into the back garden, and take a couple of cups, and I shall be afterwards ready to receive your instructions." He ordered his servants to serve up a collation, and then rising, he begged Sse Yeoupe to pass with him into the garden.

All the eastern part of the garden was planted with flowers, and in it was a gallery enclosed with trellis-work, painted red and fancifully designed. It was shaded from the sun by bamboos and flowering shrubs. The walls were dyed with brilliant colours, and in the distance was seen a lofty pavilion surrounded by elms and willows, that terminated the prospect in a very agreeable manner.

On entering the gallery, Sse Yeoupe was not in a humour to pay much attention to these things. Shortly afterwards the collation was brought in; and the counsellor, by way of doing honour to his guest, sat down to table with him. They were about drinking, when a servant entered to announce the visit of the licentiate Tsian. "He comes very apropos," said the counsellor; "go instantly and beg him to come in."

As he said this, he rose up and went out to meet

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the licentiate, and in a moment after returned with him. Sse Yeoupe rose up also to receive him, and perceived that the licentiate was a corpulent man, with a long beard, a large belly, and a double chin. "Who is that gentleman?" said the licentiate to the counsellor, as soon as he perceived Sse Yeoupe.

"That is Mr Sse of Kinling," said the counsellor.

"Ah!" replied the licentiate, "he is a guest that comes from a great distance;" and he ceded to him the left side. The ceremonies being terminated, all three took their places; and the licentiate, addressing Sse Yeoupe, said, "Mr Sse, what motive can have brought an inhabitant of your fine province into our little town?"

Before Sse Yeoupe could answer him, the counsellor said, "It was not the lord Sse's intention to come to our town: he was proceeding to the capital, when he was robbed on the road, and obliged to interrupt his journey. One of my relations met him this morning by chance, and having learned that this gentleman, young as he is, was possessed of most distinguished talents, and knowing that I had not yet obtained from you the four pieces of poetry that I requested of you to write for the lord judge, he ventured to ask him to take the trouble of composing them. Mr Sse did not object to the proposal, and he has been good enough to honour me with his visit. We were going to recreate ourselves *tête à tête*, my guest and I; but the pleasure would not have been complete. It is fortunate that you chose this moment to come and see me. We shall now have no lack of inspiration."

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" This is all very well," said the licentiate; " not however but that I have been here frequently of late. But I have been so overwhelmed with business and importunate visits, that I have not had one single moment of poetical fervour. I heard to-day that the judge had returned from his circuit of inspection, and I came here to offer you my services, fearing that a further delay might be the cause of your missing the opportunity of making him your present. My poetical ideas are however not so abundant as I could wish them. Happily, heaven has led hither the lord Sse, who will save me the trouble of ransacking my head."

" I am," said Sse Yeoupe, " nothing more than a poor traveller put to his shifts. And this it is that suggested to me the foolish idea of writing some verses in exchange for an act of kindness. I take the place of the flute-player. But the poor weeds that I can offer are very unworthy of the banquet set before me. I did not at first take into consideration the scantiness of my powers. Now that the great magician has appeared, the little magician will find himself out of breath, and the best thing he can do will be to retire."

" Gentlemen," said the counsellor, " do not be so modest. Since you are so complaisant, you must both afford me the aid of your talent. Drink quickly some cups to put you in proper humour for composing;" and offering them some wine, he exhorted them to drink.

After occupying themselves in this manner for some time, Sse Yeoupe, addressing the counsellor, said, " I am but a poor drinker, my lord Li. Since you do not disdain my service, I pray you to shew

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me your subjects; and when I shall have finished, I shall submit what I have composed to your judgment."

The counsellor was unwilling to consent to this proposal; but the licentiate Tsian seconded it, saying, "Yes, yes, let it be so, shew us your subjects. We can compose and drink at the same time. One is no obstacle to the other."

The counsellor then sent his servants for a chest in which the presents were kept. He opened it, and took out four paintings representing women, with the titles of the subjects, which he handed to his guests. The latter unrolled them, in order to examine them.

The first bore the inscription of *The Semstresses*; it represented two women seated opposite each other, in the act of sewing.

The second painting was entitled *The woman weighing*. It exhibited a woman weighing something in a balance, and several other females near looking on.

The subject of the third painting was *The Kitchen*. In it were seen several women in a kitchen; some were blowing the fire, and others were preparing the dishes, washing plates, and cooking.

The fourth subject was *The Fortune-tellers*. It represented three or four women playing at *mourre** with the cups of flowers.

These were the subjects upon which the verses were to be composed; and as there were four paintings, it was necessary to have an equal number of pieces of poetry, the allusions in which would relate to the sentiments entertained for the person to whom

* Morra, the Italian play of love with the fingers.

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the paintings were to be offered. Sse Yeoupe considered them for some time without saying anything. The licentiate Tsian, addressing the counsellor, said, "My lord Li, you are very munificent; these paintings that you have had executed are very beautiful. But the subjects are very difficult to treat; it is impossible to take them in hand all of a sudden. One must take time to study them; I am not capable of doing them for you in so short a time. But I see that Mr. Sse, who is a clever man——"

"Master Tsian," interrupted Sse Yeoupe, "what you have said applies to me still more strongly. But I have some very pressing business, and I cannot refuse making the attempt, however unsatisfactory it may prove. I hope this will excuse my rashness in putting myself forward, my only reason for which being that I may the sooner take my leave of you and depart."

"I feel very sensibly your complaisance," said the counsellor; and he immediately ordered his servants to bring pens, an inkstand, and a sheet of paper. Sse Yeoupe took them without any further ceremony, and seizing the pencil, began writing without any hesitation.

It is not on foot that he proceeds;
A courser could not keep up with him.
He sets off like the demon, stumbles like his steed;
His paper is darkened by the clouds of smoke with which the ink * is made.

When he had finished writing, Sse Yeoupe presented his composition to Counsellor Li and the licentiate Tsian. "If this has but little to claim your attention," said he to them "may at least

* Chinese ink is made with lamp-black.

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my weakness not be found too unworthy of your confidence!"

The counsellor and the licentiate, having unrolled the sheet of paper, found what follows:

FIRST SUBJECT.—*The Semstresses.*

This occupation reminds us of the fair of other times.
Such were the garments, adorned with all that is most brilliant in heaven and earth.
Skilful as Ninwa in the use of the needle,
Seated near each other, they may be compared to the sun and the moon.

SECOND SUBJECT.—*The Woman weighing.*

The sweet smile of a beautiful woman will eternally prove the greatest weight in the balance;
And at the very first glance a sulky air will be found to be the lightest.
An incorruptible judge, who holds the balance with a steady hand,
And suffers not, with regard to himself, an inequality amongst men.

THIRD SUBJECT.—*The Kitchen.*

Water and fire wage a thousand various combats with each other in the universe:
In the same manner our humours offer the contrast of sourness and sweetness.
With such different flavours, how is it possible to produce a sweet and agreeable mixture?
You teach us how to do it by the skilful use you make of plums and salt.

FOURTH SUBJECT.—*The Fortune-tellers.*

Do not rely upon vain conjectures or the suggestions of chance:
You would find its name existing in the thought of the sovereign.

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The golden cup will one day be the recompense of brilliant services.
The stars which influence high employments are seen through the clouds.

After reading these, the licentiate Tsian gave free course to his surprise and admiration. "What art, grace, and skill!" he exclaimed. "You are gifted, sir, with the genius of an immortal."

"These empty words, the work of a moment, are unworthy to fix your attention," replied Sse Yeoupe.

Counsellor Li then read the verses. His taste was not a very refined one; but as he had heard the licentiate Tsian praise them unreservedly, he thought they must be good; and full of inward satisfaction, he said, "The inhabitants of your fine provinces are very different from the natives of this country. How happy am I to possess this composition, and what honour will it not bring me! But men are never satisfied; no sooner are they at Loung, but they turn their eyes towards Chou. If I were to ask you to transcribe these verses with your hand, would you consent?"

"What difficulty should I have?" said Sse Yeoupe; and he immediately asked the servants to place a very dry and clean writing-table at the bottom of the staircase, and then he began preparing some ink, whilst counsellor Li took four pieces of strong white silk, and had them spread upon the table.

Sse Yeoupe, who was at this moment a little excited by wine, eagerly seized a pen; and his progress was such, that it might be compared to the flight of dragons or the involutions of serpents. In an instant he had finished this new task. The

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licentiate and the counsellor, as they looked on, were incessant in their praises. Sse Yeoupe, occupied with his own reflections, said to himself, "Can such common-place ideas deserve the name of poetry? Ah! if some day, seated near Miss Pe, having an arbour before my eyes, and lanterns over my head, I may alternately drink and sing, then will my whole life be filled with delicious thoughts! At present the bright pearls are scattered in darkness; but, interrupted as I have been in the midst of a journey undertaken for the love of Miss Pe, how could I do otherwise?"

While occupied with these reflections, he raised his head, and thought he saw over the wall in the pavilion a person stealing a glance at him through the foliage, and who seemed anxious to escape being seen. The face appeared to him beautiful and interesting, and he could not help thinking that the possessor might have as many charms as Miss Pe, but might not probably be gifted with the same talents. His imagination, having touched this point, turned off from it with the rapidity of an arrow. Then addressing counsellor Li, he said, "The task you gave me to perform is completed; I shall now take my leave."

The counsellor hastened to detain him. "Having been so fortunate as to meet with a sage like you, I cannot think of letting you go in this manner. It is very late—you cannot go away—you must positively remain here, and accept a bad bed for the night: to-morrow you can depart at an early hour."

"True, I may defer going till to-morrow at an early hour," said Sse Yeoupe; "but I have neither

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horse nor baggage, and I must return to the inn to get things in readiness."

" Do not trouble yourself on that account, Mr Sse," said the counsellor. " I shall see to those things."

" Do not behave so unkindly towards us," said the licentiate, in his turn. " It is by the favour of heaven that such good friends meet together upon earth. I wish also to do you the honours of the country to-morrow. My lord Li must certainly not allow you to go away."

" It is absolutely necessary that I set out to-morrow," replied Sse Yeoupe; " I feel very sensibly, master Tsian, your kindness."

" We shall speak again of this to-morrow," said the counsellor. " Let us now finish the business of to-day." He then engaged his two guests to come and dine in the gallery. They all three remained at table conversing and laughing until the lanterns were brought. Then the licentiate quitted them, and counsellor Li obliged Sse Yeoupe to remain and pass the night in the library at the further end of the gallery.

When a vulgar guest presents himself, no one thinks of saluting him;
But the poet meets everywhere a flattering reception.

Sse Yeoupe was unable to sleep during the whole of the night. The next morning he rose very early, and as soon as he was dressed, he wished to depart; but not seeing his host appear, he remained some time longer. While he was waiting, Tchang came towards him, and said, " Mr. Sse, why have you got up so early?"

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"Whilst I am prevented from pursuing my journey," replied Sse Yeoupe, "the days appear like years to me. I wish I had wings to enable me to reach the capital. I entreat you, sir, to speak to your relation to let me have the assistance he promised me; you will do me thereby a most important service."

"As to the money for your journey, that is a mere trifle," replied old Tchang; "he of course will give it to you; but there is another subject about which my relation has an earnest request to make to you."

"What subject is that?" asked Sse Yeoupe.

"My relation is convinced by the praise which the licentiate has given to your talents and acquirements, that you are a man of the rarest merit, Mr Sse. He has conceived a very great esteem for you, and would wish to have you continually near him; and as he has a son thirteen years of age, he would wish to enter into an engagement with you, and put this boy under your direction for a year. You shall yourself fix the terms; and whatever they may be, he will not presume to diminish their amount."

"I know nothing about the duties of a preceptor," said Sse Yeoupe; "besides, I am only a traveller; I am going to depart immediately; how therefore can I listen to such a proposal?"

As he was speaking, a servant entered, and handed him a card of invitation. This card was from the licentiate Tsian, engaging him to dine with him. Sse Yeoupe hastened to reply—"I positively cannot accept this invitation; be good enough to present

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my respects and thanks, and take the trouble of carrying back this card."

"The dinner has been already ordered," replied the servant; "you cannot possibly avoid remaining half a day more, Mr Sse;" and so saying, he laid down the card and went away.

Old Tchang then said: "Mr Sse, as you are not inclined to remain here, my relation will of course not detain you. But you cannot by any means refuse the invitation of the licentiate Tsian. Besides this dinner is not one of those that are so easily found. If the licentiate had not had a double esteem for you, he would not have taken it into his head to invite you. It is a dinner sent from heaven to you."

"Yes," said Sse Yeoupe, "it is very obliging on his part, but I am extremely impatient to resume my journey."

"Moderate a little your impatience," replied old Tchang; "I shall go and see about your horse and baggage. They dine at an early hour at the licentiate's; you will drink a couple of cups with him, and then set out immediately after."

"I entirely rely upon your good offices," said Sse Yeoupe. As he said this, old Tchang left him, and he remained alone seated in the gallery, a prey to the deepest depression. In the midst of the impatience that dried up his heart, he cursed the necessity he was under of waiting for money to enable him to pursue his journey. "Go," said he to his servant, "and see if the road is good. We shall go away, for I can no longer bear waiting in this manner.

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"The garden gate is shut," said Siaohi: "we cannot get out; and even if we could, we have no money for the road: so that one way or the other we must have patience for to-day. To-morrow, without fail, we shall set out."

Sse Yeoupe, not knowing how to get over this obstacle, resigned himself to the delay. As he was thus waiting, he heard some one in the pavilion that joined the wall saying, "The pomegranate-trees outside the back-door are in full blossom."

This remark struck Sse Yeoupe, and made him reflect, that the garden in which he was must certainly have a back-door. He immediately began walking alongside the wall, for the purpose of finding this door; and after having turned round a little flowering thicket, he found it behind an artificial rock. It was closed, but Sse Yeoupe told his servant to open it, and he advanced to see what was at the other side. He saw at a great distance a piece of ground planted with elms and willows, the shade of which appeared most inviting. There were also there two pomegranate-trees, but their blossoms were not in a very advanced state.

Sse Yeoupe went forward a few paces to examine the place where he was, and perceived that the wall, belonging to the house from which he had issued, served also to enclose a flower-garden, and that there was a door in it close to that through which he had come out. As he was looking at it, the door opened, and there appeared a youth who might be about fifteen or sixteen years of age: he wore on his head a light cap, and his clothes were of a violet colour. His rosy lips, sparkling white teeth, brilliant eyes, and finely-marked eye-brows, made

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him look like a charming girl: it might truly be said—

His vernal robe is formed of the leaves of the willow and the tints of the peach-tree.
Is it a mortal or a divinity?
Who dare envy this spirit formed of the essence of flowers?
How is it possible to avoid being attached to this soul that has emanated from the moon?
One should die for love of her youth and gracefulness.
But her soft promises will calm the ardour excited by her charms.
Is it only a young boy who has come here to laugh and sport,
Or is it a perfume that exhales from the interior apartment?

Sse Yeoupe was struck by his appearance, and in his joyful surprise exclaimed, "Can it be that there is under heaven so charming a young man? Such a one must have been the Pangan so highly lauded in ancient times!"

As he was occupied with these thoughts, he saw the youth approach him with a lovely and engaging air; who, after making him a bow, said, "Who is the handsome young man that amuses himself in profusely scattering the flowers of his talent, who composes admirable verses without deigning to inquire if there be any one looking at him over the wall?"

Sse Yeoupe lost no time in replying to this cheerful address, and raising his hand, said: "Entirely occupied with the recollection of the prince of letters, I imagined that I was playing the guitar without being heard, and I had no idea that in the neighbourhood on the west side, 'Soung, favoured

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by the snow, was employed in watching me.' Now that I have met with gold and jasper, there can be no longer any mention of my scribbling."

"I have always heard say," replied the new comer, "that pleasure is not the only thing that seeks its kind, but that talent also has a sympathy for talent. To judge by your merit and your countenance, you must be an accomplished man. I wish that we were like the rush and the reed, which are said to lend each other mutual support. Should you, my dear sir, be of the same disposition?"

"I see in you the gracefulness of former times, and the deportment of a genius. When the laseras * and the vanilla are within reach, why should we not wish to grasp them? All that I fear is not to be in harmony with you, and not to be worthy of the connexion you have the goodness to propose to me."

"If you feel no disdain for me, let us sit down for a short time upon this stone, and communicate the sentiments which occupy our hearts.

They both went and sat down side by side upon a large stone which was near the garden-gate.

"Permit me," said the youth, "to ask you your family name, your country, your age, and the circumstances that brought you here?"

"I am Sse Yeoupe of Kinling, surnamed Liansian—I am twenty years old—I was going to court to see a certain person of distinction, when I was suddenly attacked and robbed upon the road. Alone, destitute of everything, and unable to advance or return, I made by chance the acquaintance of this old Li, who asked me to compose four

* The most beautiful of mushrooms.

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pieces of poetry for him, he promising to furnish me with what was necessary to continue my journey. The verses were written yesterday, but the money he was to lend me as a recompense is not yet forthcoming. It was for this I was waiting when I so unexpectedly met with your lordship, which is a happiness sufficient for a triple existence. But I am yet ignorant of the name of your lordship."

"My family name is Lo; my mother, when she brought me into the world, saw in a dream a pear-tree in blossom, and thence comes the surname of Mengli* which she gave me—I am now sixteen years of age—my sister, who is younger than I, was yesterday in the pavilion, whence she saw you unperceived. She was struck with your merit, your agreeable appearance, and the extreme skill that you displayed in the use of the pen. She took you for Litaïpe† himself come back to life. Having heard all these circumstances from her, I felt a great desire to have an interview with you. I did not foresee that the accomplishment would have so soon followed the wish, and that I should meet your lordship. If you are in want of anything that may be necessary to you, it follows of course that I shall supply it. What can you expect from old Li? He is a vulgar man, who only thinks of pushing his own fortune. How could he appreciate talent?"

At this moment Siaohi ran up to inform his master that breakfast had been brought in, and to engage him to return to the house: "The lord Li," he added, "is preparing to go out."

* The surnames of the Chinese of both sexes, have often no other origin than adventitious circumstances of this kind.

† A celebrated poet of the eighth century.

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Sse Yeoupe, who would willingly have continued the conversation, shewed no disposition to quit the place; but Lo Mengli, on hearing what Siaohi said, instantly rose up, saying, " Since your host invites you to breakfast, I shall quit you. But in a short time, when there will be no one at home, we shall again meet here. But do not say a word about me to old Li; he and I are not on very good terms."

" Very well," said Sse Yeoupe, " I shall go in for a moment; but above all things I entreat of you not to fail in the rendezvous."

" Since our hearts have already met, there are still some points upon which we must have an understanding. You may depend upon my coming;" and so saying, Lo Mengli retired into the garden and disappeared.

As Sse Yeoupe was returning to the gallery, counsellor Li came out to join him. After the usual compliments, he said, " I am very culpable not to have remained with you. I should have seen you set off at an early hour this morning. But old Tsian had most vehemently requested me to detain you for the dinner that he wishes to offer you, and this was what emboldened me to delay your departure. The trifles that you want are all ready, and to-morrow, without fail, you shall continue your journey."

" It is," replied Sse Yeoupe, " a great mark of affection on your part,—my gratitude shall be unlimited."

An instant after breakfast was served up, and when they had finished, the counsellor, addressing his guest, said, " the sub-prefect came yesterday to pay me a visit, which I must now return. It

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pains me very much to be thus obliged to leave you ; but what can I do ?"

Sse Yeoupe, who thought of rejoining Lo Mengli, had been afraid that his host would not have quitted him, and he hastened to reply, " Do whatever will be pleasing to you : I shall remain and repose myself after my fatigues."

" Well," said the counsellor, " I am going to incur the guilt of another incivility ; and when I shall have returned from this visit, it will be time for us to go and dine with old Tsian." He then saluted Sse Yeoupe with his hand and took leave of him. The latter, now left at liberty, ran to the back-door of the garden in the hope of finding Lo Mengli there. But as in this interview things belonging to the interior apartment were treated of, it deserves to be described separately. Who could have foreseen that it would give rise to sentiments that penetrate to the very marrow of the bones? Thus is seen, before a thicket in the moonlight, a new object interesting from its gracefulness and the elegance of its language.

Their sentiments are like two streams of living water, which can never be exhausted.

Their hearts are like a wall pierced with loop holes.

Man under the influence of love turns towards the most worthy objects.

But why does this lover go to a distance from her who possesses his affection?

The following chapter will shew if Sse Yeoupe succeeded in finding Lo Mengli again.

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CHAPTER XIV.

PRESENTS FROM LO MENGLI RECEIVED BEHIND THE GARDEN.

"Why does not talent shew itself by external advantages? In what places is the man of merit treated unfavourably? In a stolen visit the rites will be broken through for the love of the prince of letters. For him the strict rules of a virtuous conduct will be set aside. The rectitude of his intentions can only be known when it comes to the proof. The first glance marks the views of fate. It is in vain to say that heaven regulates marriages: Passion may counteract even the decisions of heaven.

Sse Yeoupe ran with great speed to the garden-gate, hoping to meet Lo Mengli there; but he found the door of Lo's house closed, and could hear no noise from the inside. He remained standing for some time in this place, his mind occupied with various reflections.

"Could they have been empty words that this young man spoke to me concerning his sister?" thought he to himself.

Another thought then occurred to him. "I perceived in him," said he, "a noble heart, and generous sentiments. It is impossible that he should break his promise."

Whilst he was thus waiting, a thousand contradictory thoughts succeeded each other in an instant. He was lost in embarrassing reflections, when he suddenly heard the noise of the door opening; and Lo Mengli came towards him with a light step, say-

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ing, "Brother, you are a man of your word. What! so soon returned? You really then have no disdain for your friend?"

On seeing him, Sse Yeoupe felt as much joy as if he beheld him descend from heaven; and eagerly running to meet him, took him by the hand, and replied laughing—"How can one arrive late, when the rendezvous is with a beloved object?"

"In friendship," said Lo Mengli, "the beginning is always good; it is the end which often leaves us something to desire. When the conclusion corresponds to the commencement, it may be called the union of sages."

"Those whose friendship languishes towards the end, may be said to have no real friendship at the beginning," replied Sse Yeoupe. "Such persons have no pupils to their eyes: they are deprived of sight. Behold these pines and thuyas: we have no need to await the coming of winter to know that they do not lose their leaves."

"Brother," said Lo Mengli, "what you say charms me; you have relieved me from an incertitude that weighed heavily upon me." Then continuing the conversation: "I have a question to ask you; but I fear that the subject is too serious a one for so slender a connexion as ours. I dare not open my mouth to you on the subject."

"A word often suffices to cement a connexion," said Sse Yeoupe, "and may lead to a confidence lasting as life. Chance has brought us together, but my affection for you is already deeply rooted. What have you upon your mind? Let

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nothing prevent you from communicating it to me."

"As you authorize me to speak freely to you," replied Lo Mengli, "I shall ask you if the object of your visit to the court be reputation or profit, and if your business will permit of any delay?"

"In going this journey," replied Sse Yeoupe, "I have not in view either reputation or profit; but the object is one which touches me nearly, and will not permit of any delay."

Lo Mengli continued his questions. "You are in the flower of your age; your father and mother, are without doubt in the enjoyment of robust health; your sister is probably provided for?"

"I have had the misfortune to lose my father and mother," replied Sse Yeoupe. "I am absolutely alone in the world, and still unmarried."

"Brother," said Lo Mengli, "at your age, gifted with such fine talents, and with a face like to the jewel of a crown, many persons must have thrown fruit to you, and you cannot have missed making choice of a connexion. How comes it that you are still in search of the phenix, alone and isolated in the universe?"

"Not to tell you an untruth," said Sse Yeoupe, "if I had thought only of riches and titles, I might long ago have had a wife in my house. But I must expose my weakness to you: in reflecting upon the five duties that regulate human life, I thought that I had nothing to do with the first, as I have unfortunately lost my father and mother, and have no brothers. As to the obligations that bind the subject to the prince, and friends [illegible] other, I know

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not if I shall ever have occasion to conform myself to them. And as to the tie which unites husband and wife, unless I find an accomplished beauty, a woman endowed with talents and virtues, who may be a companion to me through all my life, I should feel but little inclination to marry, were I to be offered even the daughter of a learned man, inhabiting the hall of jasper, or mounted upon the golden horse *. This is the reason why I have remained alone exposed to tempests."

" Those are noble sentiments," brother Sse, and capable of drawing tears of tenderness from the eyes of all the young girls in the empire who are gifted with any talent." As he spoke, Lo Mengli let a sigh escape, and then added—" The choice that you wish to make of an accomplished beauty for a wife, is a very difficult thing, brother Sse. The manœuvres of relations, and the deceits of match-makers, are equally unfitted to inspire confidence. Thence it is, that so many husbands, full of merit and talent, have reason to complain of the depth of the interior apartment. Even when two persons meet who are fitted for each other, has not the prince of letters forbidden them to omit the rites, in order to arrive at a happy result ?"

" These ceremonial rules are a general law," replied Sse Yeoupe ; " but is it for the man of real talent, for the charming and virtuous woman, that they have been laid down ?"

" Brother," said Lo Mengli, " since the object of your journey is neither profit nor reputation,

* It has been already observed, that these pompous names designate the Imperial Academy.

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you have no doubt found some person according to your wishes, as you do not complain of the fatigue of so long a journey."

" Brother Lo," replied Sse Yeoupe; " from a person of so sound a judgment as you have, and who have shewn me so much affection, I cannot think of concealing anything. The object of my journey is in fact marriage, and I am going to entreat a doctor of the grand college to interest himself for me. But the period of the examinations is approaching: I fear that he may be sent from the capital to preside at some provincial examination, and that I shall not be able to meet him. This is the reason I am so anxious to set out."

" She who has merited your choice, must be a very accomplished person," said Lo Mengli; " but you have not yet told me whose daughter she is."

" She is," replied Sse Yeoupe, " the daughter of my countryman Pe, the counsellor of state. Her name is Houngiu. For grace and beauty she has not an equal. She is also perfectly skilled in the art of writing verses, and we ourselves must yield the palm to her upon this point. As to the esteem she entertains for talent, there has never been a person either in ancient or modern times, who has had more than she has; so that sleeping or waking, it is impossible for me to detach my thoughts from her. And if I do not succeed in obtaining her for a wife, I should wish to remain a bachelor all my life."

On hearing this, Lo Mengli paused for a moment

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to reflect; then putting another question to Sse Yeoupe, he said, " What is the sirname of the counsellor of state Pe, and where is his residence ?"

" His sirname is Hiouan, and his title of honour Thaihiouan : he lives in the village of Kinchi."

On hearing this answer, Lo Mengli perceived that the person in question was his maternal uncle ; but not wishing to let this appear, he said, " If she has so much beauty, it is not surprising that she should have inspired you with such strong affection. But the empire is vast; suppose that another person should be found gifted with like charms ; what would you do, brother Sse ?"

" When one is sensible to the charms of beauty, how can one have two kinds of heart ? If another could be found possessing equal beauty, it would be quite natural that I should feel the same passion for her. But to quit one, and attach myself to the other, would be a treachery of which the fear of death could not even make me guilty."

This reflection caused Lo Mengli again to pause. Then after the lapse of a moment, he said : " Brother, your passion shews itself in your language. Your line of conduct cannot be changed. Why therefore defer any longer ? I have brought with me what is necessary for your journey."

Lo Mengli then drew from his sleeve thirty ounces of silver, and presented them to Sse Yeoupe, saying—" Little is necessary for such light baggage ; but if this should not be sufficient, here are besides a pair of my sister's golden bracelets, with ten fine pearls, which will assist in providing for your wants

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on the road;" and Lo Mengli took from his arms his two bracelets, and offered them to Sse Yeoupe, together with a necklace of fine pearls.

"Ten ounces of silver are sufficient for my journey," said Sse Yeoupe. "What necessity is there for offering me so many things? My dear brother, you are too generous towards me. It is already too much to accept of this money. As for the bracelets and pearls, they are precious objects belonging to your sister, and I cannot permit myself to take them."

"Can a scholar such as you," said Lo Mengli, "make use of similar language? A necessitous traveller finds himself embarrassed at each new demand he is obliged to make. You can put these pearls and bracelets in your girdle, and reserve them for unforeseen circumstances. If you do not make use of them, you will keep them, and return them to me another time when we shall meet. The news of your return will be very gratifying to me."

"Brother," replied Sse Yeoupe, "you unite, in your manner of obliging, all the seductive delicacy of a young girl to the generosity of a mature age. Are you an unique being, formed of the vapours of rivers and mountains? Having met you only by chance, what good fortune was it that inspired you with such favourable dispositions towards me? At first I was as impatient to depart as an untrained horse. Now the excess of your affection has made me like the bird that flies round its master,—like the imagination that attaches itself to a beautiful flower. You intoxicate my heart, you soften my s[illegible] subjugated, I can no longer

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support the idea of separating myself from you. Hitherto my mind had contemplated only the bonds of marriage: I was ignorant of the ties of friendship. You add an excellent friend to the other objects which will occupy my thoughts. You make me feel that a single body, a single soul, may suffer in two persons."

"I have been educated by my deceased father," said Lo Mengli. "I have led the retired life of a young girl; I have never received the lessons of any master; it has therefore not been possible for me to make friends. But in the first moment that I met you, I know not how it was, but you inspired me with affection. Do you, whose sentiments have more energy than mine, explain to me what I feel."

"The force of my sentiments has nothing but what is natural; yours, brother Lo, have the mildness of water. There are some verses of Litaïpe, which say, *The flower of the peach-tree, placed upon the surface of the water, sinks to the depth of a hundred feet; such, and still more penetrating, is the affection that you shew me.* It would seem as if these verses alluded to what you have evinced towards me to-day. On my part, what proof have I given you? It is but a point, considering the terms upon which we are."

"The thing which you consider the most difficult to reconcile yourself to, is the idea of our separation," said Lo Mengli; "and what troubles me, is the difficulty of our meeting again hereafter. Who knows, when once we shall separate, if a time will ever come, when I shall again find myself in your company?"

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"What is that you say?" asked Sse Yeoupe with surprise. "Our interview of to-day has rendered you and me, though merely friends, more intimately united than are relations. You should have constancy in your affections; and as for me, I am not amongst the number of the ungrateful. I shall repair to court, and make as little stay there as possible. On my return, I shall pass this way, and shall consider it my duty to pay a visit to the lady your mother. We shall then so contrive it as to meet again, and renew our conversation. How should it be possible that we should never see each other again?"

Lo Mengli, whose mind was pre-occupied, remained for some time without answering; and Sse Yeoupe continued, "You are silent, brother: is it because you think me capable of not coming back?"

"My silence was not caused," replied Lo Mengli, "by the suspicion that you would not come back; what I fear is, that when you return, I myself shall have become invisible like a second Tseuhiu."

"If your mother reside in this house, she will not certainly send her son to live in another town. I suppose then, if you have a sincere affection for me, that there can be no obstacle to our meeting; how can you become invisible?"

"To meet or remain separated, depends not upon man. The affairs of this world have a mysterious progress, which it is impossible to calculate. How, brother, can you be so sure of what is to happen?"

"What depends upon heaven cannot be fore-

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seen," said Sse Yeoupe; "but that which depends upon man may be calculated. If you mean to say that within a certain time I shall not come back to see you, I know what reliance I can place upon my own resolutions. If you mean that in some time you will no longer have any wish to see me, why then have you desired to see me to-day? This is perfectly clear and easy to unravel."

"At present that I am at liberty to see you, I have seen you," replied Lo Mengli. "If at a future time I should not see you, it will be because it will be no longer possible for me: and this is what I cannot be sure of beforehand."

"At the commencement of our interview," replied Sse Yeoupe, "you spoke to me without fear or reserve; and yet you apologized for touching on a subject too serious for a connexion of such short standing. Now that the conformity of our sentiments has given birth to a union as intimate as that between the flesh and the bones, you speak to me in mysterious and enigmatical language. May you not now in your turn be reproached with making use of frivolous expressions in the course of an intimacy thus become so close? It is a thing that I cannot explain satisfactorily to myself."

"What I said to you at the commencement, I had a right to say," replied Lo Mengli; "and that was the reason I spoke to you without reserve. Now I am silent with regard to what I think I ought not to reveal. But where is the necessity for so many explanations?"

"I am here alone, and but for the space of a day," said Sse Yeoupe. "What distinction do you make

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between the things that you may tell me, and those which you think you ought to conceal from me?"

"I wished to tell you," replied Lo Mengli, "the things which might have led to some result; but what need is there to inform you of those which can lead to none?"

"I have always heard," replied Sse Yeoupe, "that what was most estimable in friendship, was the interchange of thoughts; but since you have thoughts that you cannot confide to me, what becomes of this interchange between us? And as I have not yet your confidence, and as you confine your friendship to making me presents, I should blush to accept them. This would be purchasing friendship with gold. I am poor, it is true, and destitute of every thing necessary for my journey; but this I should not consent to, had I a much greater distance to travel." He then endeavoured to make Lo Mengli take back the necklace and bracelets.

"Brother," said Lo Mengli, with emotion, "why do you make me such severe reproaches? The very first moment I saw you, I wished to confide something to you, and that was the reason that I questioned you about your journey and your sojourn. I now know that what I had to say could turn to no useful purpose, and would only bring shame upon a certain person; and therefore I have been silent, and not because I was unwilling to communicate my thoughts to you, or had any want of confidence in you: but since you consider my reserve a crime, I cannot any longer refrain from speaking, and taking the shame upon myself."

"What shame can there arise from a conversation

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between two friends? I hope you are going to explain all this to me."

Lo Mengli, who seemed to be restrained by a sense of confusion, remained for some time silent. At length, being still further urged by Sse Yeoupe, he broke silence, and said, "I have a twin sister, who is consequently, like myself, sixteen years old. Her features are like mine, for she very much resembles me. She has devoted herself to the study of poetry and literature. Since our father quitted us, my sister and I have been to each other, reciprocally, as instructor and friend. Although she cannot in any way be compared to the perfect beauty whom you lately lauded, yet she holds talent in such esteem, that she dreads, equally as much as that beauty, to make a bad choice. She and I have upon this subject the same views. My mother's bad health has hitherto prevented her from seeking for a husband for her daughter. I am still too young to have many acquaintances; besides, 'the lintel of our door has fallen down,' so that no one knows that she still inhabits the interior apartment, waiting to be settled in life. Yesterday she saw you from the pavilion. On beholding your deportment, which announced a scholar endowed with the most shining qualities, she could not prevent herself from thinking of the fall of the plums*. I saw what was passing in her mind, and this induced me to come and meet you, with the intention of acting as a go-between. I learned from you that your vows were fixed elsewhere; I saw the obstacle that stood in the way of our wishes; and this it was that induced me to remain silent. The object which

* The season of marriage.

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led me to meet you to-day appeared to me a feasible one; but should you come back again, that object being impracticable, how could I prevent myself from blushing internally, even though you should be good enough to refrain from all raillery on the occasion? This is what made me speak of the possibility of our never seeing each other again. But you heaped such unjust reproaches upon me, that I could no longer refrain from making you acquainted with the whole truth. In thus revealing to you the secret sentiments of a young girl, I feel the blood ascending to my forehead, and that my face is all on fire. If you should communicate them to others, you will certainly make me die of shame."

This disclosure, full of candour, caused no less joy than surprise to Sse Yeoupe. "Brother," he exclaimed, "are you jesting, and do you wish to mock me?"

"I have opened my heart to you," sorrowfully replied Lo Mengli; "how then could I think of jesting with you?"

"Am I not abused by a dream?" again asked Sse Yeoupe.

"We are speaking in the face of heaven and in the open day: therefore you are not abused by a dream," said Lo Mengli.

"If it be a reality," cried Sse Yeoupe, "you then wish to make me mad with joy, and to kill me with desire?"

"A project which has failed beyond all resource, leaves not even room for hope," replied Lo Mengli; "and yet you speak of joy, brother; what can be the subject of it?"

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" Isolated as I am in the midst of four seas," said Sse Yeoupe, " behold on a sudden a young beauty, like unto you, my dear brother, in talents and appearance, presents herself in profile before my eyes, and promises to be mine for life. Were I a tree or a plant, I should still feel the soft influence of spring: but being a man, why should you be astonished at my joy ?"

" Brother," replied Lo Mengli; " you have already found her who is destined to form with you the well-assorted union *. How could you reject the sweet-flavoured peach, and gather the bitter plum ? The sentiments which seduced my sister and me are nought but vain desires."

" There is," replied Sse Yeoupe, " a passage of Soungiu that says, ' there are not in the empire any beauties to be compared to those of my village, and there are none equal to the daughter of my neighbour who lives on the eastern side'. These words may be applied to you and your sister. Now that chance has offered me a charming person like her, if I should neglect seeking her in order to pay her my most earnest vows, should I not resemble Yekoung, who took a delight in looking at painted dragons, but who ran away when he saw the living ones ?"

" Since you are desirous not to disoblige my sister," said Lo Mengli, " she will not prove more ungrateful than the beauty who has already made herself mistress of your heart."

" It is I who would be an ungrateful one;—but could I be so ?" asked Sse Yeoupe.

* Allusion to a celebrated couple of antiquity, whose conjugal harmony has rendered proverbial the expression of the *well assorted union*.

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"I am convinced that you have not an ungrateful heart," said Lo Mengli; "but if, sensible to the merit of my sister, you break faith with her predecessor, may it not happen, when you shall meet with another superior beauty, that you will abandon my sister, in her turn, as you would a dog lying upon straw? If you should think but lightly of the resentment of our old friends and the loss of their favour, you are not the man for whom my sister and I have conceived so much esteem, and whom she would wish to attach to herself for life."

"Your mysterious propositions had penetrated to the bottom of my heart," said Sse Yeoupe; "and now your language, full of candour, augments my esteem and respect for you; but my soul is softened, my imagination bewildered, I know not if I ought to live or die; in fact, I know not if I am still in existence."

"You are a man of quick passions," replied Lo Mengli. "Your sentiments become feeble when not opposed, but obstacles give them force. With regard to the affair in question, I have thought of a plan that may reconcile all."

"Provided," replied Sse Yeoupe, smiling, "that what you propose will enable me to possess both. But I am not sure that the young child who inhabits the interior apartment, would willingly listen to such a project."

"True, my sister is very young," said Lo Mengli; "but she has a prudent and reflecting mind, and you should not consider her a child. The sincere love inspired by a sage leads to perfection. My sister herself said to me yesterday—The woman

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that a man marries with all the usual ceremonies, is the first wife; she with whom he contracts less regular ties, is the second; and there is certainly something irregular in being one's own match-maker. There is however nothing culpable in endeavouring to surmount the influence of the stars, and to become the companion of a virtuous man. All that is to be feared, is that the wise person whom you seek may not consent to such an arrangement."

On hearing this, Sse Yeoupe felt the most lively satisfaction. "If the person of whom you speak was not in fact full of wisdom," said he, "I should cease to desire her. If she has as much as I believe her to possess, what danger is there that so wise a girl should nourish jealousy in her heart? And you, my dear friend, who promise me a companion so congenial to my wishes, what forced distinction do you make between the first and second wife? You fear perhaps that when I shall be made more happy than I deserve to be, by the possession of these two charming girls, I shall not entertain for them the same affection: my sentiments towards them shall be like the dazzling light of day."

This declaration gave Lo Mengli the most lively pleasure. "Brother, if you can thus secure the interests of my sister, nothing more remains than to give you a promise without further preliminary. But the Genii of heaven and of earth are listening to us; and the sea will be dried up and the rocks will crumble into dust, before the promise shall be forgotten."

"A thought strikes me," said Sse Yeoupe. "My marriage with Miss Pe is still an affair floating in

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uncertainty. But since I have the dear consent of your sister, what should prevent me stopping here some days, and finding out a go-between to conclude the business immediately?"

"When you arrived," said Lo Mengli, "your vows, my dear brother, were directed towards Miss Pe. If you should thus stop half way to marry my sister, it would be a breach of your first engagements; and when it should come to Miss Pe's knowledge, she would have every right to complain of it; and this would be laying up for the future motives of discord, and subjects of contest. Besides, my sister is still very young; and once united to a husband, all change would be rendered impossible. Repair quickly to the capital, and conclude without delay your marriage with Miss Pe. But there is one question more I must ask you."

"What is it you wish to know?" said Sse Yeoupe.

"You have, my dear brother, devoted your thoughts to Miss Pe: but does she, on her side, know of your existence in the world?"

"My dear brother," replied Sse Yeoupe, "since you carry to such a length your affection for me, I ought to conceal nothing from you." And he then related to him all that had passed when he had filled up the rhymes upon the *Vernal Willows*, and been put to the proof in composing *The Farewell to the Crane, and the Welcome of the Swallow.*

After having heard this account, Lo Mengli said, "Well, my dear brother, you should hasten to fulfil the engagements you have entered into with Miss Pe. You have no further occasion to solicit me. That affair once terminated, the marriage of

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my sister will follow of course; you should have no dread of my breach of faith."

"I am convinced that you will not break your word with me," said Sse Yeoupe. "But my heart is restless and agitated at the idea of being obliged to quit you so soon after our meeting."

"And can you suppose that I am less afflicted?" said Lo Mengli; "but I console myself in thinking that we shall soon be reunited for ever. Should we, retained by our affection, remain here together any longer, I fear that we may be seen by some of the servants. Another time we shall have numerous subjects of conversation."

"Well," replied Sse Yeoupe, "I have all that is necessary for my journey, and I shall immediately set out without taking leave of old Li."

"You will do well then," said Lo Mengli, "to go immediately from this; but I still have advice to offer you before your departure."

"Permit me, my dear friend, to entreat of you to afford me your counsel," said Sse Yeoupe.

"The views of a man gifted with fine talents, and solid and durable merit, are not bounded by riches and titles," replied Lo Mengli; "but glory and honour are the worthy objects of his ambition. Since you, my dear brother, are endowed with such uncommon faculties, conduct yourself so that this journey may accelerate for you the moment when you shall hear the *song of the stag* *. Endeavour to obtain the advancement and reputation which you have a right to hope for, after which every thing will become easy and practicable. How

* Sung at the banquet given to the newly-named licentiates.

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many young men are there of distinguished intellect, who might succeed in the world, and take advantage of the esteem shewn to talent, if their conduct was pure and irreproachable! Why happens it so often that they exhaust their time and means in playing the part of effeminate and frivolous fops, instead of fulfilling the duties befitting men of merit."

On hearing these words, Sse Yeoupe assumed a new expression of countenance, and after giving his utmost thanks to Lo Mengli, said—"My dear brother, this language so noble and full of reason, deserves to remain engraven on my heart. Should I obtain any advancement, I shall, on my return, beg of you to be my guide and support."

As he said this, Sse Yeoupe called Siaohi to the garden door, and said to him, "We are going to set off immediately."

"The path," said Lo Mengli, "leads along the ramparts of the city, towards the northern gate. I ought to accompany you further; but as I fear to be seen by some one, it is better for me to quit you here. May your journey be a happy one, brother Sse!" And as he spoke, some tears escaped from his eyes; but Lo Mengli hastened to wipe them away with his sleeve.

At this sight, Sse Yeoupe himself could not restrain his tears. "You and I," he exclaimed, "can scarcely support the grief of this separation. But watch over, I pray you, for the sake of Sse Yeoupe's happiness, the gentle inhabitant of the interior apartment, with all the care and tenderness imaginable!"

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Lo Mengli dried his tears, and replied by a nod of his head.

The two friends remained for a moment as if enchained near each other. At length, impelled by necessity, they let go each other's hands, and repeated:—

Harmony of sentiment is the foundation of tender affection,
And separation becomes an insupportable evil.
The man of the most manly character, when put to this proof,
Cannot restrain the tears that betray his emotion.

Lo Mengli re-entered the garden, and Sse Yeoupe went out of the town by the northern gate. Fearing that counsellor Li and the licentiate Tsian might come to importune and detain him, he did not dare to go back to his former inn, but went to another house to pass the night. There he expended some ounces of silver in purchasing baggage and a horse, and the next morning at an early hour resumed his journey.

While proceeding, his thoughts rushed confusedly through his mind and completely absorbed him. Formerly he had been occupied only with the idea of Miss Pe, but now other ideas had been added to this,—the recollection of Lo Mengli and Miss Lo. His reflections left him not an instant of repose, and he gave free course to them. "I am acquainted," thought he, "with Miss Pe's talents, but not with her beauty; neither have I seen the features of Miss Lo, but I can form some idea of them by those of the brother, which I have seen. Besides, without speaking of her person, by mar-

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rying her I shall enjoy every day the society of her brother, which is sufficient of itself to render life happy. Lo Mengli is very young," he continued, " but his mind is full of all imaginable delicacy, and his sensibility equals his judgment. He is a young man equally remarkable for penetration and acquirements; and since he lauds the talents of his sister, there is no reason to suppose that he exaggerates them. But supposing that she has not pursued any solid studies, yet when once she shall be united to Miss Pe, and inhabit the same apartment, she will, without trouble and almost imperceptibly, make a progress that will lead to perfection. What happiness is thine, Sse Yeoupe, to have met these two charming women!"

Entirely occupied with these seductive thoughts, he let his horse proceed in his own way, and travelled on without being conscious of it. He was approaching a place where there was a military post, when he suddenly heard the sound of cymbals, which some soldiers were playing. Behind them marched several officers, bearing blue standards, and after these came a number of persons ranged in processional order. Sse Yeoupe learned from one of these persons, whom he questioned, that it was the judge of the province returning from a circuit he had been making. He was therefore obliged to quit his horse, and stand on the side of the road while the judge passed by; an instant after, he perceived a blue parasol, and a large sedan chair, escorted by some scores of officers belonging to the tribunal. In this sedan chair was the ma-

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gistrate; behind him came a crowd of subaltern officers composing his suite.

Amongst these last was a messenger, who on perceiving Sse Yeoupe began to examine him with great attention; and then jumping from his horse, he ran up to him, crying out, "It is our young lord; in how many places have we been seeking you during the last spring? And how happens it that you are now here?"

Sse Yeoupe, very much astonished, asked him who he was?

"I am," replied the man, "a messenger in the service of his excellency lord Sse, judge of the province. It was I whom our master sent to seek you last spring, sir. Have you forgotten me?

"Ah! is it you?" replied Sse Yeoupe. "And where is your master at present?"

"Ah! sir, was it not he that has just passed by?" replied the messenger.

"What! was that my uncle?" said Sse Yeoupe. "But it is not long since he returned to court, to give an account of his operations. How comes it that he has already been sent upon a new mission?"

"My master does not like residing in the capital," replied the messenger; "his preceding mission to the province of Houkouang detained him only half of the year, so he requested to be allowed to employ the rest of it on the present circuit. Ever since he sent for you, he has been perpetually thinking of you, sir; mount your horse quickly, and come and present yourself to him."

In compliance with this advice, Sse Yeoupe mounted his horse, and turned back the way he

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came. The messenger also got on horseback: "Ride slowly, sir," said he: "I shall go forward, and inform our master;" and striking his horse, he rode on quickly. An instant after, he returned and joined Sse Yeoupe. "Sir," said he, "our master has been delighted to find that you were here. He says that a high road is not a proper place for your interview; and he charged me to place myself at your disposal, and to conduct you to his mansion, where you will meet together."

"But," said Sse Yeoupe, "it is thirty or forty miles* from this to his mansion; and I fear we shall not be able to reach it to-day."

"Our master's mansion is in the capital of the department," said the courier: "we are not going to the chief town of the canton. From this to the capital, there are scarcely seven or eight miles†."

The two travellers continued their route, conversing together, and soon arrived at the gate of the mansion. The officers who were guarding it accosted Sse Yeoupe, saying, "Enter quickly, sir: our master is waiting for you in the interior saloon."

Sse Yeoupe dismounted from his horse, recommended Siaohi to take care of him, and putting his clothes and head-dress in order, he proceeded to the back apartments. There he saw the inspector-general Sse standing at the entrance of the saloon, waiting for him. Sse Yeoupe made him an obeisance; and the exultations being performed, his uncle ordered him to sit by his side, and seeing that Sse Yeoupe was a handsome and well made young man, whose appearance denoted the posses-

* Three or four leagues. † Less than a league.

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sion of talent, he felt infinitely rejoiced. "My dear nephew," said he, "I recollect, when first I saw you, you had still your hair hanging down. It is now several years that we have been separated, and I had no idea that you had become a full-formed man, with a prepossessing countenance. This is for your uncle, now enfeebled by age, a subject of unutterable satisfaction."

"I have been so unfortunate," said Sse Yeoupe, "as to lose my father when I was still a child, and my mother a short time afterwards. Fate also threw obstacles in my way, which prevented me from running to throw myself at the feet of my venerable uncle, and profit by his wise counsels. An isolated and wandering orphan, without any protector, the only sound I have been able to make, has been that of a house falling to ruin. And at this moment, in looking forward or backward, I feel a confusion most difficult to get over."

"I am old," said the inspector Sse; "I have no children; besides, I am tired of travelling: the career which I pursue must have a termination. I see in you, my dear nephew, a young man in the flower of his age, and fitted for anything. You are one of those couriers who go a hundred leagues a day. You ought, in time, to raise your family to the highest degree of renown. This idea banishes sorrow from the house of your uncle."

"What I have hitherto wanted," replied Sse Yeoupe, "I may henceforward hope to obtain from you. But to prevent me from falling into total ruin, the streams issuing from the same source must re-unite at Mount Meï. It is only by these means that I shall be enabled to acquit myself by de-

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grees of the duties imposed upon me by my age."

"I have no son," replied the inspector Sse, "and you have lost your parents: this I remarked to you in my letter last spring. I wished that the uncle and nephew should become father and son. These names will render less bitter the thought of death which is continually present to me; and when the time shall come to dispose of what I possess, I shall restore it, as one may say, to my deceased brother and sister-in-law. To make any other use of it, would be to wish the annihilation of my own race, and the ruin of our family. I know not, my dear nephew, if you have sufficiently reflected upon my proposal."

"Your intentions, my dear uncle, in what light soever I consider them, are meant to serve an orphan. This was the sole object of the wishes of the parents I have lost; and my inclinations shall never go contrary to the desires of those parents."

This answer filled the inspector Sse with joy. He immediately made choice of a fortunate day, and ordered preparations to be made for a great banquet, at which he intended his nephew should recognise him for a father. After that moment, the names of father and son were the only ones made use of between them. All the magistrates and officers of the department and of the canton, as well as the functionaries of the neighbouring jurisdictions, as soon as they heard that the judge of the province had adopted a son, hastened to make him their felicitations, and bring him presents. Amongst the number was counsellor Li, who came to present his silken skreen with its four paintings.

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That day the inspector-general, being occupied with some business in his office, he sent Sse Yeoupe into the saloon to receive the visits of all the magistrates.

When counsellor Li recognised Sse Yeoupe in the person of the newly-adopted son, he was confounded, and hastily quitting his place, he came to make him an obeisance, and to excuse himself, saying: " I must have appeared very culpable in your sight some short time back. Whilst I was absent paying visits, you took the opportunity of departing. I know not what motive you had, unless it be that you were offended at my not having remained to keep you company. I had got ready some trifling presents, and the articles of which you stood in need. We sought for you in every direction without being able to discover any traces of you. My rather uncivil conduct has rendered me guilty towards a man of merit and distinction ; but it has never ceased to be for me a source of regret and mortification. Even when you called on me, I did not recognise *your horse and servants**. This is like having eyes, and yet not being able to see Mount-Taï. Now that I have the good fortune to appear before you, permit me to implore the pardon of my negligence and impoliteness."

" The numberless favours which were shewn to me in your mansion, are for ever engraven on my

* A proverbial expression; for Sse Yeoupe went on foot to the counsellor's house. But in the same manner it is polite to say, *It is a long time since I have seen your respectable carriage*; and what is still more singular, *I beg your noble coach to do me the honour to come and dine with me.*

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heart," said Sse Yeoupe. "It so happened that I had business to transact the day after that of which you speak, which obliged me to resume my journey without delay; besides, I was unwilling to give any trouble to the lord Tsian. This was what hindered me from taking leave of you, my worthy host, and offering you my acknowledgments. What could I have asked for more than you did for me?"

"Your greatness of soul is like the ocean," said the counsellor Li; "but though you may not be vexed with me, yet I am far from being satisfied with myself." He then reiterated twice or thrice more his excuses, after which he retired with the other magistrates.

> Proud and haughty with the poor,
> Obsequious and cringing towards the rich;
> It is thus generally that the little minded
> Conduct themselves in all countries.

When the inspector-general had expedited the business that detained him, he examined the objects that had been sent him as presents. All that was of gold or silver, the stuffs and provisions, were refused without any exception; as to the verses, paintings, and complimentary productions, in which the virtues and talents displayed in his administration were celebrated, he could not reject them, though filled with personal eulogies. He even read them with attention, one after the other; the greater number were made up of those common-place flatteries applicable to every one. But when he came to the four pieces of verse upon the silken skreen of counsellor Li, the elegance and superiority of the style, and the beauty of the writing, appeared to him equally remarkable. They pleased him so

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much that he ordered his officers to take the skreen into his apartment, and place it in such a manner that he might have it continually before his eyes. A short time after, Sse Yeoupe came and joined him; and his uncle, pointing to the skreen, said, " There are four pieces of verse of the most perfect beauty : there is not a single fault in them; I have read them with the greatest delight. It was counsellor Li who sent them to me, but he is not capable of producing such poetry; I cannot imagine by whom they could have been composed. I have heard it said that you are an admirer of poetry; if so, it is impossible that you can be insensible to the graceful style of these stanzas."

" It was I," replied Sse Yeoupe, " who wrote these verses for counsellor Li. They are rather clumsy and obscure, and do not merit the praise you give them, father."

The inspector-general's surprise was equal to his satisfaction. " This is very singular indeed," said he. " I was not a little astonished that there should have been found so skilful a pencil in the province of Chantoung, and I had as little suspicion that my son was possessed of such remarkable talent. But tell me, how did you come to write these verses for the counsellor ?"

" As I was coming here some days ago, I was stopped upon the high road, and robbed of all my baggage. Unable to continue my journey, I found myself in the greatest possible embarrassment. Chance brought me acquainted with this counsellor. He promised to advance me the money necessary for my journey, on condition of my writing these verses. He merely told me that they were meant to

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be presented to a judge of the province; but I did not know, father, that you were that judge."

"We have been so full of business these few days past," replied the inspector-general, "that I have not yet had time to learn all that has happened to you. This spring I sent messengers to you, to whom you promised that you would come to meet me. Why did you not come at that time? And how happens it that you arrive at the present moment?"

"When at home, I quitted the house but very seldom," replied Sse Yeoupe. "I knew very little of the country, and imagined that the high road near the mouth of the river was so easy to follow, that I threw the reins on my horse's neck. I lost my way, and arrived at the hamlet of Keouyoung, near the village of Kinchi. I determined to quit it the next morning; but having fallen so ill that I could not proceed, I was obliged to demand an asylum in a monastery, where I remained fifteen days. On my recovery I perceived that the time was past within which you appointed me to meet you, father. The reason of my being now here is, that during my stay in the monastery I learned that a magistrate of that country, named Pe, had a daughter gifted with the rarest talent for poetry, who was at the same time possessed of the most extraordinary beauty. I took it in my head to ask her in marriage. Every one told me that this lord Pe was extremely difficult to be pleased in a son-in-law, and that he would not enter into any engagement till after the utmost precaution. I had also heard speak of a Dr Gou of Kinling, member of the grand academy, who is his near relative, and by whose advice he is guided in every-

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thing. Having been recently informed that this Dr Gou had been called to court by an imperial decree, I undertook this journey with the two-fold motive, first of inquiring after you, father, and next of calling upon Dr Gou to beg of him to be my go-between."

"These are most singular coincidences," exclaimed the inspector-general Sse. "This magistrate Pe must be, I suppose, Pe Thaihiouan, and Pe Thaihiouan was my fellow collegian. I am perfectly well acquainted with every thing concerning him. His daughter has really an admirable talent for poetry, and he is, in fact, very difficult to be pleased in a son-in-law, so much so, that he would sooner risk his life than yield in that point."

"How is that?" asked Sse Yeoupe.

The inspector-general then stated to him the adventure relative to the verses upon the china-asters, the proposal made by the inspector-general Yang, the refusal he met with, and the mission on which Pe had in consequence been sent to the captive emperor. After having informed him of all these particulars, he said—"Such shining merit as yours, added to that of such a companion, should you obtain her, will form a charming union. Gou Touian will be an excellent go-between, and I shall write to him. All this promises something; but still, when I think of the character of this old man, and his fickleness of disposition, I see there are yet many difficulties to be got over."

"What difficulties?" asked Sse Yeoupe.

"No matter how great your talent may be, you are as yet only a poor bachelor; and I fear that Dr Gou, who is a renowned scholar, will look with

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disdain upon your humble rank. This is the difficulty to which I allude. The period of the examinations is approaching; and as it appears to me that you have the necessary skill and knowledge, I shall retain a place for you at the northern examination: you will go and seek honour and reputation; and if, young as you are, you should obtain a distinguished rank, that will most materially tend to the accomplishment of your hopes. Then would be the time to apply to Gou Touïan, and entreat him to play the part of a go-between. I shall then write to him again, and I am confident we shall be completely successful. Let us not grieve that nothing is as yet done. When you shall have acquired consideration, your marriage will be half concluded. You will obtain the height of your desires; all my wishes will be gratified; and every thing will turn out in the most fortunate manner possible."

Perceiving that what his uncle said agreed perfectly well with the advice given him by Lo Mengli, Sse Yeoupe felt like a man aroused from a dream, and he eagerly answered: "Father, it is my duty to follow your wise counsels."

A new voyage!—in which will be seen the dragon and the tiger writing their names in the registry of promotions, a family covered with glory, and the male phœnix in search of his mate.

Heaven appears to be sparing of honours and riches,
But men are particularly sensible to glory.
A treasure, no doubt, weighs in the balance,
But without the black scarf it would be but a trifling advantage.

In the next chapter will be made known what measures Sse Yeoupe took to acquire reputation.

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CHAPTER XV.

SUCCESS AT THE AUTUMNAL, AND AT THE IMPERIAL SPRING EXAMINATION.

"What gives to man the immortality which the gods enjoy? Not draughts or the prescriptions of doctors. A poor student who gets an employment, is happier than if the mysteries had been revealed to him; and he who is raised to dignity thinks himself transported to heaven. The Hall of Jasper, the Golden Horse, are the true isles of the blessed. The imperial banquet, the flowers which the conqueror receives in the palace, are for him the philosopher's stone. Let no more be said of ages passed in solitude by a hermit. The day in which honours are obtained is worth a thousand years of life."

THE inspector-general Sse, and Sse Yeoupe, after having agreed upon their plan, made choice of a messenger to carry their despatches, and gave him the money necessary to take him to court and retain a place at the examination. These sort of persons are generally skilful and steady; the one employed upon the present occasion accomplished his mission in a very short space of time.

Some days after, the inspector-general Sse, addressing Sse Yeoupe, said, "The multiplicity of affairs transacted in my offices must confuse and interrupt you. Since you now intend making a name for yourself, I must send you immediately to the capital; you will make choice of some quiet situation, where you may study without being disturbed. This is, I think, the best thing you can do."

Sse Yeoupe, on his part, being also desirous to go to the capital, in order to learn something of Dr Gou, assented without hesitation to the proposal. The day of his departure was fixed. The great and petty

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officers of the department and canton came to pay him their respects, and to offer him the farewell banquet. Counsellor Li was not one of the last to shew his zeal upon this occasion. After some days thus passed in tumult and confusion, Sse Yeoupe took leave of his uncle and resumed his journey. Sse Yeoupe, now the son of a provincial judge, took along with him, besides Siaohi, several officers; his horse was richly caparisoned, and on the road he figured as a great personage, very different from the poor bachelor who some time before travelled all alone. He soon arrived in the capital, looked out for a retired and quiet lodging, and at the same time took the necessary steps to be admitted to the examination, and also made inquiries about Dr Gou. It unfortunately happened that the latter had been nominated some days before to preside at an examination in the province of Houkouang, and had already quitted the city. Sse Yeoupe was mortified by this untoward circumstance; but seeing no remedy, he recollected the advice of Lo Mengli, and devoted himself to his studies, in order to advance himself and succeed in his projects.

He felt the time pass rapidly; and before he was well aware of it, the period of the autumnal examination arrived. Sse Yeoupe presented himself amongst an immense number of other persons. Three sessions were held, and on the day of proclamation the name of Sse Yeoupe was found upon the list in the second rank of the new licentiates.

When the news of this success reached Chantoung, the inspector-general Sse felt the most unutterable joy, and despatched a letter by express to Sse Yeoupe, recommending him strongly

not to quit the capital, but to seek in the mountains to the east of the city for some retired convent, where he might pursue in tranquillity his studies, and prepare himself, against the spring, for the examination which would entitle him to the degree of doctor, and permit him to solicit a mission ; on obtaining which, he might return to the province and offer the accustomed sacrifices to his ancestors. By this means he would avoid those repeated journeys, which would otherwise waste his time and exhaust his strength.

Sse Yeoupe, since his promotion, had thought of nothing but returning to the south. But the commands of his father, the desire to see Dr Gou, who had not yet come back to the court, and the fear that the degree of licentiate was not sufficient to incline the lord Pe in his favour, determined him to prolong his stay, and pass the winter in the capital.

At the commencement of the year all eyes were turned towards the general spring examination. Sse Yeoupe again entered the lists, and the most complete success crowned his literary efforts. His name, classed in the very highest rank, was found the thirteenth in the list of doctors ; and when the examination took place in the palace, he was again the first of the second series. Sse Yeoupe thus saw himself marked out for the high appointments of literature.

But it so happened, that at the examination held the preceding autumn in the department of Chun-thian *, when he had presented himself, there had

* The city of Peking is so called in the administrative hierarchy of the departments of the empire.

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also appeared Tchinying, son to the minister of state Tchinsiun, and Wanglun, the son of Wang-wen. As neither of these young men obtained promotion, their resentment was excited. They sent in a complaint against the presidents of the examination, Lieouyan and Wangkian, alleging that these two magistrates had not been impartial in their review of the themes, and they therefore required that they should be punished for their injustice. These two young men contrived to interest Kaokou, the under governor of the hereditary prince, in this affair. It was represented to the emperor Kingthaï, that it was already an unfitting thing to see the sons of men of dignity put upon the same line with vulgar students; but that it was still more reprehensible that these latter should obtain the preference from the presiding magistrates, in contravention of the laws and orders of his majesty.

The emperor, easily discovering the truth, took good care not to punish the presidents of the examination, but sharply repremanded the two young men in private. He afterwards, by a special decree, granted the title of licentiate to Tchinying and Wanglun, and permitted them to present themselves at the examination with the other candidates. At this examination Lieouyan was again named president of one of the sections to which Sse Yeoupe belonged. The latter had been one of those chosen, placed in an eminent rank, honoured with the first place in the second series at the examination in the palace, and rendered elegible to the high literary appointments. The two young men, through hatred of Lieouyan, made interest with the minister of the household, and had Sse Yeoupe appointed a judge

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in the department of Hangtcheou, in the province of Tchekiang.

On receiving intelligence of this, Sse Yeoupe, finding himself in possession of a place, and at liberty to quit the capital ; recollecting moreover, that as Kinling was upon the road to Tchekiang, he could easily, as he passed, go and see Pe, and make his proposal of marriage,—felt the most entire satisfaction instead of supposing that he had any reason to complain. He determined therefore to wait only till the inspector-general Sse came to court, to render up an account of his mission, and then, after having seen him, to set out immediately.

Before the inspector-general Sse's arrival, Dr Gou returned to the capital, to receive the emperor's orders. Sse Yeoupe was enraptured on learning this circumstance, and hastened to pay him a visit, leaving a card with his name and the title of his office. Dr Gou was happy to find the name of Sse Yeoupe on the list of those who had been promoted at the general examination ; but he gave the circumstance no further attention, when he observed that the candidate was set down as being from the province of Honan, which led him to suppose that it must be another person of the family name and surname. The day that Sse Yeoupe went to visit him, the doctor was surprised to see upon the card the word *magistrate*. He took care not to close the door upon him, but eagerly went out to meet him, and received him in the first saloon. As he saw Sse Yeoupe approach, he was delighted at recognising in him the handsome young man who had the preceding year composed some verses under the blossoming plum-trees ; and, quite certain that his eyes

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did not deceive him, he put on a smiling countenance, and came forward to the stair-case to meet Sse Yeoupe. As soon as the latter perceived him, he bowed profoundly, and saluted him in a manner the most proper to testify his respect. Both seated themselves, after the usual compliments; and the doctor, commencing the conversation, said—"Sir, your eldest brother was kind enough to pay me a visit last year, and I heard from him, while he partook of a little collation at my house, that you could not do me the honour of coming to see me with him, because you were then in retirement in the country, preparing for the examination of the south. Why, sir, have you changed your resolution? And how comes it that, on presenting yourself at the examination of the north, in the capital, you set yourself down as a candidate from the province of Honan?"

Sse Yeoupe extremely surprised at what he had heard, said: "My father and mother were taken from me at a very early age. I am the only one of my family, and have neither a younger nor elder brother. Since last spring, when I had the misfortune to incur your excellency's disapprobation, I have been wandering in various provinces. In passing through the kingdoms of Tsi and Lou*, I met by chance my paternal uncle, who, having no children, and seeing me an orphan, has condescended to receive me into his house, and adopt me for his son. This is what led me to the examination in the capital of the north. As to my having set myself down as from the province of Honan, I had a right to do so, through my father."

* Ancient names for the province of Chantoung. The learned employ them in preference to the new denomination, to show their knowledge of antiquity.

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" Is not your uncle his excellency the lord Sse Fanghoeï ?"

" The same," replied Sse Yeoupe.

" If such be the case, and if you have no brother, who was the person who came, last year, to entreat of me to speak in your favour to Pe Thaïhiouan ?"

Sse Yeoupe, very much confused, said, " It is very true that I had such an intention, but I charged no one to make the request of your lordship. Can your lordship recollect the name of that man ?"

" All that I can recollect is, that he told me he was your brother ; but I have forgotten his title and his surname." He then sent for the servant who kept the list of the visiting cards, and found that the person in question was named Sse Yeoute.

Sse Yeoupe, laughing, and his mouth half open from surprise, exclaimed, " What ! Sse Yeoute ?" Then heaving a sigh, he said, " Oh, how difficult it is to sound the heart of man !"

" What do you mean by that ?" asked the doctor.

" Last spring," replied Sse Yeoupe, " I had been detained some time in the village of Kinchi : secretly enamoured of the talent of Miss Pe, your niece, I aspired to the possession of the water-lentil and the alisma * ; but none of the expedients I resorted to succeeded. I was afterwards informed that the only effectual recommendation would be

* Pin and fan, two plants which young girls are represented gathering in the *Book of Verses, second Part, Ode* ii. *and* iv. One of these plants was gathered by those who were about to be married ; they deposited them as offerings in the chapel of their ancestors. It is to this custom that Sse Yeoupe alludes in the above passage.

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that of your excellency; I determined therefore to come to court to implore your assistance. On my way I met by chance Sse Yeoute, who by force of entreaty kept me with him for some time. He inquired about the motives of my journey: in a moment of indiscretion I frankly told him what it was—he learned from my own mouth all my intentions. He immediately assured me that your excellency had been called to court, and that it would be useless for me to go to your house. He earnestly advised me to proceed to the capital, and even furnished me with the money necessary for my travelling expenses. This act of kindness at the time inspired me with gratitude; I crossed the river immediately after, and directed my course towards the north. I had then no suspicion that he was acting towards me with the most signal duplicity, and that he intended to go and practise a thousand impostures upon your excellency. But I am still ignorant of the answer you thought proper to make him."

"When I learned your wishes, I wrote immediately to my relative," replied the doctor: then, after stopping to laugh, he continued, "I now see how the case is; the object that you refused when it was offered to you, you now travel a hundred leagues to solicit."

"How is that?" asked Sse Yeoupe with simplicity.

"Last year," replied the doctor, "Pe Thaihiouan was sent upon a mission into Tartary. Out of his extreme caution he confided to me the care of his daughter, my niece. During an excursion which I took to the temple of the Valley of Immortals, to see the plum-trees in blossom, I had occasion to

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remark the superiority of your poetical talent, and your external advantages. I then conceived the idea, in order to justify my relative's confidence, of uniting you to my niece. It was that very niece whom you then, for what reason I know not, so obstinately refused, and whom you now, for what motive I am ignorant, seek with so much earnestness. Have I not then reason to say that you travel a hundred leagues to solicit what you had refused when it was offered to you?"

Sse Yeoupe remained for some time confounded. When he recovered his speech, he reiterated several times his excuses: "It is just," said he, "that I should reap the fruits of my own conduct. I was like a man asleep in open day; though surrounded by the marks of your kind partiality towards me, I remained ignorant of it. This is really the last degree of stupidity."

"It was by no means your fault," replied the doctor; "but happiness is always beset with obstacles."

"I should think little of the obstacles," said Sse Yeoupe; "but what I fear is, that this miserable Sse Yeoute has, aided by the powerful support of your excellency's letter, already succeeded. If such should be the case, what is to be done?

"It is not possible," replied the doctor; "my relative Pe is a very enlightened and extremely circumspect man. He will not let himself be duped by a knave under a supposed name; but even should my relative yield a too easy faith to his representations, my niece, who has so much intellect, and whose eyes are so piercing, will never allow herself to be hurried into the snare. It is therefore gratuitously,

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sir, that you alarm yourself with such chimeras you should make your mind perfectly tranquil. Leave your cause in my hands—I answer for its success."

Sse Yeoupe hastened to acknowledge this assurance by a profound obeisance. "I entirely rely upon your excellency," said he, "to complete the good work that you have so well begun. I have no doubt as to the result of your kindness."

After having taken three cups of tea, and continued for some time longer the conversation upon indifferent subjects, Sse Yeoupe took leave and went away.

The cormorant hid under the snow is discovered when he takes flight:
The parrot perched upon a willow is found out when he speaks.

The explanation given by doctor Gou to Sse Yeoupe, caused him much regret. "If I had sooner known that there was fire in the lantern," said he to himself, "the rice should have been cooked long before this. In consequence of not having taken in good time more exact information, I have lost the opportunity that offered itself to me; and now I am wandering from east to west in search of assistance, without being able to foresee what will be the decision of fate."

"Every one talks in terms of praise of Miss Pe's charms," continued he; "these praises cannot be meant to deceive. She whom I formerly saw at the bottom of the garden was not however handsome. Could I have had a film on my eyes at that moment, or did I consider with too little attention?"

He continued his reflections. "I have heard it

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said that he had himself a daughter, who has contracted an engagement. It was probably her that I saw: but of this I cannot yet be certain."

These ideas caused some incertitude in the mind of Sse Yeoupe. A short time afterwards, the inspector-general Sse arrived to take the orders of the emperor. The father and son felt extreme pleasure in again seeing each other. "Now your reputation and your destiny are fixed," said Sse; "nothing now remains but the marriage. I shall pay a visit to Gou Touïan to-morrow, and entreat him to lend us his support. I shall also write myself, and I see no reason why the business should not succeed."

The thoughts that occupied Sse Yeoupe, made him quicken his preparations for his journey. The inspector-general, who observed his extreme impatience, was unwilling to increase it by detaining him any longer; so that, after a few days, he gave him permission to depart. A great number of young men of his own age, and magistrates belonging to the province of Tchekiang, accompanied him out of town, and offered him the farewell banquet; but their polite attentions made a very slight impression on him.

He came without a cap or parasol,
He returns in a chariot with a retinue and horses:
He is still the self-same person,
But how different is the reception given him!

On quitting the gates of the capital, Sse Yeoupe was to have gone into the province of Honan, to offer a propitiatory sacrifice to his ancestors. But, as he wished to see Lo Mengli, he told his uncle that he would go to Honan through the province of Chantoung. His servants ventured to make no

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observation, but took the road to Chantoung. After ten days' march, they reached the little town of Tseou. Sse Yeoupe ordered his servants to wait for him outside the town; and taking with him only Siaohi, and in the very same clothes he had worn when last there, he entered the town, to make the desired inquiries. Having arrived in a short time before the house of Lo, he observed that there was a large padlock upon the principal gate, with two strong straps of leather fixed cross-wise upon it; he also remarked that a perfect solitude reigned all around. This sight gave him great trouble; and to escape from the suspicions that agitated him, he went round the house to look at the back-door of the garden; but he found this door also closed, and secured with a padlock and two leathern straps. This served only to augment his surprise and inquietude. "What can this mean?" he exclaimed. "Or am I under the influence of a dream?"

He then considered with more attention the objects that surrounded him: the large white stone upon which he had formerly sat with Lo Mengli, was still before the door; the trees planted in the neighbourhood, the prospect, the air of the whole place, were the same as before. But the beloved being,—in what place was he? Sse Yeoupe found himself exactly in the same situation as Lieouwon, when he returned to Thiantai.

While Sse Yeoupe abandoned himself to his reflections and fears, the servants of counsellor Li, who all knew him, and who had seen him pass before the gate of the next house, went secretly to inform their master. The latter, who already knew that Sse Yeoupe had been promoted to the degree of doctor,

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felt the greatest desire to receive him in his house. He sent servants out in every direction to invite him, and he himself opened the back-door of the garden to let him in. He perceived Sse Yeoupe standing near the garden-door belonging to the house of Lo, apparently absorbed in his own thoughts. He hastened towards him, and saluting him with great respect, said, "I have not yet been able to go and felicitate you upon your success; it is a fault of which I confess myself guilty. But since you have come to-day into my neighbourhood, what detains you in this place—why do you not come and honour me with a look?"

Sse Yeoupe promptly replied to his polite address. "I was on the point of going to ask for you," said he; "chance brought me to this spot, and I stopped, I know not why, to view this prospect, which I have seen before. But, my lord, why have you deigned to disturb yourself so much as to come forth thus, and give me so honourable a welcome?"

When he finished speaking, counsellor Li induced Sse Yeoupe to pass into the garden. After they had entered it, they recommenced their salutations; and this duty fulfilled, counsellor Li ordered the table to be laid, as he wished to offer a collation to his guest. He also sent a servant to invite the licentiate Tsian to come and join them. Sse Yeoupe, whose object was to get some information about Lo Mengli, stood upon no further ceremony. A few moments after the table was covered, the licentiate arrived; and after the usual compliments and a desultory conversation, they took their seats at the board. After a certain time, Sse Yeoupe, ad-

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dressing counsellor Li, said, "When I slept here last year, I met at the garden-gate the son of the owner of the next house, Lo, a very young man. What is the reason that the garden-gate is locked and sealed up, and that no person is to be seen in the house? You are next door neighbour, my lord Li, and should know the cause."

"That," replied the counsellor, "is the house of the lord Lo, the sub-intendant, surnamed Yihoung; but the lord Lo is dead. His son is a child who may be about five or six years of age. There are no other persons in the house except the lady, who lives in a state of widowhood, and her young daughter. Of what young man do you speak? You must be under a mistake, my lord."

"There is no doubt of my having met him, for I conversed a long time with him. How then can I be mistaken? Might it not have been a nephew, or some other member of the family, who had been on a visit there at the moment?"

"The lord Lo was himself the founder of his house," replied the counsellor. "His family was originally very obscure; I have never heard any mention made of his relations, near or distant. Besides, the lord Lo was, when living, of a solitary and reserved disposition; he saw very little company. His widow belongs to a family of magistrates in Kiangnan; her father and brother live a great distance from this; her house was regulated upon a footing of the strictest severity, and she would not suffer any young male relation to sojourn in it. It was probably some person of the neighbourhood,

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who presented himself to you under the name of young Lo, in order to ask you for something."

"This gentleman, so far from making a demand on me, shewed me the greatest kindness; I saw him very distinctly come out of the garden and re-enter it. How then could it have been a person not belonging to the house? This is a very extraordinary occurrence."

"Did you ask him his name and surname?" inquired the counsellor.

"His name is Mengli," replied Sse Yeoupe.

After a moment's reflection the counsellor said, "Mengli? These two syllables resemble very much the name given by the nurse to the daughter of the house." Then laughing, he added, "Might it not have been the young lady who was with you?"

Sse Yeoupe laughed, and replied—"As the son is an infant, and as there is no young man in the house, let us say no more about it. But I pray you to tell me why the front and back gates are sealed up and fastened with padlocks, as the lady of the house and her daughter no longer exist?"

"The lady and her daughter are still living," replied the counsellor.

"If living, where are they?" asked Sse Yeoupe.

"About fifteen days ago they went on a pilgrimage to the sea-coast of the south," replied the counsellor; "and as nobody was left in the house, the doors were secured and sealed up."

"If they went only on a pilgrimage to the sea-coast of the south, why did the whole household, without any exception, accompany them? I imagine there must be some other cause."

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The licentiate then took a part in the conversation. "The pilgrimage is only a pretext," said he; "there is, in fact, another cause, of which I have heard some talk, but am not fully acquainted with its nature."

"Dare I request of you to tell me what you have heard," replied Sse Yeoupe.

The licentiate, addressing the counsellor, said, "My lord, have you never heard speak of this?"

"If there be any other reason, I am totally unacquainted with it," replied the counsellor.

"I have heard," resumed the licentiate, "that the lord Lo had a personal enemy, who has lately obtained a high situation in the magistracy, and who, on learning the death of the lord Lo, had resolved to take vengeance upon his family. The lady Lo has therefore only pretended this pilgrimage, in order to escape from the persecutions with which she is menaced."

And is it not known whither she is gone?" asked Sse Yeoupe.

"As her relations are magistrates in Kiangnan, she has no doubt gone back to her family, who inhabit that province."

Sse Yeoupe was confounded by this intelligence, and remained for a moment as if deprived of reason and consciousness. He was, however, obliged to overcome his trouble of mind, and reply to the healths that were proposed. They continued drinking the half of the day, till Sse Yeoupe's servant arrived, when he took leave of messieurs Li and Tsian, and rose up to quit them.

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We recollect with pleasure the delightful breath of the
vernal breeze,
The recollections of the past, the fears of the future,
Are so many demons that weigh upon our hearts.

After having quitted his two companions, Sse Yeoupe ordered his servants to go in the direction of Honan. During the whole of the way he abandoned himself to his reflections. "Here in my sleeve," said he to himself, "are the bracelets and pearls which young Lo gave me; but where is he himself? Since this lady and her daughter are flying from persecution, they of course will not think of returning soon. There are many families of magistrates in Kiangnan. Where can I seek for information? He did, indeed, tell me, that on my return it would be uncertain if we should again see each other. This presentiment was but too well founded. But since there was an obstacle to our re-union, why did he not forego the pleasure of our first meeting? What a misfortune to have seen each other, to have become so intimately connected, to have separated so precipitately, and to have gained nothing by this meeting, but a subject of affliction and regret!"

Another train of reflection then presented itself to his mind. "He assured me," said he to himself, "that after my marriage with Miss Pe, the affair of which we spoke would follow of itself. This young Lo appeared to me a person of sense and understanding; his language had probably a hidden meaning, which I have not yet been able to discover. I had best confide in his promises, and go and conclude my marriage with Miss Pe.

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We rejoice to see each other,
We are sad at parting:
The duration of joy is well known,
But the cause of inquietude is to know how long sorrow will last.

We shall here leave Sse Yeoupe to continue his journey, occupied with his reflections, and speak of Pe, who since his illness had not quitted his house, or received any visitors, but passed his time in solitude, composing verses with his daughter. After the examination in the provinces of the south, he had looked over the lists, and could not find the name of Sse Yeoupe; but he afterwards discovered it as second upon the list of Chunthian; however, his being set down as a candidate from Honan, threw him into great perplexity. "May it not be," said he to himself, "that Sse Yeoupe, after having been deprived of his first degree, put down his name amongst the candidates of the north?" But making a second reflection, he said, "This might account for his name being inscribed, but the name of his birth-place could not be changed. It must therefore be some one else, who bears the same name." After this conclusion, he ceased to think on the subject.

In the spring of the following year a new train of thought occurred to him. "I have now," said he to himself, "been many years looking for a son-in-law. The only one that satisfies me is Sse Yeoupe; but the print of his footsteps has disappeared upon the surface of the waves. I know not where to find him; my daughter is now eighteen years of age, and it is time to settle her in the world; there is, in fact, not a moment to be lost.

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I have been told that Wanlin, upon the Western Lake, is generally frequented by all the poets and wits of the empire. I shall take advantage of the fine days of spring, to make a little excursion there, myself. It will be a recreation for my old age; and by some means or other I shall make choice of a son-in-law of merit, and at length establish my daughter Houngiu. The only thing that grieves me, is to leave her alone in the house behind me."

This consideration detained him some days, when it was unexpectedly announced to him that Mrs Lo, of the province of Chantoung, with her daughter and young son, followed by her servants, had arrived, and were waiting at the gate. "How is that?" cried Pe in the greatest astonishment: and he immediately ordered the sedan chairs of Mrs Lo and her daughter to be brought into the inner court, and the servants and persons belonging to her suite to be lodged in the front apartments.

This Mrs Lo was Pe's own sister. The sedan chairs having been immediately brought into the inner court, Pe and his daughter went to receive Mrs Lo. The lord Pe and Mrs Lo began first to perform the salutations befitting an elder brother and a younger sister. Afterwards, Miss Lo and the young boy paid the respects due to a maternal uncle. "Nephew and niece," said he to them, "it is many years since I saw you: you have both grown very much." These compliments being over, Miss Pe acquitted herself, in her turn, of the duty she owed to her aunt Lo; and afterwards the two young girls and the boy saluted each other reciprocally. After all these ceremonies, they sat down; and Pe, addressing his sister, said, "The great dis-

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tance that separated us, has prevented me from hearing anything about you for a long time back; what circumstance has induced you to come here with your household?"

"When your brother-in-law was employed in the province of Kiangii," replied Mrs Lo, "there was at Kinkou a sub-prefect, who shewed, in the exercise of his office, great rapacity and severity: your brother-in-law denounced him—he was brought to judgment, and deprived of his place. I know not how it happened, but he afterwards contrived to obtain another sub-prefecture, and has even been appointed to the situation of inspector-general. On learning that your brother-in-law had quitted this world, his former resentment awoke in his heart; and as he has just been named judge of the province of Chantoung, he would of course, not fail to make us feel his vengeance. How could a poor widow such as I, and your niece, who is still so young, make head against him in a province where we have no friends? My daughter and I, after discussing the matter, and before he had set foot within the limits of the province, pretended a pilgrimage to the sea-coast of the south; and in order to escape his persecutions, we have come, brother, to ask you permission to pass some time in your house.."

"Such being the state of things, you have acted perfectly right," said Pe. "It is but the power of a moment, and all that is necessary is, to quit the sphere of evil-disposed persons of that kind; besides, you have arrived here very apropos, sister. I was just thinking of making an excursion to Wanlin; and the only thing that withheld me, was the necessity of leaving your niece alone in the house,

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without any person to watch over her. Now that you are here, sister, you can assist her with your advice, and my niece will keep her company. I shall now go this journey with a mind at ease."

"Since I am here, and I can keep my niece company, there is no longer any obstacle to your departure, brother," said Mrs Lo. "But, besides escaping persecution, our journey has another motive, with regard to which I must trouble you."

"What other motive?" asked Pe.

"Since your brother-in-law quitted this world, our house has fallen into neglect. Your niece is now seventeen years of age, and is not yet betrothed; not but several persons have proposed for her; but widow as I am, I had little opportunity for seeing society, and I felt some difficulty in fixing my resolution. I am therefore come along with her, to entreat you, as her uncle, to choose a good husband for her, to bring to a conclusion an affair that will influence her whole life."

On hearing this, Pe sighed. "It is a very difficult task to make choice of a son-in-law," said he. "What a deal of trouble has not the marriage of Houngiu given me? And yet I have not been able to find a person to my liking. To a woman in your situation such a choice must have been still more embarrassing. Since you put your confidence in me, I shall leave nothing undone to justify it. I see that my niece has a very pretty face, and an elegant and graceful figure. She, no doubt, excels in all the works peculiar to her sex."

"She understands tolerably well whatever appertains to embroidery, carpet-making, and other works of the needle and the fingers; but her taste

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is of another description. The only occupation she really delights in is literature. When at home, she is always either writing or composing verses: from her infancy till the present moment, she has had constantly a book of some kind or other in her hand. Her father, when living, used to say, that she had a clever mind, and he took a pleasure in making her compose. I know not if what she writes is good or bad; but, brother, when you have a moment to spare, you will examine her."

Pe was both surprised and delighted at hearing this account. "Ah! she loves literature!" he said; "in that case she will take pleasure in the society of Houngiu." Although making use of this language, Pe nevertheless thought that she might have some knowledge of letters without being deeply versed in them.

After this conversation, Pe ordered his servants to prepare, in the inner court, three large pavilions for the use of Mrs Lo, her son, and daughter. Their baggage was carried there, and the persons of the suite were distributed in various apartments in the front part of the house. Preparations were then made for a banquet to celebrate the meeting of the family.

In a short time the banquet was ready. There were two tables: Mrs Lo sat at one end of the table, on the left, with her son and daughter at each side; and Pe sat at one end of the table to the right, with his daughter at the side. The brother and sister talked, as they drank, over the family affairs. After some time, Mrs Lo, addressing Miss Pe, said, "You are, niece, seventeen years of age, I believe, this year?"

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" I am eighteen," replied Miss Pe.

" You are then a year older than Mengli," replied Mrs Lo ; " you are really a woman."

" I have had all my life a taste for wine and poetry," said Pe; " and as I was denied the advantage of a son, my greatest pleasure was to send for your niece, every evening, and make her compose with me. This was my favourite recreation at the close of the day. I am agreeably surprised at learning that my niece has, also, a taste for literature ;" then, addressing himself to Miss Mengli, he said, " If you have anything, be it in verse or prose, will you do me the favour to let me hear you recite it ?"

" I have some pieces of verse that I composed formerly," replied Lo Mengli ; " but they relate to past circumstances, and are not worth the trouble of being repeated. But have the goodness to give me your instructions, uncle; point out, I beg of you, a subject to me ; and your niece Mengli will submit to you her feeble essays, in order that you and Miss Pe may teach her how to correct them."

This proposal pleased Pe. " Yes, that will do better," said he; " but you must not compose alone, I desire that Houngiu may compose something at the same time."

" Should Miss Pe do me the favour to write along with me," said Miss Lo, " I shall then have before my eyes a model by which to regulate myself, and I shall endeavour to profit by it."

Pe, entertaining still some doubts as to Miss Lo's skill, thought that if he gave them both the same subject to treat, the difference of talent might be too

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evident, and the result of the comparison, an unpleasant one. "It is better," thought he, "that each should write upon a different subject; then, if there be any inequality, it will not be so obvious. A friend whom I met a few days ago at Kinling," continued he, "gave me two subjects that may serve at present; one is *the Sighs of an Old Maid*, the other, *the Song of the Clapping of Hands**. He told me that there was not one of the celebrated poets at Kinling that had not written upon them. Why will you not take them, young ladies, and each write some verses on them?"

"I am willing to do so," said Miss Lo; "but I beg of you, uncle, to distribute them."

"That is not difficult," replied Pe; and having asked Yansou for pens, ink-stand, and two sheets of flowered paper, he wrote upon one *The Sighs of an Old Maid*, and upon the other, *The Song of the Clapping of Hands*, noting underneath, that each piece should have four strophes, and that the song should be written in regular verse. When he had finished writing, he folded down the side upon which the subject was written, so that it could not be seen; and having shuffled them for a moment, he laid the two sheets of paper upon the table, saying, "Now, young ladies, take each of you, without choosing, one of these sheets."

The two young girls rose up eagerly, took each a sheet, and unfolded it, to see what had fallen to her lot. Miss Pe found that what she had got

* Literally *the blow of the fist*. But the blow alluded to here, is that given to the table, when one is very much surprised or gratified.

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was, *The Sighs of an Old Maid*, and Miss Lo *The Song of the Clapping of Hands.*

As it was a constant amusement of Pe's to make his daughter compose verses, her attendants knew what was to be done on the occasion; and on seeing the two young girls take each a subject of composition, they brought and laid before them some pens and two ink-stands. Both then, desirous of displaying their talents, sought, the one to paint the whiteness of snow, the other to animate her style with all the ardour of spring. It was then that the ink might have been seen falling confusedly, under the form of flowers, upon the two sheets spread out to receive it, while the pens flew up and down, backwards, and forwards. In less than an instant both had finished their four strophes.

The rapidity of their pens outstrips the wind.
The verses polished by them would make the genii blush.
This talent, which might immortalize poets,
Was found one day to belong to two fair ones.

Both young girls finished their pieces of verse exactly at the same moment, and presented them simultaneously to Pe, who was a little surprised at observing that Miss Lo had written without the slightest hesitation, and finished as soon as Miss Pe. He first opened the paper given him by Miss Lo, and read what follows:—

SONG.

THE CLAPPING OF HANDS.

Jealousy remains crouched in the midst of a shower of flowers,
And the anger of a beautiful woman betrays itself in the motion of her eye-brows.

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The goldfinch and the butterfly have not yet displayed
their rich colours;
And in so fine a day the golden needle remains still
inactive.
The succession of these purple tints amuses a simple heart:
It takes pleasure in beholding these carpets of verdure
which the season renews.
The lover enjoys the privilege of commencing in a jesting
manner the game of chess,
And the fair one with the golden comb shews her im-
patience *by striking the table with her hand.*
But impatience and the actions that it inspires disturb
the peace of the soul:
I prefer, by milder gestures, to make known my senti-
ments.
It will be the shadow of a cloud passing over a tissue of
a single colour,
Or the traces which the bamboo in spring leaves upon
the surface of jasper.
Discussions and mutual attacks will never cease:
But I fear not the most violent attacks.
May I finish my days in the happiness that I now feel!
The blossom of the pear-tree will in this asylum bid
adieu to the tree that has protected it.

Pe read these verses with the greatest attention; and when he saw that all the expressions were delicate, elegant, and well chosen, he felt, in the bottom of his heart, as much astonishment as satisfaction. Then, addressing Mrs Lo, he said, "I imagined that a young beauty might be able, by her acquirements, to wash out the shame of paint and pomatum; but I had no idea that my niece was endowed with such fine talents. It is impossible to treat more ingeniously a difficult subject." He then handed the verses to Miss Pe. "See, my child," said he, "what grace and elegance are in this composition.

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It is a harmonious sound escaped from a box of perfumes. You have now found an adversary worthy of you."

On reading these verses, Miss Pe expressed her admiration in uninterrupted praises. Miss Lo received them with modesty, saying, "They are the humble, ungraceful production of a poor orphan, brought up in the obscurity of the women's apartment. I fear that I have lost myself in the region of phantoms; I hope, uncle, that you and my sister will have the kindness to set me right."

When she had ceased speaking, Pe took the verses of Miss Pe, and, having unfolded the paper, found what follows:—

THE SIGHS OF AN OLD MAID.

The spring has come to adorn our paths with purple-tinted flowers,
And the pleasure of beholding them attracts crowds of young girls.
Each year sees the flowers bloom and wither;
But there is a girl who is silent whilst looking at the flowers.
Her silence is caused by a reflection suggested to her by the flowers.
The reflection which troubles her heart remains unknown to us all:
She recollects that the linnet is envious of the new moon:
Already the hair on her temples rivals the flowers in brilliancy.
Formerly she complained of the premature rigour of the winds of autumn;
But now she has no longer the same delicate waist.
Alas! this petticoat, once of as bright a red as the pomegrenate,

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Equals no longer in freshness the blossom of the peach-tree.
Months and years are passed in bewailing her forlorn state:
How often does she return to her mirror to seek for the image that she saw in it formerly!
The young women of the neighbourhood avoid meeting her:
Alone and abandoned to herself, she appears to us an object most worthy of pity.

After the perusal of these verses, Pe exclaimed: "Ingenious obscurity and delicate reserve! Nothing fully expressed, and yet the meaning is marvellously clear. That is absolutely the manner of the good times of the dynasty of the Thangs *. My niece and you merit equal praise, and it cannot be said *which is the hand that has killed the stag.*"

He ordered Yansou to hand the verses to Miss Lo. She, having read them with attention, thus expressed her admiration, "Ah, sister, what a beautiful composition! Both the matter and the manner are excellent. It is truly fire without smoke; when compared to this, mine is like a paper cut with a hatchet, and shaved with a plane. With such talent," she continued to herself, "it is no wonder that she has inspired young Sse with so lively a passion."

These two pieces of poetry increased the esteem and affection which these two young girls felt for each other as relations.

When talent meets with talent,
Friendship soon springs up between them.

* Toufou and Litaïpe, the two most celebrated poets of China, lived under this dynasty.

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Deep as may be the attachment of relatives,
It is at bottom only relationship.

In the next chapter will be seen what was the conduct of the two cousins.

CHAPTER XVI.

MUTUAL CONFIDENCE OF TWO AMIABLE COUSINS.

"Let it not be said that the two young girls cannot live together: in a thousand years perhaps there may not be found two others whose minds are so congenial. It must not be forgotten that Ying and Hoang lived and died together; and man and son never dissolved the ties of relationship. What matters it that sympathy has been feeble in the commencement? Love, once born, can never become extinct. Of what use is the voracious fury of buzzards disputing their prey? The vulgar alone are destined never to know the sweets of the union of the tenis."

Since Pe had become convinced by his own observation of the poetical talents of Miss Lo, his heart was filled with the most lively satisfaction. "I have made fruitless researches in every direction to find a man endowed with true merit," said he; "and behold, in the bosom of my own family there appears a girl so abundantly provided with it, as to be worthy of being compared to Houngiu. But if it has been already so difficult to find one son-in-law, what trouble shall I not now have to discover two? Let us take advantage of the genial season of spring; let us make an excursion to Wanlin, the rendezvous of all the men of letters. Who knows but there I may find means to conclude our marriages?"

After having fully explained his intentions to Mrs Lo, and also to the Misses Houngiu and Mengli, he ordered his servants to get ready a bark, a

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chariot, and the baggage, and then he made his own particular preparations for the journey. Miss Houngiu could not refrain from again renewing her representations: "Though my aunt is here to watch over the house," said she, "yet you, father, have no one to accompany you on the road; return soon, I beseech you."

Pe promised to do as she desired, and a few days afterwards he set out for Wanlin, followed by his servants. Since Miss Pe had discovered in her cousin, with a face like the flowers, talent and sentiments pure as snow, she conceived for this young girl the tenderest affection. On her part Miss Lo, who recognised in Miss Pe a poetical genius of the highest order, with a character and exterior superior to any that was to be seen in the rest of the world, felt for her a most profound esteem. Every day they mutually excited each other to celebrate the singularities of nature, and subject their inspirations to the yoke of metre and rhyme. Under flowering arbours during a serene day, or by the light of lanterns during the mild evenings, these two young girls were found together, as inseparably united as are the substance and the shadow. There reigned in their conversations the most happy accord, and the most perfect coincidence marked their manner of thinking. One day at the commencement of the new season, Miss Pe, dressed in a simple robe, whose colour corresponded with the tints of the spring, made Yansou take up a large mirror; and, holding in her own hand another, she placed herself at the bottom of the trellis-work, and so disposed the two mirrors that she could see all those who entered. While she was thus employed, Miss Lo

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gently approached, and seeing what she was doing, smiled and said, " Oh! sister, you wish to keep to yourself all the subjects for poetry which offer themselves in the inner apartment! But this very spectacle itself would furnish a fine subject."

" Dear sister," replied Miss Pe, " if you will not allow me to keep all the subjects to myself, and if you find this one to your taste, give us a piece of poetry, if you please; and you shall have your full share of this amusement."

" Truly," said Miss Lo, " I should like to share it with you; only that I fear, when I should take my eyes off the beautiful person who now attracts them, they would rest upon objects less worthy to inspire me: what then am I to do?"

" If it were in your power to confer degrees, you would soon make a doctor of me," said Miss Pe. " Let me only be re-born with a beard on my chin, and I shall have no cause for inquietude."

Miss Lo began to laugh, and immediately went in search of a piece of paper and pens, and in a very short time presented to Miss Pe the verses she had composed. The following was the poem, written in verses of five syllables:

UPON A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN

MAKING USE OF A MIRROR TO OBSERVE WHAT WAS PASSING BENEATH HER WINDOW-BLINDS.

Her toilette finished it is not her face that she delights
in looking at;
Standing before her mirror, she is observing what passes
beneath her window-blinds.
The reflected image offers itself to her sight,
And her stolen glance seizes the rays of light that strike it.

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It is the blossom of the pear-tree turning in the spring towards the disk of the moon.
It is the branches of the willow, inclining, in a beautiful evening, towards the surface of the pond.
She was possessed already of charms sufficient to seduce all mankind:
What necessity to add to them the piquant air of these contracted eye-brows?

Miss Pe was enchanted with these verses, "What grace and complacency!" she exclaimed. "These verses are worthy of the most celebrated poets. Ah, sister, if you were a young man, I should wish to have you, all my life, as near me as my cap and my comb."

At these words Miss Lo frowned, and remained for some time without speaking. "Then," said she at length, "because I am not a young man, you wish me far away from you. This expression announces on your part an affection of little depth."

"Sister, you take in a wrong sense what I have said," replied Miss Pe laughing; "for I have the warmest affection for you, for your person and your talents. I should wish to pass my whole life with you; but I fear that it is not possible; and the expression of regret that I made use of had no other origin than that of fear. In what way does my affection for you appear to want depth?"

"It entirely depends upon ourselves to pass our lives together," said Miss Lo: "it must be our own wishes that will decide it. If we both desire it, who can prevent us? What makes you suppose it impossible?"

"What makes me think it impossible, sister," replied Miss Pe, "is the fear that you do not really

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desire it. If you do, there is no necessity for your becoming a young man. If I had not desired it, I should not have expressed the wish that you had been one."

This answer restored Miss Lo's good humour. " I have not to reproach myself with want of affection for you," said she ; " and it was truly ridiculous on my part to have conceived any doubts as to the solidity of yours. But something remains still to be said. Although there is between us no motive to prevent our living together, yet there exists a condition, without which our separation would be inevitable. Now I do not know, sister, if this condition would be to your taste."

" We learn," replied Miss Pe, " that in former times Hoang and Niuying devoted themselves to Chun. I should like very well to imitate them. Would that be also your wish, sister ?"

" If it were not my wish, I should not have come here," replied Miss Lo in a transport of joy.

" I should not dare to make any comparison, with regard to merit or beauty, between us and Ying and Hoang," said Miss Pe ; " however, these heroines, so celebrated in ancient times, ornaments of the women's apartments, comparable to the breeze of the forests, did not blush to contract a similar union. But I know not if, in the world as it now exists, it would be possible to find a man sufficiently gifted with talent, to be worthy to receive us both."

Miss Lo remained for some time buried in thought. " Sister," said she at length, " you have consented that we should have but one heart: Let us then speak with perfect sincerity. Why conceal anything from each other ?"

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"We have poured our hearts into each other," replied Miss Pe; "what therefore can we have to conceal from each other?"

"If you conceal nothing from me," said Miss Lo, "tell me then if he who has touched your heart, sister, be a man so devoid of merit, that it becomes necessary to seek for another?"

Miss Pe, laughing, said: "What foolish story is this you are telling, sister? Without saying that nobody has touched my heart, suppose it to be true, where could you have learned it?"

Miss Lo burst into a loud laugh. "It is a true saying," said she, "that the only way to prevent an action, which one is desirous to conceal, from being known, is not to do it. The fact is, that the conduct and proceedings of a man of talent and a beautiful woman attract the eyes and ears of every one, and become, during an infinite time, the subject of interesting communications. Though I live a great distance from hence, the whole of that affair has been known to me for a long time."

Miss Pe did not give credit to this assertion. "Why do you not at once tell what you do know?" replied she. "You have probably heard some foolish story with regard to Tchangfanjou, and the verses upon the vernal willows?"

"Every one knows that adventure," replied Miss Lo, laughing; "I am not the only one who has heard it. What I know does not relate to Tchang, who presented some verses upon the vernal willows under his own name; but it relates to a lord Sse, the author of these verses, and moreover of *The Farewell to the Crane*, and *The Welcome of the Swallow*."

On hearing this disclosure of the secret senti-

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ments of her heart, Miss Pe was so confounded and disconcerted that she could not utter a word, but she directed her looks towards Yansou.

"We are sisters, and have but one heart," resumed Miss Lo; "why then this inquietude and these suspicions? Why wear such an expression of countenance?"

After a moment's surprise and hesitation, Miss Pe, feeling that this assertion was well founded, could no longer dissemble, but said, "You are, sister, very clever; but the business of which you speak is known only to me and Yansou. I have not dared to speak of it even in my dreams. How then should you have learned it? It must be some one of my women who has played the spy upon me in the privacy of my apartment, and has afterwards secretly gone to inform you of the fact."

Miss Lo began to laugh. "Sister," replied she, the genii themselves could not have penetrated your secret. How then can you suppose that any mortal could discover it? I have heard it from young Mr Sse, whose own lips conveyed it to my ear. None but he could have known it; you therefore should have no suspicion on the subject."

"You are jesting with me," said Miss Pe. "It is now nearly a year since young Mr Sse quitted this part of the country. My father has made inquiries in I know not how many places, without being able to get any information respecting him, or learn in what direction he has turned his steps. But even should he have gone into Chantoung, how is it possible, sister, that a young and beautiful person like you, inhabiting the inner apartment, could have found yourself in his company?"

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" Your doubts are natural," replied Miss Lo " and yet it is true that I have seen Mr Sse, and conversed with him about your affairs. I have no intention to impose upon you by unfounded assertions."

" What you tell me is neither natural nor probable. How can you expect me to give credit to it ?" asked Miss Pe.

" It is natural that you should not give credit to it at present; but another day, when you shall find yourself with Mr Sse, if you ask him about it, you will be convinced that that there is no want of truth in what I have said."

" Young Sse is like a felled tree, or a portion of light foam on the surface of the water. After the inquiries that have been made, it appears that he no longer thinks of me: and you only speak to me thus, sister, because you know that I shall have no opportunity to see him."

" What is that you say?" resumed Miss Lo. " It is in the hope of being married to you that young Mr Sse is now running about from east to west, destitute of every thing that makes life agreeable. How can you speak so lightly of him? This is making a bad return for the extreme fidelity of this young man. Last autumn he was promoted at the examination of the north. Why then compare him to a felled tree, or a portion of foam floating on the surface of the water ?"

Miss Pe felt a little surprised at hearing this. " It was then he who obtained the second place at the examination. Why did he set himself down as a candidate from Honan ?" asked she.

" I have learned," replied Miss Lo, " that his

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paternal uncle, the provincial judge Sse, was a native of Honan. He has now adopted him for his son, and it is for that reason that Mr Sse stated himself to be a candidate from Honan."

"Since he had obtained the degree he sought, he should have come and demanded the fulfilment of the engagement we had entered into," said Miss Pe. "How comes it that we have never heard from him since?"

"The cause is, I suppose," replied Miss Lo, "that he does not wish to return till he has obtained the degree of doctor. You must, sister, have a little patience, and wait for him. I am confident, that sooner or later he will be here."

"I see, dear sister, that you speak very confidently, and it appears to me that you must have some reason for doing so. And yet, how could a young girl like you, who never quitted the women's apartments, have met Mr Sse? But still, if it was any one else whom you had questioned, you could not have obtained such precise information. If you love me, sister, why do you not tell me all the details, and relieve my mind from the doubts that besiege it?"

"At the point where we now are," replied Miss Lo, "the best thing that I can do, is to tell you the whole of the circumstances. But do not, sister, make me the subject of your raillery afterwards."

"A secret commerce carried on in the inner apartment of the women, is a much more serious matter than this," replied Miss Pe; "and since you have not blamed my imprudence, why should I indulge myself in any raillery against you?"

"Well, since you have promised not to laugh at

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my expense, I shall tell you what has taken place. Last year young Mr Sse set out for the court, in order to ask Dr Gŏu to interest himself with regard to his marriage with you. On reaching the province of Chantoung, he was suddenly attacked on the high road, and plundered of all his baggage. Finding himself in the greatest embarrassment, and not knowing what to do, good luck willed it so, that he become acquainted with a certain counsellor Li, who lives in the house next door to ours, and to whom he related what had befallen him. The latter, seeing in young Sse a bachelor full of acquirements, requested him to compose four pieces of poetry for a silk skreen that was destined for the judge of the province, promising him, in return, the funds necessary to continue his journey. He invited him to his house, and put him in an apartment at the bottom of the garden. The pavilion in which I resided was contiguous to that part of the garden, and I had an opportunity of observing, without being seen myself, young Sse. His superior air, and the readiness with which he wrote the verses, convinced me that he was a poet of the greatest merit. Reflecting on my own situation, I saw myself deprived of my father, my mother a friendless widow, and my brother still a child. Who then was there to busy themselves about my marriage? If I persisted in observing the usual rules, I should in the end find myself the dupe. In this extremity, I thought myself justified in accommodating myself to circumstances. I put on the dress of a man, and had an interview behind the garden-gate with Mr Sse."

Miss Pe remained for some time silent, after

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hearing this account, which gave her no less satisfaction than surprise. "Sister," she at length said, "so young as you are, I should never have supposed that you could have acted with so much wit and resolution. It may be said that you are a hero amongst the fair sex."

"There was in this no proof of extraordinary intellect," replied Miss Lo, "What you say is suggested by the extreme desire you have to see me changed into a young man."

"Let us talk no more of that," said Miss Pe. "But, sister, in the interview of a moment, how did you come to speak of our adventures? This young student must be a great babbler!"

"He is not a babbler," replied Miss Lo; "but as I had made him a proposal of marriage, from accepting which he repeatedly excused himself, I pressed him to let me know the cause; and he, not knowing otherwise what to do, was obliged to avow his previous engagement. He was certain that I could never know anything more of a transaction that took place more than a thousand miles off; and he had no kind of suspicion that he was speaking to me of my uncle and my sister. I believe that it was the will of heaven that I should thus have learned all these circumstances."

"And, my dear sister, upon what did you agree afterwards?" asked Miss Pe.

"When I saw that there was a secret engagement, through which he would not break either in life or death; that he was not a giddy-headed person; and that since he was incapable of being unfaithful for a moment to you, I ran no risk of his becoming so to me afterwards—I renewed my pro-

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posals more eagerly than ever, and at length obtained his consent to a double marriage. It was then that, under pretext of flying from persecution, I engaged my mother to come here. With this secret thought I set out, proposing to myself to arrange the affair with you, my sister. I did not then foresee that you would be so willing to join with me in accomplishing a union sweet as the concert of teals, and intricate as the intertwinings of the ivy; and I was ignorant that you would put your interests in common with mine, and, without requiring any formal arrangement, consent to all that accorded with the wishes of young Sse. Heaven, it may be said, has well seconded the wishes of man, and no obstacle has started up to impede the project I had formed."

"You are really full of understanding, dear sister," resumed Miss Pe. "Young Sse's entire conduct appeared to me as obscure as if it had been enveloped in fog and smoke; and were it not for the explanations that you have given me, he would be still like the stag lost amongst the bushes. If you are, besides, capable of plucking the flower and fixing it to the tree, if you know how to sacrifice yourself for another, the heroines of former days cannot be said to have surpassed you. But after young Sse went away, how did you learn that he had set himself down as a candidate from Honan?"

"Our neighbour, counsellor Li," replied Miss Lo, "is a man entirely devoted to persons in place and favour. We saw him, some time ago, preparing some fine presents to be sent to the newly-adopted

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son of the judge of the province: he said that this son was the very young man who had composed the verses for him, and as he had upon that occasion given him but a poor reception, he now wished to make up for it by an extraordinary degree of politeness. Who could this young man be, if he were not Mr Sse? And as the lord judge is from Honan, I knew from that circumstance that young Sse had entered himself amongst the candidates of that province. Afterwards, when the lists of the examination were published, counsellor Li again sent to compliment him; and this was what made me acquainted with his success."

"After what you now mention, there can be no doubt of its being young Sse," replied Miss Pe; "and since he has not forgotten me, our former engagement subsists. Now that you are come to aid me, dear sister, no sorrow shall enter into my peaceful retreat."

"And to conclude," resumed Miss Lo; "as, on coming here, I dreaded that, if young Sse should not find me on his return, he would wander about in search of me, I sent a servant to the capital to deliver him a letter. I have not yet received an answer. The period of the examination is already past, but I know not whether young Sse has been again successful. Sister, why do you not send some one to ascertain this?"

"I had forgotten it," said Miss Pe. "The lists of the general examination were brought to my father some days ago; but as I took no interest in them, I did not read them; and I do not know where they have been deposited."

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Yansou, who was near her, said, " I believe they were left in the pavilion of rural dreams; I shall go and look for them."

An instant after, she returned with the lists which she had found. The two cousins unfolded them, and, on looking over them, saw that the thirteenth name was that of Sse Yeoupe. This circumstance filled them with joy. " It may be said," cried they, " that heaven favours the desires of mortals."

From that moment the two cousins felt their mutual esteem and affection redoubled. They were never out of each other's sight for a quarter of an hour.

Grief has but a period, and the bee produces honey.
Sentiment assumes a hundred different forms, and the worm spins silk.
If the fair one had not with her own lips explained the mystery,
Who could have unravelled so many contradictory rumours?

Let us leave the two cousins full of joy in the privacy of their apartment, and speak of Sse Yeoupe, who from Chantoung had gone into the province of Honan. He there performed a sacrifice to his ancestors, and immediately took the road to Kinling. He soon arrived there, and wished to go without delay to the village of Kinchi, to visit Pe. Whilst he was getting ready the usual presents, he sent a servant before him with the two letters from Dr Gou and the inspector general Sse. He hoped to receive some good news after these letters should have been delivered. But the following day the messenger came back, and told him that, on going to the house he was informed that the lord Pe was

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not there, but had gone on a little journey of pleasure to Hangtcheou. " I gave the two letters to the porter," continued he; " and he told me that his master would answer them as soon as he returned. I informed him that your lordship wished to pay a visit to his master. He replied, that his master not being at home, there was nobody to receive you, and that your lordship should not take the trouble of coming; but that if you insisted upon paying the visit, all that was necessary was to leave a card, which he would put into the registry kept at the gate."

Sse Yeoupe felt extremely disappointed at this account, and remained some time without speaking. " Poor Sse Yeoupe!" said he to himself, " you are not favoured by fate. You go into Chantoung to meet Lo Mengli, and cannot see her; you come here to visit the lord Pe, he is from home. What is now to be done?"

" The lord Pe," he then continued to himself, " will no doubt soon return. I had therefore better remain some days here, and wait for him. You should," said he, addressing the messenger, " have inquired when the lord Pe would return."

" I did inquire," replied the messenger, " and was told lord Pe had not long been gone; that his intention being to make an excursion of pleasure, he would be absent probably a month, probably two or three; and that it was impossible to fix precisely the period of his return."

Sse Yeoupe, reflecting upon this statement, said to himself, " Although the lord Pe be not at home, I have a great desire to go to-morrow, and pay my first visit. Probably I shall find some favourable

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opportunity to see Yansou, and learn some news of her young mistress since our departure."

Then, pursuing his reflections, he said to himself, "Should I go, my retinue, my servants, the people who follow and accompany me, all this would prevent me from getting any private information. And even should I be led into the saloon, Yansou will not be able to come to me. It would serve no purpose to go there. Should I remain here, the time for entering on my functions would soon overtake me. Since it is upon a journey of pleasure that the lord Pe is gone to the western lake *, I had better go after him thither.

When he had determined upon this plan, he saw the officers of his tribunal coming to meet him. Sse Yeoupe, after making his official proclamation, set out; and as he had not caused his approach to be announced on the road, he arrived in seven or eight days at Hangtcheou. He was very much occupied, at first, in visiting the authorities, and taking possession of his office; but after some days, finding himself at leisure, he sent a person to the western lake, to inquire where his lordship, the counsellor of state, Pe of Kinling, was lodged. The person whom he had charged with this commission, took a whole day to execute it; and on his return, he told his master, that after having been to all the convents of the western lake, to all the

* Si-Hou, the western lake. This lake is situated under the walls of Hangtcheou, capital of the province of Tchekiang. Its borders are remarkable for the beauty of the prospect. In it are many islands planted with all kinds of ornamental trees: it is like a vast garden, in which parties of pleasure, concerts, and banquets are given. People resort to it to enjoy the charms of *wine and poetry*.

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inns and farm-houses, and after having made inquiries in every direction, he could not learn that any counsellor of state, named Pe, had arrived there.

" This is very extraordinary," exclaimed Sse Yeoupe ; " nevertheless, his servants very distinctly said that he had gone thither : how happens it that he is not there ?" And he sent his servants to make inquiries in all parts of the city.

Now Pe, as he was proceeding on his journey to the borders of the western lake, recollected that the inspector-general Yang was governor of the province ; and fearing that, if he should hear of his arrival, he might wish to make a return for the attention paid him in Pe's house, and detain him on his way back, he therefore thought proper to change his name ; and, adding something to the orthography of the word Pe, he called himself Hoangfou *, a private citizen, so that no person could tell where he lived. He then hired, for his residence, a small grotto close to the bridge of Sinling ; and every day, being dressed like a private individual, in a linen garment and rush shoes, and followed by a servant carrying the four precious articles belonging to the closet of a man of letters, he went, either in a little bark or on foot, to enjoy the view of the double peak and the six bridges. Whenever he met any young men of family, he made the most minute inquiries about everything concerning them.

He was one day seated in the gallery of the *cold-spring*, occupied in admiring the limpid water that

* To comprehend how *Pe* could, by a slight alteration in the spelling, be changed into *Hoang*, it would be necessary to see both words written in Chinese.

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flowed over the rocks of dazzling whiteness, when he saw approaching six or seven young men with large caps on their heads, clothed in garments of various colours, and followed by great numbers of servants, carrying carpets of felt, and several flasks of wine. They all entered the gallery to partake of a collation; and perceiving Pe, who was seated there before them, and whose noble air, in despite of the plainness of his dress and the two servants who attended him, shewed that he was not a man of common rank, they all made him an obeisance, and then sat down. A short time afterwards the servant served up the collation, to which the young men invited Pe. "My lord," said they, "if you have no objection, will you do us the favour to join us?"

On seeing six or seven young men, all in the flower of their age, Pe thought that he might probably find a man of merit amongst them. He therefore did not wait to be pressed much, but contented himself with saying—"Gentlemen, without knowing you, how can I think of becoming troublesome to you?"

"Not at all," replied the young men. "In the midst of the lakes and the mountains, all those who live between the four seas are brothers."

"Well, gentlemen," said Pe, "I am very much obliged to you;" and he went and sat down with them.

They had not drunk more than a few cups, when one of the young men of the company, addressing Pe, said—"From your language, my lord, I perceive that you cannot be from our city of Hangtcheou. Tell us, I beg of you, the name of

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your country, your own name, and what brings you here?"

"I am from Kinling," replied Pe: "my family name is Hoangfou. The beauty of your country, of your lakes and mountains has induced me to make an excursion here."

"Are you in the schools, or in an official situation?" asked the young men.

"I am neither in the schools, nor in an official situation," replied Pe; "I have in my own village a couple of acres of ground, and I occupy myself in rendering them productive."

"For a village farmer," said one of the young men, "you are somewhat of a friend to dissipation, my old comrade; since you come for the mere pleasure of the walk to these lakes and mountains."

"Permit me to ask you, gentlemen," said Pe, "if you are in the schools, or in official situations?"

"We are here seven," replied one of the company, "who honour the same tutelary deity." Then, pointing with his finger to his companions, "these three gentlemen," said he, "are students of the college of Jinho; these two here belong to the college of Tsiantang; and I myself am in the college of the department, and obtained recently a degree at Nanyoung." Then, pointing out the young man who had asked the first questions, "for this gentleman," continued he, "he is like you, my old friend, neither in the schools nor in any official situation."

"The gentleman has then obtained some very high degree?" asked Pe.

The young man began to laugh. "You guess

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well, my old friend," he cried; " you have found it out at the first offer: the family name of this gentleman is Wang; he was promoted at the last autumn examination. He is, you see, the germ of a great personage."

" Ah, gentlemen," resumed Pe, " since such is the case, you are so many branches of the river of literature. I have been wanting in the respect due to you."

The licentiate Wang then took a part in the conversation. " What do you say of literature?" said he. " It is a profession that breaks the head and the bones. You would easily succeed in it. This degree of licentiate is obtained by bolstering up your studies with a little boasting and babbling; but the fact is, my old brother, that you find it more agreeable not to study, but to purchase some good acres of ground, to amass money, and to make yourself merry with flesh and with fish!"

Another of the party then said, " My lord Wang, behold you are now, after your success, like a god upon earth; do not therefore use the language of a man of pleasure. It appears to me, that it is bachelors who are subjected to suffering. When the principal comes, we must undergo the yearly examination. In college we must appear at the monthly examination. As friends, however, we cannot refrain from seeing and enjoying each other's society. There are disadvantages in not studying, and also disadvantages in being devoted to study."

" My dear friend," said a third, " you speak only of disadvantages, and you say nothing of the pleasure there is in walking about the city, speak-

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ing of other people's affairs, and partaking of good cheer."

At these last words all the company laughed; and after they had remained some time longer at table, one of the young men said, "We are drinking too much; I shall take no more. How comes it, that, being all assembled here, we have not as yet written any verses? Somebody must propose a subject; let every one write something on it; and that will conclude our meeting for this morning."

"Who can think of writing verses after a collation?" cried one of the young men.

"Even should we not finish them, let us at least choose a subject," said another; "and to-morrow we can give them the last polish, with the assistance of our comrades."

"Speak not thus like men of contracted views," said the licentiate Wang. "Since it is necessary to write, let us write; and let those who shall not finish their poems be condemned to drink three cups."

"This is sufficient to give us inspiration," exclaimed the young men; "but our old brother Hoangfou here,—what is he to do?"

"How can you make him compose verses, since he has never studied?" asked the licentiate Wang. "Let him drink, that will be sufficient for him."

"Right! right!" cried the young men. "Give us the subject, if you please."

"Let it be *the Excursion of the Western Lake:* what necessity is there to seek another?" replied the licentiate Wang.

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"The subject is a good one, but a little difficult," observed the young men: "however, let us say no more about it."

The servants were then ordered to bring the paper, ink, pens, and ink-stands, which had been brought from town, and to place them before the company. All then set about composing; some remained silent, seeking for ideas; others drunk some cups, to enable them to go in quest of their expressions; while some others, holding their pens raised, and shaking their heads, muttered with difficulty some syllables. They had been a long time occupied in this manner, without any one of them having finished his task. Pe, who was observing them, burst into an involuntary fit of laughter. "Do not laugh, old brother," said the licentiate Wang. "You who have never studied, cannot conceive the trouble there is in composing verses; there is an old proverb, which says—'to make a verse of five syllables, you must pluck out more than one bristle of your beard.'"

"Though I have not studied," replied Pe, "I could contrive to write a couple of verses."

"If you are able," said the young men, "why do you not set about writing a piece of poetry?"

"If I must compose one," replied Pe, "give me the rhyme: otherwise, there are so many persons who have written upon the subject of an excursion to the western lake, that you might say, I pilfered from some ancient poem."

On hearing him speak with so much assurance, the licentiate Wang said to himself, "Since he wishes to have the rhyme given him, I shall choose

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him a very difficult one." Then, raising his head, he perceived at one side of the gallery a Japanese pear-tree in full blossom, and pointing it out with his finger to Pe, he said, "Well, the rhyme shall be the name of that pear-tree."

"Be it so," replied Pe, and immediately he ordered the servants who attended him, to take out of his chest of ceremonies an antique inkstand of Touanhi, a pen with a handle of striped bamboo, a stick of excellent old ink, and a sheet of paper ruled with black lines; and to place them upon the mat.

When they saw these pens, and this ink of the first quality, the young men began to be a little disconcerted, and whispered to each other, "Who could have imagined that this old simpleton was possessed of such choice things? He must be some rich old fellow!"

"If he be a rich old fellow," added another, "he will certainly not be able to compose anything."

"In the midst of these doubts and conjectures, they saw Pe seize the pen; and it was soon like a cloud which lets fall torrents of rain. In less than a quarter of an hour the four distichs were written. As soon as Pe had finished them, the young men hastened to take and read them; when they found what follows:—

At the voice of the hawk the swallow flies away, like to a tissue of silk;
The lake spreads, to the distance of ten miles, its shores which resemble perfumed carpets.
The sun sheds an odour like flowers; and even the dust under the horse's feet is balmy.

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It is a tennis court in which the spring detains us with his soft smiles.
The mountains pierce the walls of the city, and the bridges traverse the monasteries;
The houses are enveloped in flowers, and the cottages covered with willows.
If it be asked where the breeze got his enchanting breath,
It is from the flute of jasper and golden oboe which adorn the pear-tree.

By old Hoangfou of Kinling.

As soon as they had finished reading, the young men, struck with astonishment, exclaimed—"What beautiful verses! what noble expressions! From your extraordinary skill, it is impossible to suppose that you have never studied. Has not your lordship been pleased to divert yourself at our expense?"

"How could you suppose any such thing?" said Pe, laughing. "Although capable of writing some verses, I have really not pursued any regular studies. The ancients were accustomed to say, that poetry required a particular kind of talent, which had nothing in common with classical studies."

As the sun now began to decline towards the west, Pe's servants came up to him, carrying a sedan chair, similar to those made use of for travelling in the mountains.

Pe immediately rose up, and, approaching the young men to take leave of them, said, "I ought not so soon to quit your company; but the day declines; I am old; and I dare not remain any longer."

On seeing this splendid equipage, the young

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men instantly rose up, and wished to accompany him a part of the way. Pe returned them his thanks, ascended his sedan chair, and set off, escorted by his bearers and footmen, leaving the young men to their doubts and conjectures, though they felt convinced that he was no ordinary man. How much did they regret the indiscreet expressions that had escaped them, and the too great familiarity with which they had treated him !

How discover that that lake is nothing less than the ocean itself?

Mushrooms of a morning reckon not upon a long existence.

What has inspired these scholars with so much presumption and impoliteness?

The cause is, they have seen the heavens for a moment through a tube.

One day it happened that a member of the monastery of Tchaohing, named Hianyun, brought Pe some fresh tea. Pe kept him to take a collation, which was got ready at the moment without any ceremony, and continuing the conversation, said, " The western lake is the most celebrated in the south-eastern provinces of the empire: it is the rendezvous of men of letters. Who amongst the young distinguished scholars of our time are there at present?"

" Many men of reputation frequent the borders of the western lake," replied Hianyun ; " but there are reputations that are solid, and others that have no foundation. Within these last few days there came, however, from Soungkiang, two young men, one named Tchao and surnamed Tsianli, and the

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other whose name is Tcheou, and surname Ching-wang. These two are amongst the number of those scholars whose reputation is well founded."

"How have you been able to know that?" asked Pe.

"They are young, and of the most prepossessing appearance," replied Hianyun; "their compositions also are received with universal praise. The friends they have amongst the most distinguished inhabitants of the country, come every day to visit them. The throng never diminishes. Men of high rank, and the first magistrates of the empire, are amongst their acquaintances. Some ask them to compose literary works for them; others invite them to their houses. They are every day upon the water in boats, partaking of collations and sharing in all manner of amusements. They went a few days ago to visit his highness the governor Yang. His lordship received them himself, and gave them the most honourable welcome. He kept them two days, and wished them to stay longer. Yesterday they were requested to choose the pieces for the examination of the city. If they were not men of real and eminent talent, could they have made such an impression upon all those who see them?"

"Where do these gentlemen lodge?" asked Pe.

"In the left wing of our monastery," replied Hianyun.

"In which building?" again asked Pe.

"There is no necessity to inquire," said Hianyun. Once at the monastery, you have only to name Tchao Tsianli, and Tcheou Chingwang. Who is he that does not know them?"

"After all that you tell me," said Pe, "they

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must certainly be two celebrated men." He continued some time longer the conversation; after which Hianyun took leave of him, and went away.

Pe felt great internal satisfaction. "I knew well," said he to himself; "that I should discover some one upon the borders of the western lake. This does not surpass my expectations. I shall go to-morrow to see them; and if they be possessed of real talent, the marriage of Houngiu and Mengli shall be soon concluded."

The next morning, having provided himself with a straw hat and a country dress, which gave him the appearance of an inhabitant of the mountains, and having taken two visiting cards, upon which he wrote only the name of Hoangfou of Kinling, he went, followed only by a little servant boy, to visit the two young men. He was about asking for them at the gate of the monastery, when some one said to him—"You are come no doubt to see Messieurs Tchao and Tcheou: go to the eastern wing."

Pe entered the convent, and went towards the place which had been mentioned to him. He soon perceived, at the entrance of a cell, a great number of servants and persons in blue clothes, some of whom held visiting cards, and others bore presents: some were entering, others coming out. There was a great bustle and hurrying backwards and forwards. Pe approached the door, and told his valet, as he passed, to present the visiting cards. The porter received them, and said, "My masters will not have the pleasure to receive them; they are gone out. Have the goodness to leave me your cards."

"Where are your masters gone?" asked Pe.

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"To town, sir, to the house of Wangtchunyouan," replied the porter; "they were invited to be present at a discussion relative to an inscription that is about to be begun. They have some visits to pay on the road, and I fear that they will not return before noon. They are invited to-day by the lord Tchang of Tsiantang; and as soon as they return, it will be time for them to go to dinner."

"Such being the case," replied Pe, "take the trouble of keeping my card. I shall return to see them." The porter made a sign that he would acquit himself of the commission; and addressing himself to the little servant boy, he said—"Where does your master live? These gentlemen will wish to return his visit to-morrow."

"He lodges at the farm of Tsaïya, near the bridge of Siling," replied the little servant.

Pe then quitted the convent. He still saw a great number of persons going in to visit Messieurs Tchao and Tcheou, and he could not help laughing in his mind. "Who can these young men be, who are thus thought so highly of?"

He returned to his lodgings to repose himself. In the evening, towards the decline of day, he went on foot to the bridge, to enjoy the view of the lake. From thence he perceived a large pleasure-boat, from which were heard the sound of flutes and the voices of singers, and which was moving in the direction of the bridge. Some one who was near him said, "It is the lord sub-prefect Tsiantang, and his company."

In a moment the boat was under the bridge; Pe looked with more attention, and saw the sub-prefect at the lower end; and in the most honourable

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place were two tables, at which were seated two young men, who were speaking in a loud and confident tone of voice. He followed them with his eyes as they moved away; and they appeared to him well-looking men, and formed to enjoy life. He could not observe them long or closely, as the boat passed rapidly by. The view he had, however, prepossessed him in their favour.

The next morning he went again to see them, but they were not at home. After the lapse of four or five days, he saw a servant, having two visiting cards in his hand, running in the most hurried manner towards his residence, and demanding if it was not there that Mr Hoangfou lived? The people of the house answered in the affirmative, when the servant said, " Take quickly these cards: Messieurs Tchao and Tcheou are coming to pay him a visit: their bark will be here in a moment."

On hearing this, Pe went out in great haste to receive them, and saw two young men who had already entered the gate. He invited them into the house with great ceremony; and the compliments being terminated, they took the places consecrated by usage. Tchao Tsianli was the first to speak. " Your lordship deigned some days ago," said he, " to cast a look upon us; we were very anxious to run hither to ask permission to see you. But what was to be done? For the two whole days we were taken up with his highness the governor. Yesterday we were obliged to partake of a collation at the sub-prefect's. Our days fly by in the midst of chariots and horses. Such have been the causes of the delay. We humbly hope that you will not impute it to us as a crime."

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"Gentlemen," replied Pe, "you are both in the flower of your age, and gifted with remarkable talents. You must sacrifice some interests to the joy and gratification of the rest of the world."

"We are," replied Tcheou Chingwang, "nothing more than poor scholars without merit, on whom chance has conferred a vain reputation; this is for us a subject of the most unutterable confusion. From what country," he added, "does your lordship come?"

"Kinling," replied Pe.

"Kinling is a noble country, and your excellency represents it worthily," resumed Tchao Tsianli. Dr Gou Touïan," he continued, "and Pe Thaïhiouan, belonging to the department of the public works, who are of your city, are, no doubt, known to your lordship?"

"I have heard speak of them," replied Pe, a little surprised; "but I have never been in their company. Permit me, sir, to ask you the motive of that question?"

"These two lords are the ornament of Kinling," replied Tchao Tsianli, "and we are on very good terms with them: this was my reason for inquiring about them."

"You have already met them?" asked Pe.

"We are continually passing from one place to another; it would have been difficult for us not to have met them," said Tchao Tsianli. "Last autumn the lord Gou presided at the examinations of the kingdom of Tsou, and he was anxious that we should have come there to compose his programme, and the introduction to the lists of the examination; but we had with us at home too many friends, who would

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not consent to our leaving them: so that it was impossible for us to comply with his desires."

"Ah, gentlemen, in what high estimation Gou Touïan must hold you!" exclaimed Pe. "But I have heard that Pe Thaihiouan was an old man who saw very little company. How did you contrive to be on such good terms with him?"

"True enough, the lord Pe sees but little company," said Tcheou Chingwang; "but he loves wine and poetry, and we have many a time drunk and composed with him. This was the origin of our intimacy."

"From what I see," said Pe laughing, "there is no one under heaven, who has not his weak side."

The two young men conversed a little more; then, having taken tea, they hastily rose up. Pe made no effort to detain them; but he reconducted them to the door, where they quitted him.

What you hear attracts you,
What strikes your eyes deters you;
There is a great difference between what has been told you and what you see;
A hollow noise will not give rise to esteem.

After the departure of these two young men, Pe could not repress a sigh: "Such scholars," said he, "with all their celebrity, are persons who ought to die of shame!"

In the next chapter will be seen what took place after this event.

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CHAPTER XVII.

THE PERSECUTIONS OF A MAN IN POWER OBLIGE A MAGISTRATE TO RESIGN HIS OFFICE.

"How detestable the passions of the wicked render them! Even their offers of service are pernicious and fatal. He who receives company, confides to a dog the care of his gate; and the knave takes care not to drive away the insects that hum around him. The forehead even of the statue of the most powerful of the gods is not sheltered from pollution, and the ice is formed between his august eye-brows. Knaves will emulate each other in multiplying odious persecutions; but perhaps in the end they will cease to act in concert."

Pe thus passed his time upon the borders of the western lake, always occupied in looking for a son-in-law, and taking much pains to no purpose. Those whom he had at first supposed to be not devoid of talent and accomplishments, were boasting school-boys, and liars: not one of them appeared worthy to fix his attention. After more than a month's stay, becoming excessively wearied with his fruitless search, he crossed the river at Tsiantang, and went to Chanyin *, to visit the grotto of the celebrated emperor Ju.

In the mean time, Sse Yeoupe, though he had commenced his functions, sent every day to make inquiries after Pe, without being able to discover any traces of him. He gave himself up in consequence to the most excessive melancholy and

* Chanyin is a little town of Tchekiang, in one of the most picturesque situations of that province, which itself passes for the paradise of China.

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inquietude. One day some business of importance obliged him to pay a visit to his highness the governor Yang. After having signed the papers that he had brought him, the governor shut his gate and kept him to take tea. " You are very young, sage magistrate!" said he to him.

" Pardon me *," replied Sse Yeoupe; " I am, this year, twenty-one years old."

" When I was at court," resumed the governor, " I used to be, morning and evening, with the lord your father, who is one of my most intimate friends: and yet I never had the advantage of meeting you."

" My father and I," replied Sse Yeoupe, " are, by relationship, only uncle and nephew: it was only last year that he adopted me for his son. This was the reason why I had not the honour of seeing your excellency when you were at court."

" Ah, I understand," said the governor; " I now in fact recollect that he had no son. But by your accent you do not appear to be from Honan: in what province did you first enter college?"

" I am from Kinling," replied Sse Yeoupe.

" Since you have entered into the magistracy, I see," said the governor, " that you have not as yet formed an establishment. What is the reason of that?"

" Chance and some peculiar circumstances have made me wander about from place to place. Such has been the cause of the delay."

" But now you can no longer defer it. I learned yesterday," continued Yang, " that the lord Tchang had been named governor of the hereditary prince.

* Literally, *I should not dare.*

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I should wish to address him some complimentary verses on the occasion. You have a great deal of talent, and you must come to-morrow, and lend me your assistance."

"I have but a very moderate share of talent," replied Sse Yeoupe; "but I must make an effort to obey your orders."

After having drunk two cups of tea, Sse Yeoupe took leave and went away.

Now the governor Yang, as it may be recollected, was no other than Yang Thingtchao. He had a daughter who was just at the age when young girls begin to enclose their hair with a clasp *. Seeing Sse Yeoupe to be a man in the flower of his age, with a handsome face and an agreeable figure, and already possessing the degree of doctor, he resolved to keep him to take tea, and have a moment's conversation with him. He was extremely delighted to learn that this young man was not yet married.

The next morning, the prefect of the department, having come to pay him a visit, he had this magistrate shewn into an inner saloon, and there he made known to him the resolution he had taken to make Sse Yeoupe his son-in-law. He then entreated the prefect to act the part of go-between on the occasion. The latter dared not refuse such a commission; and, on returning to his own house, he immediately sent an invitation to Sse Yeoupe, to come and see him. When Sse Yeoupe presented himself, he said to him, "I have to congratulate you, my virtuous friend."

* At the age of fifteen.

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" On what account?" asked Sse Yeoupe.

" I have been this morning to visit the governor. His highness kept me to take tea: he told me that he had a daughter equally virtuous as beautiful; and, having been struck by the success which you have obtained at so early an age, and understanding that you are unmarried, he intrusted me with the care of bringing about an alliance between you and himself. He wishes that an indissoluble and happy tie may bind you to him. This is undoubtedly an extremely fortunate event: for what could one rejoice, if not for a piece of good fortune like this? This was the subject upon which I congratulated you."

" I am infinitely sensible of the kind intentions of his highness, as also of your kindness, Mr Prefect." replied Sse Yeoupe. " I certainly ought not to refuse such an offer: but my father has already written to our countryman Pe, who is in the department of the public works, to ask the hand of his daughter for me."

" Is the proposal your father has made for you, already accepted?" asked the prefect. " If it be not definitively concluded on, the manner in which his highness insists upon conferring on you this mark of his goodness, and the offers made you, will scarcely admit of refusal."

" It is a long time ago," replied Sse Yeoupe, " since I entered into an engagement with the lord Pe relative to that marriage. Besides, my father's letter has been already sent, and moreover the historiographer Gou Touïan has undertaken the office of go-between. There is consequently no means of being off from this marriage, or of entering on another. I hope, Mr Prefect, that you will be

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good enough to make my excuses to the governor, as I am obliged to refuse this mark of his kindness."

"That will not be difficult," replied the prefect. "There is, however, one thing to be observed: the governor is a man with whom it is as well not to have any cause of dissatisfaction; the more particularly as you and I are under his jurisdiction. Such an answer to the proposal of a marriage with his daughter, may lead to unpleasant results."

"People in office have always some discussions of this kind to carry on," replied Sse Yeoupe; "but with regard to this proposed marriage, it is impossible for me to execute your orders."

"However that may be," said the prefect, "you should give it more consideration, and not sin through too much wilfulness."

"The nature of this affair is very plain," replied Sse Yeoupe. "Marriage is an act regulated by certain conditions, established by the rites relative to social relations. Since I have already made one proposal, how can I now think of making another? I have therefore, only to pray you, Mr Prefect, to employ all the precautions necessary in giving him my answer."

The prefect, seeing that Sse Yeoupe resisted all his entreaties, and that there was nothing to be hoped for, resolved to repeat to the governor, word for word, all that Sse Yeoupe had said to him. When the governor learned that the person sought in marriage by Sse Yeoupe was the daughter of Pe, the intelligence suggested to him various reflections. "The daughter of Pe Thaihiouan," said he to himself, "has a great reputation for talent and beauty: every one is in love with her. Besides,

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he has for a go-between Gou Touïan, and his father Sse Fanghoeï is also on very good terms with the family. There are nine reasons out of ten for believing that the marriage will take place. It is no wonder that he should not have come into my views. I should think little of all this, if he shewed himself favourable to my proposal; for though by my place I am his superior, yet he is a young man in the flower of his age, whose merit has been already proved at the examination. But unless old Pe should reject him, he will never think of accepting my offer. But, after all, who knows but Pe may not be willing to listen to him at present?"

He pursued this train of thought without being able to hit upon any expedient; when suddenly an idea struck him. "Some time back, when old Pe made me stay some days in his house, he had a certain Tchangfanjou residing with him, who kept me company during my sojourn there. Since my departure I had lost sight of him. But some days ago he sent me a card, requesting to be allowed to see me. Imagining that he wanted to get something from me, in consequence of his intimacy with old Pe, and not having any wish to renew the acquaintance, I refused to receive him. But it will now be useful to invite him to dinner. I shall begin by settling the business that has brought him here, and I can afterwards find out from him, what are the present intentions of old Pe. If there be any machine we can bring into play, I shall not yet despair of our project."

Having resolved upon this plan, the governor ordered one of his officers to write his name upon a card, and send it to Mr Tchangfanjou of Tanyang,

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together with an invitation to dinner in the private apartment. Conformably to this order, the officer prepared the card, and sent his servant with it and the invitation.

It may be recollected, that when Tchangfanjou quitted Pe's house, where he had played so ridiculous a part, he pretended that it was the approaching examination that obliged him to do so. He was not a man to blush at his conduct; but recollecting that he had made the acquaintance of governor Yang, he came to seek a refuge at Hangtcheou. There he had paid a great number of visits to the governor; but seeing that his politeness met with no return, he judged that the governor had no wish to receive him, and he ceased his visits. The arrival of a messenger with a visiting card and an invitation, was therefore a most unexpected event for him. Full of joy, he partly changed his clothes and cap, and went to wait before the gate of the palace. At noon the gates were thrown open, the names of the persons invited were called, and Tchangfanjou was admitted into the palace. After the first compliments, the governor and his guest sat down each in their place; and the former, beginning the conversation, said, "Since your first visit, I have been wishing to ask you to dinner; do not be offended, I beg of you, that the affairs of government have prevented me from doing so till this moment."

"I had already received numberless favours from you," replied Tchangfanjou; "and I considered myself the happiest man in the world. You now do me the signal honour of inviting me to dine with you; what can I do to shew myself worthy of it?"

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Shortly after dinner was brought in, and when the first cups had been emptied, the governor said, "You have taken up your residence with Pe Thai-hiouan: how have you found time to come here?"

"I took leave of my lord Pe at the approach of the last autumn examination, where I was a candidate," replied Tchangfanjou. "This has enabled me to come hither, and approach the fountain of reason and virtue."

"Ah! you have quitted Pe Thaihiouan?" said the governor. "I know not if he has married his daughter since: have you heard anything about it?"

"To tell your highness the truth," said Tchangfanjou, "though I was at first living with the lord Pe upon the footing of an ordinary guest, he had really given me hopes that he would accept me as a son-in-law. I could never have imagined that the lord Pe would afterwards have lent his ears to the calumnies of some persons of no consideration, which obliged me to take leave of him: however, I have heard that his daughter is not yet married."

"Old Pe is an extremely wilful man, and full of confidence in himself. Formerly, when I was at court, I repeatedly proposed to him a marriage between his daughter and my son, but he would not listen to it."

"If it be thus he pretends to secure a son-in-law, I fear that the marriage of his daughter will not take place during her present state of existence *," said Tchangfanjou.

"True, you are right," said the governor, bursting into a loud laugh. "But I have lately been in-

* Allusion to the metempsycosis.

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formed that the judge Sse had proposed for her, through the medium of Gou Touian. You probably know that?"

"I did not know it before. Permit me to ask you who is this judge Sse?"

"He is one of the newly-promoted doctors, Sse Yeoupe," replied the governor.

"This Sse Yeoupe is from the province of Honan," observed Tchangfanjou.

"It is because his paternal uncle comes from Honan," replied the governor, "that he has inscribed himself amongst the candidates of the province; he is himself from Kinling."

"In that case it is Mr Sse surnamed Liansian!" exclaimed Tchangfanjou in great surprise. "I thought it was another person of the same name."

"Are you acquainted with him?" asked the governor.

"Mr Sse and I are intimate friends; he lived upwards of a month in my garden," replied Tchangfanjou.

"I am delighted to hear it," said the governor, "for I have something to confide to you."

"May I ask what it is?" said Tchangfanjou.

"I have a daughter," said the governor, "and I have cast my eyes upon him for a son-in-law; but his views being directed towards the daughter of the lord Pe, he persists in refusing my offers. Since you are intimate with him, you must take the trouble to speak to him on the subject. The lord Pe is a fastidious and obstinate man. The marriage he projects will be very difficult of accomplishment. It would be better for him to accede to the proposal I make to him. Should the affair

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succeed according to my wishes, I shall know how to acknowledge your services."

Tchangfanjou made a low bow. " I receive your orders," said he; and, after having drunk some more cups, he rose up, took leave of the governor, and went away.

When he returned home, Tchangfanjou made some reflections upon what he had just heard. " What torments have I not given myself," thought he; " what a sum of money did I not spend in the beginning, in order to secure an alliance with the family of Pe! And yet I have lost my trouble and my time. He has now made choice of one of the newly-created doctors for a son-in-law. Is this not enough to anger me? The best thing that I can do is to overset the project. They are not yet betrothed; and if I can find out any means of sowing division amongst them, I shall always be sure of the protection of the governor in case of discovery. But this little Sse is a very demon in love affairs. He has now been a long time enamoured of Miss Pe; he is like a man famished or devoured with thirst. If I confine myself merely to exhorting him or reasoning him out of his purpose, he will pay no attention to my words. I suppose he cannot be accurately informed of what has recently taken place in Pe's house; I must therefore tell him something of my own invention; I shall tell him that Miss Pe is dead. By that means I shall cut short his projects, and governor Yang will not have to regret the failure of the marriage he wishes to take place."

Tchangfanjou was satisfied with this stratagem, and the next morning he got ready some presents, wrote his name upon a visiting card, and went to

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pay his devoirs and compliments to Sse Yeoupe. The usher, after announcing him, shewed him in. It was exactly at the time when Sse Yeoupe was having inquiries made in all directions about Pe, so that the sight of Tchangfanjou's card gave him great pleasure. "This man," thought he, "will certainly know something about the lord Pe."

He ran eagerly to the saloon to receive Tchangfanjou. They both accosted each other with a smiling and satisfied air, and after the first compliments, joyfully sat down. Then Tchangfanjou, commencing the conversation, said—"You quitted us very suddenly, my lord; but no day has passed since without my thinking of you. Now that I have the good fortune to meet you, I am not the less charmed to see you, although the distance between us is as great as that between the clouds and the slime of the earth."

"I shall always recollect your obliging conduct towards me," replied Sse Yeoupe. "Since fortune more than my merit has favoured me, I am desirous of letting you know something about me; but the great distance did not permit it. When I passed recently through Kinling, my leave of absence was near expiring, so that I was not able to pay you a visit. Hitherto I have not had a moment's leisure; now that you have had the kindness to come to see me, I feel very sensibly the favour. But permit me, sir, to ask you a question. The lord Pe had made arrangements for your residing with him; you were continually together morning and evening; how comes it that you have left his house?"

"My first intention, as you well know," replied Tchangfanjou, "had been to marry his daughter;

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but since she died, I saw no further use in remaining in the house; so I took my leave and came away."

These words threw Sse Yeoupe into the greatest trouble: "Who died?" he exclaimed.

"His daughter, Miss Pe, is dead," replied Tchangfanjou. "Is it possible that you did not know it?"

After a moment's stupor, during which he found it impossible to speak, Sse Yeoupe exclaimed—"How could I have known it? When did she die, and of what disease?"

"She died in the course of last winter," said Tchangfanjou. "The great majority of girls of great talent never come to good. Miss Pe had no lack of confidence in her own talents; she passed all her time in composing. Whenever she could get a glimpse of the moon in autumn, or the flowers in spring, she gave herself up to fatal emotions. Added to this, she had an intractable and obstinate father, always occupied in search of a son-in-law, now on this side, then on that, without being able to put an end to the wearisome celibacy of his daughter. She at length fell sick, and her indisposition degenerated into a languishing malady, from which she never recovered. All the physicians said that it was a kind of consumption; but, as far as I could judge, it was a moral malady that killed her."

At this account, which bore such an appearance of truth, and which inflicted so sudden and cruel a blow, Sse Yeoupe could not restrain his tears. "I have returned too late!" he cried. "I wished to acquire reputation but it was for the purpose of

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making me more worthy the happiness of marrying that charming creature. My station in life is now fixed; but she, for whom I desired it, has disappeared. A vain dream of glory has led me astray; and I, alas! am the cause of her loss. One of the ancients has said, *I have not killed Pejin, but I am the cause of his death. Blind that I was, to have failed in my duty to so excellent a friend!* Such is my situation with regard to Miss Pe! How can I avoid feeling anguish in my heart?"

"Placed as you are in the first rank of public officers," said Tchangfanjou, "the eyes of the learned and the people are fixed upon you. You ought, it appears to me, my lord, to moderate your feelings conformably to the rites."

"An author of the time of the dynasty of Tsin says, that the objects of our affections are identified with ourselves," replied Sse Yeoupe. "You speak to me of the rites; is it for us that they have been instituted? For whom do you take me, my dear friend, that you form such an idea of me?"

"You are young, sir, and possessed of elevated rank: would you accuse the whole world of not being able to offer you a beautiful wife, and do you wish to remain attached to her who is no more?"

"She was the only one I ever loved in all my life," exclaimed Sse Yeoupe. "Now that her lute is broken, her image at least shall follow me into solitude. What an infidelity would it not be, to go and seek another fair one for a companion!"

"Bad news, when first heard, naturally produces lively affliction," replied Tchangfanjou; "I am far, my lord, from finding fault with yours. It would be the language of a wretch to speak to you of the

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water lentil and the alisma, at the very moment when you are plunged in the grief of funereal homage. You must, by little and little, accustom yourself to think of them."

" You have an affection for me, my dear sir: your words have all the charm of friendship; but my heart is not of rock, and I fear that it will never recover itself."

" Your sensibility is excessive," said Tchang-fanjou; " but I have been too long fatiguing you with my conversation. I shall now take leave of you, and return another day to offer you my consolations."

" My heart is suffering cruelly," replied Sse Yeoupe; " I dare not detain you any longer. I shall see you another day, and receive your kind instructions." As he said these last words, Sse Yeoupe accompanied Tchangfanjou to the door, where they separated. The next morning he went to return him his visit; when Tchangfanjou renewed his representations. " My lord," said he, " whatever idea you may have formed to yourself of the talents of Miss Pe, you had not entered into any marriage contract with her. If her death prevented you from marrying another, it would be making of Miss Pe a second Soupou. I have lately heard that the governor has a daughter equally remarkable for merit and beauty; that he charged the prefect to offer her to you in marriage, my lord; but that you refused her in consequence of your previous engagements with Miss Pe. But now that you know that the latter is no more, you have no longer any reason to persist in your refusal. His highness knows that you honour me with your friendship,

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and he has commissioned me to speak to you again on the subject. You should not, my lord, keep to your former resolution."

"An extreme languor, a complete stupidity, have taken possession of my whole being," replied Sse Yeoupe; "and that to such a degree, that it is impossible for me to listen to any further proposals of marriage: a thousand obstacles prevent me from complying with the orders of his highness. I hope, my dear sir, that you will take the trouble of communicating to him my refusal."

Tchangfanjou essayed a hundred different ways to bring him to compliance, and Sse Yeoupe shewed equal obstinacy in refusing him. At length Tchangfanjou, having exhausted all his resources, saw himself obliged to carry his refusal to the governor, to whom he repeated, word for word, the conversation he had had with Sse Yeoupe. "It entirely depends upon him," said Yang, laughing. "I invite you to come to see me again: I shall myself think of some other means."

The bee and the butterfly grieve because they cannot
gather the perfume of flowers;
The swallow and the loriot would fain, at any price,
arrest the flight of spring.
But to the king of the East it belongs to make the flowers
blow:
Neither the rain nor the wind can prevent them from
budding.

Sse Yeoupe's refusal to marry the daughter of the governor, filled the heart of the latter with the keenest resentment. He speedily occupied himself in collecting difficult and confused causes, which he sent to Sse Yeoupe to judge. The latter sent them back

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to him completely unravelled. This was not what the governor hoped for. He annoyed him in every possible way, forcing him to revise his judgments, or reversing himself the decrees which he had given, or reviving causes which had been already judged. At other times he insisted upon Sse Yeoupe paying him money which he had never received, or requiring him to apprehend robbers of whom no traces could be found. He thus fatigued Sse Yeoupe with daily persecutions ; and when the business with which he overwhelmed him was despatched, he still reprimanded him, and never shewed him the least mark of kindness.

" All this," said Sse Yeoupe, " is manifestly caused by my objection to the marriage he proposed to me. He wishes to drive me to despair ; and I, who am in a subordinate situation to him, have no means of making head against him. Miss Pe is no more. I have not been able to discover any traces of Lo Mengli or his sister ; I am alone ; I have neither father, mother, wife, nor any other woman in my house. I set no value upon riches ; and shall I remain without any compensation, to lead the life of a beast of burden, merely through attachment to this scarf of black gauze, and for the hollow pleasure of seeing my name in the list of persons in place ? Besides, I have in my superior a dangerous adversary. As I am but a short time in office, he has not yet been able to find any sufficient grounds to attack me ; but if I should continue to exercise my function, he will, sooner or later, discover some trifling pretext for an accusation ; and then, if I wish to rid myself of him, I must exhaust all my resources. The best thing I can do is to send in

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immediately my resignation. By so doing those who surround us will see that it is this insupportable man that has forced me to take this step; and as to my profession, if I at some future time wish to resume it, the thing will not be difficult."

As soon as he had resolved on this measure, he despatched successively all the causes before his tribunal. He answered all the memorials that had been addressed to him, and then wrote a letter, which he sent by one of his officers to the prefect, to beg of him to make known his resignation to the three directors, as also to the intendants and other magistrates of the province. As he had no family, he took with him only Siaohi, and the servants who had accompanied him when he came to take possession of his office, and the baggage necessary for his journey; then, very early in the morning, he set off, telling his officers that the provincial judge had given him a commission relative to his function to execute, and forbidding them to follow him. He went out by the gate Tsiantang, with the intention of taking a boat to return to Kinling. But when he found himself outside the city, and on the borders of the lake, he made the following reflections. "I am travelling without any determined view," said he to himself. "When the prefect, and the two sub-prefects, shall hear of my departure, they will not fail of sending persons in pursuit of me. If I follow this route, they will infallibly overtake me; and it would be a great annoyance to me, to be obliged to return. I had better cross the river at Tsianting, and go round by Chanyin, which is near the grotto of the emperor Ju. I shall remain there for some days; and when

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they see that it is impossible to find me, they will necessarily let the business drop; and then I can safely resume my journey without fearing to meet with any obstacle."

Conformably to this plan, he took a little boat, and had himself rowed to the mouth of the river. From thence he continued his journey, slowly, on foot. He had not proceeded more than a mile *, when he perceived a great monastery, before the gate of which was a grove of pines and thuyas, which cast a pleasant shade about the place. Sse Yeoupe sat himself down upon a large stone, which was dry and clean. He had been some time reposing himself, when he saw pass by one of the soothsayers who offer up divination prayers. On examining this person, Sse Yeoupe perceived

A square hat soaked with the sweat of the wearer's brain,
A water green garment, through the holes of which his shoulders were seen,
Black spots here and there upon his face,
Two large tumours at each side of his neck,
A divining box rattling between his fingers,
A placard suspended without a clasp from his loins;
An exterior, in fine, that had nothing prepossessing,
But under which were talents capable of driving the genii to despair.

Sse Yeoupe paid no further attention to the soothsayer, whose appearance was so repulsive, and whose garments were so ragged; he had let him pass, when his eyes were attracted by the little placard, suspended to his loins, upon which was written, in seven characters, *hermit of gratitude;*

* The tenth of a league.

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divine instrument of prayer. At the sight of this, a thought instantly occurred to him. "I recollect," said he to himself, "that last year, when I quitted home, I met a man who borrowed my whip, in order to enable him to find his wife. This man told me, that he had been advised to do so by the *hermit of gratitude.* Can it be the same soothsayer who has just passed? When I was at the hamlet of Keouyoung, my intention was to go in search of this hermit. Shall I now let slip the occasion that offers itself?"

He immediately ordered one of his servants to go after the man, and engage him to come back. The hermit complied with the request, and approaching Sse Yeoupe, saluted him with his hand, sat down upon a stone, and asked him, "if he wished to have some prayers said."

"Yes," replied Sse Yeoupe, "that is my intention; but tell me, I pray you, master, have you fixed your residence in this place Or are you but lately arrived here?"

"I wander about in every direction, saying prayers," replied the hermit: "how could I have a fixed residence? I came here during the autumn of last year."

"And in what place were you last spring?" asked Sse Yeoupe.

"Last spring," said the hermit, "I was in the hamlet of Keouyoung, where I remained for six months."

Sse, convinced by this that it was the man he desired to see, was very much gratified by the circumstance, and said to him, "Master, whilst you were in the hamlet of Keouyoung, there was a

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man searching for his wife, who asked you to offer up some prayers for his success. You assured him that, if he went to the distance of forty miles, he would meet a horseman, whom if he asked for his whip, his wife would soon after be found. Do you ecollect this circumstance ?"

" How is it possible for me to recollect all the prayers that I offer up every day ?" replied the hermit. Then, after a moment's reflection, he continued—" Yes, yes, I have a confused recollection of it ; I remember that the trigramma of that day was that of *union ; union* means a *meeting ; union* means also a *marriage*. Thus every meeting is a kind of marriage. It was for this reason that I told him to pursue his researches ; but I know not if he found his wife. How did you come to the knowledge of the circumstance ?"

" The person whom the man met was myself," replied Sse Yeoupe. " In order to give me a substitute for my whip, he climbed up a large willow-tree to break off a branch, when he saw his wife, who had been carried away by some men, and brought into a neighbouring convent ; it was in this way that he recovered her. Your prayers have something divine in them, and you have justified the title that you bear."

" All that," replied the hermit, " is owing to four holy personages, Fouhi, Wenwang, Tcheoukoung, and Confucius *, who have invented the admirable

* Fouhi was the founder of the Chinese monarchy. Wenwang and Tcheoukoung were two princes of the dynasty of Tcheou, who lived twelve centuries before Jesus Christ. Confucius put in order the maxims left by these holy personages, and has composed with them an almost unintelligible book, entitled *Yiking*. The basis of this work con-

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art of combinations. What merit have I then? All that I know is, to reason and decide conformably to the rules."

"But that is precisely the difficulty," replied Sse Yeoupe. "Now, master," he continued, "I should wish you to offer up a prayer for me."

The hermit presented his divining box to Sse Yeoupe, saying: "Now seek for the foundations of truth."

Sse Yeoupe took the box, pointed it towards heaven, then to the earth, and, after repeating an internal prayer, returned it to the hermit. The latter took it in his hand, shook it several times in various directions, all the while muttering between his teeth some inarticulate sounds, and then threw out the rods. There were three lines outside, three lines inside, and several other figures. The hermit, having finished reciting his formula, exclaimed—"What a singular circumstance! We were just now speaking of the trigramma of *union;* and behold, it is exactly that that presents itself. I know not, sir, in what sense it may relate to you."

"There is a marriage in question," replied Sse Yeoupe.

"Well!" said the hermit, "you recollect that I

sists in trigrammas, or figures of three lines, whose various combinations express all the actions of nature, physical and intellectual. To foresee future events, it is not necessary to be invested with supernatural faculties: it is sufficient to know the sense of these figures, and of the aspects which they assume with regard to each other: these figures are traced by throwing little rods from a wooden case, as dice are thrown from a box. This species of *Thabdomancy* requires neither superior talents, nor the intervention of spirits: it is, in the opinion of those who believe in it, a purely natural operation; to perform which, it is only necessary to learn how to interpret the results.

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said, a short time ago, that *union* meant 'both *meeting* and *marriage*. The marriage in question has already taken root. There cannot be a more fortunate destiny. You see it before your eyes; you have only to speak your wishes, no further effort on your part will be necessary. The two figures, inside and outside, denote a particularity singularly auspicious; by one marriage you will obtain two wives."

Sse Yeoupe began to laugh. "It is possible to have two wives, one after the other," said he; "but how am I to obtain two at the same time, and by one marriage?"

"The two figures are opposite to each other, face to face," replied the hermit. "They have formed themselves into that position. If one of the wives were to precede the other, that would not be an extraordinary circumstance."

"But if I am to obtain them both by one marriage, they must be two sisters, who may be married in the same house."

"One of the figures appertains to *heaven*, the other is connected with the *wind;* thus, though they denote two sisters, yet one of the figures being to the north, and the other to the south, it follows that the persons implied are not sisters by birth*."

"Master," said Sse Yeoupe, "to be sincere with you, for the last two years I have been thinking of marriage, and have cast my eyes upon two girls of different families: these may be the *north*

* There is here an *equivoque* which will tell only in Chinese, because in that language the words *brothers* and *sisters* are applied to cousins or other relations.

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and *south* of which you spoke; but now one of these persons is unfortunately no more, and I know not what has become of the second: if there be others that should wish to unite themselves to me, I shall never be able to find one to my liking. So you see I have no hope during this life to enter into the nuptial chamber. It is very easy for you to speak to me thus; but I fear, master, that you are amusing yourself at my expense."

"My profession is to recite divination-prayers; why then should I occupy myself in practising silly jests? I should not dare to tell you anything that did not result from the operation; but if you wish, I shall make to disappear that which has appeared."

Sse Yeoupe replied, laughing—"Behold me alone in this place: I see no vestige of what I am pursuing. Where should I go to? Since you say the thing is before my eyes, be kind enough to tell me in what direction I am to look for it."

The hermit stretched forth his hand, and described a circle.

"Here is a very extraordinary thing," said he. "The two ladies are in the country of Kinling; but to find them, you must cross the river of Tsiantang, and go to Chanyin, near to the grotto of the emperor Ju. It is there that, by continuing your researches, you will infallibly meet them within the space of half a month.

"That is still more impossible," exclaimed Sse Yeoupe. I may, according to my former plan, go in search of these persons, and make proposals of marriage to them, if their merit and beauty be

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really remarkable; but how is it possible that the affair should ever be concluded, if one party is in one place, and the other in a different one?"

"The prognostication of the trigrammas is extremely favourable," answered the hermit. "The two ladies are extremely beautiful; they are, in fine, exactly as you would wish them. So, sir, do not miss the opportunity. If you let such a connexion escape you, you will never again meet with the like."

"Notwithstanding all you have said, if I set out and cross the river, it will be of no use, for I know no one in that country; where am I to pursue my researches?"

"*Union* signifies *meeting*," replied the hermit. "You will have no occasion to make any researches. The meeting will take place without your seeking it."

"In what rank is the family?" asked Sse Yeoupe.

"This also offers a singularity. At this very moment, the family is of an ordinary rank; but when the time shall arrive for concluding the marriage, it will be of a very noble and elevated rank."

"Your present predictions contain things as opposed to each other as is the lance to the shield: may you not have committed some error?"

"I have already told you, that I am not one of the genii; my business is only to prophecy after the rules of reason *. You will yourself be convinced of their excellence when you shall see that

* The reason here alluded to is the theory, formed by the ancient Chinese, relative to natural actions in their conformity with the views of heaven.

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the effects correspond to them. I myself know nothing more at this moment."

"I recollect that, in the prediction which you gave the man who was looking for his wife, you described even the colour of my garments. Can you also make known to me, before I leave this, the appearance of the person I am to meet?"

The hermit drew another circle with his hand. "At noon, on the third day of the cycle, after leaving this, you will meet a respectable old man, with a noble countenance, and clothed in a white linen garment. He will be the person in question. The advantages of this connexion are such that you might traverse the whole empire and not meet another equal to it. Be very careful, sir, not to miss it! If you do, you shall repent when too late."

"Tell me some other thing that your operation indicates," said Sse Yeoupe.

"My prophetic operations are performed one at a time only. They cannot serve two ends. If you wish to consult me upon some other subject, you must throw the chances a second time."

"Be it so," replied Sse Yeoupe; "let us perform a new operation." And he began saying another prayer. The hermit got ready his figures, and repeated his prophetic formula. The trigramma that came up was the fifty-fifth. "This figure," said he, "denotes literary illustration: what is it you wish to know?"

"I wish to know if I shall be restored to the rank I had obtained," said Sse Yeoupe.

"That rank is not lost," replied the hermit.

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"There is therefore no necessity to restore you to it."

"Lost it is," said Sse Yeoupe.

"It is not, it is not, I tell you!"

"Tell me, I pray you, what this rank may be," said Sse Yeoupe.

"Success at the principal examination is not worth the trouble of talking about," replied the hermit: "but the figure that denotes literary illustration, most usually identifies itself with the degree of academician of the great college."

Sse Yeoupe burst into a fit of laughter. "Master," he cried, "your operation is most incontestibly erroneous. I had a place in the magistracy, which I have resigned; therefore my rank is lost. If it were restored to me, that would not make me an academician; and if I should be named academician. I should be in a different rank from that which I have lost."

The hermit drew another circle with his hand. "It is certainly the rank of doctor of the academy," said he; "I have not made any miscalculation, and I should sooner be inclined to think that the place in the magistracy was conferred on you through some mistake."

Sse Yeoupe, with the air of a person who is doubtful whether he should put confidence in what has been told him, said—"Well, I have given you a great deal of trouble!" And he ordered one of his servants to give the hermit half an ounce of silver * for his prophetic operations. The hermit took it, and disappeared in an instant.

* Three francs and seveny-five centimes.

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The world is a machine regulated beforehand:
The men of the age are unacquainted with its springs;
But at the winding up of events
Felicity or unhappiness will make them known.

"The recollection of this prophetic operation was mingled, in Sse Yeoupe's mind, with doubt and confidence; and as the result it pointed at agreed with his first intention, which was to cross the river, he took a little boat, and had himself landed upon the other bank of the Tsiantang, in order to proceed towards Chanyin. Amongst the results of this new journey will be seen that mirror, the brilliancy of which cannot be tarnished; the polished jasper, and the sacred mountain, which will facilitate the access to the nuptial bed.

Without the aid of destiny, a journey of a thousand miles would be useless;
With its succour the object of search is found at arm's-length.
Fate is a wilful and capricious child
Who has a thousand bye ways for attaining his object.

The next chapter will make known if Sse Yeoupe did really meet the personage of whom he went in search.

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CHAPTER XVIII.

MEETING OF A SON-IN-LAW DURING AN EXCURSION IN THE MIDST OF THE MOUNTAINS AND LAKES.

"Everything is in the end cleared up, and men of congenial dispositions meet. But in the bosom of sorrow how is it possible to speak of the nuptial mirror? Deprived of the harmony of the lute and guitar, of what importance is the difference of perfume between the laseras* and the vanilla? To a connoisseur the smell of salt fish is not fetid. What proof of penetration would there be in telling the hour when the clock strikes? Peyo really met with a generous steed. He discovered him at a glance amongst a number of inferior ones."

SINCE Sse Yeoupe's meeting with the hermit, the prophetic operations he had seen him perform, and the precise explanations he had given him, failed not to inspire him with some confidence, and he consequently without further hesitation directed his course towards the west. But fearing to be followed, he concealed his real name, and took that of Lieou (willow) in remembrance of the verses which Miss Pe had written upon the vernal willows. He was therefore known to the persons he met in his journey, except as the bachelor Lieou.

In a few days he arrived at Chanyin, where the country offered prospects of the most imposing and truly rural beauty. Through a thousand vallies ran streams that seemed to rival one with the other. Admirable points of view succeeded each other without end and without interruption. Sse Yeoupe was very much struck by this spectacle; and to enjoy it more at his leisure, he went to lodge in an old monastery called *The Temple of the Emperor Ju.* From thence he set out every morning and evening

* The most beautiful species of mushroom.

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upon his rural excursions. It happened that the counsellor of state Pe, on his return from visiting the grotto of Ju, came to lodge in the same convent. Both one day went out after breakfast, to enjoy the surrounding prospects, when they unexpectedly met. Sse Yeoupe, on turning his head, saw an old man with a cap of linen-cloth on his head, and clothed in one of those white linen mantles worn by the members of religious communities. His air announced a person of distinguished qualities, and far above the ordinary race of men. Sse Yeoupe, to whom occurred at the moment the prediction of the hermit of gratitude, was so affected by the sight of this personage, that he remained motionless, without being able to move forward a single step. Pe, on his side, remarked that Sse Yeoupe had, joined to the appearance of youth, a prepossessing exterior, and all the signs of a person of eminent merit. The sight of the young man gave him great pleasure; and as he perceived that Sse Yeoupe had stopped to look at him, he himself remained stationary. Both kept their eyes fixed on each other, and, after mutual salutations, they still continued to regard each other without being able to move away. At length Pe began to laugh. "My dear sir," said he, "you are here alone, enjoying the pleasures of a walk; to wander amidst lakes and mountains is the recreation of great geniuses."

Sse Yeoupe replied, smiling—"I do not aspire to the quality of a man of genius: I confine myself to following the footsteps of your lordship."

Pe saw upon the side of the road several lofty pines, which offered an agreeable shade. "We are

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country folks, inhabitants of the mountains and borders of the lakes; why should we not sit down and converse for a moment at the foot of these pines?"

"There is nothing I desire more," replied Sse Yeoupe; "but I fear I shall make but a poor return to your obliging proposition."

They both then walked towards the pines, and made choice of two large stones to sit upon. Sse Yeoupe commenced the conversation. "Will your lordship," said he, "permit me to ask you your name, that of your country, and the motive that has led you here?"

"My name is Hoangfou," replied Pe, "my country is Kinling; I have come here to admire the beauties of these mountains, and visit the grotto of Ju. And you, my dear sir, how do you call yourself? What business has brought you here? By your accent I should take you to be my countryman."

"My family name is Lieou," said Sse. "It is likewise a taste for the view of lakes and mountains that has brought me here. I am in fact from Kinling, though I have not had the honour of making your acquaintance in my native town. It is a piece of good fortune for me to have the advantage of seeing you here, at a moment when I had least reason to expect it."

"I am an old man, of no use to the world, and the recreation which I take here, in the midst of the mountains, cannot be blamed. But you, Mr Lieou, who appear made to mount the steed of gold, or to sit in the hall of jasper*, how happens it that you

* It has been already stated that these two figurative expressions denote the supreme college or the grand academy.

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have been able to come here on a journey of pleasure?"

"I have read," replied Sse Yeoupe, "that the greatest of our historians * had travelled over the whole empire, visited the most celebrated mountains and the noblest rivers, and by that means had furnished himself with an ample provision of images and recollections, whereby he was enabled to mingle, in his animated and brilliant style, all the wonders of our days with those of antiquity: the same thing may now he said of your lordship. As for me, who have advanced but a short way in my studies, I have some little inkling of the taste to which you allude; but I am not, and I blush to say it, the man you suppose me."

"Great views belong only to superior talents," observed Pe, "and it does not suit an old man like me, enfeebled by age, to entertain such. But a young man, such as you, has duties to fulfil: are you alone in the world, that you should consider yourself exempted from these duties?"

"I have had the misfortune to lose my father and mother; I am an orphan, and unmarried. This it is that permits me to follow my own inclinations. I do not, however, receive with the less respect the advice you have been good enough to give me; and I am infinitely indebted to your frankness."

"Ah! is such the case?" said Pe.

"Permit me, my lord," interrupted Sse Yeoupe, "to inquire where your mansion is situated at Kin-

* *The great historian* is the title given to the celebrated Ssemathsian, whom some missionaries have named *The Herodotus of China.*

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ling, that on my return I may make it my duty to call on you."

"I live in the country at a village called Kinchi, sixty or seventy miles* from the town."

"Ah! you reside in the village of Kinchi; do you happen to know then Pe Thaïhiouan, who is in the department of the public works?" asked Sse Yeoupe.

At this question Pe could not prevent himself from smiling internally. "There is the question!" thought he. "Can this man be a second Tchaotsi-anli? Pe Thaïhiouan," continued he, "is one of my relations, and I consequently know him: but, Mr Lieou, since you ask after him, you must of course be acquainted with him."

"I am not acquainted with him, but I highly respect his excellent character, and that is the reason that I inquire about him."

"My relation Pe has a good deal of haughtiness and reserve in his character. How has he been able to gain your affection?" asked Pe.

"A vulgar man is never reserved, and haughtiness would sit very ill upon him who has no talents; but both one and the other become a man of letters. The affection I have for him is therefore well founded," replied Sse Yeoupe. "His lordship, however, in my opinion, has one defect."

"What defect?" asked Pe.

"His judgment is not very sound, and he allows himself sometimes to be duped by knaves," said Sse Yeoupe.

"True," said Pe, "I have more than once made

* Six or seven leagues.

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the same remark; but, Mr Lieou, since you are not personally acquainted with him, how do you come to know him so well?"

"The lord Pe had a daughter, who for merit and beauty has never had an equal. You should know that, my lord, since you are related to him."

"Yes, I know something about it," replied Pe.

"Well, having such a daughter, he ought naturally to have occupied himself in choosing a son-in-law; but he sought for one only amongst rich young men devoid of merit, and paid not the slightest attention to men of talent who were within his view. This is what makes me say that he is not possessed of a sound judgment."

"Have you been to see my relation, Mr Lieou?" asked Pe.

"I called at his house, but could not see him," answered Sse Yeoupe.

"Well, Mr Lieou, do not form too unfavourable an opinion of my relation. Chance has not been his friend, since he has not met you; had he known you, he would not have failed to recognise in you the accomplishments of Tseutou."

"I by no means merit this praise," said Sse Yeoupe; "but assuredly the person whom he invited to his house was not an accomplished man."

These words gave birth to a reflection in Pe's mind. "The affairs of this world have a singular march," thought he. "I committed an oversight with regard to Tchangfanjou, and every one knows it; and when I have fixed my choice upon Sse Yeoupe, no one can tell me where he is. Upon this occasion it may truly be said, 'that good news goes not outside the door, while bad travels a thousand

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miles off.'" Then, addressing Sse Yeoupe, he said, "Did you know at the college of Kinling a student named Sse Yeoupe, Mr Lieou?"

This question astonished Sse Yeoupe a little. "Why does he put such a question to me?" said he to himself. "Sse Yeoupe and I were fellow-students; he is one of my best friends—why does your lordship inquire after him?"

"Permit me to ask you another question," said Pe. "Tell me, I pray you, what degree of talent has this Sse Yeoupe?"

"He has not more than I have," replied Sse Yeoupe, smiling.

"One may judge favourably of him, if he deserve to be compared to you," replied Pe. "My relation told me that this young Mr Sse was the person to whom he had determined to give his daughter, and that all others had disappeared like benumbed flies or butterflies, which the hurricane had swept away. Will you now say that his judgment was not sound?"

On hearing these words Sse Yeoupe felt a mingled sensation of surprise and joy that tempered his unutterable regret. "What," he exclaimed, "I have then been guilty of most inexcusable indiscretion!"

After this conversation, they talked of the beauty of the surrounding country. They remained sitting in the same place till the approach of night, when they arose, and walked back to the monastery, where they separated.

The glances of two fine eyes never fatigue;
A conversation between two upright hearts is prolonged without effort.

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What is to be seen beyond these willows, over the mountains?
Some birds, which the twilight calls from the summit of the clouds.

On returning to his room, Sse Yeoupe gave himself up to his reflections. "The lord Pe," said he, "had then given me a place in his breast. Had I unceremoniously presented myself to him, and solicited a connexion with his family, I should not have met with a refusal. The idea of going to ask Gou Touïan to intercede for me, was nothing more than a desire of acquiring consideration—a desire that has made me lose months and years, and has been the cause of my returning too late, when sorrow and resentment have conducted Miss Pe to the nine fountains*. After such a misfortune, though you should die of grief, Sse Yeoupe, yet it would not atone for your crime; but I thought not at first of this vain glory: it was Lo Mengli, by his reiterated exhortations, who made me think it my duty to seek it. The exhortations of Lo Mengli, sprung from a good motive," he continued. "He assured me that, once in station, all things would become easy to me. Who could have foreseen that Miss Pe would have been so soon snatched away, and that he himself would have disappeared without leaving any trace behind? No, certainly, my marriage is not written in the book of destiny: hence all these disappointments and woes. Only some days ago that hermit told me that, on coming here, I should meet some one; and in fact I have met this old man. He even told me the day of the calendar, and it is precisely to-day, the third of the

* In European phrase, *the banks of the Styx*.

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cycle. The more I think of this, the more inconceivable it appears to me. Can the success of my marriage depend in any way upon this old man?"

Sse Yeoupe passed the whole of the night amidst a confusion of ideas and reflections. The next morning he hastened to write a visiting card in a respectful form, and called upon Pe. The latter detained him; they payed their tribute to antiquity, and talked of literature cup in hand. In this manner they spent the whole of the day, and did not separate till evening.

Pe, in his turn, came to visit Sse Yeoupe, who kept him to partake of a collation. From this moment they were continually together, either composing, or enjoying the sight of the flowers, and the aspect of the waters. Their dispositions were congenial, and their hearts in perfect accord. They were inseparable during the entire of the day. "They boast of Sse Yeoupe's talents," said Pe to himself, "but I have not seen his person. I have now passed several days with Mr Lieou. I have been able to study profoundly his character; he has very eminent talents, and most varied acquirements; his exterior is agreeable, and his countenance denotes a man of distinction. In the two capitals, and in all the provinces I have travelled through, I have passed in review a great many young men, but I never met one who united so many qualities as Mr Lieou; and, moreover, he is not yet married. If I let slip this occasion, he would be justified in accusing me of unsoundness of judgment. There is but one difficulty: if I conclude only the marriage of Houngiu, my niece Mengli will ask me where she shall be able to find

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a husband equally worthy of her; and she and her mother will complain that my affection has been measured according to the degree of relationship. If, on the contrary, I speak first of Mengli, and leave to another time my search after a husband for Houngiu, it will be making a sacrifice of my personal sentiments. Both cousins possess equal talents and equal beauty. Their characters are in perfect harmony. The best thing that can be done is to give them both in marriage to young Lieou, and by this means all our affairs will be terminated. What a happy event! This young man, from what I see, possesses talents that will one day conduct him to the academical gardens. Besides, reputation is not what occupies me at present. No one but he will suit me for this marriage."

He accordingly addressed himself to Sse Yeoupe, and said, " I have something to say, which I ought naturally to engage some one else to speak to you about. But you and I are above the common customs of the world; I have a great desire to open my mind directly to you: may I do so, my dear sir?"

" What instructions have you to give me? I can receive them only with respect," replied Sse Yeoupe.

" Nothing more than what I am going to tell you. I have reflected often, Mr Lieou, upon what you told me the other day, that Pe Thaïhiouan had been, in various and distant places, seeking for a son-in-law, and had neglected observing those deserving persons who were in his neighbourhood. It is my opinion that you were perfectly right. Now I also have a daughter, and moreover a niece. I will not permit myself to represent them to you as accomplished persons; but there is very little

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difference between them and the daughter of Pe Thaïhiouan. Now I find in you a young man full of merit, a scholar who has not his equal in the empire; and, as it fortunately happens, you are unmarried. If I did not express the desire of drawing together the bonds of marriage* with you, and if hereafter I should find it impossible to meet with a second son-in-law equal to you, what raillery should I not have to undergo from those who ridicule Pe Thaïhiouan! Mr Lieou, do you find yourself inclined like me towards this connexion?"

When Sse Yeoupe heard Pe talk to him of the double marriage of his daughter and his niece, and of those circumstances which agreed so perfectly, and without a single title of difference with the predictions of the hermit, he felt confounded with surprise. However, he hastened to reply—"Let not your lordship regard as impolite the language I shall make use of in the first moment of extreme emotion. What! it is with you that such a project takes its origin. It is you who are willing to confer the honour of your alliance upon a poor student like me! How can I have deserved such a favour? I have however a scruple upon my heart, and I do not know if I ought to permit myself to make it known to you."

"Why not?" said Pe. "When friends are together, they should explain themselves to each other with the most entire candour."

"It is true that I have yet no establishment," said Sse Yeoupe; "and yet I had made a proposal of marriage to two girls. One of them is like a broken lute: she has seen the nine fountains. The

* Literally *the tissue of silk.*

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other has fled to escape persecution, and I have been able to get no information respecting her. As to her who is no more, though it is not in my power to restore to her the soul she has been deprived of, yet the fidelity I vowed to her requires that I should never marry another. And as to the second who is living, if the lost pearl should be found, I fear that her return would prove an obstacle to the offer you make me. Such are the sentiments that animate me. Deign, my lord, to teach me how to regulate them."

"In announcing your intention not to marry, because she whom you wished to make your wife is no more, you hold the language of a faithful and strongly-attached heart. But you are young, Mr Lieou; and you would reflect upon what the consequences of that resolution may be, if no barrier be opposed to the impetuosity of the passions. If the lost pearl be restored to you, it is but just that you should fulfil your engagements. But should she never come back, ought you on that account to devote yourself to celibacy?"

"Your advice is so full of wisdom, that I must needs conform myself to it respectfully. But devoid of merit and talent as I am, I fear that the choice you make of me will bring but little honour to the threshold of your house."

"For a poor house, like mine, it is an instance of singular good fortune, to connect itself with a sage like you," replied Pe.

"I must then accept the mark of goodness with which you deign to honour me. But how are the necessary arrangements to be made?"

"A promise once given endures for the remainder

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of life; and as to the acts and other usual preliminaries, all shall be in readiness when the day of marriage arrives."

Both were equally satisfied at having concluded this engagement. They remained together three or four days more, to enjoy the pleasures of the country. Pe then was the first to express a wish to depart. "I am now a long while from home," said he; "I must return to-morrow. When shall you think of returning, Mr Lieou?"

"I have nothing to detain me here," replied Sse Yeoupe: "I shall set out soon after the departure of your lordship. We shall not be separated more than fifteen days. I shall go and ask for you in the village where you live."

"At the appointed time the house will be swept, and every thing put in order to receive you," said Pe. Thus finished their conversation, and the next morning Pe took leave and departed.

The departure of Pe left Sse Yeoupe to his own reflections. "There is something really supernatural in the predictions of this hermit. Every word of what he announced to me has been verified. But I cannot explain to myself what he meant relative to my promotion, when he assured me that the degree of academician had not been taken from me."

He passed a few days more in wandering over the country; he then recollected that it was time for him to resume his journey; and, imagining that he should not now be recognised, he ordered a servant to hire him a boat, and he returned by the same road he came, again crossing the river Tsiantang.

Now it must be known that when governor Yang

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had at various times endeavoured to embarrass and perplex Sse Yeoupe, he had no other object in view than to oblige him to consent to the proposal of marriage that he had made him. However, Sse Yeoupe took, of his own accord, the resolution to resign, and remove to a distance. When the prefect, and the sub-prefect, came to inform him of this event, he was a little troubled, and ordered these magistrates to send their people in every direction in pursuit of the fugitive; but in vain—they could find no traces of him. The prefect and sub-prefect returned to give an account of their ill success. This disappointment made him reflect. "Sse Yeoupe is under my jurisdiction," thought he; "but during the very short time he has been in office, he has committed no errors in the exercise of his functions. Although it does not appear that I have obliged him to resign, yet in fact I am the cause of his resignation. This, the intendant and judge of the province know very well; and when Sse Fanghoei, who is at court, shall be informed of it, his resentment will, no doubt, be excited against me. This is altogether an awkward business."

He was occupied with these ideas, when the gazette was brought to him. The governor opened it; and the first paragraph that met his view was a declaration from the minister of the household, acknowledging an error which he had made; which declaration was accompanied by an imperial decree to the following effect;—that Sse Yeoupe having obtained the first place at the second examination for the degree of doctor, he should have

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been nominated to one of the posts appertaining to the court, instead of being sent as a judge into Tchekiang. Such conduct deserved exemplary chastisement; but as the minister had himself recognised his error, he merited thereby some indulgence. In consequence, Sse Yeoupe was to be nominated to the place he had merited, and another named to fill the office of judge in Tchekiang.

Sse Yeoupe would, in fact, have been designated to occupy one of the posts appertaining to the court, had not some of the grandees, jealous of his elevation, obliged the ministers of the household to appoint him a judge in Tchekiang; but afterwards the members of the grand college refused to allow the regulations to be thus infringed. Two persons, they said, had been chosen to receive the title of academician, and there was no reason why one of them should be sent to fill a situation in the magistracy. They even wished to present a public memorial on the subject, and bring to trial the members belonging to the ministry of the household, for prevarication and infraction of the laws. The minister of the household, becoming alarmed, had no other resource left than to acknowledge his error, and make a declaration, the effect of which was the decree above mentioned.

The restoration of Sse Yeoupe to the degree of doctor of the grand academy was by no means agreeable to governor Yang. He feared that Sse Yeoupe would treasure up in his heart a vengeful feeling against him, and that, on his return to court, he might speak of him in a manner not at all to his

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advantage. He therefore sent out other persons in search of him, and left no effort untried to discover him.

It happened one day, that the prefect had invited a party to meet him on the western lake. His company not having yet arrived, this magistrate was alone in his bark, looking out of the window. It was the very day that Sse Yeoupe, after crossing the river, had embarked upon the lake in a little boat which was going from the south to the north. As he passed close to the prefect's large bark, he was recognised by that magistrate's attendants, who cried out, as they pointed to him, "There is the lord Sse!"

The prefect raised his head, and at the first glance recognised Sse Yeoupe; he instantly ordered the lord Sse's boat to be stopped, and came himself to the end of his bark to receive him. The guards soon overtook Sse Yeoupe's little boat, and brought it underneath the prow of the bark. Sse Yeoupe, seeing himself thus discovered by the prefect, and no means of escape offering, was obliged to ascend the magistrate's bark. The prefect received him very politely. "My lord Sse," said he, "why did you go away without taking leave of us? In how many places have I sent to look for you!

"My indolent and inert disposition, which renders me very unfit for business," replied Sse Yeoupe, "was the cause of my so precipitately resigning, as I wished to avoid committing those faults which would have inevitably occurred, had I continued in the administration of justice. Such a proceeding was, I think, just and reasonable;

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but have you really, Mr Prefect, given yourself the trouble of thinking of me ?"

The prefect immediately invited Sse Yeoupe to pass into the cabin of his bark: he saluted him, and having ordered an arm-chair to be placed at the upper end, he engaged his guest to sit in it. Sse Yeoupe refused, and wished to take his seat to the east or to the west; but the prefect, addressing him, said—" My lord, you ought naturally to sit in the place of honour; to refuse it, would be shewing too much humility upon your part."

" Why do you change your manner of speaking to me?" asked Sse Yeoupe. " Why should I not remain in my place, and why should you give up yours?"

" A doctor of the grand academy has his prerogatives, which are superior to those of a functionary such as I am," replied the prefect. " I cannot now permit myself to act towards you in the same manner as formerly."

On hearing this, Sse Yeoupe in the greatest astonishment exclaimed—" Since I have resigned my office, I am now without employment; what do you mean by talking to me of the grand academy?"

" It appears, my lord, that you have not as yet seen the gazette. The minister of the household committed a mistake in appointing your excellency to a place in the magistracy; but your academy resisted this infraction of the regulations, and wished to bring the point to a public trial, till the minister, thus hotly pressed, resolved to make a declaration acknowledging his error. There has been already an imperial decree, re-establishing things as they

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ought to be. Respect and joy, my lord! Allow me to offer you my felicitations."

This intelligence caused great joy and surprise to the heart of Sse Yeoupe. "What a supernatural character have these predictions of the hermit had!" said he to himself.

Both sat down, and continued to converse for some time, after having taken tea. Sse Yeoupe then wished to get up and go away, but the prefect would not consent to this. "Since your excellency's departure," said he, "the governor has been very much annoyed. He was very angry with me for not having detained you. Yesterday he told the sub-prefects and me to cause you to be sought for in every direction. Now that I have met you, I could not take upon myself to let you go away so easily."

He immediately ordered the bark to be loosened from its moorings, and conveyed Sse Yeoupe to the monastery of Tchaoking, where he requested him to remain in the hall of meditations. He picked out four of his guards to accompany him, and then returned to his bark, to entertain his company.

In the mean time, the news of Sse Yeoupe's reappearance had been communicated to the authorities. The two sub-prefects were the first to come, followed by all the subordinate officers of the prefecture, to visit Sse Yeoupe. The next morning, the intendants and the magistrates came to pay their homage; and a short time after, the governor Yang came to visit him. Immediately after the salutations, he began to excuse himself; he then

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ordered a collation to be prepared upon the lake, and shewed himself extremely attentive and eager to please. Sse Yeoupe conducted himself towards him as if he had still been under his jurisdiction, and evinced neither pride nor resentment.

Officers are divided into high and low :
With regard to magistrates, it is their functions that must be looked to.
It is really like a bucket in a well,
One is unexpectedly now at the bottom, then at the top.

During this period, Tchangfanjou, instead of returning home, had prolonged his stay on the borders of the lake. When he heard speak of the elevation of Sse Yeoupe, he could not help thinking of what he had done. " What !" said he to himself, " a governor who, but a short time ago, treated him so ill, now gives him such a reception. It may be very truly said, that men's manners change according to situations. And you, good Tchang, will you be foolish enough to make an enemy of him ? During the intercourse I have had with him, he has never done me any harm. The only thing between us is this little affair relative to Miss Pe. But now that there no longer exists any hope for me, why should I not again direct his views towards her, and thereby make a friend of him ? If I restore Miss Pe to him, he will be enraptured ; and I must certainly benefit by a friendship with a doctor of the grand academy."

Being resolved upon this point, he went to pay a visit to Sse Yeoupe. After the usual salutations,

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Tchangfanjou, addressing him, said—"Do you know, my lord, what is the motive of my visit to-day?"

"I cannot tell," replied Sse Yeoupe.

"I come, my lord, to ask your pardon, and to felicitate you," replied Tchangfanjou.

"What necessity is there for pardon between friends who have never injured each other? And as to my promotion, an office is but an office, be it at the court or in the provinces; therefore there is no cause for felicitation."

"It is not upon that account I come to congratulate you; it is upon another subject that will give you the greatest joy."

"I hope then that you will communicate it to me," said Sse Yeoupe.

"The intelligence that I gave you the other day of Miss Pe's death was false; and the fault I am come to ask pardon for is, to have told it to you. Are you not charmed by what I now tell you? That is my reason for congratulating you."

"How!" exclaimed Sse Yeoupe, enraptured.

"The truth is, that she is not yet dead," replied Tchangfanjou, laughing. "What I told you was only in jest."

"And what could have been the motive of such a jest?" cried Sse Yeoupe, still surprised, but not less satisfied.

"The motive was," replied Tchangfanjou, "that the governor, wishing that you should marry his daughter, and knowing that you were enamoured of Miss Pe, had given me the humiliating mission

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to tell you that falsehood, and put an end to your hopes with regard to her."

On hearing this account, which confirmed the truth of what he had before heard, Sse Yeoupe's joy was complete : giving way to it, he burst into a fit of laughter, and said—" Well, my dear sir, since such is the case, you have indeed to reproach yourself with a fault, and I have real cause for satisfaction."

" Permit me," said Tchangfanjou, " to become your go-between : let the service I shall render you, in some degree, efface my fault."

" Already," replied Sse Yeoupe, " my father and Gou Touïan have written upon the subject. Your intervention, my dear sir, could not fail to be very useful ; but can I allow myself to give you that trouble ?"

" A man of talent, and a perfect beauty, are two such rare objects in the world, that there will be some glory in bringing them together : how can you call it trouble ?"

" Since you allow me to hope for so great a mark of complaisance from you, I shall to-morrow call upon you to solicit it," said Sse Yeoupe.

" A word once uttered, four horses cannot hold it back," said Tchangfanjou. " You agree with me that I had best set off to-morrow. You are, my lord, an inmate of the hall of jasper ; your illustrious father and Gou Touïan have each written. The first word will conclude the affair ; you had need only follow me, and enjoy the happiness of placing the perfumed tapers in the nuptial chamber."

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"If you execute what you have the kindness to promise me, my gratitude shall not be trifling: it shall be my duty to acknowledge such a service," said Sse Yeoupe.

Here the conversation ended. Tchangfanjou took leave, and went away. Sse Yeoupe remained alone, occupied with his own thoughts. "Since Miss Pe exists," thought he, "there are many chances still that our marriage shall take place. But I have recently entered into an engagement with Hoangfou: how can I break off this connexion? The lord Hoangfou is a man of noble character, and full of goodness. He has acted towards me in the kindest possible manner; can I be ungrateful to him? If he had but one wife to offer me, probably the two affairs might be accomplished together; but Hoangfou has already two young girls: what proposition can I make him? The predictions of the hermit had at first disposed me to accept of his offers. His words have hitherto been verified to the letter: Will it be otherwise with regard to my marriage? In exhorting me to accept, did he forsee that my union with Miss Pe would never take place? The lord Hoangfou is an extremely sincere and frank-hearted man," he continued. "When we had that conversation together, he told me, that when the time came for concluding, we should conform ourselves to circumstances. The best thing I can do, is to write him a letter, under my former name of Lieou, and inform him in detail of all the circumstances of my situation, and ask his advice as to what I must do. Who knows but he may suggest some expedient to me?"

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Having resolved to act thus, he immediately wrote the letter. The next morning he went to see Tchangfanjou, and only said that he had a friendly service to ask of him, which was, to deliver a letter to Hoangfou, an inhabitant of the village of Kinchi. Tchangfanjou willingly took charge of it, and immediately set out. Some time after, Sse Yeoupe took the road to Kinling, and was accompanied a part of the way by several magistrates of Tchekiang.

The butterfly that wanders about, is always a butterfly,
But the bush is not the dead stag, nor the stag a bush.
He who seeks to foresee what is to happen,
Let him follow gently a single path to the end.

We shall here leave Sse Yeoupe, following the steps of Tchangfanjou. In the mean time, the two young ladies, Pe and Lo, had passed all their days and evenings, since the departure of Pe, in studying literature and writing verses, which was their favourite amusement. One day, the porter brought two letters: one was from Dr Gou, and the other from the inspector-general Sse. When Pe was at home, his daughter was in the habit of opening and reading all letters; she therefore unfolded the two that had been brought her, and read them conjointly with Miss Lo. The letter of the inspector-general Sse was conceived in the following terms:

"Your old brother Sse Youan has the honour to offer you his respects, his compliments, and his wishes.

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" *Private Communication.*

" Since your glorious return, an entire year has passed away without my having had the honour of seeing you. I imagine that in the noble retreat which you inhabit in the midst of the mountains of the east, having nothing to occupy you but wine and poetry, you are surrounded by all sorts of felicities. As for me, even in the midst of the affairs which the service of the state imposes on me, I have always present to my thought your example, which is to me a source of unutterable confusion.

" My nephew Yeoupe, first inscribed amongst the candidates of your country, from whom I had been hitherto separated, presented himself to me last year, when I was complaining of having no children. I have kept him, and adopted him for my son. Chance has constantly favoured him, and he has been recently appointed judge in the province of Tchekiang; but though he has attained the age of manhood, he is not yet married.

" The young lady your daughter, in the profound retreat in which she lives, is far above all the qualities which form the union of teals. My son has disclosed to me the sentiments he feels towards her, and the desire that he has to obtain her in marriage. I do not suppose that the particular sentiments which a young man and a maiden may feel for each other, are capable of influencing a man like you. However, if you do not disdain a poor and obscure family, andif you grant them access to the eastern wall of your house, our gratitude shall be really without limits; if, on the contrary, you feel any repugnance to witness the intertwining of the ivy and

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the dodder, and if you are unwillingly to lend them the support of a strong tree, I shall receive your answer without bitterness of heart, and shall in no degree permit myself to follow the traces of a certain personage who has preceded us, and who has become a subject of raillery to our friends. I put my confidence in this sheet of mulberry *, and shall await the orders it will please you to transmit me."

The perusal of this letter made joy sparkle in the eyes of the two cousins. Having then unfolded that of Gou Touïan, they found what follows :—

" Your relation Gou Kouei salutes you with respect. Obliged, last year, to set out precipitately for court, I had, through mistake, solicited from you, in favour of an intriguing knave, the support that the tree gives to the plant. He got from me, by stratagem, the letter with which I troubled your lordship ; but the artifices even of the dæmons of the mountains could not deceive so enlightened an understanding as yours. However, the fault which my carelessness made me commit, admits of no excuse. On going this spring to take the orders of the emperor, I met our brother, Mr Sse, from whom I learned, not without astonishment, the circumstance, and consequently the knowledge of my own error. Mr Sse had already fought with honour in the palace of the south †, and had obtained an appointment in Tchekiang. Having turned his thoughts towards the intertwin-

* The paper in China is made with the bark of a species of mulberry-tree.

† The college of Nanking.

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ing of the ivy and the dodder, he addressed himself to me, to prepare the path for him; taking advantage of a journey which his functions oblige him to make, he intends ascending to the sacred mountain which you inhabit. You will perceive, by the first glance that you cast upon him, that he really has the qualities of jasper. You have hitherto given yourself much trouble to find out a son-in-law; but here, I think, you will have no difficulty in fixing your choice. I hope in a short time to find some pretext for returning to the south. I wish to be present at the joyous banquet, and to join in the felicitations that will be addressed to you. If before then you have anything to command me, favour me with an answer, &c."

The satisfaction of the two cousins was redoubled, when they had read this letter. Miss Lo immediately rose up, and paying her compliments to Miss Pe, said to her: "Health and joy, sister!"

Miss Pe hastened to reply to this compliment. "You have a share in it, sister, as well as I," she said; "and I am not the only one to be felicitated."

"Sister," replied Miss Lo, "you have for you the commands of his father the inspector-general, the interest which Dr Gou takes in it, and the solicitations which he has undertaken to make. On the return of my uncle, he will accede to the proposal at the first word. As for me, I have, to be sure, an engagement of the heart, but I have not yet any go-between; and even should young Sse be faithful, and return to keep his promise, he does not know that I am in this house. If, on receipt of my letter, he should come to seek me

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here, will my uncle, who has so strong an affection for you, consent, through love for me, to put two spoons into one cup? When I think of all this, I find that my fate is far from being certain."

"Your reflections would be very just, sister, "if they were applied to what usually takes place in the world; but my father is not at all like other men. Since he has an affection for me, he must also love you, sister: besides, he has accepted the commission from my aunt, and certainly he will not establish any difference between us by making me a jealous and selfish woman."

"So much the better," replied Miss Lo; "but there are still many difficulties in the way. The moment after a man has given him his daughter, to ask him for his niece is what young Sse would find it very difficult to do; while, on the other hand, my uncle could never suppose that he would afflict us by choosing one husband for his daughter, and another for his niece. My establishment depends entirely on the will of my mother, and that of my uncle: what resistance could I oppose to them?"

"Do not make yourself uneasy, sister," replied Miss Pe. "If any difficulty should occur, it belongs to me to declare the truth. Should your marriage not be concluded, I shall remain faithful to my engagements with you, and I shall not marry either."

"If it is thus, the protection that you afford me will excite my deepest gratitude," said Miss Lo. "In Dr Gou's letter," continued she, "it is said that young Sse will take advantage of the journey

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which his functions oblige him to make, to come to the sacred mountain. So that young Sse must have arrived here about the same time as the letter. If he should have come, how are we to know it? It would be an excellent thing to let him know that I am here."

"You are right," said Miss Pe; and she sent a person to the porter, to ask if the lord Sse had come to pay a visit. The porter replied—"The lord Sse sent a messenger here to announce his visit; and I answered that my master was not at home, and that there was no one here to receive him; that as he wished to pay his visit, it would be sufficient if he sent his card to be deposited in the registry of the gate, without taking the trouble to come so far himself. His servant went away, and I know not if he will come back."

"If that answer was given him," said Miss Pe, "young Sse will not return."

"I suppose so," said Miss Lo. "And even should he come, we should have some difficulty in conveying him intelligence."

"Where would be the difficulty of conveying intelligence to him?" said Miss Pe, laughing. "It would only be necessary for you, my dear sister, to put on male attire, and go and meet him as you did before."

Miss Lo could not help laughing in her turn at this jest.

How agitated are the hearts of the beautiful inmates of the inner apartment!
What numberless fears spring up in their tender bosoms!
Sorrow and joy succeed each other in their souls;

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They abandon themselves to the cares which occupy their hearts.

The two cousins were now however better satisfied than before: in the next chapter will be found the remainder of their adventures.

CHAPTER XIX.

MISTAKE UPON MISTAKE, CROSSES ON ALL SIDES.

"How comes it that fate so often deceives our hopes? Most human affairs are thus conducted in an irregular manner. On opening my eyes, I see very well that *he* is not *me*. But on starting from sleep, the question is often asked; who am I, myself? At every moment we are abused by a thousand deceitful appearances. It is not given to us to discern the truth. The destiny of marriage must have been previously fixed; and yet in the midst of so many cross purposes we at length become bewildered."

WHILST the two cousins thus passed their time conversing together in their apartment, it was one day suddenly announced to them, that the lord Pe had arrived. Mrs Lo and the two young ladies went to receive him; and soon after, Pe entered, his countenance wearing a smile of satisfaction. After saluting Mrs Lo, he said—"Health and joy, my dear sister! I have at length found the son-in-law I have been looking for. The marriages of my niece and of Houngiu are now certain."

Mrs Lo was delighted to hear this intelligence, and said—"Ah, brother, if it be so, what thanks do I not owe you for so great a mark of goodness!"

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After Mrs Lo's salutation, the two young ladies came forward together to pay their devoirs to Pe, who said to them, laughing: "You are two sisters, whose talents and beauty are perfectly equal; and I have been unwilling that you should be separated."

This declaration persuaded the two cousins, that he alluded to Sse Yeoupe, whom he had no doubt met at Hangtcheou, and who had made proposals of marriage for them. They therefore rejoiced in their hearts, and desisted from asking any questions. Young Lo came in his turn to salute his uncle. The baggage was looked over, and a banquet prepared to celebrate Pe's return. The latter, having changed his clothes, went to repose himself during a part of the day; afterwards, they came and took their places; and all being seated, Mrs Lo commenced the conversation. "You have been from home a long time," said she. "You were to have gone only to the borders of the lake, but you have, no doubt, extended your excursion further?"

"I went to Hangtcheou, and as I feared that the governor Yang might suppose that I came to return his visit, I changed my name, and passed under that of Hoangfou, a private individual. During my stay on the borders of the lake, I saw a considerable number of young men, but not one man of real merit." He then gave them a detailed account of all that happened to him, when he composed some verses in the *gallery of the cold spring*, as also the false reputation which Tchaotsianli and Tcheouchingwang had acquired, and how he had discovered their vain boasting.

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This account very much amused the two cousins, who could not refrain from laughing. " And what took place afterwards ?" again asked Mrs Lo.

" I had made rather a long stay on the borders of the lake, sometimes directing my walks to one side, then to another. Seeing, at length, that there were as few men of talent there as here, I crossed the river Tsiantang, and went towards Chanyin, to see the curiosities of the grotto of the emperor Ju. There I met a young man of the name of Lieou, who is also a native of Kinling: in point of appearance and good manners he is really an accomplished model. We lodged together in the monastery of Ju. Morning and evening we conversed upon literature, or wrote poetry together: we discussed ancient and modern subjects. In this manner we passed our time for fifteen days. Judging from his mind, his noble appearance, his vast acquirements, and his eminent talents, he appears to me destined one day to take his flight to the gardens of the academy. Many men have passed before my eyes, but I have never before seen one who united so many qualities. I wished to marry him to Houngiu, but I feared that my niece might accuse me of undue preference; and if I had given him to my niece, I should have to dread that Houngiu would complain that I neglected her interests; for, with the exception of young Lieou, I believe it would be very difficult to find a man worthy of her. I recollected that Ohoang and Niuying had both consecrated themselves to Chun. Several persons have since imitated that ancient example. I saw, besides, that

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they were not only friends, but united by the tenderest affection, and that it would grieve me to separate them; in fine, of my own accord, and with my own mouth, I promised him that he should have both. It has been to me a subject of extreme satisfaction to have accomplished the business: what do you think of it, sister?"

On hearing these words the two cousins remained stupified, looking at each other without being able to utter a word. "Brother," replied Mrs Lo, "your idea has been an excellent one. I had in fact myself thought that Mengli was too young to preside at the gathering of the marsile and the nuptial alisma; but now that she will have my niece for a companion and support, my mind is perfectly tranquil; besides, since this young Lieou has so much merit and so many accomplishments, the happiness of her life is assured. Your brother-in-law inhabits the land of the nine fountains, and like him I may now close my eyes."

Pe seemed to be in the greatest joy. "You have exactly expressed what I had in my thoughts," cried he. "I who have no son, have only my daughter Houngiu to think of; but now that I have found a son-in-law in the person of Lieou, all my wishes are accomplished. Let my coffin be closed to-morrow; I shall enter it joyously and without repining."

Though speaking in this manner, Pe laughed with pleasure, and Mrs Lo imperceptibly joined in his satisfaction. It was only the two young ladies who, seeing a tacit consent thus wrung from them, felt to the bottom of their hearts the most unutterable trouble. They dared not however open their lips,

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or make the least allusion to Sse Yeoupe. At length Miss Pe turned her eyes upon Yansou ; Yansou understood the look, and immediately brought to Pe the two letters of the inspector-general Sse and Dr Gou. After having read them, Pe, very much surprised, exclaimed, " How is this ? He who obtained the second place at the examination of the north, is Sse Yeoupe ; and he is the nephew of Sse Fanghoeï, who has adopted him for his son ! That was the reason that he set himself down amongst the candidates of Honan. If I had known all that a little earlier, the marriage would have been soon concluded. Why has he delayed so long making me the proposal ? Now I have myself entered into an engagement with young Lieou, and Sse Yeoupe consequently comes too late. How can I remedy this ?"

He cast his eyes upon his daughter, and observed that she held down her head and remained silent. He then made a reflection. " Every one talks of the merit and accomplishments of Sse Yeoupe," said he : " he has obtained the second place at the examination. I am very well inclined to think that he cannot be an ordinary man ; but alas ! I have not as yet seen him. The number of men possessed of real merit is not great," continued he ; " those who have talent, have not always an agreeable person ; and those who are well-looking, often lack talents ; but perfection is to be found only in the man whose appearance and talents are equally unexceptionable. Sse Yeoupe may be a man of a vulgar exterior, whose sole recommendation is his merit, or he may be incapable of conducting himself prudently. Under every point of view he

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cannot be so perfect a man as I desire ; while, on the other hand, I know the figure and talents of young Lieou ; and not to say any more of him, he appears to have a character full of moderation and sweetness ; his language is modest, and his reflections always judicious. He is a man who has raised himself to the perfection of jasper. As to the reputation that he may acquire, I have no doubt but it will one day lead him to the steed of gold, and open to him the hall of jasper. Young Sse is assuredly also a man of merit ; but I do not see in what he can be superior to young Lieou. Now I have already an engagement with the latter, while with the former we have got no further than the proposal. What is to be done in this case ? What plan can I adopt ?"

" Brother," said Mrs Lo, " you are yourself acquainted with the excellent qualities of young Lieou, and they have met your approbation ; there is therefore no reason to change your resolution. You cannot think of breaking off such an engagement, when the girl is already promised ? Young Sse may have merit, but of what consequence is that now ? All that can be done is to send him a refusal."

" Yes, certainly that is the only measure to be adopted," replied Pe. " Truly, this young Sse has been badly treated by destiny. In the commencement Gou Touïan had made choice of him for my son-in-law, but he himself refused. He came afterwards, and left at my house some verses that he had written upon the vernal willows ; in this he become the dupe of a knavish stratagem. I succeeded in unravelling that affair, and had inquiries made after him in every direction, without being able to discover

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him. He now reappears; and when the letter containing his proposal arrives, I am already under engagements to another. So many cross purposes shew that he has no share in the destinies of marriage, since nothing turns out according to his wishes."

The family continued thus conversing some time longer before they separated. As soon as all had retired, Miss Lo hastened to glide secretly into Miss Pe's chamber. "Sister," said she, "at first we had only Sse; now we have got also young Lieou. In what way shall we arrange this matter?"

Miss Pe heaved a sigh. "There is an old proverb," said she, "which says, that for eight or nine things that go contrary to our desires, there are but two or three that succeed. You and I may apply this to ourselves. How many obstacles and cross purposes has not this projected marriage with young Sse met with! It might be said that my father is even at present inclined towards it. He had attained the object of his hopes: the letters of the inspector-general Sse and Dr Gou had arrived, containing the proposal, and to all appearance there could be no doubt of its success; my father had been for several years looking for a husband for me, without being able to find one of whom he could approve:—who could have ever foreseen that in the space of a few instants he would have discovered this young Lieou? Thus all the trouble that has been taken during so great a length of time, is carried away one morning by the current of the water. How is it possible to support such a thought?"

"Sister," replied Miss Lo, "whatever attachment you and young Sse may have for each other,

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it is at best only a secret inclination; you have never seen each other, even in profile. The engagement as far as it concerns you may be fulfilled; but I, who when conversing with him placed my hands in his, who, seated by his side, touched his shoulder with mine, who have given him assurances, and pronounced oaths, which I repeated two or three times;—that I who have done all this should be thus one morning consecrated to another man, that I should be wanting in constancy to the first and fidelity to the second, is an event absolutely impossible."

"Though I have never been in the presence of young Sse," replied Miss Pe, "the engagement of the heart does not the less exist; besides, he had performed the condition of writing the verses upon the vernal willows. The pieces of poetry which I asked him to compose upon the departure of th crane and the arrival of the swallow, had a meaning and a motive; I cannot therefore look upon him with indifference. But in such delicate matters girls like us, inmates of the inner apartment, find it very difficult to speak their minds."

"I conceive, sister, that in the first moment you should have some difficulty in declaring openly what concerned yourself; but I do not see any obstacle to your telling what regards me. My uncle's intention is to secure our happiness, and not to oppose himself without a motive to what we desire. If he was made acquainted with the irregular proceeding in which I engaged myself, he would probably adopt another line of conduct."

"I shall certainly not fail to speak," said Miss

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Pe; "but it is better to wait a little while. I heard yesterday that my uncle Gou had set out on his return home; he will certainly come to see us in a few days. When here, I shall seek for an opportunity to explain everything to him; and as he is the go-between chosen by young Sse, he will no doubt leave nothing undone."

"This appears to me a very good idea," said Miss Lo.

This affair became the constant subject of their deliberations at all hours and all moments.

It is of themselves these fair ones, whose minds are so agitated, are thinking.
The support of a father and an aunt is however not wanting to them;
They had found a peach-tree which heaven had adorned with the most brilliant tints,
But too thick a foliage has come and concealed it from their fond regards.

Two or three days after, Dr Gou, who had heard of Pe's return, came eagerly to see him. The brothers-in-law, who had been separated for more than a year, felt the most extreme joy at seeing each other. Pe detained the doctor and put him to lodge in the pavilion of rural dreams; and a short time after, Miss Pe came forth to pay her duty to her uncle. The doctor took advantage of the occasion to speak to Pe. "Well, brother, you have at length found the accomplished son-in-law you have been seeking for, and all the pains and trouble you have given yourself during so long a time have not been in vain! You have discovered a man not unworthy of the talents and charms of my niece. This is a subject of great joy, and I

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ought to congratulate you. But tell me, I pray you, has Sse Liansian already sent the nuptial presents?"

"Brother," replied Pe, "I am infinitely sensible to these proofs of your affection, but alas! this affair cannot be arranged."

"Here is something new! And why not?" exclaimed Dr Gou in the greatest astonishment.

"For no other reason," replied Pe, "but that your letter, brother, and that of the lord Sse, arrived too late; I had already concluded with another person."

"My letter must have arrived a long time back," said the doctor: "how could it have come too late?"

"Since my malady, finding the time hang heavy on me at home," replied Pe, "I went in the beginning of spring on an excursion to the beautiful scenery in the province of Tchekiang. I met by chance at Chanyin a young poet, to whom I promised Houngiu and Lo Mengli in marriage. It was on my return here a few days ago that I found the two letters, which you perceive have come too late."

"I suppose that this young man is a native of Chanyin. What is his name?" asked Dr Gou."

"His family name is Lieou; and, what is better, he is from Kinling."

"What kind of a person was he, and how did he so promptly obtain your consent, brother?" said the doctor.

"In appearance that Pangan of whom the ancients boast so much, did not perhaps equal him; and with regard to talent, it may be said that he is superior to Fangtseukian. How could I have refused my consent to such a man?"

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" Brother," inquired the doctor, " did you ask him if he resided in Kinling, or in the environs ?"'

" He told me that he lived in the city, and added that he had had the honour to pass under your eyes at the examinations."

" This is still more extraordinary. Had he been from Chanyin, I should have nothing to say; there may be other men of merit besides those I have seen. If he said that he was from the environs of Kinling, though I cannot know every one there, yet I ought to have heard speak of him. However, there may even be talents there that have escaped my observation. But if he says that he inhabits the city itself, and that I know him, not only there is not amongst my friends any person calling himself Lieou, but I have never seen a clever man of that name amongst those who were assembled at the examinations. May it not be, brother, that you have again become the dupe of some adventurer ?"

" If I had had but a single interview with him, and had seen him only for a few moments," replied Pe, " I might not have been able to examine him sufficiently; but he and I lodged together in the same monastery; we were continually together from morning till night. For more than fifteen days we constantly passed our time together, looking at beautiful flowers, giving each other subjects for composition, drinking as we talked of literature, and reasoned now upon the events of remote antiquity, and then upon things of recent occurrence. His amiability never failed him for a single moment; it is certainly of a nature to seduce any one. This was what rendered me so eager to accept him for a son-in-law. Should I have foolishly been led away

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by such an idea, if I entertained the least well-founded doubt?"

"Since you have observed him so minutely, brother," said the doctor, "it is clear that you could not have been mistaken; but I regret very much that you have not seen Sse Liansian. Had you seen him, the inferiority of young Lieou would have soon made itself apparent."

"You think so," replied Pe, laughing, "because you have not seen young Lieou. Had you seen him, you certainly would not speak thus."

"Without meaning to disparage your young Lieou," replied the doctor, also laughing, "he is after all nothing more than a poor bachelor."

"I merely said that he had sufficient talents and accomplishments to distinguish him from the crowd," replied Pe. "But when the time comes for promotion and reputation, he will certainly not be found an ordinary man at the examinations. I am persuaded that his name will be one day heard in the gardens of the academy. He is not unworthy of you, brother."

"I do not set an excessive value upon the honours even of the academy," replied the doctor; "but you, brother, turn away your view from Sse Yeoupe who is already nominated academician, and fix it exclusively upon him who does not yet belong to the academy. It appears to me that there is an excessive partiality in this conduct."

"Brother," said Pe, "you announced to me in your letter, that Sse Yeoupe had been appointed judge in Tchekiang. Why do you now speak of the academy?"

"Sse Yeoupe," replied the doctor, "had ob-

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tained the first place at the second examination. According to the regulations he should have had one of the posts appertaining to the court ; but through animosity towards him who had presided at the examinations, Messieurs Tchang and Wang had contrived that he should be given merely a place in the magistracy. Our college, however, not wishing to suffer such an infraction of the law, declared the intention of publicly denouncing the fact. The household minister, alarmed, acknowledged himself the injustice he had committed, and by virtue of an imperial decree he re-established things as they should have been. I suppose that, on receiving this intelligence, Sse Yeoupe will have quitted his place, and in a few days will return here."

" In a few days also, according to the engagement we entered into, young Lieou will come here to see me," said Pe. " When all the parties shall be assembled, the waters of King will be easily distinguished from those of Wei."

" All in good time," said the doctor.

Miss Pe listened to this discussion, but did not think it right to take a share in it. She went secretly to confer with Miss Lo. Neither of the suitors had as yet sent any presents ; and it was necessary to wait, before taking a resolution, until one of them should observe this formality.

Pe and the doctor had now been several days together, when the porter came to announce that the young lord Tchang, who previously, under the title of guest, had lodged in the house, wished to be received. Pe, moved by his recollections, exclaimed, " What does he want here again ?"

" He has certainly some motive for coming,"

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said the doctor, " what inconvenience can it be to you to receive him?"

Pe told the porter to invite him into the saloon; and in a few moments Tchangfanjou entered and made his obeisance. After the usual compliments, they took their seats; and Pe, opening the conversation, said, " It is a long time since we have had the honour of seeing you."

" Since the last autumn examination," replied Tchangfanjou, " I have been to the college of the province of Tchekiang. This it was that hindered me from coming to pay you my respects."

" Is it long since you returned?" asked Pe.

" I arrived yesterday, and on an affair which I have to communicate to you," replied Tchangfanjou.

" What is the affair upon which you deign to give me your instructions?" asked Pe.

" I have a very intimate friend who is now well known. A long time back the reputation of the virtues of your excellency's daughter reached him, and he knows that she possesses all the qualities which conduce to a perfect union *. He has therefore put into my hands the handle of the hatchet, and has charged me to come and ask your excellency's consent to the fortunate ties he wishes to contract."

" What is the name of your friend?" demanded Pe.

" Sse Yeoupe, the new doctor of the grand college."

* Literally *the union of teals.* These water-fowl always swim together in couples, and answer each other by a cry which the Chiking thus expresses, *kouan, kouan,* and which is considered to be very harmonious. Teals from this circumstance are looked upon as the emblems of happiness and conjugal fidelity.

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" Ah, it is really Mr Sse! My relation arrived here a few days ago to speak to me in his favour, and that is precisely the cause of the embarrassment in which I am at this moment."

" Is the lord Gou, your relation, here at present?" asked Tchangfanjou. " Well! Mr Sse has proved himself a scholar from his earliest years, and the young lady your daughter is a celebrated beauty, the ornament of the inner apartment. Heaven has designed them for each other: how can you be embarrassed upon this subject?"

" The cause of my embarrassment is, that I have already promised her to another," replied Pe.

" When Mr Sse had obtained the first place at the examination for bachelors, your excellency was kind enough to give him some hopes. How comes it, now that he has mounted the steed of gold, and penetrated into the hall of jasper, that you seem disposed to reject him? This is a circumstance that requires explanation."

" Sir," said Pe, " do not ask me any more questions at present; but return, if you please, when I shall have consulted my relation upon this subject."

" It is so excellent a connexion," said Tchangfanjou, " that I trust your excellency will be enabled to agree to it."

Pe kept Tchangfanjou to take tea, during which the conversation continued. " This village is inhabited by a great number of persons," remarked Tchangfanjou. " Are all the houses close to each other in this spot, or are there some apart and at a distance?"

" The greater number are close to each other

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here," replied Pe: "there are few isolated houses. What motive have you for asking the question?"

"One of my friends," said Tchangfanjou, "has given me a letter. I have sent to inquire at both sides of the village, but the person to whom the letter is addressed cannot be found."

"Who is the person you seek, sir?" asked Pe.

"He is a private person named Hoangfou," replied Tchangfanjou.

Pe anxiously said—"Hoangfou is one of my relations; if you have a letter for him, you have only to give it to me, and I shall deliver it to him."

"Ah, he is one of your relations! I asked for him everywhere," said Tchangfanjou. He then sent one of his servants to get the letter, and bring it to him. Pe received it, and after casting a glance at it, put it into his sleeve. The conversation was kept up some time longer, until Tchangfanjou took his leave and went away. Pe returned to the pavilion of rural dreams, to rejoin Dr Gou. "This visit of Tchangfanjou," said he, "is also relative to Mr Sse's proposal."

"Did he tell you when Sse Liansian would arrive?" asked the doctor.

"I did not inquire," replied Pe. "But he has also brought me a letter from young Lieou;" and he drew the letter from his sleeve, opened it, and began to read it with the doctor. The following were the contents:—

"Young Lieou Hiochi has the honour to offer you his homage, his wishes, and his compliments."

"*Private Observations.*

"I, who am but a poor scholar without instruction, have had the happiness, without hoping it,

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to perceive in the midst of the waters and the mountains the purple flame which announces the presence of the immortals. Since I received the orders you were pleased to give me, I have suffered much by being deprived, during the space of a lunar revolution, of your presence, and of those paternal examples that you afforded me. They are all still enclosed in my breast. You not only shewed me no disdain, but even you conferred on me the honour of the most brilliant alliance. This may be called one of those celestial blessings which leave not in the heart of man sufficient place for gratitude. But I told you, when we were together, that I had already formed engagements with two families; that one of them had seen its lute broken, and that the other young lady, flying from persecution, had disappeared, and had not left the slightest trace. You did me the honour to persist in your offer, saying, that all was over with regard to the young girl that was no more; and that as to her who was still in existence, fitting arrangements should be made in case of her reappearing. Now, contrary to my expectation, on arriving at Hangtcheou, I found that there was still no account of her who was living; and that she who was supposed to be dead, was still alive. It was a false report of the person who came to me with the news. The father of the young girl whom I wish to marry, is a man of the highest rank; a great magistrate has charged himself with the part of go-between; and I now find myself in a defile where it is equally difficult for me to retreat as to advance, and out of which I know not how to get. All that I can do is to lay the circumstances frankly before you. Your lordship is full of reason, justice,

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and delicacy. You are a mirror in which man's duties may be seen reflected. You will in some manner or other succeed in arranging all this. I take the opportunity of this letter to announce to you, that in a few days I shall await the commands of your lordship at the foot of your staircase, in order to learn what fate may have decided.

"*Confidential Communication.*

"Hiochi again reiterates to you his respectful homage."

Pe was very much surprised by the perusal of this letter. "This is also a singular adventure!" cried he. "Were there ever in any affair so many turns and cross purposes?"

"Since he excuses himself on account of another engagement, you ought, brother, to seize the occasion and reply to him, and thus enable yourself to conclude the marriage with Sse Yeoupe. There would be an advantage on both sides."

"I do not deny that your plan is a good one. But young Lieou has so many fine qualities, that I cannot yet resign the hope of having him for a son-in-law. Let us wait till he comes here, brother, and then we shall terminate this affair."

"Be it so," said the doctor.

It was thought that no further change could take place,
And yet here are all of a sudden new engagements;
But were it not for these crosses to which we are constantly exposed,
How could our sentiments make themselves known?

We shall for some time leave Pe awaiting the return of young Lieou, and occupy ourselves with Lo Mengli. When she had resolved to go from

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Chantoung to Kiangnan, to avoid the persecution which menaced her, she feared that Sse Yeoupe might in vain seek her on his return; and she therefore wrote him a letter, which she intrusted to an old servant named Wangcheou. She gave this man the money necessary for his journey, and ordered him to go to the capital, and deliver the letter to the lord Sse; if he was not at court, Wangcheou was to make inquiries after him on the road till he arrived at Kinling, and afterwards bring her the answer to the house of the lord her uncle Pe. She recommended him above all things to keep the letter safe, not to give it into any hands but those of Sse Yeoupe, and to be very careful not to take another person for him. Wangcheou set out, after having promised to execute this commission.

Now this Wangcheou was a very simple man. When he arrived in the capital, Sse Yeoupe had already quitted it, so that he immediately set off again to follow him. But being ignorant that Sse Yeoupe had obtained the degree of doctor, and that he had been appointed a magistrate, he asked upon the road only for young Mr Sse Yeoupe, in consequence of which no one knew of whom he was speaking. He followed him thus to Kinling, and there continued to ask after him in every direction. In the affairs of this world there are sometimes singular coincidences: it so happened that Sse *Yeoute* was in the town at that time. Since his disagreeable adventure in the house of the lord Pe, Sse Yeoute felt greatly mortified. When he afterwards heard of Sse Yeoupe's double success, he could not help regretting what he had done. "It was assuredly a friendly act," said he, "to offer

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him twenty-four ounces of silver, and the baggage he stood in want of; but nevertheless, after the trick I played him, it would not be agreeable for me to meet him." He was, as it has been said, in town the day that Wangcheou, deceived by the similarity of the names of Sse Yeoupe and Sse Yeoute, came to make inquiries in the house where he lodged. The servant, addressing the porter, said—"Is it not here that young Mr Sse Yeoupe lives?"

"It's here," replied the porter, who had not heard very distinctly. "This is the house of young Mr Sse Yeoute. Where do you come from?"

"Young Mr Lo, of the province of Chantoung, has sent me to deliver him this letter," replied Wangcheou.

The porter went to inform his master, who said, "I do not know Mr Lo of Chantoung: there must be some mistake;" and he went out to see what it was. The moment Wangcheou saw him approach, he hastened to address him, saying—"I have been by my master's orders to look for you in the capital, Mr Sse; but unfortunately you had already left it. I have inquired after you all along the road, and in every direction: and during all this time you were here."

Sse Yeoute began to suspect that Sse Yeoupe was the person he was looking for; but not to let this be perceived, he answered vaguely—"What a deal of trouble I have given you! Where is your master's letter?"

"My master," replied Wangcheou, "has had some business that required him to quit the province of Chantoung, and go into Kiangnan; and as

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he feared that he should not see you on your return from the capital, he charged me to go in search of you, and give you this letter." And, as he said this, he took from his breast the letter, which he presented to Sse Yeoute with both his hands. Sse Yeoute, on taking it, said—"Go and sit outside there, while I look at the contents of this letter." And he ordered his servant to prepare something for the messenger to eat.

After Wangcheou had gone out, Sse Yeoute ran to his library; and looking at the letter, he saw at top and bottom two flourishes, and the impression of two little seals. It was very neatly folded, and carefully closed. On the middle was written, in seven large characters—*To be opened by the lord Sse with his own hands;* and underneath, in four little characters, *whose noble surname is Yeoupe.* The writing was regular and very elegant. Sse Yeoute thought there was something very particular in the manner in which this letter was addressed. "Must there not be some reason for all this?" he asked himself: he then stole a look into the inside of the letter, and raising cautiously the folds of the paper, he opened so much of it that he was enabled to read the writing. He saw one side entirely covered with small regular characters like flies' heads, and he read what follows:—

"Your friend and younger brother Lo Mengli has the honour to salute you. He addresses this letter to his brother Liansian, to you with whom chance brought him acquainted during your voyage. This interview was like a blessing sent from heaven, but the sad separation that followed it has filled my heart with extreme bitterness. I recollect the

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solemn oaths which were pronounced upon the stone, and the secret engagements contracted in presence of the flowers are still sounding in my ears. And yet, alas! the body is in the east, whilst the shadow is in the west. How difficult it is to reunite them! Every time these thoughts present themselves to my mind, it appears to me as if I were pursued by a dream. But the event upon which the happiness of one's life is placed, cannot be considered a dream. I heard of the success that attended you last autumn at the examination of the north, and was greatly consoled. No doubt the flowers of the literary gardens await you next spring. I should have wished much to have seen you on your return, and offered you my congratulations at your half-way home. Unfortunately, some unforeseen difficulties into which my family has fallen, obliged me to go for some time to the house of my uncle in the province of Kiangnan: my former residence will be entirely shut up. I dreaded that, if you should come to inquire for me, you might have conceived suspicions capable of troubling the fountain of the peach-tree. For this reason I have sent to you this old servant, who is charged to inform you of these circumstances. If you still attach any value to my friendship, and wish for a marriage with my sister, come and inquire for me in the village of Kinchi, at the house of Pe Thaï-hiouan, counsellor to the department of public works. It is there that you will hear of me. These lines at a thousand miles distance, have for object to solicit remembrance.—*Private Communication.*"

"How!" said Sse Yeoute, on finishing the letter,

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" this is another marriage that Sse Yeoupe is gone to contract with the Lo family in Chantoung. If I could again present myself under his name! But it is precisely to Pe's house that he is told to go for news of his fair one; and it is in that very house that I have already once shewn *the horse's hoof;* how can I ever present myself there again? I have heard," continued he to himself, " that after having been first appointed judge at Hang-tcheou, he afterwards entered the grand academical college. He must now be on his way home. It is better to preserve this letter for him, and by a shew of affection endeavour to obliterate my former conduct towards him. He is now an academician, and hereafter I may have need of him."

He determined to follow this idea; and when Wangcheou had finished dining, he had him called in, and said to him, " Return to your master, make my compliments to him, and tell him that I already knew all that he told me in his letter; that I will follow exactly his orders; and that, for fear of some mistake, I do not send him a written answer."

He then took one ounce of silver, and gave it to Wangcheou, saying to him—" I have made you take a long journey, and given you a great deal of trouble."

" I have still all the money my master gave me for the journey; how can I think of accepting more from you, Mr Sse?" said Wangcheou.

" It is but a trifle, only something to purchase wine," replied Sse Yeoute.

Wangcheou thanked him, took his leave, went

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away, and proceeded to Kinchi with the answer to Miss Lo.

Sse Yeoute, having now the letter in his possession, returned to his country house, and told his servants to be on the look-out for the lord Sse, as in going to Kinchi he must pass by the house, and he was desirous of having him stop for some time with him. In pursuance of these orders, the servants were on the alert. At the end of a few days they learned that Sse Yeoupe had arrived at Kinling, and that he intended to go to the village of Kinchi the next morning. Immediately Sse Yeoute had a banquet prepared; and at nine o'clock the following morning his servants came to inform him that the lord Sse was approaching. Sse Yeoute went out himself, and ran to the entrance of the place, to be there before he came up. A short time after, the sedan chair of Sse Yeoupe was seen. Sse Yeoute gave one of his servants a visiting card, and told him to run up to the sedan chair, and announce that his master was on the road and requested an interview. When he saw Sse Yeoute's name, Sse Yeoupe ordered his bearers to stop. As soon as Sse Yeoute saw him stop, he hurried forward, and made an obeisance before the sedan-chair. Sse Yeoupe immediately descended, to return his politeness. "I was just going to call upon you," said he: "why should you take the trouble to come so far to meet me?"

"I feared," said Sse Yeoute, "that a man of distinction like you, my lord, might have disdained a poor and obscure individual, and I came forward to present you my invitation."

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In speaking thus, the two young men walked to Sse Yeoute's house. Sse Yeoupe ordered one of his suite to take a card of ceremony, and bring it into the saloon. The courtesies re-commenced; and when they were finished, the two friends sat down.

Sse Yeoupe began the conversation. "The benefit which you formerly conferred on me with so much kindness," said he, "remains profoundly graven on my heart; the sacrifice of my person would not be sufficient to repay it."

"So light a trifle deserves not to be mentioned," replied Sse Yeoute. As he said this, dinner was brought in.

"I came only to have the honour of seeing you," said Sse Yeoupe: "it is not right that I should put you to all this trouble."

"On coming hither from the city, your people and horses must have got an appetite," said Sse Yeoupe; "there are but a few coarse viands that have been got ready; deign to treat me still as a friend."

"My dear sir," said Sse Yeoupe, "you shew me an excess of affection; you are continually giving me proofs of it."

The two friends sat down opposite each other; after having drunk during some time, Sse Yeoute said—"I imagine, my lord, that the object of your present journey is your marriage with the daughter of the lord Pe?"

"Yes, it is that for which I am come. But I am not yet certain what turn the affair will take."

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Sse Yeoute began to laugh. " The fate of this marriage has been already fixed by an old engagement. Now, my lord, that you have been promoted to new dignities, the accomplishment must follow as a matter of course; all that is to be regretted is, that the marriage and other affairs which you have in Chantoung with Lo Mengli, will be retarded thereby."

Sse Yeoupe was struck with the greatest astonishment. " I have never," he said, " mentioned a single word about these affairs to any one living. How have you come to the knowledge of them?"

Sse Yeoute continued to laugh. " What, my lord, you will not permit me even to know the fine things that you propose doing?"

" Since you know something about them," replied Sse Yeoupe, " you also, no doubt, must have some information concerning Lo Mengli, which I hope you will have the kindness to communicate to me."

" Yes, I have some information;" said Sse Yeoute laughing; " but you shall not learn it so easily."

" Only tell it to me," said Sse Yeoupe, laughing also, " and you shall be at liberty to fix your own conditions. I shall not object to your orders."

" My lord, I shall not take advantage of your situation; drink only three cups," said Sse Yeoute.

Sse Yeoupe again laughed. " I cannot bear much wine," said he; " but I cannot refuse this

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condition. Have the kindness to relieve me from inquietude ?"

Sse Yeoute ordered his servants to fill three large cups; and Sse Yeoupe, seeing there was no remedy, was obliged to drink them, all the while speaking and laughing. When he had drunk, he called upon Sse Yeoute to give him some news of Lo Mengli. But the remainder of this account requires to be treated separately. In it will be seen the suitor gifted with real talents pursuing his path, supported by the solidity of his successes; and the beautiful inmates of the inner pavilion unveiling their impassioned sentiments.

These disasters were not the mistakes of fate,
These cross purposes were the results of misunderstanding.
Who could have foreseen that from so many mistakes and disappointments
Would result in the end a fate brilliant as flowers?

The last chapter will make known if Sse Yeoute consented, at length, to tell what he knew about Lo Mengli.

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CHAPTER XX.

EMBROIDERIES UPON EMBROIDERIES — GENERAL SATISFACTION.

"The demons have exhausted their efforts, and accomplished their task; the mountain has been scaled, and the torrents have been crossed. Sweetness and bitterness are mingled in the nenuphar, and in its flower. The same fate awaits the root and leaves of the peach-tree. Genius at length takes its flight upwards like the flame. Love is like the river which is hurried to the east by an irresistible attraction. A tender engagement had made probable what has happened. There is nothing now to obstruct the wishes of the lovers."

After having fulfilled the condition of the three cups, Sse Yeoupe wished to hear the news concerning Lo Mengli.

Sse Yeoute prolonged for some time the jest, and then drawing the letter from his sleeve, said—"Do you think this contains any news of Mr Lo?"

Sse Yeoupe seized the letter; and as he ran over the contents with a glance, joy involuntarily lighted his countenance. "Mr Lo," said he, "is truly a man full of sentiment! Brother," added he, "how did this message fall into your hands?"

"The person who brought it," replied Sse Yeoute, is a shallow-brained old serving man: the resemblance of my name with that of your lordship, led him to my house; as I thought the letter might contain something to which you attached importance, and fearing that some other more serious mistake might happen, I kept it for the purpose of hand-

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ing it to you, my lord, without knowing in what light you would view my precaution."

"I am infinitely obliged to you," replied Sse Yeoupe. "The devotion of a thousand friends could not recompense such attentions."

"There is no occasion for recompense," said Sse Yeoute, laughing. "Only take me with you, that I may be present at the banquet of rejoicing."

The two young men continued to amuse themselves thus for some time, while drinking a few cups. Sse Yeoupe then rose to take leave; and after having quitted his host, he got into his sedan chair, and resumed his journey. On arriving in the village of Pechi, at the monastery of Kouanyin, he wished to pay a visit to Tsingin. When Tsingin saw a cortege of sedan chairs and horses approaching, he came out in great haste to receive him; and as soon as Sse Yeoupe perceived him, he cried out, "Master, do you know me?"

"Ah! it is the lord Sse!" replied Tsingin: "why should I not know you?" He then led him into the hall of meditations; and after the salutations had been gone through, Sse Yeoupe told the persons of his suite to bring in the presents.

Tsingin received them with many expressions of acknowledgment. "My lord Sse," continued he, "what numberless congratulations I have to make you! I am a poor religious man, buried in the solitude of a village; I was absolutely unacquainted with all that had happened, and therefore could not offer you my compliments."

After tea, Tsingin ordered an apartment to be got ready.

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"Do not give yourself any trouble about an apartment," said Sse Yeoupe. "I come as formerly to ask you for shelter, and a bed in one of your cells."

"My lord Sse," replied Tsingin, "you are at present a man of distinction. I should fear that a simple bed of matting would not be fit for you."

After the conversation had continued for some time, Sse Yeoupe, addressing his host, said—"Is the lord Pe Thaïhiouan at present in good health?"

"He is in good health," replied Tsingin. "In the course of this spring he went on an excursion of pleasure to the western lake, where he remained two or three months. It is now scarce a month since he returned."

"Is the young lady his daughter yet married?" asked Sse Yeoupe.

"As usual, there has been no lack of proposals," replied Tsingin; "but she is not yet married. I heard it said yesterday, that the lord Pe, during his stay at Tchekiang, had promised her to some one, and that the lord Gou had come to speak in favour of a second suitor; that the two parties being in opposition, considerable contest had taken place, but that nothing was yet decided."

"Do you know an inhabitant of the village of Kinchi, named Hoangfou, master?" asked Sse Yeoupe.

Tsingin reflected for a moment. "There may be a thousand inhabitants of the village of Kinchi," replied he. "I go there to beg the rice necessary for each month's consumption. Every house is perfectly well known to me; but I have

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never heard speak of a person of the name of Hoangfou."

"He told me that he was a relative of Pe Thaï-hiouan," added Sse Yeoupe.

"If he be a relation of the lord Pe," observed Tsingin, "he is probably residing at his country house. You need only ask at the mansion, and you will immediately get some account of him."

After supper, Sse Yeoupe begged permission to retire for the night. The next morning, after rising, dressing himself, and breakfasting, he ordered his servants and followers to remain with his sedan chairs and horses at the convent, whilst he dressed in the clothes which he formerly wore, and, accompanied by Siaohi only, walked leisurely towards the village of Kinchi. On approaching, and beholding those hills, and waters, and trees, in the same state as when he saw them last, he felt unutterable emotion at the thought that nothing was as yet concluded with regard to the marriage.

The peach-tree blossoms, the stream flows as before.
Behold young Lieou, the object of so many wishes, returned:
But is the divinity whom he adores still there?
Every thought, every recollection, gives him heart-rending emotion.

While proceeding to the village, Sse Yeoupe continued occupied by his reflections. "I did not foresee," thought he, "that these two marriages were to be discussed in the same village. If I present myself to the lord Pe by the name of Sse, I cannot afterwards call upon Hoangfou. It is better still to keep my name of Lieou, ask for a private intercourse with the lord Hoangfou, reveal frankly

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to him the truth, and then repair without delay to the house of lord Pe."

As soon as he had taken the resolution, he entered the village, and, as he went along, inquired for the house of Hoangfou. Now Pe, who surmised that young Lieou might come to ask for him by that name, had sent some of the servants who had attended him on his journey, to the entrance of the village, to await the coming of Sse Yeoupe. As soon as they saw him approach, they hastened forward to meet him, saying, " Is it really you, Mr Lieou?"

" The same," replied Sse Yeoupe, very well pleased to see them. " Is your master at home?"

" He is, sir, and expects you," replied the servants, who immediately conducted Sse Yeoupe into the eastern wing of the house. They made him sit down, and then hastened to inform the lord Pe, who was greatly rejoiced, and said, " The young Lieou is a man of his word."

He ordered a banquet to be prepared, to which he intended to invite his guest, and then, addressing doctor Gou, said—" I will first go and receive him, and afterwards send some one to beg you to join us."

" All I fear," said the doctor, laughing, " is to find him far beneath what I have heard you say of him."

Pe replied to this pleasantry: " At the first glance, brother, you will acknowledge that he is inferior in nothing to young Sse." He then went to the eastern side of the building. On arriving there, he fixed his eyes upon the person of Sse Yeoupe, in order to examine him attentively; and

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beholding the gracefulness of his figure, the charms of his face, and his light and easy deportment, attributes of youth, he felt his heart swell with joy, and going up to him with a smiling air, he said—"How is it that you have not arrived till now, Mr Lieou? From morning till evening I have been looking out for you."

Sse Yeoupe hastened to make a low bow. "I have been detained several days at Hangtcheou by one of my friends," said he, "which has retarded the visit I proposed having the honour of paying you; I am infinitely culpable."

While speaking thus, they paid each other the accustomed respects. After which they sat down. Pe then, addressing his guest, said, "I have seen by the letter that I have received from you, that the person whom you supposed dead, is not so, and that you have been led into an error by a false report. This is a great subject of joy; but you have not told me whose daughter that person is. You also informed me, that a magistrate undertook to be your go-between; who is the magistrate? And lastly, you had told me that the lord your father had made the voyage to the immortals; how then can you say, that the marriage in question has been concluded by the lord your father?"

"Things are now come to that point, that I must no longer conceal anything from you. I shall now tell you the whole truth. It is a long time since my respectable father quitted the world; but last year a fraternal uncle took me into his house, and adopted me for his son. The young lady is no other than the person of whom we spoke some time ago, the

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daughter of Pe Thaïhiouan. The magistrate who has undertaken the part of go-between, is the great historiographer Gou Touïan."

These words threw Pe into an extreme surprise. "I have heard," said he, "that the person for whom Gou Touïan interested himself, was Sse Yeoupe. Since what period have you given him a similar commission, Mr Lieou?"

Sse Yeoupe arose, and making a profound obeisance before Pe, said—"I am very culpable; my name is not Lieou; I am really Sse Yeoupe himself."

This declaration filled Pe with joy and astonishment.

"This is a most extraordinary occurrence," he exclaimed. "Sit down, sir, I beg of you, and permit me to ask you a question. In the letter of introduction that had been given you, Mr Sse, it was mentioned that you had been appointed judge at Hangtcheou: how came it to pass that I met you during my excursion, traversing the country under a fictitious name?"

"The sole reason," replied Sse Yeoupe, "was, that the governor Yang had a daughter whom he wished me to marry. My refusal provoked his resentment, and he took every occasion to annoy and embarrass me. As I was then under his orders, I knew not how to avoid the effects of his malice but by sending in my resignation, changing my name, and escaping the pursuit he had made after me, by going to Chanyin and the grotto of the emperor Ju. It was in this manner that I came to meet your excellency."

"What!" exclaimed Pe, "old Yang still con-

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tinues to exercise his malignity! But tell me who gave you intelligence of the death of Pe Thaïhiouan's daughter?"

" It was Tchangfanjou who had told it to me," replied Sse Yeoupe. " The governor, knowing that my affections were placed upon the daughter of Pe, had engaged him to tell me that falsehood, for the purpose of destroying my hopes."

" What an odious thing that one should be the laughing-stock of such wretches!" cried Pe. " Mr Sse," added he, smiling, " since you have an old engagement with Pe Thaïhiouan, and that Gou Touïan is your go-between, the fate of your marriage may be compared to a piece of richly embroidered silk; but upon what ground will you place me?"

" I was alone, abandoned, poor, a prey to adversity, my appearance had nothing that indicated a man favoured by fortune, and I had not the support of any powerful men to interest you in my favour. After the first glance that your excellency deigned to cast upon me, you overwhelmed me with benefits by promising to grant me a double union; I may well say that it was you who accelerated the approach of happiness towards me. The affection with which so amiable a conduct has inspired me will last to my extreme old age, and it is that which induces me to come here now, and prostrate myself at the foot of your staircase, to solicit your orders. Could I permit myself, after the example of a despicable world, to obscure by clouds the light that shines at the gate of a sage, and draw upon myself the railleries of all those who know me?"

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Pe began to laugh. "Mr Sse," said he, "you evince great delicacy, and it must be acknowledged that you are not one of those men whose sentiments are changed by new-made honours; but what can I do to maintain the discussion? The best thing I can do, is to give way to Pe Thaïhiouan."

"Were such an arrangement to take place, you would give a proof of perfect virtue, and I should shew myself guilty of great ingratitude. I still hope that your excellency will find some means to accommodate matters."

"All that may be settled; but there is a point in which *I* am culpable, and which I ought to make known to you."

"How can you say so?" replied Sse Yeoupe. "Have the kindness to let me know what you mean."

"My name is not Hoangfou," replied Pe: "I am, Mr Sse, the Pe Thaïhiouan of whom you have been speaking."

At these words, Sse Yeoupe was seized with unutterable astonishment. "What!" cried he, "then your excellency was only jesting in what you said to me during your excursion! I have been all this time in a dream."

Both, looking at each other, burst into a loud fit of laughter, and Pe immediately sent to pray the the lord Gou his brother-in-law to come and join him.

In a short time, Dr Gou appeared; and when, instead of young Lieou, he saw Sse Yeoupe sitting down, he eagerly asked for an explana-

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tion. " I understood," said he, " that it was young Lieou who had come to pay you a visit: how happens it, on the contrary, that I find Mr Liansian here?"

Sse Yeoupe immediately saluted him, laughed, and remained silent. Pe, who was also laughing, said, " You will be told that, when you shall have performed your salutations."

As soon as the doctor and Sse Yeoupe had rendered to each other the accustomed respects, they sat down; and the doctor, being convinced that there must be some motive for their mirth, insisted upon knowing it. " You wish to see young Lieou," replied Pe, still laughing. " There he is!" added he, pointing to Sse Yeoupe.

" What do you mean?" cried Dr Gou, quite confounded.

Pe then gave him a detailed account of all that had previously happened. " What a multiplicity of cross purposes!" exclaimed Dr Gou, bursting into a loud laugh. " I told you that I had never heard speak of young Lieou amongst the scholars of Kinling. I told you also that amongst the young men of the empire, there was no one could surpass Mr Sse, but Mr Sse himself." Then, turning towards Pe, " Brother," said he, " in consequence of your not having been deterred by so many obstacles from making choice of Mr Sse, and your having entered without the least hesitation into a marriage engagement with him, it may be said that you have the eye of a magistrate. Such a proof of discernment inspires me with great respect."

" It is not in this instance that I have dis-

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played it," said Pe, laughing. "But the opinion I had of his merit, was communicated to me by yourself, my dear brother."

"How can the reed and the rush," said Sse Yeoupe, "have any charms for your lordships, accustomed as you are to reflect the images of the most elegant plants?"

The pleasure which they enjoyed in conversing together was not to be exhausted. In a short time the servants brought in the collation. All three took their places to do it honour; and as this time Sse Yeoupe was to fill the place of son and and son-in-law, he put himself at the end of the table, which was cross-ways. The conversation was carried on gaily, animated by feelings of real satisfaction.

They remained at table the half of the day; and when the collation was over, one of the servants took it away.

Pe and his two guests quitted the table, and resumed their conversation. After some time, Sse Yeoupe, choosing a favourable moment, said to Pe, "Your son-in-law has still something to communicate to you."

"Upon what subject?" asked Pe.

"I received yesterday, by chance, some intelligence of the person who I told you a little while back was obliged to fly from persecution. I have discovered a clue that will guide me to her."

"And according to that clue, where may she be?" asked Pe.

"What I have been told is very singular," replied Sse Yeoupe. "I have been assured, my dear

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father-in-law, that I shall hear of her, if I make inquiries in your mansion."

"That is no doubt very singular," observed Pe, laughing. "Why should they tell you to apply to me for information? To what family in Kiangnan does she belong?"

"She is not from Kiangnan, but from Chantoung, and of the house of Lo," replied Sse Yeoupe.

"I knew in Chantoung a certain Lo Yihoung, but he has been dead a long time. His son is still very young. How could you have made any acquaintance in the house of a widow woman, Mr Sse? And who has been able to act as go-between for you?"

"Last year," replied Sse Yeoupe, "I passed through Chantoung on my way to court. Having been stopped and plundered by robbers, I found myself in a very embarrassing situation, being unable to continue my journey, or return home. Chance brought me acquainted with a certain counsellor Li, who asked me to write some verses for him, he promising to supply me with money to continue my journey. He in consequence invited me to his residence. The house of Li happened to be contiguous to that of Lo; and as I was walking before the back garden gate, young Lo came by chance to walk in the same place. We met; a mutual interchange of sentiments ensued, and we were soon intimately acquainted. He furnished me with the expenses of my journey, and at the same time told me that he had a younger sister with whom he promised to make me tie the *knot of silk*."

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"Tell me, Mr Sse, what age was this young son of the house of Lo?" asked Pe. "What kind of a looking person was he?"

"The young man," replied Sse Yeoupe, "was sixteen years of age last year. He is now seventeen: his face is charming, and full of delicacy; his complexion is as brilliant as the tree of jasper agitated by the breath of the breeze. When we stood opposite each other, his countenance exhaled the modesty that animated his bosom."

"When you quitted the capital, and returned through Chantoung, did you again meet him, sir?" asked Pe.

"I hoped to have seen him in passing through Chantoung on my return from the capital. Unfortunately, the front and back gates of Lo's house were closely shut and sealed, and there was no one in the interior. I made various inquiries of counsellor Li; but all he could tell me was, that the family, which was composed of a widow, a young girl, and a little boy five or six years old, being menaced with persecution, had gone to Kiangnan; that moreover there was no young man of the age of sixteen or seventeen belonging to the family. I also questioned a certain Tsian Hiaolian, who assured me of the same thing; so that for some time it appeared to me that I had been in a dream, not being otherwise able to account for such an illusion. But yesterday, at the house of one of my friends, I found by chance a letter from Mr Lo. I have begun again to believe in his existence, and to be convinced that the previous information given me was not conformable to truth. However, in this letter, he merely tells me to make

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inquiries about him at your mansion. What does this recommendation mean?"

"What is this young Lo's surname?" asked Pe.

"His sirname is Mengli," replied Sse Yeoupe.

"He must have had some motive for telling you to inquire about him at my house," said Pe. "With your permission, we shall return to this subject another time."

"You came here on foot, Mr Sse," said doctor Gou. "Where did you leave your chairs and horses?"

"Some distance from this, at the convent of Kouanyin in the village of Pechi," replied Sse Yeoupe. "I used formerly to lodge there."

"That convent is too distant," said Pe. "Why do you not bring them here? It would be then more easy for us to meet and converse morning and evening:" and he immediately ordered his servants to go for Sse Yeoupe's baggage. Towards the approach of night, another collation was brought in. All three re-commenced talking more briskly than before, and drinking with fresh ardour, till the second watch *, when they separated. Sse Yeoupe remained in the oriental wing of the building where he had been received, and Pe and the doctor returned to their apartments; the doctor went to sleep in the pavilion of rural dreams, and Pe entered the inner apartment, where the effects of the banquet soon put him to sleep.

The next morning, after he had got up and dressed, he told Yansou to acquaint her young

* Nine o'clock in the evening.

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mistress that he wished to speak to her. Miss Pe had the evening before learned that young Lieou was no other than young Sse, with which intelligence she and Miss Lo had been enraptured. She accordingly obeyed with great alacrity the orders of her father. On seeing her approach, Pe began to laugh. "Well," said he, "young Lieou is young Sse. Your uncle made no mistake in becoming his go-between; nor was your father mistaken in the choice he made of a son-in-law. There was no error when he was put at the head of the list, when he was distinguished at the examination, and when he was appointed to an office. You see that upon all occasions they who have real merit receive the recompense."

"It is then the same person?" said Miss Pe. "Who could have foreseen so many cross purposes! What a deal of trouble all this has caused you, father!"

"All this is now of no consequence," said Pe; "but here is another question:" and he told her what he had heard from Sse Yeoupe with regard to his adventure in the Lo family. "It is clear," said he, "that it was my niece with whom he had this adventure; for who could the young man be whom he saw?"

"My sister Mengli had already informed me of this affair," said Miss Pe. "Her father was no more, her brother was only an infant, her mother led the retired life of a widow, and had no means of choosing a son-in-law. She was afraid that she should die without finding a husband. She therefore resolved to take advantage of a circumstance: she put on male attire, and contrived to

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have an interview with the young Mr Sse. She gave him gold, and entered into an engagement with him. All this is the exact truth; and now, father, I earnestly hope that you will do the rest for her."

Pe was extremely satisfied with what he now heard. "Still, so young," said he, "I should not have imagined that she could have displayed so much address. My first project was to give you both in marriage to young Lieou: now you will both marry young Sse; that comes to the same thing. It is easy to see that his wishes are in accordance with our desires; both the one and the other shall be satisfied, and that will be bringing matters to an extremely happy issue. I see no objection to it. You may acquaint her with it; but you must not say a word of all this before your aunt."

Miss Pe undertook the commission of her father, while he and Dr Gou went to the eastern side of the building. After a triple salutation, Pe, addressing Sse Yeoupe, said, "I have made very minute inquiries with regard to what you yesterday confided to me about Lo Mengli; such a person does, in fact, exist."

Sse Yeoupe, delighted by this assurance, asked—"And where is my brother Lo? Can I not see him?"

"The place into which Lo Mengli has retired, does not permit him at present to have an interview with you," replied Pe. "But I have it in my power, if you are so inclined, to give you his sister in marriage."

"I am not," said Sse Yeoupe, "one of those who, as soon as they have reached the land of

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Loung, turn their eyes towards Chou. I have obtained the object of my wishes, and I have nothing further to desire; but I was poor, stripped of everything upon a high road, reduced to the extremity of distress, when, at the first word, and after having seen me only in profile, Lo Mengli came to my aid. His generosity supplied my wants by offering me thirty ounces of silver, and adding to this loan the gift of bracelets and pearls; besides this, he engaged that this marriage should take place; he shewed the warmest and tenderest affection: he could not have treated me better, had I been one of the sages of antiquity. Now that fortune has given me rank, if I should break off my previous engagements, I should be like the dog who, after gnawing the bones, abandons them."

"That is impossible! that cannot be!" cried Dr Gou. "But it may be said, that Mengli knew how to judge of men, and make good use of his generosity."

"It is right to recompence him for it," said Pe. "We shall with pleasure witness the fulfilment of his engagement. But I fear we cannot do as much for this niece of mine, whom I promised to you some time ago. It is not permitted to have three wives in the same house."

"Mengli is an amiable scholar, father-in-law," said Sse Yeoupe. "Why would you not give him your niece in marriage."

"We shall speak of that hereafter," said Pe.

The conversation continued in this tone, and in the course of it mention was made of the exchange of verses upon the vernal willows, practised by

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Tchangfanjou, and of the knavery of Sse Yeoute, when he presented himself with a letter under the name of another. These two adventures produced considerable laughter. " Now that I am honoured with your affection," said Sse Yeoupe, " and that all these important affairs are concluded, let us forget these trifling incidents of the past time. Besides, these two men are old acquaintances; and I hope that you will deign to receive them as before, and show thereby that you know how to pardon."

" Your idea agrees perfectly with my own sentiments," replied Pe; and immediately he told a servant to take two visiting cards; to carry one to Mr Tchangfanjou, and the other to Mr Sse Yeoute; to tell them that the lord Sse was at the house, and to invite them to come and seat themselves by him. Shortly after, they both came, one after the other; their conduct was very respectful, and the entire company remained in the oriental wing of the building, diverting themselves.

In the mean time the inspector-general Sse, on his return to take the orders of the court, learned the restoration of Sse Yeoupe to the degree of doctor of the grand academy, at which he was extremely rejoiced.

He saw now that he had a successor in the following generation; and as he himself took no pleasure in exercising the functions of a magistrate, he wrote a memorial in which he pretended illness. At the same time he stated his regret to the chamber of inspectors-general, and after reiterated entreaties, he procured his name to be withdrawn from the list of disposable inspectors until the

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period of his recovery, when he should be able to resume his functions.

When Sse obtained the decree, he left the capital without delay, and first went to his own house in the province of Honan, where he remained a month. He afterwards set out for Kinling, in order to conclude Sse Yeoupe's marriage. As soon as the news of his arrival reached the village of Kinchi, Sse Yeoupe hastened to take leave of Pe and Dr Gou, and went to receive his father at Kinling, in the house which he had formerly inhabited. It was the very same day that the inspector-general Sse arrived. The father and son were greatly rejoiced to see each other. It was not long before Sse inquired in what stage was the intended marriage. Sse Yeoupe then related to him the proposals that governor Yang had made to him; how, having changed his name, he had met Hoangfou; how on his return every thing had been cleared up; and concluded by recounting his adventure with Lo Mengli, from beginning to end. The inspector-general listened with great satisfaction to all these circumstances. "What astonishing events and strange incidents are there in the affairs of this world!" he exclaimed. "Another day we shall resume this agreeable conversation."

The magistrates of the city and of the neighbouring districts, having heard of his arrival, came to pay him their respects. The invitations followed: and banquets and importunate politenesses of all species, left them not a moment of repose. In a conversation which the inspector-general Sse and Sse Yeoupe had upon this subject, the former said—"The noise and dissipation of the city render it

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insupportable; let us go and seek for a residence in the village of Kinchi. We shall become neighbours of the lord Pe, and you will be more conveniently placed for the prosecution of your marriage. In the next place, Pe has no small children: you will be his stay and support, and you will prevent him from feeling the sadness of solitude and abandonment. In fine, the tranquil life of a village, with the prospect of hills and waters, and the society of the lord Pe, will have charms to beguile my old age."

"My lord," replied Sse Yeoupe, "your idea appears to me an excellent one." And, in fact, the next morning the father and son went to the village of Kinchi. After the salutations addressed to them by Pe, Dr Gou, Tchangfanjou, and Sse Yeoute, the inspector-general Sse made known to Pe the design he had to fix his residence at Kinchi. Pe was charmed with the idea, and immediately sent to inquire for a large mansion in the village, for the acquisition of which he advised the inspector-general Sse to pay a thousand pieces of gold. In a short time Sse fixed his dwelling there.

Preparations were then made for the grand banquet. Dr Gou was prevailed upon to undertake the direction of the nuptials. Tchangfanjou undertook the part of go-between with regard to Miss Pe, and Sse Yeoute performed the same function with regard to Miss Lo. A fortunate day was fixed upon, and a double display of nuptial presents were prepared, and sent at the same time to Pe's house; Pe retained one collection for himself, and had the other conveyed to Mrs Lo, who accepted them. A great number of persons were invited to the feast, and the joy of all parties was at its acmé.

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After the ceremony of the nuptial presents, the inspector-general chose another day, and one of the most fortunate, to celebrate the marriage. Sse Yeoupe was then twenty-one years of age. His very recent admission amongst the body of academicians, his graceful appearance, his well-known talents, raised him above all other men. Every one repeated his praises, and shewed him marks of affection. Miss Pe was eighteen years of age, and Miss Lo seventeen. Renown had already spread far and wide the talents, the virtues, and graces, of these two charming girls.

When the day of the wedding arrived, the inspector-general Sse had preparations made for a grand banquet of ceremony. Two large bamboo chairs with embroidered ornaments had been constructed, and painted lanterns were placed all along the road at both sides. Drums and musical instruments resounded without interruption. Sse Yeoupe, mounted upon a superb horse which proudly threw up his head, appeared with a black gauze cap upon his head, buskins of the same colour upon his feet, and around his neck a large purple scarf. The officers of the grand academical college, and of the chamber of inspectors-general, accompanied him, ranged in a double file. He advanced in this manner to meet his wives. Along the whole of the way fireworks were played off, the sound of which re-echoed to the sky. Tumult and joy attained their utmost pitch.

The two young ladies, clothed in golden stuffs with ornaments of precious stones, appeared to be the daughters of the king of the immortals. They respectfully took leave of the lord Pe and Mrs Lo,

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and mounted into the chair, their faces bathed in tears. Pe on account of the intimacy did not observe the vulgar custom. Clothed in a festal garment of the second order, he ascended a chair carried by four bearers, and accompanied by the officers belonging to his department, came himself to be present at the ceremony. Dr Gou, also clothed in festal garments, was carried in a large chair. Tchangfanjou and Sse Yeoute, wearing caps, dressed in blue, and mounted upon prancing horses whose heads were decked with flowers and scarlet streamers, were the two marshals of the procession, which upon this occasion was as brilliant as if it were for the reception of a doctor.

The ringing of bells, and the sound of drums, were joined to the harmony of the lute and the guitars.
A perfect union spread joy amongst all the spectators.
The niece to whom they had given shelter doubled the charms of such an alliance.
The sparrow hangs his nest to the branches of two trees;
The moon remains suspended over the scarlet tissues that adorn the windows of the pavilion.
Before the door a gilded victim replaces the seductive flowers.
The immortal who has attained the object of his desires tastes a new joy.
These are not the songs of the book of verses: it is the melody of the great Chun.

In a little time the chairs arrived before the gate. Those who were in them descended, and entered the saloon of the principal body of the building. Sse Yeoupe stood in the middle, having the two brides, one on his left, the other on his right; and

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in this position made his salutation to the inspector-general Sse, and to his other relations. This ceremony being concluded, the musicians entered the apartment of the women. The inspector-general Sse remained without, in the company of the lord Pe, Dr Gou, Tchangfanjou, and Sse Yeoute. Three tables were laid out in the hall for the banquet. Sse Yeoupe dined with the two brides. He threw a stolen glance under the perfumed tapers upon Miss Pe, upon that beauty really capable of attracting the fish from the bottom of the abysses, bringing down the crane from the heights of heaven, eclipsing the light of the moon, of making the flowers blush; and of which it might be said, that there was nothing exaggerated in the reputation it had. This sight threw him into a perfect rapture. He afterwards directed his looks to Miss Lo; and, struck with the extreme resemblance that he found in her to Lo Mengli, he could not help asking himself with astonishment if it were possible for a sister to be so very like a brother. The troop of handmaids who stood around them, did not permit him to open the conversation; and he was obliged to confine to his own breast the joyful emotions with which he felt himself transported, until the moment when the company separated, and each one was at liberty to retire to his own apartment.

In the interior court there were two pavilions, surmounted by a single story, and placed opposite each other to the left and right. The pavilion on the left was destined for Miss Pe, that on the right belonged to Miss Lo. Sse Yeoupe went first to Miss Pe's apartment, and in a conversation which for them was full of charms, they recalled to mind

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the origin of their mutual passion, the verses upon the vernal willows, and the two pieces of poetry upon the farewell to the crane and the welcome of the swallow. Miss Pe did not affect the airs of an inmate of the inner apartment, but her answer constantly shewed the union that existed between their sentiments.

After this interview Sse Yeoupe passed to the apartment of Miss Lo. "Where is your eldest brother Mengli now?" he asked her.

"I have no eldest brother: Mengli is the name of your humble servant," replied she.

Sse Yeoupe, very much astonished, again asked her, "Were you the person, madam, whom I formerly met near the rock?"

"Be good enough to ascertain that yourself, sir," she answered, smiling: "I cannot tell you."

"Here is," cried Sse Yeoupe, bursting into a laugh, "a dream of six months dissipated in a day. I had, it is true, before this some suspicion of the truth: for I thought it impossible that the world could contain so charming a young man."

After this conversation, Sse Yeoupe returned to Miss Pe, to whom he related the discovery he had made, which amused them for some time. Then, as Miss Pe was a year older than her cousin, it was in her pavilion that Sse Yeoupe remained this first night of the marriage. A poet full of ardour, and a charming woman animated with reciprocal tenderness, must have enjoyed with transport the happiness of being together.

The following day Sse Yeoupe went to the lord Pe, to make him the customary acknowledgments. All the company passed the whole day in feasting.

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On his return, Sse Yeoupe ordered a collation to be served up to himself and the two brides. He showed to Miss Lo the verses upon the vernal willows, which he had formerly composed to prescribed rhymes, the 'farewell to the crane' and the 'welcome of the swallow.' These pieces of poetry were again relished and admired. Afterwards Sse Yeoupe shewed Miss Pe the golden bracelets and pearl necklace which Miss Lo had lent to him. "I did not foresee," said the latter, "that that first movement of tenderness would have become the foundation of a felicity that must last all my life."

It was in the apartment of Miss Lo that Sse Yeoupe passed the second night. It was upon the pillow that she related to him the particulars of her adventure, when she had quitted the dress of her sex. This account augmented still more Sse Yeoupe's tenderness.

From this moment, the reciprocal esteem and affection with which Sse Yeoupe and his two wives were animated, continued constantly to increase. The most perfect harmony reigned between them. Sse Yeoupe, who preserved a grateful recollection of the good offices Yansou had rendered him, spoke to his wives on the subject, and took her into his service.

The inspector-general Sse felt no inclination to resume his functions: he preferred passing the evening of his days in the society of Pe. Some time afterwards he disposed of his possessions in the province of Honan, and transferred his establishment to Kinling.

Dr Gou did not resign his situation. The functions which he had to perform as an acade-

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mician, occupied him but a few days, and left him a good deal of leisure. This time he passed in amusing himself with his two friends. When governor Yang learned how matters had turned out, he sent, by express, presents and felicitations. After some time, Sse Yeoupe was obliged to go to court, to fulfil the duties of his office; but he remained there only a month or two, for the recollection of his two wives soon obliged him to solicit permission to return. As his road lay through the province of Chantoung, he profited of the circumstance to put in order the domestic concerns of Mrs Lo. They waited till the son had grown up, to give him the management of them. At this period the licentiate Tsian had just been appointed sub-prefect, and had set out to enter upon the duties of his office. Counsellor Li was still in his former house, and invited Sse Yeoupe to dine with him twice.

After his return home, Sse Yeoupe never indulged in any other recreations than composing in verse or prose with his two wives. He never thought of quitting the house. At the examination which followed, he had the direction of one of the sections; and on another occasion he presided at the examination of the province of Tchekiang, and collected round him a great number of disciples. He was afterwards named superintendent of the department of literary affairs; and as he had no taste for magisterial functions, he did not return to the court. Tchangfanjou and Sse Yeoute made use of his credit to obtain by purchase literary titles. The first was named commissary adjunct, and the second secretary in an office.

The lord Pe found in the inspector-general Sse

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a companion to his taste; besides, he saw continually Sse Yeoupe and his two wives: he therefore could know nothing of the ennui of solitude. In course of time young Mrs Pe brought into the world two sons, and Mrs Lo gave birth to one; and as about this time Yinglang died, Sse Yeoupe offered Pe his second son to replace him. These three young boys became in their turn distinguished scholars at the examinations.

Whatever crosses Sse Yeoupe might have suffered on account of his double marriage, the manner in which the matter terminated had well recompensed them. He enjoyed during thirty or forty years, with his two wives, all the happiness that love can afford. Is not this narrative worthy of figuring amongst the beautitul histories which have come down to us from antiquity?

The following verses were written in praise of the lord Pe.

Just and incapable of fear, his mission to the Tartars proved his courageous devotion;
Wine and poetry formed the amusement of his life;
Smiling reason, a taste for music and books, never quitted him;
Such a man is a brilliant embroidery upon the summit of a peak.

Some verses were also consecrated to the particular praise of Sse Yeoupe.

His youth, his talent, make him resemble the blue nenuphar of the most celebrated of poets.
Without caring about destiny—he attached himself only to an accomplished fair one.
His strength and his life will probably be exhausted;
But heaven, in its mercy, has gifted him with two charming wives.

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Here follow the verses that celebrated the virtues of Miss Pe.

From the depth of the women's pavilion she made her love for talent shine out;
Verses and poetry were the go-betweens for her marriage.
Let it not be said that in quitting the paternal mansion she has carried away with her the snow sparkling with whiteness;
This other wonder, the vernal willows, will render illustrious the house of Pe.

There were also some composed in praise of Miss Lo.

Her piercing eye from the top of a pavilion discovered all the merit of a man;
It was to the present which she offered him, that she confided the care of her whole life's happiness.
Never did a more beautiful face thus shew itself amongst the flowers.
Talent and generosity were united to form her heart.

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SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES,

SUPPLIED BY

J. H. PICKFORD, Esq.,
Member of the Asiatic Society of Paris.

Page 1, last line but one, "*silver.*"

About £6 5*s.*

Page 2, line 27, "*fortunate day.*"

Vide previous note, Vol. I.

Page 4, first word, "*money.*"

In the text, literally *five-tenths;* a *tenth* is a small copper coin worth 7½*d.*, and is the tenth of an ounce.

Page 5, line 6, "*silver.*"

£31 5*s.*

Note. Page 6, last line.

The Chinese are the most ceremonious people in the world; there is nothing for which they have so high a veneration as for their rites and ceremonies, these being, according to Du Halde, rather so many laws, than fashions introduced by custom. One of their books contains *three thousand* rules of politeness, to watch over the due performance of which a *tribunal of rites* is established, which will not even exempt foreign ambassadors from their observance.

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Page 19, line 7, "*miles from this.*"

About five English miles.

Page 31, line 24, "*master of the house.*"

Literally in the Chinese text, *guestly and masterly.*

Page 52, line 5, "*silver.*"

About £37 10*s.*

Page 55, note, (erratum.

Scarcely three English miles.

Page 61, fourth line from the bottom, "*ounces.*"

£6 5*s.* *or* £9 7*s.* 6*d.*

Page 69, seventh line from the bottom, "*Mourre.*"

The *Tsae mei*, the game at which the *fair divines* are here represented as playing, is a very universal one, and appears to exist in almost every nation. It is the *Morra* of the Italians, the *Munke* of the Germans, and the *Mourre* of the French. It is also met with in Spain, and is well known in Greece; indeed, a celebrated modern Greek poet, Solomos of Zante, has made an allusion to it in one of his compositions. It is played in Scotland and also in Ireland, and is not, I believe, wholly unknown in our own country, though less so than in those above named; on which account I shall endeavour to give an idea of the manner in which it is played and in what it consists.

The *Mourre* of the French may be considered as two distinct games, the one *(micatio digitorum)* consists in one of the parties quickly holding up one or more of his fingers,

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and calling out a higher number than those make which he holds up; the other party must instantly, and without consideration, hold up as many of his, the number of which added to that indicated by the fingers of his opponent, will amount to the number called by the latter: thus, if the one hold up *two* and call out *five*, the second must instantly hold up *three* of his to complete the number named; in the event of an error, the party failing has to pay a fine. This game is very common in the south of France and in Italy, where men and women may be repeatedly seen playing at it.

The other division of the *Mourre* is that played by young girls on the petals of flowers when seeking for sweethearts, and it is at this game the fair Chinese are supposed to be playing. A margaret or chrysanthemum is the flower usually selected: the little one begins by plucking off one of the petals, saying at the same time, *Il m'aime un peu:* for the second, *beaucoup:* for the third, *passionnément*, and for the fourth, *pas du tout*. She then commences again with the same words and in the same order, until she arrives at the last petal, and according as the corresponding word happens to be, *much* or *little*, &c., so is she beloved by the object of her researches. The *Morra* of the Italians and *Munke* of the Germans correspond exactly to both these different games. In Greece, the latter seems to be chiefly known, though I have met with some Greeks who were not wholly unacquainted with the former. The Spanish girls have also a mode of divining with grapes after the same manner. In Germany the young ladies pursue their investigations somewhat farther than their fair neighbours the French: plucking the petals in the same way, they pronounce the words, *Edelmann, Bettelmann, Pfaff, Soldat, Student, (nobleman, beggur, parson, soldier, student,)* thus learning the *quality* of their lover; they then take another of the same kind of flowers, and repeat the following words, plucking off a petal for each: *Er libet mich von Hertzen—mit Schmertzen—*

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klein wenig—nein gar nicht. (He loves me with his heart—with smarts—very little—not at all.) Sometimes, however, they only repeat the words, *he loves me, he loves me not,* in succession, and indeed Goëthe, in his original and extraordinary composition, *Faust,* makes Margaret pluck an aster when in the garden with Faust, and repeat these words to see if she be loved by him. The Grecian ladies chiefly employ the latter words, but repeat their operations on three flowers; it therefore results that they must have the same word twice out of thrice, and this of course is very decisive.

The Chinese, it appears, are acquainted with both these games, the one with the flowers and that with the fingers: the latter is much used by the Manderins; they may be seen sitting together amusing themselves playing at it, and not unfrequently, in the absence of others, with their servants. In Italy, France, and Germany, the *micatio digitorum,* however, is confined exclusively to the vulgar.

Note. Page 70, "*Chinese ink.*"

I have seen in a Chinese Encyclopædia a minute and interesting detail of the manner of preparing their ink through all its stages: that is considered the best which is procured by burning old pines in a furnace, divided into three compartments or chambers: of this the coarser sort is employed in making printer's ink, whilst the finer kind, being mixed with musk, camphor, and other perfumes, to correct any unpleasant odour it may have, is formed into the consistence of paste, with a size obtained from the hide of animals, chiefly, however, from that of the ass, and put into wooden moulds of the desired forms. The Chinese author gives us two modes of ascertaining its purity—the one is to mix a small portion with a moderate quantity of water: if it fall to the bottom of the glass, it is coarse and not good; if, on the contrary, it swim on the surface of the water, or remain sus-

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pended in it, it is of the finer kind and of a superior quality. The other mode is to strike it smartly with a hammer; if it be brittle, and break readily into many pieces, and the fracture be shining, it is good; but if it be not frangible, and if the fracture instead of shining be dull, it is of an inferior kind, and probably adulterated. Lamp black is also obtained from olive oil, but is not so much esteemed as that procured from pines. An active man, says our author, may attend to two hundred lamps, his business being to brush off the lamp black from a sheet of metal suspended over the lamp upon which it is collected. The same writer finishes the article by saying good ink is a valuable remedy for *burns*, and mitigates the pain instantaneously. He recommends it to be rubbed up with water to the consistence of cream, and smeared on the burned part with a brush: this is to be very frequently repeated, and then allowed to dry and remain on for some hours.

Page 88, sixth line from the bottom, "*thirty ounces.*"

£9 7*s*. 6*d*.

Page 103, fourth line from the bottom, "*the judge passed by.*"

Failing to shew this mark of respect would infallibly have subjected him to several blows of the bamboo from the judges, officers, or *lictors*, by whom mandarins are always accompanied when they go out.

Page 105, line 12, "*miles.*"

Eight and half, *or* eleven and half English miles.

Page 105, line 17 "*miles.*"

About two miles.

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Page 106, line 3, "*hanging down.*"

Children of both sexes up to the age of fifteen, allow their hair to grow and wear it naturally, but after this period the boys shave all off except a little lock behind, which they either plait and make into a long *queue*, or tuck up under their caps: this custom was introduced by the Tartars at the conquest; prior to which period, they did not shave their heads, but rolled their hair up in a bunch upon the crown of the head. We are told that the head-dress of the women usually consists of several curls, interspersed with little tufts of gold and silver flowers: some deck their heads with the figure of the *fong-wang*, *phœnix*. The young ladies commonly wear a kind of crown made of paste-board (covered with a beautiful silk), of which the forepart rises in a point above the forehead, and is covered with jewels, &c., but on the top of the head, with natural and artificial flowers.

Page 113, third line from the bottom, "*black scarf.*"

The sign of a doctor's degree.

Page 116, line 8, "*ancestors.*"

A custom observed by the Chinese youth on obtaining their degrees, to thank their relations for the care they have bestowed on their education, and to invoke the blessings of the irancestors on their future undertakings.

Page 175, line 13, "*clasp.*"

Vide previous note to page 106, line 3.

Page 188, line 25, "*black gauze.*"

The sign of doctor's degree, as has been previously seen.

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Page 190, line 8, "*mile.*"

Rather more than the quarter of an English mile.

Page 192, line 3, "*forty miles.*"

Eleven and half miles.

Page 198, third line from the bottom, "*silver.*"

Three shillings and three halfpence.

Page 204, line 4, "*miles.*"

Seventeen or twenty miles.

Page 251, line 7 from the bottom, "*politeness.*"

It is customary in China to dismount or alight on meeting superiors or equals, or even persons of an inferior rank, to whom they are anxious to shew great respect.

Page 275, line 17, "*painted lanterns.*"

The lanterns employed on these occasions are of a very splendid description and of a proportionate size, some being at least five feet square. Père le Compte, however, says, one may eat, drink, sleep, rceeive visits, act plays, and dance, in those used at festivals, which are from twenty-five to thirty feet in diameter. These lanterns are beautifully carved and gilt, and consist of several panes of fine silk, rendered transparent by means of a thin varnish, on which are painted all kinds of grotesque figures, ships, horses, &c. Instead of silk, some employ a blue transparent horn, the effect of which is very pleasing. From the top and corners hang long rich streamers. Once a year, a feast of lanterns is celebrated throughout the empire, when every house is

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illuminated with those of the most expensive and beautiful kind: to add to the singular effect of this scene, the most curious and brilliant fire-works (in which the Chinese far surpass every other nation, the use of gunpowder having been known to them from time immemorial) are discharged in every direction. The Mandarins and their relations always have lanterns carried before them at night, on which are written in large characters the title and quality of the Mandarin, with the order of his *Mandarinate*.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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