

Fih-tszc.

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We hold in our hand a volume printed on thin yellow-brown paper, almost exactly the same size and thickness as a monthly number of the *Cornhill Magazine*. Though equal in bulk, its weight is hardly one-half that of the magazine; and so thin is the paper, that the foreign book, although printed only on one side of the sheet, contains about seventy pages more than the English one. The writing runs from top to bottom of the page, as is shown by the dividing lines between the columns. Neither the arrow-headed inscriptions of Ninevite marbles, nor the hieroglyphics of Egyptian papyri, present such an intricate puzzling appearance to the uninitiated eye as do these complicated characters; and yet they are more familiar to our English vision than any other oriental writing; indeed, we may venture to say, than any other foreign language whatever. For there can hardly be man, woman, or child in the British isles, certainly there can be none among the four millions of London, who have not frequently gazed at this strange character where it stares them in the face in every grocer's window upon the sides of tea chests. Owing to its extreme dissimilarity to all other forms of writing, possibly the majority of these gazers never imagine that what they see is intelligible written language, but take it to be grotesque ornamentation, congruous to the willow-pattern plate style of beauty. Yet these queer-looking pages, with their endlessly diversified combinations of crosses and squares, straight lines and flourishes, curves and dots, picture forth to the instructed eye the thoughts and feelings of a heart that ceased to beat thousands of years ago, and a brain long since decomposed to join the dust of a land ten thousand miles away, and that with no less precision than the columns of the morning's *Times*, still damp from the press, reflect the ideas which passed through the editor's mind last night. If thought be but a mode of matter in motion, our brain has been just now agitated by vibrations first set in movement about two thousand three hundred years ago within the skull of a black-haired, yellow-skinned Mongolian, who pondered the mysteries of existence while he cultivated his rice-field, somewhere not far from where the impetuous Hoang-ho turns its turbid rush from a southerly direction eastward. It is curious to review the strange and various media along which the vibrations must have passed from his brain to ours. In his age pen, ink, and paper were yet unknown. Either he himself, or more probably his disciples after him, painfully scratched with a knife's point rude figures on the smooth surface of slips of split bamboo, to record the memories of thoughts they would not willingly let die. As the

centuries rolled on, woven silk was substituted for the wood, and a brush of hair took the place of the graving-tool. Later still this costly material yielded to coarse paper made from the inner bark of trees, ends of hemp, or old fishing nets, and by and bye of the fibre of the very bamboo plant which had afforded the earliest writing-tablets. Centuries before Gutenberg, Faust, and Caxton, this book of tea-chest symbols was once more graven on wood, but now cut in relief on a block of pear-tree wood, from which copies were printed off with ink made of lamp-black and gum. Multiplied by the press, the book held a more secure tenure of existence, though in a country where book-worms and white ants rapidly devour neglected libraries, new editions must have been frequently issued to preserve the work for posterity. Originally the outcome of a human mind, thinking and teaching amid poverty and obscurity, its author could hardly have expected it to be remembered beyond the third or fourth generation, yet here it is, after more than two millenniums, a standard book among millions of reading men in Eastern Asia; and at present it is putting in motion the brain-cells of a red-haired stranger on the banks of the Thames, and perhaps, by means of these pages, may awaken some interesting and not altogether valueless trains of thought in the minds of English readers.

The catalogue of the imperial library of China, commenced by the erudite Lew Heang, and completed by his son Lew Hin about the commencement of the Christian era, enumerated and described upwards of eleven thousand sections* by more than six hundred authors. Three thousand of these contained the classics and their commentators. The remainder were classified under the heads of philosophy, poetry, the military art, mathematical science, and medicine. Of this respectable amount of literature by far the larger portion perished ages ago; the imperial library itself, with nearly its whole contents, being reduced to ashes during an insurrection in the generation succeeding the completion of the catalogue. But this library of the two Lew was only a collection of the scattered and charred fragments of a much larger antecedent literature; a restoration by means of new copies of half-legible tablets disinterred from their hiding-places in gardens, or dug out of old walls, in dilapidated houses. Midway between Leih-tsze's time and the labours of the Lew family, occurred the infamous attempt of that Chinese Vandal, Shih Hwang Te, the first Emperor of China, to annihilate all literature, with slight exceptions, that existed in his dominions, that is, throughout what was to him and his people the whole civilized world. Leih-tsze lived in the feudal age of China, when the area drained by the Yellow River, was divided into a hundred petty kingdoms, dukedoms, and baronies, nominally owning allegiance to one Suzerain, but practically independent. Two centuries after his death, a Chinese Alexander the Great issued from the extreme

* The meaning of *peen*, translated "section," is uncertain. Originally a slip of bamboo, it came to mean a chapter of a book, or a book. Probably it stands for section, or chapter, in the catalogue above referred to, as the authors hardly could have written eighteen or nineteen works apiece.

west of that Eastern *orbis terrarum*, and welded all these states into one great despotic empire. Inflated by an insane pride which could not brook comparison with the mythic glories of the semi-fabulous hero-kings of antiquity, and irritated by the conservatism of the literati, who were to him what the French Legitimists were to Napoleon the First, he resolved to commit to the flames every memorial of the past, in order that the history of humanity might begin with his reign. The attempt failed. Literature was too widely spread, and the love of literature too deeply ingrained in the hearts of the people, for the efforts of a tyrant to exterminate it, even though the monster went to the length of burying alive four hundred and sixty learned men who resisted his decrees. But only those books which possessed the largest amount of inherent vitality could sustain so severe an assault. Among these was this work of Leih-tsze. This suggests to us a remark of some importance. Shih Hwang Te's very objectionable form of bibliomania was happily as exceptional in Chinese history as Khalif Omar's consignment of the library of the Ptolemies to heat the bath fires of Alexandria was in Western history. But apart from any special and extraordinary attacks upon literature, every generation saw multitudes of books perish in China, either through neglect, or in the catastrophes of fire, war, or civil commotion. That this particular book should have survived from the fourth century B.C. to the age of printing, of itself marks it out as worthy of attention. The preface of the earliest extant commentator, Chang Sham, who edited Leih-tsze in the fourth century A.D., gives an interesting glimpse at the process of natural selection which was always going on, preserving a few favoured volumes from the oblivion into which numbers of other works continually lapsed. Chang Sham tells us, "I have heard my father say that his father married a Miss Wong, one of three sisters. Mr. Wong belonged to an old literary family which had a passion for book-collecting, and had become possessed of a vast library. The other Misses Wong also married scholars, and the three young men vied with each other in transcribing rare books. When there ensued a time of confusion in the reign of the Emperor Wai (A.D. 310), he and one of his brothers-in-law fled southward, each one putting as many books as he could into his baggage-waggons. The road, however, was long, and frequent attacks of robbers diminished their load greatly; so he said to the other, 'We cannot save all the books, let us select the rarer ones to preserve them from extinction.' Among those which he himself chose for preservation were the writings of Leih-tsze."

The continued existence of an author through two thousand years of literary vicissitudes, the earlier millennium of which was especially fatal to literature, may not, perhaps, prove its superior fitness to survive, according to our estimate of fitness. But it indicates that the book was congenial to the tastes, and interested the minds, of its preservers. We have met with the complaint on the part of English readers of Chinese translations, that "they contain nothing new." It would be strange, indeed, if Chinese poetry, philosophy, or religion, should contain any ideas abso-

lutely new to those who have inherited the wealth of Sanscrit and Semitic, of Greek and Roman literatures, with all their offspring of later date. The value of a work like this is not in the novelty of its contents, but in the light it throws upon the development of the human mind among a people entirely uninfluenced by our Western progress. We should find great light would be thrown upon many interesting but difficult questions in psychology if we could discriminate always between original and imitative thought. Much which seems to us the purely spontaneous operation of our minds is, no doubt, unconscious reproduction of what has been first put into them from outside. If, however, we could enter into communication with the inhabitants, supposing there to be such, of Venus, Jupiter, and other planets, and upon comparison of the respective conditions and developments of mind in each we should find that the same dominant ideas and principles had manifested and established themselves in other planets as in our own, our conviction that these ideas and principles are not the artificial product of restless, baseless speculation, but the natural and necessary effect of the interaction between mind and the universe in which it works, would be greatly strengthened. The mutual comparison which is impossible for us with those star-dwelling neighbours of ours, we can obtain upon the surface of our own globe, whenever impassable mountain-ranges, and vast breadths of stormy ocean, have isolated any portion of mankind for a time sufficiently long to permit the independent evolution of thought, and its being recorded in literature. Whenever the time comes that science marks out our globe into distinct areas of independent mental evolution, China will occupy a prominent place, making one great division by itself, and affording in its ancient, vast, unbroken stream of literature the richest materials for comparison with the rest of the world. In this article we aim at nothing more than to give the reader a glimpse into the thoughts of an ancient thinker, some might say, dreamer rather, belonging to a long obsolete school of Chinese philosophy.

Conclusive proof of the mental isolation, and, therefore, independence of those old Chinese thinkers is derived from the extant literature itself. This does not militate against the theory that the black-haired race, which has almost obliterated the traces of earlier peoples in Eastern Asia, originally immigrated into the country, probably in successive waves separated by hundreds of years, from some part of Western Asia, taking its long pilgrimage across the sterile plateau of Thibet, and following the course of the Yellow River, until it founded its first permanent settlements on its banks about seven hundred miles from the sea. These immigrants may have brought with them the rudiments of writing, as they doubtless did bring many oral traditions, and habits of thought already formed, or in formation, before they bade a long farewell to the streams of humanity which tended south and west. Something, therefore, we must allow them as their original stock of mental furniture when they came into the land, at an unknown distant date, two, three, or more thousands of years

B.C. That which was strongest and most durable of this primitive floating stock of thought was crystallised in their most ancient books, called the Classics. We can see in these earliest national records that already, when they were first inscribed on the bamboo tablets, all memory of derivation from the West had died out of the minds of the people; and if a portion of their contents came into China from beyond the Western mountains, the earliest scribes had not the faintest sense of the fact. All Chinese literature after this, for about a thousand years, is beyond suspicion purely Chinese. Take our author for example; the whole known world to him extended only about three hundred miles east and west, and about half that distance north and south. All beyond this region was wrapt in Cimmerian darkness. On every hand a fringe of savage tribes surrounded the very limited area of civilisation, through which not the faintest rumour of what existed to the north and south had penetrated, while the ocean to the east was but dimly known by vague report, and the great mountain region to the west was the chosen abode of genii, deified men, and celestial spirits. Confucius, Laou-tsze, Leih-tsze, Yang-Choo, and all other leaders of thought in China for some centuries were either original thinkers, or were indebted to their own national literature only, not a trace of outside influence being discernible in their writings.

Leih-tsze is for us the name of a book rather than of a man. Unlike the great national hero Confucius, whose disciples Boswellized before Boswell, Leih-tsze's personality has left so faint an impression on his literary remains, that he has been taken by some Chinese critics for an imaginary personage. This incredulity we may comfortably waive aside on the high authority of the imperial catalogue of the reigning dynasty, which discusses the question temperately and fairly, and decides that there are no good grounds for doubting that there did live a man by name Leih Yu-kow, [or, as literature quotes him, Leih-tsze, the philosopher Leih, whose teachings were compiled into a book by his disciples, in the form in which we now have it, barring some errors and interpolations which have crept into the text. Beyond the bare fact of his existence in the kingdom of Ch'ing, nearly central among the feudal states, about four hundred years before the Christian era, we have only the most meagre information about him. Though a light of the age, a pupil of distinguished rabbis, and himself the revered master of a band of attached disciples, he was neglected by Government, and lived in obscurity and poverty. Once, indeed, he came into contact with the ruling powers, as the following anecdote shows:—"So poor was Leih-tsze, that he bore the traces of hunger in his emaciated frame. A travelling scholar drew the attention of the Prince of Ch'ing to this, saying, 'In your territory one of the leading teachers of the age lives in extreme poverty; is it because you, O prince, do not love learned men?' The prince immediately sent an officer to carry relief to Leih-tsze. Leih-tsze came out to receive the messenger, and with a double obeisance declined the gift. When he went inside again, his wife taunted him with the reproach, 'I was told

that a philosopher's wife and children were sure to be well off. Here we are all starving, and when the ruler sends us relief, you refuse it. This, no doubt, is an instance of the fate you are always preaching! (Leih-tsze taught necessity and pooh-pooed free will. So his angry spouse seemed to have him on the hip.) But he quietly rejoined, 'The prince only sent his help in consequence of another man's report; he has no personal knowledge of me. Another day he will be listening to some one else's report, and finding me a criminal, that is why I declined the gift.' These philosophers were a proud, at least self-respecting, set, counting it shame to be pensioners on royal bounty, unless royalty respectfully received their admonitions. The narrative intimates that, in this case, Leih-tsze's independence of spirit saved his life during a revolution which succeeded.

We have a peep at the man inside the philosopher's cloak in this next incident. "Leih-tsze started for Tsai, went half-way, and returned. A friend asked, 'Why have you come back?' 'I was afraid,' he replied. 'What made you afraid?' 'On the road I stopped to get a meal at the sign of "The Ten Syrups," and they presented me with a grand dinner.' 'What was there in this to frighten you?' 'Truly it made me very uncomfortable. I thought that if my personal appearance won me such reverence from a poor innkeeper, how much more would it make an impression upon a monarch of ten thousand chariots, who would surely employ me in Government, and ascribe merit to me. On this account I was afraid.' 'Excellent,' replied his mentor, 'I see you know how to conduct yourself. You will come to honour.'" The popularity from which the philosopher shrank, nevertheless, found him out and besieged him in the form of a numerous band of disciples, who showed their respect by taking off their shoes before entering his door. This, again, we are told, is an illustration of destiny. Leih-tsze was to be famous, and he became so, even against his will.

Though a few passing allusions give us all that we can glean of the personal individuality of Leih-tsze, this book, supplemented by other contemporary records, affords a very vivid picture of the state of society in which he moved. We are apt to think that times so far anterior to our own must still have retained lingering traces of primeval arcadian simplicity of thought and manners. But we are introduced by these pages to a highly artificial state of civilization, which felt itself removed by immense spaces of time from the youth of the world. Kings and nobles feasted in their halls, rode out in four-horse chariots to the chase or the battle; minstrels, jugglers, mechanics crowded to their courts for employment and reward. Ladies sighed in the harems, or plotted with eunuchs to secure the advancement of their own children in place of the legitimate heir. Travelling statesmen and philosophers wandered from court to court with the latest recipe for establishing universal peace, and bringing mankind under one sway. Below them all was the great mass of the people engaged in trade, handicrafts, and the cultivation of the soil, but liable to be called upon for military service, and frequently

suffering the calamities of war. In this highly complex condition of society there were a few men who, instead of taking existence as they found it, laboured to discover its secret, or to amend its conditions. Some of these, by the fame of their learning or their wisdom, attracted disciples around them, and thus established informal schools, where the instruction was chiefly oral and by example, and in which keen debate upon the principles of philosophy and ethics was frequent. Among such self-constituted teachers Leih-tsze held a distinguished place, and to the admiration of his disciples we owe this record of his doctrines from which we will now present some specimens.

Mr. G. H. Lewes, after reviewing the history of philosophy from Thales to Kant and Hegel, considers that he has abundantly proved the barrenness of all metaphysics and the impossibility of ontology. These conclusions we do not venture to dispute. His numerous examples from Ancient Greece and Modern Europe might be paralleled by a third department in which the metaphysics of China should be exhibited, and India, of course, would add a crowded fourth. This agreement in prosecuting inquiries so inevitably barren seems to indicate an innate tendency in the human mind to ask these questions, unanswerable though they be. Granted that it is utterly impossible for man ever to extricate himself from the great stream of phenomena of which he is himself part, and to survey from the lofty altitude of absolute perception the realities of being, which here he knows only in its relations, will he ever learn to be contented in his necessary ignorance? A few thousands of generations more may perhaps evolve a human race which shall be incapable of curiosity about these profoundest speculations; and the man of the future, having thoroughly acquiesced in the hereditary conviction that truth is but the order of ideas corresponding to the order of phenomena, may have ceased even to scorn metaphysics as equivalent to inquiring about lunar politics, because the very memory that once such contemplations possessed irresistible fascination for the human mind shall have been long lost. If so, the future will be very unlike the past and the present, and for ourselves we acknowledge that the vista of human progress thus opening out before us does not seem attractive. Leih-tsze, however, lived in a metaphysical age, and in the very foreground of his philosophy we find abstruse speculations upon the nature of being in itself. A bare translation into English without explanatory notes would hardly be intelligible, but we may select a few sentences to show the style. "That which brings forth all things is not born; that which changes things is itself changeless. Spontaneously it lives, changes, takes form and colour, knows, is strong, decays and dies. Yet if you say that it lives and changes, has shape and hue, possesses knowledge and strength, is subject to decay and death, you err." Again: "There are living things and a cause of life; there is form, and a cause of form; there is sound and a cause of sound; there is colour and a cause of colour; there is flavour and a cause of flavour. That which life produces

is death, but the cause of life never comes to an end. That which form produces is substance, but the cause of form is immaterial. That which sound produces is hearing, but the cause of sound is ever inaudible. That which colour produces is beauty, but the cause of colour is ever invisible. All these are functions of the Absolute.* It can be male and female, yielding and rigid, short and long, square and round, living and dead, hot and cold, sweet and bitter, stinking and fragrant. It is without knowledge and without power, and it is omniscient and omnipotent." All this seems the childish babbling of a philosophy which has not grown up to manhood, and entered into possession of a polysyllabic terminology for its ideas; yet its meaning is equivalent to Herbert Spencer's fundamental proposition "the origin of all things is inscrutable." It recognises the existence of that "something" which is above, and behind, and in, all phenomena; which no acuteness of observation can reach, no profundity of meditation can fathom, but which we know is there. In this direction the latest researches of modern science and the crude reflections of our Chinese philosopher both come to a dead stop at exactly the same point.

How crude and fanciful the metaphysical speculations of Leih-tsze were is apparent in the following imaginary dialogue:—"King T'ang asked Hea-Kih, 'Was there originally a time when nothing material existed?' Hea-Kih replied, 'If originally there was nothing, whence have existing things come from? Will it be reasonable if some day posterity should ask whether anything existed at this time?' The King continued, 'Then is there really no succession of events?' Hea-Kih said, 'The succession of things is infinite. Beginnings may be endings, and endings may be beginnings. Who can discriminate them? But as to that which exists beyond all phenomena, and before all events, I am ignorant.' 'Then is the universe without limit?' asked the monarch. 'I know not,' Hea-Kih replied; but when pressed for an answer, added: 'The non-existent is infinite. Existence is finite. How do I know this? It is involved in the idea of the infinite. The infinite cannot have a greater infinite to bound it. But as to what limits the finite, I confess my ignorance.' T'ang asked, 'What is the nature of being beyond the limits of our world?' 'Just like it is in the middle kingdom,' was the answer. 'How know you that?' 'Because,' he replied, 'I have travelled east and west to the limits of civilisation, and everywhere I found things the same. At the extreme points of my wanderings I inquired of the people, and they assured me that they knew of nothing different beyond them. Thus I conclude that the whole universe is alike.'"

If disposed to smile at the superficiality of these reasonings, yet one must remember that whether we sound a bottomless ocean with a deep-sea line or a pole, the result is the same; in each case we fail to reach

* We must make apology to the sinologue for the audacity of this translation of *moo wei* by the Absolute. Yet does it not approach nearer to the idea of the Chinese than any other English expression?

the bottom. Our Chinese used the longest line he had, and could do no more, nor can we.

Leih-tsze's philosophy of life was fatalism, yet fatalism of a peculiar shade. He belonged to the school originated by the famous contemporary of Confucius, Laou-tsze, the watchword of which was *taou*, "the path." Confucius, too, believed in "the path," but his path was the path of duty, the way of righteousness, following the higher instincts of our moral nature.

"What Heaven has conferred is called *the nature*; an accordance with this nature is called *the path*; the regulation of this path is called *instruction*." It is much more difficult to grasp Laou-tsze's and Leih-tsze's meaning when they speak of "the path"; but this difference between the rival schools is clear. Confucius fixed his mind exclusively on the ethical side of human nature, while his opponents included in their idea of "the path" not only the totality of human nature, but the totality of the universe. One student of Taoism explains *taou* as the "ultimate ideal unity of the universe." [It is simpler to take "the path" for what we express by "the course of nature," only extending nature beyond physical things to embrace gods and men, mind and matter, heaven and earth, and all their contents in one universal stream of being, all pervaded by one uniting principle it is true, but that principle inscrutable to us, and inseparable from the stream of existence itself. This infinite march of events moves on of itself in its own irresistible current; it is folly to struggle against it, wisdom to resign ourselves to be borne along by the stream whithersoever it tends. "The Emperor Shun asked Ching: 'Can I attain to the possession of "the path"?' (Taou here stands for the inner secret of being, the reality behind appearances, and perhaps might be rendered by "the truth.") "Ching replies to him: 'Your body is not your own, how can you acquire and possess taou?' Shun said, 'If my body is not my own, whose is it?' 'It is a form entrusted to you by Heaven and Earth,' was the answer. 'Life is not yours. It is a harmony entrusted to you by Heaven and Earth. Your nature is not yours, it is a concord entrusted to you by Heaven and Earth. Your children and grandchildren are not yours. They are new forms entrusted to you by Heaven and Earth. When you move, you do not know whither you are going; when you are at rest, you know not what you are grasping. The very food you eat is made by Heaven and Earth to nourish you, you know not how. Why should you talk of attaining to the possession of anything?']

In the sixth chapter we have an amusing discussion between fate and free-will personified. What we call free-will is represented by Mr. Effort, who challenged Mr. Fate thus: "How can you compare your merits with mine?" Fate retorted: "What are these merits of yours which you wish to compare with me?" Effort replied: "Long life and early death, failure and success, honour and obscurity, riches and poverty, all depend upon me." Fate said: "Pang-tso was not wiser than the sages Yau and Shun, yet he lived to be eight hundred years old. Ngan Uen's

talents were not mediocre, yet he died at thirty-two. Confucius' virtue was not inferior to that of the princes of his day, yet he wandered about in poverty. The tyrant Chow's morality was not better than that of the three sages, yet he enjoyed the royal seat. If these things are your work, Mr. Effort, why do you confer long life, riches, and honours upon the bad, and accumulate misfortune on the good?" Effort replied: "According to what you say, I have no merits at all. But that things happen so contrary is your arrangement, not mine." Fate answered: "Since you say Fate does these things, why talk about their being *arranged* so? Crooked and straight are all the same to me. All things are what they are of themselves. How can I know anything about it?"

The sentimentalism of Xerxes weeping at his grand review would have met with small sympathy from a Taoist, as the following anecdote, told by Leih-tsze, shows:—"The King of Tsai, returning from a journey, came in sight of his capital from the northern hills and burst into tears, saying, 'Beautiful, beautiful, is my royal city! So stately and spacious, yet I must leave it and die! If I were to live for ever, I should never wish to quit this place and go elsewhere.' His courtiers wept with him, saying, 'Our food and clothing, our chariots and horses, are poor compared with yours. Yet we, too, are unwilling to die, how much more reason have you to dislike the prospect!' One among them, however, only smiled. The king, observing this, ceased to weep, and demanded of him why he alone smiled when all the others sympathised with their master's grief? The philosopher replied: 'If virtuous rulers never left their thrones, T'ae Kung and Hwan Kung would be always reigning. If valiant men never died, Chong Kung and Ling Kung would constantly occupy the royal seat. If these monarchs had not vacated the throne, you, my prince, would to-day be clad in mats and tilling the ground. You owe your occupancy of the throne to the mutations of life and death.'" This same doctrine of fatalism rudely jostles against an Englishman's conceptions of providence in our next illustration. Listen to this:—"Mr. Tien made a great feast in his hall, and sat down among a thousand guests to the banquet. While the waiters were bringing in fish and wild geese, Mr. Tien heaved a sigh and said, 'How generous is Heaven to man! For our use the corn grows; for us the waters yield fish, and birds fly in the air.' The guests re-echoed these sentiments; until a boy of twelve years old stepped forth and said, 'Not so, my lord. All things in heaven and earth live by the same right as ourselves. The large prey upon the small; the strong and intelligent eat the stupid and weak. It is not that they are made for each other. Man takes what is eatable and eats it. Why should you think that Heaven produced things for man's sake? Mosquitoes bite man's skin, and tigers devour his flesh. Did Heaven produce men for the mosquitoes and tigers?'"

Fate rules all; or, since there can be no such conscious intelligence in fate as the word "rules" suggests, all things are by fate. But this conviction does not interfere with human activity. A considerable part of

Leih-tsze's teaching is devoted to illustrate the power of mind over matter. Laying hold of such facts as the immense superiority in feats of skill, driving four-in-hand, swimming, rowing, archery, and music, and handicrafts, which is attained by unremitting practice, concentrated attention, utter fearlessness, and freedom from self-consciousness, our author seems to push them to the extreme of believing that man may possibly attain, by a still higher degree of abstraction, to an omnipotent command over material forces. Many of his tales, which have the appearance of extravagant credulity, may perhaps be intended to convey an allegorical meaning. We read of men who could ride upon the wind, walk through fire, over water, and even through solid rocks as through empty space. These marvellous stories, perhaps, only clothe in fables the philosopher's conviction of the power of wisdom and virtue to render the soul independent of the shocks and changes of external circumstances. These mystical utterances, however, lack the clue needed for their interpretation, and we are never sure whether Leih-tsze is credulous himself, or playing upon human credulity, or veiling some subtle meaning under his marvellous narratives. A few of these tales occupy a border-land between fact and fiction. Here is one which embodies a notion common enough among ourselves, that there is a wonderful power in faith, apart altogether from the reality of what is believed. "Tsze Wa was a favourite with the Prince of Tsun. Those whom he patronised were ennobled; those whom he spoke against were degraded. Two guests of his on a journey passed the night at a farm-house. The old farmer, by name Yau Hoi, overheard them conversing about the power of life and death, riches and poverty, possessed by Tsze Wa. The farmer, who was grievously poor, drank in all their words, and on the morrow went into the city and found his way to Tsze Wa's door. Tsze Wa's disciples were all men of good birth, used to dress in silk and ride in carriages, to walk with a stately step, and look about them with a lofty air. When they saw Yau Hoi, a weak old man with a dirty face and untidy clothes, come into the school, they despised him, and amused themselves by making game of him and pushing him about. Yau Hoi exhibited no sign of anger. Presently Tsze Wa led them up to the top of a lofty tower, and cried out, 'I'll give a hundred pieces of silver to any one who will throw himself down.' All of them eagerly responded, and Yau Hoi thinking they were sincere, determined to be first, and threw himself over. He claved the air like a bird, and alighted upon the ground without a broken bone. Tsze Wa thought he had escaped by chance. So he again pointed to a deep pool in the river and said, 'Down there is a precious pearl: dive and you will get it.' Yau Hoi again complied; dived into the flood, and when he came up, he had really got a pearl. The spectators then began to suspect something extraordinary; and Tsze Wa ordered that food and clothing should be prepared to present to him. Suddenly a great fire was discovered in Tsze Wa's treasury. Tsze Wa exclaimed, 'If any one dare venture in, he shall have whatever treasure he rescues as his reward.' Yau Hoi entered calmly, and came out again

unsoiled and unhurt. Then every one thought he possessed a magic charm. They crowded round to do him reverence, apologising for their former rudeness, and begging for his secret. Yau Hoi said, 'I have no secret. I myself do not know how it was done; but I will try to recount it to you. Last night Tsze Wa's guests lodged at my house, and I overheard them praising Tsze Wa's power of life and death, riches and poverty, and I perfectly believed it. When I came here, I took all your words to be true, and only feared lest I should not perfectly trust them and act them out. I was unconscious of my bodily frame, and knew no fear. Now that I know you have deceived me, I tremble, and wonder at what I have gone through. I consider myself lucky that I was not burnt or drowned. Now I shake with fear, and I shall never dare to approach fire or water again.' From this time forward, if Tsze Wa's pupils met a beggar or a horse-dealer on the road, they did not dare to be rude to him, but stopped and bowed." This represents the power of faith as inherent in itself. There is another view of faith which regards its efficacy as not in itself, but in its appeal to a higher Power. Leih-tsze was no theist, and he was so careless of the national objects of worship that they are hardly alluded to in his pages. Yet he gives us a story which will convey to many minds a meaning far beyond his own. "A stupid countryman, ninety years of age, had his dwelling on the northern slope of a lofty mountain-range, two hundred miles long and ten thousand cubits high. One day he was struck with the thought that a road to the south was eminently desirable, so he called his family together and proposed to level the precipices, and make a road through to the southern waters. His wife remonstrated, hinting that the old man's strength would not suffice to demolish a hillock, let alone those great mountains. But the old man was not daunted, and leading on his son and grandson, the three of them began to pick and dig, and to carry away the stones and earth in baskets, and an old widow sent her child of seven years old to help them. Winter and summer they toiled away, and after a whole year seemed to be where they began. A shrewd old grey-beard mocked their slow progress; but the stupid countryman replied with a sigh, 'Your heart is not so intelligent as that of this widow's feeble child. Although I am old, and shall die, I have a son, and he has a son; these will have children and grandchildren. My posterity will go on multiplying without end, and the mountain will not grow bigger. What is to prevent our levelling it?,' The old man had nothing to say, but the spirit which presides over snakes heard what was said, and fearing that the work would not stop, reported the matter to God. God was affected by their sincerity, and commanded two genii to remove the mountains, shifting one to the east, and another to the south, so as to open a pass to the river Han."

In that last reference to God, Leih-tsze does but for a moment borrow the language of the ancient creed which he usually lost sight of in his speculations. On the subject of immortality he seems to have speculated much, and at times to have indulged some faint hope of existence beyond

the range of present vision. "Once on a journey he sat down with a group of his disciples to take a meal by the road-side. One of the company saw a skull, bleached with age, half hidden by the grass; he pulled the long grass aside and pointed to it. Leih-tsze said to his disciple Pak-fung, 'Only he and I know, and are independent of life and death.' " But his utterances on this are indistinct, and rather point to an absorption into an infinite substance than continued conscious individuality. "The living, according to nature, must end. The pure spirit-essence is Heaven's part, the bodily framework is Earth's part. When the spirit-essence leaves the form, both return to their true state. From birth to death man has four great changes, childhood, youth, old age, and death. In childhood his physical nature is simple, and his will is not divided, which is the perfection of harmony. External things cannot injure him, and his virtue is complete. In manhood his passions change like the wind and overflow like a flood. His desires and anxieties arise in abundance. External things fight against him, therefore his virtue declines. In old age his desires and anxieties become feeble, and his body is near its rest. External things do not occupy the first place. Although it does not reach the completeness of childhood, it is superior to middle age. In death he attains to rest, and returns to its extreme limit." The Taouist philosophers are never tired of aiming a blow at Confucianism, and thus the great sage is made to figure sometimes in ridiculous situations. In the next extracts there is probably a covert attack on the melancholy which overshadowed the life of Confucius, and wrapt his end in gloom. "Confucius roaming about the Tai mountain, saw Wing K'ai Ki walking in the fields, dressed in a deer-hide, with a bit of rope for his girdle, striking his guitar and singing. He asked him, 'Sir, what makes you so joyful?' K'ai Ki replied, 'I have many reasons for joy. Of all things Heaven has made, human beings are most noble, and I have been made a human being; that is one reason for joy. Men are more honourable than women, and I was made a man; this is a second cause for joy. Some men are born and die before they are out of the nurse's arms, but I have gone along for ninety years; that is a third cause for joy. Scholars are always poor, and death is the end of man. Why should I regret being as others and coming to my end?' Confucius exclaimed, 'Capital! you know how to be magnanimous.'" Another of these refreshingly contented spirits meets us in the following:—"Lam Lü, when a hundred years old, was gleaning in his patrimonial fields, clad only in a sheepskin, and he sang as he went along. Confucius saw him from a distance, and said to his disciples, 'That old man is worth speaking to, go and question him.' Tsze Kung requested leave to go. Encountering him on a hillock, he looked him in the face, sighed, and said, 'Sir, have you not yet any regrets that you go on singing as you glean?' Lam Lü neither stopped walking nor singing. Tsze Kung kept on asking, until he looked up, and replied, 'What should I regret?' Tsze Kung said, 'In youth you failed in diligence, in manhood you did not struggle with the times,

now you are old you have neither wife nor child; death's appointed day is near; what occasions for joy can you have that you should sing as you glean?' Lam Lü smiled and said, 'All men share in my causes for joy; but they, on the contrary, take them for sorrows; because when I was young I did not work hard, and in my manhood I did not struggle with the times, therefore I have attained to this green old age. Now I am old, because I have neither wife nor child, and death's appointed day is near, therefore I rejoice like this.' Tsze Kung replied, 'It is natural to man to love long life and to dislike death; how is it that you take death to be a cause for joy?' Lam Lü said, 'Death and life are but a going forth and a returning, therefore when I die here, how do I know that I shall not live there? And how do I know that planning and craving for life is not a mistake? Also, how know I that for me to die now is not better than all my previous life?' Tsze Kung heard, but did not understand what he meant; so he went back and told the Master. The Master said, 'I knew he was worth speaking to, and so it has proved. But though he has got hold of the thing, he has not got to the bottom of it.'"

Live without care, die without fear; such was our author's philosophy of life. When we compare his ethical teaching with that of his great predecessor Laou-tsze, five or six generations before, we are struck with the marked degeneracy of his moral tone. In his *Taou Teh King*, the founder of the Taouist sect, despite his sphinx-like style, impresses us with a sense of his profound moral earnestness. Though Laou-tsze dissented altogether from the Confucian system, nevertheless we see in him an eager yearning for perfection, a pensive sadness in the contemplation of human follies and crimes, a positive inculcation of personal virtue, which draw out our hearts towards "the old philosopher." Confucius was the stern practical reformer like Calvin, whom we rather admire than love; while Laou-tsze possesses the attractive power of the mystic Tauler. It would be utterly unjust to attribute to the founder of Taouism the moral aberrations of his successors, even though we can detect in his teachings the germ of the subsequent evil development. For if we can detect it, he could not, and we cannot doubt that his devotion to virtue was as sincere as his conception of it was beautiful. If called upon to express the guiding principle of his moral teachings by one word, we shall not be exalting it above its intrinsic merits by choosing that noblest of words, self-abnegation. Not that he in the dim light of heathenism could see all that that word now implies to us in the clear light of our Christianity. The passive side of self-abnegation was more evident to him than the active. But amid the confused noises of a distracted world, the shock of battles, the intrigues of courts, the restless contentions for honour and advancement of the officials and scholars, the fierce pursuit of wealth by the merchants and artisans, Laou-tsze distinctly heard a still small voice, summoning him, and through him mankind, to the calm serenity of a life freed from selfish desires, devoid of covetousness, envy, and ambi-

tion, strong in acknowledged weakness, and victorious over pride and violence by the might of meekness and humility. To him the type of perfect goodness was water; "water which is good to benefit all things, while it does not strive, but runs to the place which all men disdain." The defects of his conception are manifest to us, though while yet untested by experience he may well have failed to perceive them. He disliked political reformers, because in them self-exaltation mingled with their desire to reform the world. He disliked preachers of morality, because their labours were an indication of, in a sense, the result of, the loss of morality. He disliked an artificial state of society, because it abounded in temptations to pride, covetousness, and deceit. This antagonism to effort, led him into the extreme of depreciating even effort for self-improvement. He appeared to entertain a vague hope that if men would only let themselves alone, strive for nothing, not even for goodness, the great *Taou*, that ineffable, inexplicable something, too mysterious to have even a name, would itself flow through the channels of the human heart, and bear the life along in the right direction. With all this exaggeration of his favourite precept "do nothing," his own personal attachment to virtue was sincere and supreme; and doubtless, while he continued to influence his own philosophy, this loyalty to virtue endured among his followers.

Leih-tsze lived near two centuries later, and in his teachings the earnest moral purpose of Taouism has given place to a licentious indifferentism. Here and there, indeed, we come across some lingering echoes of the traditional admiration for meekness and humility, but for the most part the philosopher is so lost in contemplation of the mystery of existence that he has not a spare thought left for these particular phenomena, virtue and vice. He is much more interested in the question whether man may not, by the power of abstract contemplation, penetrate into the secret of existence, and gain a superhuman control over natural forces. He still holds theoretically that the riches, power, and fame of the world are all delusive appearances, and that to be free from appetites, and passions, and self-assertion, is "the path;" but he has ceased to entertain the slightest hope that out of this doctrine will ever come a moral renovation of the world. Indeed, he suspects now that the distinctions of virtue and vice are themselves but delusive imaginations, as much as the pomps and vanities of life which his leader eschewed. One can hardly read the following specimens of his teaching without a shudder of disgust:—"Tsze Ch'an * became Prime Minister of Ch'ing, and had sole authority in the Government. Within three years he brought the whole kingdom into a state of order. The good gladly submitted to his sway, and the bad obeyed his laws from fear. But his own brothers, Ch'iu and Muk, were addicted to vicious pleasures; Ch'iu loved wine, and Muk loved women. A thousand jars of wine stood in Ch'iu's cellar, and heaps of grain in his barns. When one passed his door at the distance of a hundred paces, the smell of distillation filled the nostrils. In his drink-

* A disciple of Confucius, and one of his personal attendants.

ing bouts Ch'iu forgot politics and morals, riches and poverty, friends and relatives, care of life and fear of death. Although the house were on fire, or swords clashing in his very face, he would know nothing about it. In Muk's harem were scores of concubines, selected for their youth and beauty; and at times he would shut himself in the inner apartments for three months together, not at home to his nearest relative or dearest friend. His emissaries haunted the whole country-side in search for lovely maidens, whom gold might tempt to enter his harem. Tsze Ch'an grieved over his brothers' ill-conduct night and day, and at last secretly consulted Tang Sik about it. 'I have heard,' said he, 'that a man must first of all regulate himself, next his family, and then the kingdom, proceeding from the near to the distant. Now I have brought the kingdom under government, but my own family is disorderly; this is contrary to "the path." Tell me, I pray you, how I may save my brothers.' Tang Sik replied, 'I have been wondering at it for a long time, but was afraid to speak about it. Why, sir, do you not find some opportunity of instructing them in the importance of following one's (moral) nature, and according with (Heaven's) decree, and also of alluring them by setting before them the high esteem which attends upon the practice of propriety and righteousness?'

"Tsze Ch'an took Tang Sik's advice, and went to visit his brothers; and began his instructions by saying, 'Man's superiority to the brutes consists in intelligence and forethought. Intelligence and forethought produce the rules of propriety and righteousness. Propriety and righteousness lead to fame and office. If you act upon the incentives of your passions, and abandon yourselves to wine and lust, you imperil your own lives. Listen to a brother's words, and if you repent in the morning, before night you shall receive a government appointment.' Ch'iu and Muk replied, 'Long ago we attained to knowledge, and made our choice; do you suppose we waited for you to come and teach us before we could understand? Life is not easy to get, but death comes of itself. Who would think of wasting a life so hard to get, by spending it in watching for a death which comes so easily? And as to caring for proprieties and righteousness, in order that we may brag over others, and doing violence to our own natures, in order to win an empty name, in our view this would be worse than death itself. All we wish is to exhaust the joys of life, and seize the pleasure of the present moment. Our only grief is that our physical capacity for pleasure is so small, we have no leisure to sorrow over loss of reputation or danger to life. If you are so puffed up by your political success, as to think of leading our minds astray by the seductions of glory and official salary, we think it mean of you and pitiable. Now we will tell you the difference. External government, however clever, is not certain of success, and inflicts suffering upon people. Internal government never leads to disorder, and men joyfully conform to nature. Your external government barely gets a temporary success in one small kingdom, and after all does not accord with the hearts of the people. Our

internal government may be applied to the whole world, and then kings and statesmen will have no more to do. We have long been wishing to teach you our doctrine, and do you on the contrary bring your doctrine to teach us!' Tsze Ch'an was dumfounded, and departed without a word. Next day he reported the interview to Tang Sik. Tang Sik said, 'You, sir, have been living with perfect sages, and you did not know it. Who will say that you are wise? The good order of the kingdom is an accidental circumstance, not to be imputed as merit to you.'"

This licentious creed was the deliberate choice of Taoism; though of course Taoists used to the full our grand human liberty of inconsistency, and by no means carried out their principle either to its full logical or practical consequences. Still it remains a fact, that for a space, if only a brief space, philosophy in China rejected morality, and exalted licentiousness to the dignity of a religion. As a natural result Taoism rapidly degenerated, and at the same time lost its hold upon the people. If in their lifetime Laou-tsze held his banner of spontaneity bravely aloft, and Confucius waged a desperate but hardly equal strife under the standard of rigid self-discipline, the two teachers were in their hearts fighting on the same side, to reclaim a lost world to truth and virtue. But while the Confucianists remained staunch to this double object of pursuit, truth and virtue, the Taoists thought they perceived an inconsistency between them, and chose truth rather than virtue. The complete victory of Confucianism along the whole line is a fact worthy of our consideration. Confucius was the prophet of conscience, not only grasping tenaciously the truth of the moral supremacy of conscience, but believing most devoutly in its divine origin, and his own divine mission to defend its rights, and also that there could not be salvation for humanity except in obedience to its behests. In his lifetime he fought an Ishmaelitic conflict, a guerilla warfare for his sacred faith. Every man's hand seemed against him, and it was as much as he could do to live with his principles, though the life of a wanderer from one city to another, from one kingdom to another people. After his death his disciples fought for his truth like soldiers combating desperately over the corpse of their dead leader, and still for generations the battle seemed to hang in the balance. But at last the victory was achieved, and it was final and glorious. Conscience proved its own supremacy, by putting these doctrines of natural licence to disgraceful rout. Now, and for these thousand years and more, that bewildering attempt of Leih-tsze's to confuse the distinctions between right and wrong has seemed as strange and unnatural to the Chinese mind as it seems to our own. The sect continued, but as a small minority of the nation, a minority given over to idolatry, superstitious arts, magic, alchemy, the philosopher's stone, and the elixir of life. But the name of Taou has never lost its potency in China, and for centuries it has been united with Confucianism and Buddhism as a member of the trinity of philosophies. At the parting of the ways, where the doctrine of nature and spontaneous life diverged from the doctrine of virtue and stern self-

discipline, the nation bade farewell to the dreamy mysticism of Laou-tsze, to follow the banner of Confucius and conscience. Yet a memory of the sweetness and serenity of those earlier musings lingered long in the national mind, preserving the ancient doctors of Taou from oblivion and their writings from contempt. They appealed to our nature on one side, and they had glimpses of one side of truth also, and although we rejoice in the clear victory of the teacher of righteousness and benevolence, as a notable instance of the survival of the fittest in the mutual struggle for life of the philosophies, we acknowledge that the far-off echoes of ancient Taou sound a note, an under-tone of which can be detected in many quarters, even in our modern Christian England.

There is a vein of humour in Leih-tsze which enlivens with a genial light some of his shrewd observations of human nature; and though he fails to smite at vice with the trenchant blade of moral faith, he manifests a visionary longing for a happier state in which vice is not. With a few extracts illustrative of these traits, we will close this notice of him.

“In the state of Ki there was a man who was anxious lest heaven and earth should fall to pieces and he have no place to lodge his body in. He could neither eat nor sleep from anxiety. And there was another who was anxious about his distress and went to enlighten him. ‘The heaven gathers air,’ he said, ‘and there is no place which is not full of air: sun, moon, and stars are only collected air which contains light; even if they could fall they would do no harm.’ His pupil said, ‘Suppose the earth should break, what then?’ ‘The Earth,’ replied his mentor, ‘is an accumulation of clods, packed close together on all sides. You may go about the whole day treading and trampling on the earth without any fear of its breaking.’ His hearer rejoiced like a released prisoner, and the teacher rejoiced in sympathy with him. But Chang Lo heard it and said with a smile: ‘Rainbows and clouds, wind and rain, sky and mountains, seas and rivers, metals and stones, fire and wood, are all but forms of matter in combination. Who says they will not be destroyed? A little thing like man in the midst of the vast universe may think it indestructible, and to trouble ourselves about such a remote contingency is needless. But heaven and earth will inevitably be destroyed, and if you encountered that time, how could you help being anxious?’ Leih-tsze heard and smiled, saying: ‘It is equally erroneous to say that the universe will be destroyed, and to say that it will not be destroyed. We are unable to determine it either way. Life does not know death, and death does not know life. Why should I trouble my mind about the permanency of the universe?’”

“Yang Choo was travelling through Sung, and came to an inn. The inn-keeper had two wives, one of whom was pretty and the other was ugly. He esteemed the ugly one and slighted the pretty one. Yang Choo asked the reason. The inn-keeper replied: ‘That pretty one thinks herself pretty, but I do not perceive her beauty. The ugly one thinks herself ugly, but I do not perceive her lack of comeliness.’ Yang Choo said to

his disciples : ' Remember this ; if you act virtuously without attributing the merit of it to yourself, where will you go without being loved ? ' "

" When the great Yu was regulating the waters, one day he lost his way, and wandered into a country on the northern shore of the North Sea, he knew not how many times ten thousand miles from China. In that land was neither wind nor rain, frost nor dew, nor did he meet with any kinds of animal or vegetable life. On all sides the ground was perfectly smooth, only gently rising in elevation in the centre. A vase-shaped mountain rose in the middle of that country, with a circular orifice on the summit, from which a fountain issued, called the spiritual fountain. Its fragrance was sweeter than rose-gardens or cinnamon groves, and its taste was more exquisite than that of the finest wine. From one source it divided into four channels and flowed down the mountain, meandering through the whole land and watering every corner of it. The climate was serene, perfectly free from malaria. The people who lived there were of a gentle disposition and in harmony with their external circumstances. No strife nor violence marred their peace. Their hearts were tender and their frames were soft. They were innocent of pride and envy. Old and young dwelt together, and they had neither prince nor official among them. Men and women wandered about in company, and they employed no match-makers, sent no marriage presents. They dwelt on the banks of the stream, and needed not to plough and sow. The climate was so genial that they did not weave nor wear clothes. They lived to be a hundred years old ; premature death and disease being unknown among them. The population was always increasing, till it was innumerable ; and enjoyed perpetual felicity, ignorant of decay, old age, grief and hardship. Delighting in music, the voices joining harmoniously in song, ceased not throughout the day. If hungry or weary they drank of the spiritual fountain and their strength and spirits were restored to their normal condition. Too deep a draught intoxicated, and then they slept for a week without waking. When they bathed in the spiritual fountain their skin became glossy and the fragrance exhaled for a week. When King Muh of Chau entered that kingdom he tarried there for three years without a thought of home. On his return to his royal palace he was plunged in profound melancholy, refused food and wine, and all the delights of his harem, and several months passed before he recovered."

" A man in the East, while on a journey, was reduced by starvation, and lay dying by the road-side. A celebrated highwayman passed that way, and, pitying him, dismounted, and put a bottle to his lips. After three sucks the dying man revived, and opened his eyes. Seeing his deliverer bending over him, he inquired his name, and being told, exclaimed, ' Are not you the famous robber ? What induced you to give me drink ? I am an honest man, and cannot receive food from you.' Thereupon he beat the ground with his arms and tried to vomit, gasped and gurgled in his throat, fell back, and expired. But if the man was a robber, his drink had not committed theft. How strangely men confuse

things." This is a satire upon certain well-known anecdotes of Confucian worthies, whose unbending scrupulousness appeared ridiculous to our Taoist believer in non-resistance to the universal life-stream of nature.

"A neighbour of Yang Choo lost a sheep, and calling upon the villagers to go in search of it, he asked the assistance of Yang Choo's servant also. Yang Choo inquired why so many persons were needed to seek for a single sheep. His neighbour said, 'Because the roads and by-paths are many.' When they returned, he asked if the sheep had been found. 'No, it is lost,' they answered. 'How lost?' he demanded. 'The bypaths branch out into other bypaths, and we could not possibly tell which way it had gone, so we returned.' A shade of sadness fell upon Yang Choo's countenance; for a long time he did not speak, and he did not smile again that day. His disciples marvelled, and requested an explanation. 'The sheep was not a valuable animal, and it did not belong to you; why should it cloud over your happiness like this?' Yang Choo returned no answer. Discussing it among themselves, one of them said, 'The great path divides into many by-paths, and many sheep are lost therein. How is it that you sit in the master's school, and have not yet learned to interpret the master's meaning?'"

"Yang Choo's younger brother went out for a walk in a suit of white silk, but rain coming on, he borrowed a black cloak to return in. When he reached the door, his dog came out and barked at him. The young man was provoked, and raised his hand to strike the dog. Yang Choo said, 'Do not beat him; you are no better yourself. Suppose your dog went out white, and came back black, would it not startle you?'"

"One new year's day, the people of Ham Tan presented a number of pigeons to their lord. He was very pleased, and liberally rewarded them. A guest of his inquired the reason. 'This is new year's day,' he said, 'and I shall set them all at liberty to fly back to the woods, and so express the good-will of my heart to all living things.' His guest replied, 'The people are aware of your intention to release the birds, and therefore they entrap and catch them, and many are killed in their attempts. If you wish to keep them alive, the better way would be to prohibit catching them.'"

"A man who had lost his axe, suspected his neighbour's son. He watched him, and said to himself, 'He is the thief; he has the gait of a thief, the face of a thief, the voice of a thief; everything in his appearance and behaviour says as plainly as possible that he has stolen the axe.' But happening one day to find the axe in his own garden, when he next met his neighbour's son, there was nothing whatever in his looks or behaviour which could lead one to suspect him to be a thief."

"Confucius, on a journey, saw two children disputing, and asked the reason. One of the lads said, 'I say that the rising sun is near us, and at noon it is far off.' The other said, 'No, the sun is far off at dawn, but

near at mid-day.' The first said, 'Why, when the sun rises it is as large as a chariot-wheel, but in the middle of the day it is no larger than a plate; is it not small when at a distance, and large when it is near?' The other said, 'When the sun first rises, its rays are mild and genial; but at noon it is blazing hot. Surely it is hotter when near, and cooler when afar.' Confucius could not decide the point. The two children smiled and said, 'Who will say that you know much?'

The English reader may be disposed to think that in this respect there is not much to choose between Confucius and Leih-tsze and all the rest of China's boasted sages. They lived before the Baconian philosophy; and a clever boy from one of our primary schools could instruct them in the exact sciences. But unless, in the progress of human evolution, man develops into a being very different from what he always has been, the subject-matter of Taouistic speculation will continue to possess intensest interest and unrivalled practical importance for mankind. Our meditations upon the *whence* and the *whither* may fail to lead to those definite and clear conclusions which science craves, but they exert a momentous influence upon the formation of a practical rule of life. One does not need to go far in modern literature in order to detect an order of thought which is strictly parallel to that naturalistic philosophy of which *Leih-tsze* is a representative. Those old Chinese thinkers were but following a tendency in human nature, which exists in us still; and it can do us no harm to learn whither it led them, and what it ended in. Happily we have a sure confidence that, as nobler instincts and loftier aspirations prevailed in the far East, leaving this indolent epicurean philosophy to lose itself in the ignominious quagmire of absurd and degrading superstition, so the philosophy of conscience and duty, of effort and conflict, will prevail, and must prevail in the long run, however for a time men may seem to lose heart and long for the land of the lotseaters.

F. S. T.
