

Mr. Tung, or Virtue Rewarded

By P'u Sung-ling

At Ch'ing-chou there lived a Mr. Tung, President of one of the Six Boards, whose domestic regulations were so strict that the men and women servants were not allowed to speak to each other. One day he caught a slave-girl laughing and talking with one of his attendants, and gave them both a sound rating. That night he retired to sleep, accompanied by his *valet-de-chambre*, in his library, the door of which, as it was very hot weather, was left wide open. When the night was far advanced, the valet was awakened by a noise at his master's bed: and, opening his eyes, he saw, by the light of the moon, the attendant above mentioned pass out of the door with something in his hand. Recognising the man as one of the family, he thought nothing of the occurrence, but turned round and went to sleep again. Soon after, however, he was again aroused by the noise of footsteps tramping heavily across the room, and, looking up, he beheld a huge being with a red face and a long beard, very like the God of War, carrying a man's head. Horribly frightened, he crawled under the bed, and then he heard sounds above him as of clothes being shaken out, and as if some one was being shampooed. In a few moments, the boots tramped once more across the room and went away; and then he gradually put out his head, and, seeing the dawn beginning to peep through the window, he stretched out his hand to reach his clothes. These he found to be soaked through and through, and, on applying his hand to his nose, he smelt the smell of blood. He now called out loudly to his master, who jumped up at once; and, by the light of a candle, they saw that the bed-clothes and pillows were alike steeped in blood. Just then some constables knocked at the door, and when Mr. Tung went out to see who it was, the constables were all astonishment; "for," said they, "a few minutes ago a man rushed wildly up to our yamên, and said he had killed his master; and, as he himself was covered with blood, he was arrested, and turned out to be a servant of yours. He also declared that he had buried your head alongside the temple of the God of War; and when we went to look, there, indeed, was a freshly-dug bole, but the head was gone." Mr. Tung was amazed at all this story, and, on proceeding to the magistrate's yamên, he discovered that the man in charge was the attendant whom he had scolded the day before. Thereupon, the criminal was severely bamboed and released; and then Mr. Tung, who was unwilling to make an enemy of a man of this stamp, gave him the girl to wife. However, a few nights afterwards the people who lived next door to the newly-married couple heard a terrific crash in their house, and, rushing in to see what was the matter, found that husband and wife, and the bedstead as well, had been cut clean in two as if by a sword. The ways of the God are many, indeed, but few more extraordinary than this.¹

¹ It was the God of War who replaced Mr. Tung's head after it had actually been cut off and buried.