

CHAPTER V.

UP BY THE ROOTS.

Emboldened by this official sanction the sellers of Shiwky had greatly increased the attractiveness of their shops. Many of those who had hitherto held aloof, now said: "Inasmuch as the Council has issued *ci-selens* to those men we see no harm in patronizing them." Is it not thus written in the Idyles of Choo-ling: "If the King drink at the faucet the page will smack his lips over the droppings?"

The village streets were full of inebriated men and youth. Industries were neglected; the ivory workers who had been formerly so trim and neat in their apparel, now appeared out at elbows, there were lights, far into the night, at many windows, where mothers sat waiting for the homecoming of their wayward sons. Crime also, rapidly increased. It was found necessary to appoint beadles for the arrest of offenders and protection of the public peace. Courts must be instituted; prisons must be built; houses of correction, and asylums for those whom Shiwky had rendered penniless and helpless. For does not Confucius say: "Though ye go cloakless, cover the shivering?"

Thus, ere the middle of the year, the public funds of Tang-si were exhausted, and at its close the Council found themselves burdened with a considerable debt. At the annual meeting of the Council the Treasurer, Ching-wing, presented his Report, substantially as follows:

Report of the Chancellor of the Exchequer of the Sun-lit and Sun-warmed Province of Tang-si, for the 909th year of the Wo-long Dynasty:

RECEIPTS.

From the Shiwky traffic	40,000 <i>leng</i>
From other sources	25,000 "
Total	65,000 <i>leng</i>

DISBURSEMENTS.

For customary expenses of the province	30,000 <i>leng</i>
For services of Beadles and other peace-officers	50,000 "
For Courts of Justice instituted	40,000 "
For Asylums for Inebriates and their widows and orphans	60,000 "
For new jails	50,000 "
Sundries	10,000 "

240,000 *leng*
65,000 "

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CHAPTER IV.

HOW NOT TO DO IT

"If a man's ears suffer from cold let him draw off his stockings and cover them; if his nose suffer, let him pull up his boot-straps for a nose-muff; if he suffer all over, let him hire a cooley to sit by the fire for him."—*Go-lang's "Maxims for Government and Daily Life."*

As Ching-wing finished the reading of the Report, there was profound silence. Naught could be heard except the soft grating of the Councillors' thumbs as they sat sagely twirling them. Thus Tao-ping has said:

"Some things are too deep for poetry,
Others are too broad and long for eloquence:
When this occurs to a wise man,
Let him scrutinize, silently,
His thumb-nails."

At length Lo-hush was heard to mutter: "This empties the purse, and hurts the conscience."

But nobody heeded him.

Petitions were next read from various parts of the Province, asking that appropriations be made for the building of protectories and additional houses for destitute widows and orphans.

The Councillors were in a quandary as Lo-hung-lung has written:

"How can you buy bread, when there is nothing but a hole in your pocket?"

Then K'-lang, ever wise and fertile in expedients, arose and said:

"O, sages of the sun-lit and sun-warmed Province of Tang-si; I counsel that we rise the *ci-selens* from 100 to 500 *leng*. This will bring our troubles to a speedy end; we shall have money enough and to spare. As has been said by Hung-to-lo: 'The antidote for one grain of corrosive sublimate is four more grains on top of it.'"

This was received as a most happy suggestion. Every queue-ribbon was lifted in its favor except that of Lo-hush, who was reckoned an over-scrupulous and visionary old man. He was heard to observe in a low tone: "I would no more license the Shiwky-men than I would receive money consideration from the would-be assassin who breaks into my dwelling at night."

"*How to Treat a Mad Dog.*—Cut a few hairs from the further end of his tail and the tips of his ears. (N. B.—Be careful not to over-do it.)"

"*How to Cure Cancer.*—Make frequent applications of simple cerate; and take internally the famous Heroic Pill, compounded of flour, cider and salt."

"*How to Get Rid of Canada Thistle.*—Manure your garden well, train the thistle stalks on short bamboo sticks, and water carefully every day."—*From "Useful Receipts," by Hung-too-hi.*

In due-time the Shiwky-men were notified that the price of *ci-selens* had been raised to 500 *leng* and must be forth-coming. The poorest among them, being unable to pay, were forced out of the business; and others congratulated themselves on their good fortune, saying: "Henceforth we will have things our own way." And they did.

The traffic, being now in fewer hands, became a practical monopoly. The shops were much enlarged and embellished. Their proprietors wore sparkling solitaires on the lappels of their jackets, were received into the politest society, and occupied front pews in the Joss-houses. The business was now counted eminently respectable. Everybody patronized it.

In the meantime the troubles of the sun-lit and sun-warmed Province were more and more increased. The revenues from traffic in poisonous fluid were still inadequate to meet the outlay occasioned by it. Doubtless the poet Chi-pung-lang had such a condition of things in mind when he wrote: "If you would eat hot soli on your pudding, you must expect to pay the confectioner."

Again the Councillors met, their hearts heavy, their faces long. They had tried everything. "What more?" solemnly asked Ku-lang. As Confucius says: "He had drawn up his bucket, and there was nothing in it."

Then Lo-hush uttered a single word. It began with a *P*, ended with an *n*, and had two *i*'s, two *s*'s and four consonants in between. It is a proscribed word in neighborhoods where *ci-selens* are sold. The moment it was uttered there was commotion in the assembly of the Heu-ta-ku. Such tender names as "fool," "fanatic," "mucker," were bandied about.

Is it not ever thus, as saith the maxim of Ti-leng: "Raw meat for a tiger, a red flag for a bull, and the unspeakable *P-n* for a Shiwky-man?"

But Lo-hush was imperturbable. He waited for a lull.

Why not? "He who speaks against a Sou-wester is cousin to him who opposes his head against a tie-pang wall."

At length he said: "O, sages of the sun-lit and sun-warmed Province, I am in favor of whatever is right and practicable. What we want is an ivory carver's shop on every hill and not a snoola in the valley. We will never accomplish this by sanctioning in anywise the Shiwky traffic. I counsel, therefore, that we enact a law forbidding the manufacture, sale, and use of the poisonous fluid."

With many earnest and persuasive words he urged this measure upon the Heu-ta-ku. It was the longest speech Lo-hush had ever been known to make. It was brimful of sound sense and logic. It carried conviction.

Thus the famous "Tang-si Law" was placed upon the statute books of the sun-lit and sun-warmed Province.

"Was it a success?" you ask.

So deep a hold had Shiwky taken upon the appetite of the people, so bitter and contumacious was the resistance of the snoola-men, so luke-warm were the Heu-ta-ku themselves, that for a season the issue seemed in doubt. No moral victory is thoroughly won in a day. Most wisely did the philosopher Wo-piang observe: "Run not for thy sand-piper until thou hast shot thy gun; else he will say 'Chee! Chee!' and lo! thou hast him not."

Nevertheless, there is a notable improvement in Tang-si. No longer do the Shiwky men pursue their traffic in open day; no longer are they able to affirm that their business is legitimate and therefore respectable. The best people frown upon it; youth are ashamed to be suspected of patronizing it. There is a most remarkable diminution in pauperism and crime. The expenses of the Province are much reduced. There are tokens of renewed industry and thrift among the ivory-workers. Indeed, the sun has never shone so brightly in Tang-si since the day when the rice-farmer's daughter found out the fatal secret.

Lo-hush is much gratified. Every morning he visits the temple of his Joss-god to burn incense. The words of the poet Lo-iching are often upon his lips:

"Right should be King;
Wrong is a Robber,
A crown for Right, and for the Robber what?
A thorn of the ilepo? a pin? a whip-cord? Nay?
A two-edged knife, four *ims* long, slender, sharp,
Thrust through and twisted.
'But if he rolls over and groans?'
Then twist it again. No mercy!
When your Robber is stretched out stark,
Then crown your King."—*American Reformer.*