

林语堂  
英译诗文选



明清小品

上

外语教学与研究出版社

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卷之四 風雨  
品出清風  
眉公



# The Book of a Cynic

From *Kueiyuyuan Chutan*

Shu Shuehmou

1522-1593

This man, who was a Minister of Ceremonies, was against the whole idea of “orthodoxy” and “orthodox tradition” in the Confucian School, believing that the scholars stood to benefit by such rigid codification of Confucius’s lively thoughts and teachings. In particular he was against the Neo-Confucianist School—known popularly as *taoshueh*, similar in connotation to the word “Puritans” in English—believing that it led to great hypocrisy.

The disasters of fire and flood and bandits usually strike the poor people first. The wasting diseases of emaciation usually strike at the powerful and the rich.

The best of high officials always ended up with a piece of ugly writing which sent them back to the country—an impeachment.

The worst of men always obtained a beautiful piece of writing at the end of their days—a eulogy on a tombstone.

If a man has read a great number of books, and does not think things through, he is only a bookcase. One may read through the entire Buddhist Tripitaka, but if he has not a pure heart, he can end up only as a wooden figure.

Be careful not to open your mind to a man of few words. Be equally careful when you meet a man who pushes himself and wants to win your friendship.

A man on his deathbed will yet give detailed instructions, even though he has not much. A retired official will gabble about his days at the capital, even though he no longer holds the official rank.

A man is physically stronger than a woman, but against an aggressive wife his hands are limp. Parents like to maintain their dignity before children, but when they have a disobedient



son, they usually shut up.

The world regards those who look down upon money as fools. That is why bribery is rampant. Similarly people who are not accommodating are regarded as “slow stuff” [tardy in getting promotion], and that is why the court is full of yes men.

Clean, fresh writing is like polished sandalwood where the wood grain shows its natural beauty. On the other hand, the writings of the hosts of imitators are like lacquer ware, which shine on the outside but do not wear well.

Do right and do it alone. Commit something wrong and you will need a gang to work with. That is why even a burglar posts someone to watch for him.

There are times when a poor scholar is forced to beg something of his friends, but he will do it with dignity. Even the sages died, but they died with a lasting fame.

When a wife feels unhappy and the husband shares her unhappiness, her unhappiness will vanish. But when a wife gets into a rage, it won't do for the husband also to get into a rage.

It is said that an unscrupulous man can end up as a cabinet minister and the man who has done him a good turn then receives his boomerang. It is also said that an official who owes debts to others must be an honest official. If so, the man who loans him money will feel very sorry to see him lose his job.

If a man quickly gets rich shortly after he gets an office, he cannot amount to much. But if he stays in an office for years and still is not rich, he does not amount to much, either.

A man often talks big to impress people but is a coward at heart. A hypocrite often makes a pretense of sterling honesty but reminds me of a courtesan who refuses to taste food at dinners and then goes home and gorges herself.

An official may solidly turn down big bribes but nibble at little gifts of carpets or coats. That is because the mouse has its own caution in stealing food. Or a man may be honest at first and then grab something really worth while. That resembles a tiger's crouch before the spring.

A police officer may catch thieves with one hand and receive booty with the other. A man may join in condemning adultery but love to take a peep at the adulteress.

Law may be too strict, or too lax. But strict enforcement of law is like screwing the strings too tight, which still produce some music. A general state of lawlessness is like having the strings too loose, when there is no sound at all.

Do not ask your children's opinions when you want to retire, especially the younger children. And do not ask your wife when you want to take a concubine, especially a lately married one.

Man loves woman like one thirsty asking for a drink. Woman loves man like one in a hot climate seeking for a cool place. Therefore the latter stays longer.

A stupid son is worse than a profligate son because there is no hope of a change. A muddle-headed official is worse than a dishonest one because he drags others down with him.

A well-read man often gives opinions from his reading and airs them as his own.

A man whose face changes color at the sight of ten dollars should not be made a mayor. One whose face changes color at the sight of a hundred dollars should not lead an army.

Better try to build up a company of friends when you have money than try to win disciples by your lofty teachings.

Better feed people than bait them with words.

A miser can amass a considerable fortune, but let something happen and he will be like a crushed rat on the streets. A big-hearted man can also go broke, but something happens and he still stays as alive as a centipede who has lost some legs.

A person who likes to drop names can fool the innocent, but not the people with a better background.

Snobbery can be worse among the rich than among the poor. The hatred among brothers is sometimes worse than that among friends.

When you see a man whose eyes are dull and fixed, you can be sure that his mind is gone. When you see a man who is obsequious, look out.

A rash temper can conceal secret greed. A servile, ingratiating appearance helps to conceal emptiness of mind.

Eating and sex follow instincts in which men and animals are alike. Beyond these, in things outside instincts, the truth must be learned through some hard thinking.

If a rich man associates with the poor, he gets a good name.

When a poor man associates with the rich, he gets money.

Humility is a virtue, but too much of it bespeaks cunning. Too much silence in a man also indicates a designing mind.

Praise a man at his back and not to his face, and he will really appreciate it when he hears about it.

Wealth and power do not come to a high-minded scholar because he never cares for them and does not run after them.

They do come to an aggressive man because he goes to it like an army fighting with its back to a river.

About one third of the book has been translated.



## 【归有园塵谈（节录）】

明·徐学谟

水火盗贼之害，必先横被于孤贫，虚羸劳瘵之灾大率淹缠乎贵介。

虽贵为卿相，必有一篇极丑文字，送归林下（弹章）；虽恶如梲杌，必有一篇绝好文字，送归地下（墓志）。

心源未彻，纵博综群籍，徒号书厨；根气不清，虽诵说三乘，只如木偶。

遇沉沉不语之士，切莫输心；见悻悻自好之徒，  
应须防口。

地下无衣食之身，而临绝者犹勤嘱付；林下无冠  
裳之用，而既休者尚事夸张。

男子之力，必胜于妇人，若对悍妻，其手自缚；  
父母之尊，素加于卑幼，使遇劣子，其口常噤。

世以不要钱为痴人，故苞苴塞路；世以不谀人为  
迟货，故谄佞盈朝。

清虚之作，如水磨楠瘿，自见光辉；剽袭之文，



明·文徵明 东园图（局部）