

# THE LONE SWAN

BY

THE REVEREND MANDJU

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH

BY

GEORGE KIN LEUNG

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## FOREWORD

THE translator feels that he owes the readers of this book, especially those who have no access to the Chinese text, what explanation he can give concerning the title of the book in question. The original Chinese work has five characters for its title (斷鴻零雁記), of which the last, "Chi" (記), means written record, or perhaps, as specifically in this case, at least, a diary or an autobiographical sketch. Of the four characters (斷鴻零雁), which may be rendered "the shattered and lone swan," the translator has chosen the English equivalent of the last two characters, "The Lone Swan," for the title of the English translation. Although many attempts were made to find some authoritative quotation from some classical work, which would give these swans a poetical or symbolical significance that would accord with the thought expressed in the title and the work itself, no results were obtained. The narrative, however, makes it quite clear that the Reverend Mandju means that he himself was shattered and lone.

The Reverend Mandju's primary aim was to give a sketch of his own life; but he seems to consider it of equal, if not of greater importance, to set forth the purity of true Buddhism and to show how, as it happened in his own case, it was possible, by leaning on this great religion, to overcome every carnal desire and to break every earthly tie, no matter how precious.

Since it was the translator's original intention to have this book in bilingual form for the convenience of Chinese students who were studying English, he took great care to follow the Chinese text, word for word, whenever it was possible; but after he had discovered that the publishers thought the work should be put out as an English book only, the translator made many changes in his work in order to make the English read more smoothly. Practically all the lines of the original Chinese have been carefully and literally translated, however, excepting in cases where changes were absolutely necessary for the sake of clarity of meaning or beauty of expression with due regard to accurate translation.

Even a genius like Mandju has pet habits that are annoying; the one that comes to the translator's mind now is Mandju's overuse of the Chinese character for "suddenly" (忽然), which would appear several times in a few paragraphs had not the translator omitted it. Other cases of this nature necessitated omissions, in order to avoid monotony. Many figures of speech, which may appear unusual or quaint to a person of European training, have been purposely translated verbatim in order to maintain the spirit of the original text.

The translator begs leave to state that in the course of translation, "The Lone Swan" has necessarily lost much of its exquisite phrasing and the actual music of its flawless lines, both of which are so evident in the Chinese text; but he has made great effort to preserve the lyrical tone of the narrative which the author intentionally employed in writing his story.

Although at the end of Chapter VII the Reverend Mandju says: "What I record hereafter concerns my experiences in Japan," and "all the incidents recorded herein are actual facts," the Chinese reader knows that no writer is so silly as to lay bare every detail of his life and never, for a moment, deviate from actual facts. The Chinese reader does know, moreover, that an autobiographer will write much that is true, and add to or change the actual facts in order to make distasteful events read to his satisfaction, or perhaps to create more story-quality to his narrative. It follows that the reader will find many contradictions if he will but compare the accounts of the Reverend Mandju's life, as taken from the book entitled "The Remaining Manuscripts of a Swallow's Study," with the statements in "The Lone Swan." For instance, the former work states that his fiancée jilted him, while his own work says that his fiancée, Snow-mei, was true to him and ultimately starved herself to death because her parents tried to force her to marry another. Admirers of Mandju know that most of the narrative is true to fact and it is only for the Reverend Mandju to decide how much one is to know of his private affairs. There is some justification at least for his stand in this age of exposure of private affairs to the public at large.

It may be fitting to state at this point that Kiyoko was a Japanese girl, not a Chinese girl, while Snow-mei was a typical, old-fashioned, Chinese girl of the higher class, who would remain faithful to her first love, even to death.

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The original Chinese text of "The Lone Swan" is published by the Kwang I Publishing Company (廣益書局), of Shanghai. To Mr. Wei Ping-en (魏秉恩), of that company, who has so courteously given the translator the right to publish the English translation of the work in question, the latter is, therefore, greatly indebted.

The translator,

GEORGE KIN LEUNG.

SHANGHAI, SEPTEMBER 12, 1924.

# THE LONE SWAN

## CHAPTER I

IN Pai Yüeh, on the shore of the southern ocean, stands the lofty and precipitate Golden Bowl Mountain. Whenever the heavens are cloudless and clear, there can be barely discerned among the verdant splendor of the lower half of the mountain, red tiles that overlap one another like the scales of a fish. Here stands the ancient monastery, Sea Clouds, still intact, as it was in the days when the house of Sung fell and Lu Hsiu-fu, carrying the child emperor in flight, had taken his own life and that of the child at Yai Mountain, thus dying for the honor of the country rather than permitting the rebel pursuers to take their lives. The surviving adherents of the dynasty retired to this spot, shaving off their hair to become monks. Day and night, they cried to Heaven, ever watching for, and beckoning to, their emperor's departed shade. Thus, even to the present day, mournfully clustering clouds fill the skies as far as the eye can reach among the mountain crests; and at times, may be heard the dolorous thrumming of ocean waves, which make the hearer sigh all the more deeply when, in his memory, the tragic past looms up again. He dare not turn his thoughts to the past for fear of sad memories.

At present I write of the precious canopies and the golden pennants in this monastery, all of them treasures of greatest antiquity. Here, where a limpid, noiseless brook meanders and pines and cypresses grow in rank luxuriance, dwell a few score of monks who observe the severest customs and the strictest rites. Even their utensils and their alms bowls are handled without a sound. After the passing of the winter each year, the instructions for newcomers are delivered; but those who enter these mountains to apply for candidatuship are very few in number, because the dangerously high and narrow mountain paths are difficult to scale.

It was at dawning one day when the deep-throated gong boomed forth its leisurely notes that I leaned against a high tower in a remote corner of the monastery and watched the sea gulls appear and disappear in the distant sky, as they drew near or withdrew in flight. The weather had been cold for a long time; the violent ocean gales seemed capable of blowing one farther than a thousand li. The reader may know that on this day, my required probationary period of thirty days of monastic life had been completed. On considering my sojourn here, it seemed that the thirty days had fairly flown by. To-day I could go down the mountain side to see my former abbot; after that, the sweeping of leaves and the burning of incense would accompany my onflowing years. Was there aught to regret?

While I was thinking in this vein, tears fell without my knowing it, and I sighed. "Every one says that I have no mother. Is it really true that I have none? No, 'tis a lie!" I cried within myself. "Although I was left a

solitary body after the death of my foster father, still, whenever the winds swayed the tree tops, or the rain pattered, or all nature was still, I heard the faint voice of my loving mother calling to me; but whence came this voice, my heart of itself did not understand. I have ever hoarded and treasured these thoughts, doting over them again and again." Sighing once more, I continued my musings: "Mother, since you have borne me, why don't you make it possible for me to see you once at least? You, too, must know that your son is wandering aimlessly about the world and has come to his present extremity of suffering."

By this time the waves were glittering far and wide in the sunlight, a dazzling scene of weird beauty. I threw on my robe and followed in the company of thirty-six other candidates, all of us walking in single file and holding incense in both hands. Having mounted the great ceremonial hall, we took positions to the left and right of the altar and remained as motionless as the proverbial swan. The abbots from all the neighboring mountains were here assembled. After the incense chants had been read, there followed a silence in which even the creatures of nature were mute. Later, there came a monk of high rank, who chanted in sorrowful and repressed tones, "You who seek candidateship turn your faces toward Heaven, and offer three prayers to show your gratitude for the loving care your father and mother gave you while rearing you." By this time my tears were streaming down my cheeks; I could not raise my eyes. My fellow candidates also could not cease their sobbing. After the ceremonies had been performed, the



abbots came, one by one, persuading and consoling us: "Goodness and great benevolence! Your intelligence is deep; your voluntary strength for orthodoxy, great. From now on, serve your personal abbot and on some future day at an assembly on a spiritual mountain, you will hold a flower and smile at each other in perfect felicity."

I listened to their voices, which were so kind and sad that I went through the usual ceremony and accepted the document of monkhood. Drying my tears, I took leave of the abbots and leisurely wended my way down the mountain side. The trees that flanked both sides of the path were leafless — a sad and cold world, indeed! The only sign of life was the woodcutters, appearing and disappearing among the trees. How were they to know that one who had renounced the world also had in his heart a distress which was difficult to set forth. This chapter is the beginning of my book, and all the incidents recorded herein are actual facts.

## CHAPTER II

I HAD already left the Sea Cloud Monastery and was living in a monastery cell of a remote village. Aside from ministering to the needs of my abbot, I spent all my time bathing my face with tears. My abbot, noticing my tender years, took compassion on me; and although he was both kind and even-tempered, still, this considerate treatment was not sufficient to wipe away my grief. If the reader will but try to think, he will realize that I was the most forlorn person in the world.

At the order of the abbot I went down to the village one day, in order to beg rice, and obtained, by approximate measure, over ten catties, which I carried as I walked along. I was wondering where I might spend the night when a robber, who had come from afar, snatched away my bag of rice. This loss I dismissed with a sigh. The sky was black by this time, and the path had become indistinguishable when I directed my steps to the seaside. Pacing to and fro for a time, I finally came to a sandy stretch where I rested for a short while, but terrifying waves suddenly arose. Blackness beset me on every side.

While I was puzzling over what I should do, I saw, on the distant surface of the ocean, a light the size of a pea; and I knew that a fishing junk was passing this spot. I therefore lifted my voice, crying, "Come hither, fisherman; I wish to cross the channel!"

As the light gradually grew larger, I knew that the junk was approaching me, and my heart felt comforted after a fashion. The junk finally lay quite close to the beach, and the fisherman asked me where I was going.

I replied, "I am a poor monk from the temple in the village of Polo, and since I have lost my way, will you kindly help me?"

The fisherman wagged his head in disgust. "What are you trying to tell me, anyway! My junk is meant to catch fish for profit; how can it transport a poor monk like you?"

Having thus spoken, he went aboard and sailed away. I could not think of a place to go to; and overcome by grief, I wept. My ears suddenly caught the sound of the barking of dogs. At this moment, I recalled that it was quite likely that a village was close at hand, and accordingly followed the path over the greensward, gradually picking my way until I came to a temple, in the middle of which hung a fisherman's lantern. I entered and was soon crouching upon a stone slab. Anon I heard footsteps outside the door; and smoothing my robe, I got up. I suddenly caught sight of a lad, entering in great haste.

"Where are you going, little boy?" I asked. The boy held toward me several bamboo baskets, which were interlaced in his fingers. "It's a very hard calling I follow," he said. "After the shades of night have grown deep, I conceal myself in some tumble-down wall, under a mountain ledge, or in the deep grass with lurking actions like those of a thief, just for the sake of catching these chirping insects. Isn't it much to be regretted?"

"You are such a distinguished-looking youth," I remarked. "Why do you follow such trivial pursuits?"

The boy answered, with a deep sigh: "My family owns a flower nursery. In the daytime, I carry cut flowers to sell to the rich; but the rich are so stingy that I take in very little money. In fact, it is not enough to support my kindly mother, and she is old. Considering that I am a son, what can I do but exert my strength to the utmost to make glad my mother's declining years? Catching insects is a hardship I do not care to shirk, and I do it on the side. My mother, however, does not know what I am doing, or else she would surely stop me. The other day I saw a cricket mounted on the back of a centipede near this temple. I have waited for it two nights, but haven't caught it yet. If Heaven puts this little insect into my hands, I will wait for market day in the neighboring village, when I shall surely get a goodly sum, with which I will buy a sheepskin robe for my kindly mother, so that although she pass through the coldest of days, yet she will feel as if she were in the warmth of springtime. In this way, her small son's heart will be comforted. Am I to be classed with the rolling stones and the men who go between buyer and seller, their only love being for money to the end of their days and not for a good name?"

On hearing the words of the lad, I could not keep back a responsive feeling, and my tears fell.

Looking at my shaved head, the boy calmly went on, "May I ask why Your Holiness sleeps exposed like this?"

Since I noticed that the expression on the boy's face was very sincere, I told him, in detail, all that had happened.

The boy spoke with genuine sympathy. "Your Holiness has had a hard time of it. My humble home isn't far from here, and we have some vacant rooms. I beg that you follow me there. If you don't, the fierce and unscrupulous villagers will falsely accuse Your Holiness of being a robber and you will suffer more than you can endure."

Touched by the boy's sincerity, I assented and followed him. We soon entered the village and reached a house the door of which the boy opened and then closed after him. He led me along the winding paths of the corridor. All the flowers in the patio breathed forth their faint perfume into my nostrils. Anon I very faintly made out the words of an elderly person, saying, "Ch'ao, why have you come home so late to-night?"

I listened very attentively. How strangely the tones of this person affected me! When I had reached the guest room, there loomed abruptly before me my old wet nurse!

### CHAPTER III

I PAID my respects to my old nurse; joy and sadness were commingled in my breast. She asked me all that I had done, one thing at a time, and requested me to have a seat. She gazed steadily at my face, and having put her hand to her head in deep thought for some time, sadly sighed: "Alas, Saburo, if I were still with your family to-day, would you have come to such a pass as to enter monkhood? By count, I waited on your mother only three years; and although that was a short period, your mother treated me with the greatest of kindness. I have been parted from your mother for more than ten long years; but even to this day, whenever I take rice how can I forget her loving kindness? Immediately after your mother's departure, I endured shameful treatment at the hands of the family because I remembered your mother's graciousness; but even then I could not bear to leave you and part with you, Saburo. When your father's friend, your foster father, died, my heart was filled with grief. I said at the time, 'Saburo is quite alone and has no one to depend on.' I wished to send a letter posthaste, explaining the whole situation to your mother, in order to make possible your journeying eastward to her home to get away from your foster mother, that ferocious dog of a woman; but who would have thought that your foster mother would nose out my intentions? I incurred her wrath, and she thrashed me

with a bamboo rod. At that time I had no desire to talk with her about humaneness. She beat me to her heart's content and drove me home."

My nurse, on reaching this point in her narrative, wept; her voice was choked with sobs. My heart became heavy with the deepest of sorrow for the moment; but I had no idea what to do in order to console her. My tears merely welled up like a mountain spring. We faced each other speechless. Then I recalled that my old nurse was over forty years of age when she had gone through that anger and mental torture for me. Who could have withstood it? I forced on a brave front and, by way of consolation, said: "Do not grieve, dear nurse. You have nurtured me so that I have reached my present state of maturity. How can I find adequate words to express my gratitude for such tenderness and affection as you have given me? Although my heart is cold and I have entered monastic life, still how fortunate am I to meet my former nurse! I rely on you for news of my own flesh and blood, else I should never meet my mother though I searched high heaven and deep earth. In considering present events, is not one led to think that, after all, great Heaven is conscious of my every need? In my tender years, I always believed that my mother was still alive; but even much puzzling did not enable me to discover where she lived and what her maiden name was. The person you mentioned as my mother, can she be the mother who bore me? Why did she allow me to drift about aimlessly, alone in all my bitter grief, without so

much as asking for me? But tell me all about myself, even about every little thing that has happened."

The old dame, having dried her tears, turned her face toward me. "Be patient, Saburo, and I will tell you everything. I was the daughter of a villager and have lived here all my days, rearing domestic animals for a livelihood. After my marriage, I followed my husband to work in the fields by day and rested at nightfall. Ours was happiness without end; but how was I to know that, as among other folk, there were destined to be circumstances both favorable and unfavorable, also tribulations for me? In the married life of the men of villages and their spouses their years flow on even as the ocean tides. Alas, when I was thirty years of age my husband died! He left no property,—only a babe, my Ch'ao. As time passed on, it became more and more difficult to meet household expenses; and all our relatives and friends looked upon me and my son as strangers. I began to perceive that the ways of the world were changing; I felt grieved at heart. Who was there to tell my troubles to? I looked far and wide and found no help.

"One day, while I was gleaning ears of grain on the outskirts of the village, there suddenly appeared a matron dressed in old-fashioned garments, advancing toward me with refined and easy gait, saying, 'You seem to harbor a great sorrow.' She asked about my circumstances in detail; and I answered all her questions. It was thus that your mother's pity was aroused and she hired me to be your wet nurse. The matron of the old-fashioned garments was, indeed, your own mother. She



was born in Japan. All her clothes were made after the old fashions of my country [China]. I first became acquainted with these facts through constant hearsay after I had met your mother. Saburo is the name she gave you.

"I once heard your mother say that you had been born a crying babe and that you were only a few months old when your father died. Your father was Tsung-lang, of a distinguished clan of Chiang-hu. He was held in high esteem by his village neighbors because of his uprightness in his daily dealings with others. After his death, your mother, on taking one sweeping survey of the vicious ways of society, bethought herself to take you, a branch of the family tree, back to China. She took you to your father's best friend, who accepted you as his foster son. She arranged for your complete estrangement from the island people [Japanese], hoping that after you had reached maturity, you would be a dragon [a hero] among men. Although she knew that this act would be against the laws of her own country, there was nothing that this loving mother, impelled by love for her son, would not do.

"She carried you in person, coming to travel secretly about my country. Your mother had lived in this country for three years when one day she called me, saying, 'I am going back to my home in the east; take good care of yourself.' She then pointed to you, and forcing back her tears, said in a mournful voice, 'This child was born in adverse circumstances; care well for it, and I surely will not forget your pains.' After she had spoken, she wrote her address, which she gave me with