

Peach-Blossom Fount

By T'ao Ch'ien (A.D. 365-427)

Translated by Rev. John Turner, S.J.

PREFACE

During the reign period T'ai-yuan [376-396] of the Chin dynasty, a man of Wu-ling who plied the fisher's trade, losing all count of distance as he made his way along a certain brook, suddenly came on a grove of peach-trees in blossom which fringed the shore some hundred paces, no other trees interspersed, where on scented grasses fresh and pleasing to the eye lay fallen blossoms in gay profusion, at sight of which the fisherman was much amazed. He went on farther, hoping to traverse the grove; which ended at a fount of water above which a hill rose. In the hillside was a small opening from which light seemed to glimmer. So he left his boat and entered at the opening, which at first was exceeding narrow, barely wide enough to allow of passage. When he had proceeded some little way, all at once there was a glow of dazzling light. Over a broad expanse of land, dotted at due intervals with houses and dwellings, were goodly holdings with fair pools, set with mulberries, bamboos and the like; the fields intersected by regular paths, and the sound of farmyard animals within earshot. There did they go about their farming, men and women arrayed as it were in alien attire; while aged men and infants merrily disported themselves. At sight of the fisherman, much startled, they inquired whence he had come. When he had replied, nothing would satisfy them but to receive him in their homes; and wine they broached and poultry killed for his entertainment. As they of the villages heard of his coming, they flocked to make their interrogations. By them he was informed how in a former age, fleeing the terror and confusion of the Ch'in regime, leading their families and fellow-townsmen, they had come to this untenanted spot away from the inhabited world, never to issue forth again. They asked what royal family was now in power, — knowing nothing as they did of the Han reign, not to speak of the succeeding dynasties of Wei and Chin. As he in his turn replied to their several questions, they expressed a rueful wonderment. One by one the rest invited him to banquet in their homes, and regaled him with store of wine and viands. After the lapse of some days he took his departure. Among his hosts there were those who reminded him that it might be wiser if one spoke not to strangers of their affairs. Emerging once more, he found his boat and retraced the way he came, marking as he did so each various point of his journey. Arriving at his own district, he betook himself to the Prefect of the locality and recounted what had befallen; who forthwith despatched certain ones to accompany him in search of the place he had described. They were at a loss, however, to rediscover the route. Liu Tzu-chi, an eminent worthy of Nan-yang, having heard the story, made eager preparation to voyage thither: but all to no effect, for he died of illness on his quest. Nor in later times was further inquiry made.

桃花源詩并記

陶潛

晉太元中，武陵人捕魚爲業，緣溪行，忘路之遠近。忽逢桃花林，夾岸數百步，中無雜樹，芳草鮮美，落英繽紛；漁人甚異之。復前行，欲窮其林。林盡水源，便得一山。山有小口，髣髴若有光。便捨船，從口入。初極狹，纔通人，復行數十步，豁然開朗。土地平曠，屋舍儼然，有良田美池桑竹之屬。阡陌交通，雞犬相聞。其中往來種作，男女衣著，悉如外人。黃髮垂髫，並怡然自樂。見漁人，乃大驚；問所從來。具答之。便要還家，設酒殺雞作食。村中聞有此人，咸來問訊。自云先世避秦時亂，率妻子邑人來此絕境，不復出焉，遂與外人間隔。問今是何世，乃不知有漢，無論魏晉。此人一一爲具言所聞，皆歎惋。餘人各復延至其家，皆出酒食。停數日，辭去。此中人語云：不足爲外人道也。既出，得其船。便扶向路，處處誌之。及郡下，詣太守說如此。太守即遣人隨其往，尋向所誌，遂迷不復得路。南陽劉子驥，高尚士也，聞之，欣然規往。未果。尋病終。後遂無問津者。

嬴氏亂天紀	賢者避其世	黃綺之商山	伊人亦云逝
往跡浸復湮	來逕遂蕪廢	相命肆農耕	日入從所憇
桑竹垂餘蔭	菽稷隨時藝	春蠶收長絲	秋熟靡王稅
荒路曖交通	鷄犬互鳴吠	俎豆猶古法	衣裳無新製
童孺縱行歌	斑白歡游詣	草榮識節和	木衰知風厲
雖無紀曆誌	四時自成歲	怡然有餘樂	於何勞智慧
奇蹤隱五百	一朝敞神界	涓薄旣異源	旋復還幽蔽
借問游方士	焉測塵囂外	願言躡輕風	高舉尋吾契

Peach-Blossom Fount

POEM

When the First Emperor foiled Heaven's decree,
 All honest men respued his tyranny.
 A knot of nobles to the lone hill fled:
 In time 'twas given out that they were dead.
 Their former track with mists was shrouded deep:
 The path they traversed overgrown and steep.
 Shoulder by shoulder did they plant and till,
 And as the sun went down might rest their fill.
 'Neath verdurous shade of drooping mulberry-trees,
 Thus as they willed they sowed their corn and pease:
 In spring they wound long threads their silk-worms spun;
 At harvest Royal taxes paid they none.
 By lonely ways from traffic far retired
 Only the noise of dogs and fowl was heard.
 In ritual they kept the ancient way,
 Nor changed their dress's mode from day to day.
 There did small children frolic make and song,
 And old men merrily saunter all day long.
 By grasses lush they knew the season mild;
 And weary trees presaged when winds blew wild.
 What though they kept no count of months or days,
 Still the four seasons made one year always.
 In blissful state of seeming-endless joy,
 What need their brains with knowledge to annoy?
 Five hundred years uncouth they dimly stayed
 Till did a wight their fairy land invade;
 But, such the vagueness of the hidden spring,
 Thenceforth were spared from curious visiting,
 How should the journey man with wares for sale
 Fathom the secret of this sylvan vale?
 O would that I, snatching some gentle wind,
 Might hoist my sail and there true kinship find!

||| Everyone knows about T'ao Yuan-ming's *T'ao-hua yuan chi* (An account
 ||| of the Peach-Blossom Fount) — a justly celebrated essay often found in
 ||| Chinese schoolbooks and many times reprinted and translated. Few are
 ||| aware that originally the prose was written as a preface to a poem — the
 ||| *T'ao-hua yuan shih*. The relative merits of the preface and the poem may
 ||| be a matter of interest, and we are glad to be able to present a new
 ||| translation of both by Fr. John Turner. |||