



THE CANON OF REASON AND VIRTUE

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THE CANON OF REASON AND VIRTUE

(LAO-TZE'S TAO TEH KING)

CHINESE AND ENGLISH

**TRANSLATED BY
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Lao-tze is not in favor of progress. He is bent on preaching that the Tao can be actualized in primitive conditions as well as, if not more easily than, in a highly complicated state of civilization. His ideal is not the luxury of wealth and power and learnedness, but the simple life of simple-minded people. He may even be accused of reactionary tendencies, for he is ready to abandon the advance made by his predecessors up to his own time and give up the practice of writing on bamboo slips, in favor of the prehistoric mode of keeping memoranda by knotted cords (*chieh shing*), or as they are now called with an American name, *quipu*, a method of assisting the memory by threads of various dyes knotted in special ways.

Lao-tze will scarcely find followers for his proposal to revert to primitive conditions, but even here where he is mistaken, there is a truth at the bottom of his thought. It is the ideal of a simple life, so much preached and so little practised in our days. Progress not only brings new inventions but also loosens the old ideals of simplicity, purity, honesty and faith. In place of the restful contentedness of former ages, the new generation is filled with desires. People have become reckless, arrogant, and luxurious. Learnedness takes the place of wisdom, and a pretentious display of filial piety supplants spontaneous respect for parents.
