

'Friends and relations' are, to a Chinese, the beginning and end of Life itself.

A highly popular form of these 'written pictures' are the *tui tzu* which form part of the decoration in even the humblest homes of China. The cultivated choose these 'antithetical phrases' with the greatest care that they may be appropriate to the place they are to adorn; the uncultivated must of course depend upon others for their choice but *tui tzu* they must have!

Method VI. Painting used instead of writing.

There are indeed three different ways in which paintings take the place of writings:

Firstly, they are used to express a wish or a proverb, or they are intended to suggest a well known tale. No pictures are more popular than are the groups of flowers, trees, and birds which are used as birthday greetings. The white-headed bul-bul appears then as a symbol of longevity, while the various trees and flowers each play a symbolical role.

Secondly, paintings are used as illustrations. Under this head one can place the Buddhist and Taoists pictures which tell—as do our religious pictures—some definite story. A very famous example is the picture of Li T'ieh Kuai by the thirteenth century artist Yen Hui.

The third manner in which Method VI is used is to suggest by a painting precisely the same mood as is suggested by a poem—of this manner there are innumerable examples. In fact one can find a poem to balance most of the master-pieces from the Chinese printer's brush.

And now I have spoken of the six methods of representation to which I at first referred. It remains, in closing, to say a few words about the scholars—the term embraces poets, painters, and calligraphists—who for the joy of expression indulged in these arts. One period during the T'ang dynasty is especially noted. I mean that quarter of a century which closed with the An Lu-shan rebellion A.D. 756.

Then there met in Ch'ang An, the Sian of today, a group of men whose names ring in the annals of Chinese art. Then lived Wang Wei who expressed himself in both

poems and paintings, whose rolling waterfall is a world Masterpiece; then lived Li T'ai-po who dubbed himself an Immortal of the Wine-cup, who chose the lyric as his chief means of interpretation. Another giant, perhaps the greatest of all, was Tu Fu in whose poems—so the Chinese say—the history of the times can be read. And Ch'eng Ch'ien, the eccentric Ch'eng Ch'ien for whom the Bright Emperor created the post of Kuang Wên, which entailed no duties because duties Ch'eng Ch'ien would not perform. He lived in the temple Tz'u En, the temple of Compassionate Grace, and collected leaves in the courtyard, which leaves, he decorated with pictures or poems. One of his famous offerings to the Emperor was a landscape with a poem in impeccable script, placed so that the balance of the composition was perfect.

The Bright Emperor with his quick aesthetic response appreciated it keenly and exclaimed: 'Ch'eng Ch'ien! The Three Perfections!' The term has been used ever since to describe such a composition.

In these days the poets and painters banqueted together listening to each others' poems or admiring each others' paintings, they made expeditions together and lived indeed a life full of aesthetic emotion. They visited the hills where they listened to what Tu Fu describes as 'the music of silence', where they watched the dragon float by in the clouds which he governs, or heard the tiger growl in the wind it controls. Then they were inspired to write—poetic frenzy seized them. And it is not to be doubted that in the brush the Chinese and Japanese possess a medium for the expression of emotion denied to us.

With the writing brush they improvise much as our musicians improvise. Intoxicated by the joy of execution they are veritable virtuosi of the brush.

The Chinese artist pours out his soul from the soft hair tip on the slender bamboo tube and whether that which drops from the tip be a writing or an image it is:

That which is undefinable;
That which is untranslatable;
That which is universal
That which is: ———— Poetry!

Chinese Painting

By WEN YUAN-NING (溫源寧)

WHAT is unique about Chinese painting is its intimate connection with calligraphy. It is difficult to draw the boundary line between the two. Indeed, so intimate is the connection between them, that it is impossible to say when one ends and the other begins. In such a picture as *An Old Tree with Bamboos and Rocks* by Ku An and Ni Ts'an of the Yuan Dynasty, for instance, the writing in it seems to be nothing but a mere extension of the drawing. And in *The Pomegranate* by Hsu Wei of the Ming Dynasty, what difference is there between the strokes that compose the picture and those that compose the writing?

A bamboo and an orchid are objects which any calligraphist can draw: the better the calligraphist, the

better the drawing of such objects. The movement of the brush in drawing them, and the strokes that compose them, are identical with those that form characters. This is obvious even to the uninitiated. For this reason, practically every Chinese scholar, ancient or modern, who has any urge to draw at all, almost invariably begins with the bamboo and the orchid. The result may not be pleasing: if so, this is not due to any defect in the technique, but in the composition and the design.

In more elaborate drawings, such as *Spring in Kiang Nan* (江南春圖), and *The Western Hill of Tung Ting Lake* (洞庭西山圖) by Wen Cheng-ming of the Ming Dynasty, for example, the connection between painting and calligraphy may not be very apparent. Nevertheless,

the rule holds good, that in them too, calligraphy and painting are not two sister arts, but one art.

There are many styles of painting; but so are there many styles of calligraphy. Each style of painting may be considered to correspond to a particular style of calligraphy. The paintings of Hui Tsung, the Sung Emperor, seem to be just the kind that a man, who writes as he does, would draw. Again, how many of the characteristics of Tung Ch'i-ch'ang's pictures may not be inferred from his calligraphy?

One chief reason for this intimate connection between painting and calligraphy in China is undoubtedly the use of the same means in both. The brush that writes is also the brush that draws. And if the drawing is in black and white and done on paper, the identity of the means employed in drawing and in writing is complete. The use of coloured inks and of silk may suggest a difference, but it is a difference which is not material. Writing has been done, and sometimes is still being done, on silk, and there is really no reason why coloured inks should not be used in writing. That they are not so used ordinarily is a matter of practical convenience, and does not import any significance at all.

One important consequence of the use of the writing-brush and of coloured inks in Chinese painting is to differentiate its technique completely from that of painting in the West. There, where oil-paints are used, mass effects are more important than lines. One sees this especially in portrait painting, as practiced in the West and in China. In the portrait, for instance, of the first Sung Emperor (宋太祖), the whole beauty of the picture lies in the vigour and rhythm of the lines, and in a certain simplicity of design. A portrait by Rembrandt, on the other hand, is all a matter of contrast between different masses of colours, and between light and shade.

Another difference between the art of painting in China and in the West is this: In China, anything once drawn cannot be changed: there may be additions, but no corrections. This, of course, follows naturally from the fact that the line is everything in Chinese painting. Where this is not so, as in Western painting, changes and corrections may be made by just laying one dab of paint on top of another, whenever any alteration is to be made. For this reason, inevitability is a note which strikes one very forcibly in Chinese painting. In European painting, this note of inevitability is somehow not apparent. One notices this especially in the paintings of birds and flowers. How laboured and painfully exact they are, as done in the West! But what freshness and simplicity in the drawings of animals and flowers in the Tiao Kuang-yin Album of the Five Dynasties! What subtle poetry in Ma Lin's (馬麟) picture of a *Sprig of Plum Blossoms and Bamboos and their Shadows* in the Album of Successive Dynasties! What grace and what inevitability in the lines and strokes of *Bamboos and Rocks* by Wu Chen (吳璣) of the Yuan Dynasty! There is no need to adduce more examples to illustrate this point: this note of inevitability is present in every Chinese painting. That it is not to be found in Giuseppe Castiglione's *Peonies in a*

Vase and Landscape, ostensibly painted in the Chinese manner, is an exception which proves the rule. Castiglione, lover and practitioner as he was of Chinese painting, could not throw off the traditions of Western painting, even when he came to employ another medium and tried to paint in the Chinese manner. The result is, his paintings strike one as a *tour de force*: not being a Chinese, he has not that in him which, present in all Chinese artists, ancient and modern, makes even the worst of their paintings seem more inevitable than any which Western painting can show.

This brings one to the next point about Chinese painting. Being more a matter of lines than masses, and not admitting of any alterations in the lines once they are drawn, Chinese painting tends to be more idealistic, than realistic, in intention. From the T'ang to the Ch'ing Dynasty, there is a tendency, however, in Chinese landscape painting to be more and more realistic. But when compared with European landscape painting, the most realistic of Chinese landscape paintings seem to be idealistic. This idealistic intention in Chinese painting is particularly noticeable in the drawing of human figures. From the Lohans of Wu Tao-tze to the black-and-white sketch of *Chung Kuei* by the Ch'ing Emperor, Shih Tsu, this idealistic tradition is unbroken: not the exact photographic reproduction of a man is aimed at, but his spirit. In Liang K'ai's drawings of human figures, for instance, what unseen forces of the spirit are realised! A few strokes, and the idea of human isolation and loneliness is immediately seized!

The poetry of Chinese painting has often been commented upon. In the same way that much of the charm of Chinese poetry comes from what it suggests rather than from what it says, so also a good deal of the poetry of Chinese painting resides in what is left out rather than in what is put in a picture. What an infinity of trees and mountains is suggested in the blanks in Kao Ke-kung's *Mountain in Mist*! How much of the beauty of Chou Yin's (仇英) *Fishing in a Willowy Stream* is due to the blank spaces in the picture! This positive use of blank spaces as part of the design of a picture is something which is peculiarly Chinese; it is a pictorial counterpart of the Taoist philosophy of *Do Nothing*.

But the supreme virtue of Chinese painting is unquestionably its fine sense for nature. Everything, including man, finds its proper place in a beautiful harmony. Whereas in Western painting, man is glorified at the expense of everything else, in Chinese painting he forms only a small part of the whole; but it is a part which satisfies, because the whole of which he forms but a part is so desirably beautiful. In Tung Yuan's *Natives of Lung Shu Suburb*, for instance, who that sees that picture does not ache, if only for a while, to be one of the tiny figures in white, who are immortalised forever in that scroll? Sublimity, harmony, beauty—they are all there in that picture. But are these not the three characteristics of all good Chinese landscape paintings, nay of all Chinese paintings, be the subject ever so humble—birds, flowers, or insects?