THE GRAVE OF A CHINESE PHILOSOPHER.

BY THE EDITOR.

We regret to say that The East of Asia magazine, published at Shanghai by the North China Herald Office, has been discontinued. We followed its publication with interest although it contained few articles that were exactly in our line. The last belated number (it bears the date of December 1906 but did not appear until October 1907) contains an article on the grave of the philosopher Chou Fu Tsz, who was one of the most prominent thinkers of China. I have mentioned his name and explained his system in the pamphlet Chinese Philosophy* (pp. 27-30), and we are now

*At that time I followed in my transcription of Chinese words the method of S. Wells Williams, who spells the name Cheu (not Chou).
glad to have an authentic report on the several memorials of him, written by Dr. C. F. Kupfer who has visited the grave himself. These memorials which are still preserved at the philosopher's tomb are the only ones now known to exist. The place is situated where the Yang tze Kiang mingles its waters with those of Lake Poa-Yang-Hu, and lies at the northern boundary of the province Kiang-Si, a little east of the 116th degree longitude, and at about 29½ degrees in latitude.

We propose to extract from Dr. Kupfer's article a few passages. He says:

"Fifteen li, or about five English miles, south-east of Kiukiang, near the foot of the Lü Mountains and on the south-western slope of the Oak Tree Hill, is the grave of the celebrated Chou Fu Tsz, called in Chinese Sien Chi Mu, Sienchi being the name of his birthplace. To foreigners this place has become a beautiful spot for an afternoon excursion; but to the more devout Chinese it is a sacred sanctuary."
"If beauty of scenery and balmy air can add anything to the peaceful repose of departed spirits when they see their 'mortal coil' surrounded by such lavish gifts of nature, then Chou Fu Tsz can certainly have nothing to regret for having chosen this location. Sheltered from the northern winds, nestled in a little amphitheater-like valley, surrounded by huge trees of many centuries growth, with the five thousand feet mountain peaks looming up into the clouds, and the Lotus Flower Peak near by, what more could immortal shades desire? Beautiful as it is by nature, the aesthetic taste of man has added much to its artistic, picturesque harmony.
“Chou Fu Tsz was a native of Hunan, born at Sienschi in the Sung Dynasty in the year 1017 A. D. He was commonly known as Chou Tsz and spoken of as Sien Chi Sienseng, the gentleman from Sienschi. When he was but a child his father died and his mother was so poor that she brought him to her brothers, whose family name was Chen. He was surnamed Tung I, as if he belonged to the Chen family. When his mother died she was buried by the side of her brothers’ graves. Forty-four years later these graves were destroyed by a flood and Chou Fu Tsz removed his mother’s remains to their present resting-place. Two years after this he died and was buried on the left side of his mother’s grave.”

Chou Fu Tsz was married twice, and his two wives are buried on the right-hand side of his mother’s grave. Inscriptions indicate the places of the four persons buried there, the largest one in the middle being that of his mother, whom the sage, in true Chinese fashion, wanted even after death to hold the place of honor. She received, as is usual in China, the posthumous title of Taichūn, i.e., “Her Great Highness.”

The grave of Chou Fu Tsz has been repeatedly restored, mostly by persons of distinction, among them several prefects of Kiu Kiang, and they have taken the opportunity to immortalize their sentiments in inscriptions duly put up in different places. Of special interest, however, is the portrait of Chou Fu Tsz, which for all we know may be authentic. It is hung near the tablet over the grave, and is accompanied by another picture which represents the “no-alternative bridge” over which all souls have to pass on their way to purgatory. There are two guides to lead them, called Chin Tung and Yū Nū, who are represented with lotus flowers in their hands. Another tablet represents in outline the doctrine of Chou Fu Tsz, which has been explained in detail in Chinese Philosophy (p. 28).

The meaning of the tablet is briefly stated as follows:

The aboriginal principle, called “the great origin” (t’ai kih), is pictured as a white disk at the top. It rested and it moved. Its rest produced what is called in Chinese philosophy “Yin” or the negative principle, its movement what is called “Yang” or the positive principle. Yang is represented in light, movement and masculinity, Yin in darkness, rest and femininity. In sets of three they constitute eight trigrams. These two principles Yang and Yin produced in different mixtures the five elements, fire, water, earth, wood, and metal, and from a mixture of the elements and the eight trigrams all things have ultimately originated. In the eight trigrams
as well as in the innumerable existences of creation the aboriginal principle is immanently present.

It is typical of the Chinese that the places of highest honor are not given to their generals or statesmen, but to philosophers, moralists, and the great teachers of their civilization.
Back of the four graves is a wall, built in the shape of a horse-shoe, open in front, which is in agreement with Chinese ideas of protecting the dead against evil influences.

It is interesting to bear in mind that this beautiful spot is Chou Fu Tsz's own choice. It was at his request that his mother was buried here, and it also indicates his modesty that his own grave was at the left while his wives are placed at the right-hand side.