STRANGE COINCIDENCES IN LAO-TZE AND PLATO.

LAO-TZE in speaking of the heavenly Reason in Chapter 14 of his wonderful book, Tao Tch King, "The Canon of Reason and Virtue," describes it thus:

"We look at Reason and do not see it; its name is Colorless. We listen to Reason and do not hear it; its name is Soundless. We grope for Reason and do not grasp it; its name is Incorporeal.

"These three things cannot further be analyzed. Thus they are combined and conceived as a unity which on its surface is not clear but in its depth not obscure.

"Forever and aye Reason remains unnameable, and again and again it returns home to non-existence. This is called the form of the formless, the image of the imageless. This is called transcendentally abstruse.

"In front its beginning is not seen. In the rear its end is not seen.

"By holding fast to the Reason of the ancients, the present is mastered and the origin of the past understood. This is called Reason's clue."

This chapter is remarkable for several reasons.

Lao-tze speaks of the Tao and describes it by saying what it is not. It is not perceptible by the senses; accordingly it is "colorless," "soundless," and "incorporeal." It can not be seen, it can not be heard, it can not be touched; but this super-sensible something, the purely relational in all things, the divine Reason, is one and the same throughout. It is the Unnameable, the cosmic law, the world-order which moulds all things. Both its beginning and its end are wrapped in obscurity.

It is strange that Lao-tze's description of the Tao finds an almost literal parallel in the Phaedrus where Plato speaks of the pres-
ence of a being in the over-heaven, the supercelestial realm, a being imperceptible to the senses and to be apprehended only by the mind, the "pilot of the soul." This presence is described as an essence, truly existent, without color, without shape and impalpable. Plato says: "Of the heaven which is above the heavens, what earthly poet ever did or ever will sing worthily? It is such as I shall describe; for I must dare to speak the truth, when truth is my theme. There abides the very being with which true knowledge is concerned; the colorless, the formless, the intangible essence visible only to mind, who is the pilot of the soul."—Phaedrus, pagina 248.

In addition to this surprising similarity between Lao-tze's very words and the thoughts of a philosopher who lived about 200 years after him in ancient Greece, a distant country which at that time was in no connection with China, we must point out another strange coincidence. The three words, "colorless," "soundless," and "incorporeal," read in Chinese i, hi, wei, and the French scholar Abel Rémnusat saw in this combination of Chinese characters, i hi, wei, the corresponding three Hebrew letters, Jod, Heh, Vav, indicating the name Jehovah, and his theory was accepted by many others who for some reason or other believed that there ought to have been a mysterious prehistoric connection between the Chinese and the Israelites. The theory has found the support of a German translator of Lao-tze's book, Victor von Strauss, a confessed mystic, but it is not countenanced by any other sinologist of standing, and there is no need to refute it. We look upon it as a curious though most remarkable coincidence.

Another coincidence between Lao-tze and Plato, not less remarkable because it seems to us far-fetched, is found in Chapter 50. The parallel is even more strange than in the passage on the colorless, inaudible and impalpable. Lao-tze says in Chapter 50: "Yet have I heard that he whose life is based on goodness, when traveling on land will not fall a prey to the rhinoceros and tiger.

"When coming among soldiers he need not fear arms or weapons. The rhinoceros finds no place wherein to insert his horn. The tiger finds no place whereon to lay his claws. Weapons find no place where to thrust their blades. The reason is that he does not belong to the realm of death."

This passage finds a striking parallel also in Plato's Phaedrus. In the same book and on the same pagina (248) it contains these words: "There is a law of destiny, that the soul which attains any vision of truth in company with a god is preserved from harm until the next period, and if attaining always is always unharmed."