

THE MEDITATION HALL, AND IDEALS OF THE MONKISH DISCIPLINE

I

TO get a glimpse into the practical and disciplinary side of Zen, we have to study the institution known as the Meditation Hall. It is an educational system quite peculiar to the Zen sect. Most of the main monasteries belonging to this sect are provided with Meditation Halls, and in the life of the Zen monks more than anywhere else we are reminded of that of the Buddhist Brotherhood (*Sangha*) in India. This system was founded by the Chinese Zen Master, Hyakujo (百丈, 720-814), more than one thousand years ago. Until his time the monks used to live in monasteries belonging to the Vinaya sect (律寺), which were governed by a spirit not quite in accordance with the principles of Zen. As the latter grew more and more flourishing and its followers kept on increasing in number and in influence, there was need for its own institution, exclusively devoted to the promotion of its objects. According to Hyakujo, the Zen monasteries were to be neither Hinayanistic nor Mahayanistic, but they were to unite the disciplinary methods of both schools in a new and original manner, best suited to the realisation of the Zen ideals, as they were conceived by the masters of the earlier days.

Of these ideals as distinguished from those of the other Buddhist schools originated in China, the one to be considered most characteristically Zen and at the same time animating its long history is the notion of work or service. Hyakujo left a famous saying which was the guiding principle of his life and is preëminently the spirit of the Meditation Hall. It is this: "No work, no living." When he was thought by his devoted disciples too old to work in the garden, which was his daily

occupation, they hid all his garden implements, as he would not listen to their repeated oral remonstrances. He then refused to eat, saying, "No work, no living."⁽¹⁾ At all the Meditation Halls work is thus considered a vital element in the life of the monk. It is altogether a practical one and chiefly consists in manual labour, such as sweeping, cleaning, cooking, fuel-gathering, tilling the farm, or going about begging in the villages far and near. No work is considered beneath their dignity, and a perfect feeling of brotherhood and democracy prevails among them. How hard or how mean from the ordinary point of view a work may be, they will not shun it. They believe in the sanctity of manual labour. They keep themselves busy in every way they can, they are no idlers as some of the so-called monks or mendicants are, physically at least, as in India for instance.

Hyakujo must have had a profound knowledge of human psychology thus to make work the ruling spirit of the monastery life. His idea of "No work, no eating" did not necessarily originate from an economic or ethical valuation of life. His sole motive was not that nobody deserved his daily bread if he did not earn it with the sweat of his face. True, there is a virtue in not eating the bread of idleness, and there have been so many Buddhists since the early days of Buddhism, who thought it a most disgraceful thing to be living on others' earnings and savings. Hyakujo's object, while it might have been unconsciously conceived, was more psychological in spite of his open declaration, "No work, no eating." It was to save his monks from a mental inactivity or an unbalanced development of mind which too often results from the meditative habit of the monkish life. When muscles are not exercised for the execution of spiritual truths, or when the

(1) Literally, "A day [of] no work [is] a day [of] no eating" (一日不作一日不食). Cf. II. Thessalonians, iii, 10: "If any would not work, neither should he eat."

unity of mind and body is not put to practical test, the severance generally issues in inimical results. As the philosophy of Zen is to transcend the dualistic conception of flesh and spirit, its practical application will naturally be, dualistically speaking, to make the nerves and muscles the most ready and absolutely obedient servants of the mind, and not to make us say that the spirit is truly ready but the flesh is weak. Whatever religious truths of this latter statement, psychologically it comes from the lack of a ready channel between mind and muscles. Unless the hands are habitually trained to do the work of the brain, the blood ceases to circulate evenly all over the body, it grows congested somewhere, especially in the brain. The result will be not only an unsound condition of the body in general but a state of mental torpidity or drowsiness, in which ideas are presented as if they were wafting clouds. One is wide awake and yet the mind is filled with the wildest dreams and visions which are not at all related to realities of life. Fantasies are fatal to Zen, and those who practise Zen considering it a form of meditation are too apt to be visited upon by this insidious enemy. Hyakujo's insistence upon manual work has saved Zen from falling into the pitfalls of antinomianism as well as a hallucinatory mode of mind.

Apart from these psychological considerations, there is a moral reason which ought not to escape attention in our estimate of Hyakujo's wisdom in instituting work as vital part of Zen life. For the soundness of ideas must be tested finally by their practical application. When they fail in this, that is, when they cannot be carried out in our everyday life producing lasting harmony and satisfaction and giving real beneficence to all concerned,—to oneself as well as to others, no ideas can be said to be sound and practical. While physical force is no standard to judge the value of ideas, the latter, however logically consistent, have no reality when they are not joined to life. Especially in Zen abstract ideas that do not

convince one in practical living are of no value whatever. Conviction must be gained through experience and not through abstraction, which means that conviction has no really solid basis except when it can be tested in our acting efficient life. Moral assertion or "bearing witness" ought to be over and above an intellectual judgment, that is to say, the truth must be the product of one's living experiences. Idle reveries are not their business, the Zen followers will insist. They, of course, sit quiet and practise *zazen* (坐禪); for they want to reflect on whatever lessons they have gained while working. But as they are against chewing the cud all the time, they put in action whatever reflections they have made during hours of quiet-sitting and test their validity in the vital field of practicality. It is my strong conviction that if Zen did not put faith in acting its ideas, the institution would have long before this sunk into a mere somniferous and trance-inducing system, so that all the treasures thoughtfully hoarded by the masters in China and Japan would have been cast away as heaps of rotten stuff.

Perhaps unwittingly supported by these reasons, the value of work or service has been regarded by all Zen followers as one of their religious ideals. It is not impossible that the idea was greatly enforced by the characteristic industry and practicalness of the Chinese people by whom Zen was mainly elaborated. The fact is that if there is any one thing that is most emphatically insisted upon by the Zen masters as the practical expression of their faith, it is serving others, doing work for others, not ostentatiously indeed but secretly, without making others know of it. Says Eckhart, "What a man takes in by contemplation he must pour out in love." Zen would say, "Pour it out in work," meaning by work the active and concrete realisation of love. Tauler made spinning and shoe-making and other homely duties gifts of the Holy Ghost; Brother Lawrence made cooking sacramental; George

Herbert wrote :

“Who sweeps a room as to thy laws
Makes that and the action fine.”

These are all expressive of the spirit of Zen, as far as its practical side is concerned. Mystics are thus all practical men, they are far from being visionaries whose souls are too absorbed in things unearthly or of the other world to be concerned with their daily life. The common notion that mystics are dreamers and star-gazers ought to be corrected, as it has no foundation in facts. Indeed, psychologically, there is a most intimate and profound relationship between a practical turn of mind and a certain type of mysticism ; the relationship is not merely conceptual or metaphysical. If mysticism is true, its truth must be a practical one verifying itself in every act of ours, and, most decidedly, not a logical one, to be true only in our dialectics. Sings a Zen poet known as Hokoji (龐居士) :

“How wondrously supernatural,
And how miraculous, this !
I draw water, and I carry fuel !”
(神通並妙用 運水及搬柴)

II

The Meditation Hall (禪堂, *Zendo*, in Japanese), as it is built in Japan, is a rectangular building of different sizes according to the number of monks to be accommodated. One at Engakuji, Kamakura, is about 36 × 65 feet. This will probably accommodate thirty-five monks. The space allotted to each monk is one *tatami*, 3 × 6 feet, where he sits, meditates, and sleeps at night. The bedding for each never exceeds, winter or summer, one large wadded quilt. He has no regular pillow except that which is temporarily made up by himself out of his own private possessions. These latter, however, are next to nothing ; for they are *kesa* (袈裟) and *koromo* (衣) (priestly robes = *kashāya* in Sanskrit), a few books,

a razor, and a set of bowls, all of which are put up in a box about $3 \times 10 \times 3\frac{1}{2}$ inches large. In travelling this box is carried in front supported by a sash about the neck. The entire property thus moves with the owner. "One dress and one bowl, under a tree and on a stone," is the graphical description of the monkish life in India. Compared with this, the modern Zen monk must be said to be abundantly supplied. Still his wants are reduced to a minimum and no one can fail to lead a simple, perhaps the simplest, life if he models his after that of the Zen monk. The desire to possess is considered by Buddhism to be one of the worst passions mortals are apt to be obsessed with. What in fact causes so much misery in the world is due to a strong impulse of acquisitiveness. As power is desired, the strong always tyrannise over the weak; as wealth is coveted, the rich and poor are always crossing their swords of bitter enmity. International wars rage, social unrest ever goes on, unless the impulse to have and hold is completely uprooted. Cannot a society be reorganised upon an entirely different basis from what we have been used to see from the beginning of history? Cannot we ever hope to stop the amassing of wealth and the wielding of power merely from the desire for individual or national aggrandisement? Despairing of the utter irrationality of human affairs, the Buddhist monks have gone to the other extreme and cut themselves off even from reasonable and perfectly innocent enjoyments of life. However, the Zen ideal of putting up the monk's belongings in a tiny box a little larger than a foot square and three inches high, is their mute protest, though so far ineffective, against the present order of society.

In this connection it will be of interest to read the admonition left by Daito the National Teacher, 大燈國師, (1282-1337), to his disciples. He was the founder of Daitokuji, Kyoto, in 1326, and is said to have spent about one

third of his life which was not a very long one among the lowest layers of society under the Gojo bridge, begging his food, doing all kinds of menial work, and despised by the so-called respectable people of the world. He did not care for the magnificence of a prosperous and highly-honoured temple life led by most Buddhist priests of those days, nor did he think much of those pious and sanctimonious deeds that only testify to the superficiality of their religious life. He was for the plainest living and the highest thinking. The admonition reads :

“ O you, monks, who are here in this mountain monastery, remember that you are gathered for the sake of religion and not for the sake of clothes and food. As long as we have shoulders [that is, the body], we have to wear clothes, and as long as we have a mouth, we have to eat ; but be ever mindful, throughout the twelve hours of the day, to apply yourselves to the study of the Unthinkable. Time passes like an arrow, never let your minds be disturbed by worldly cares. Ever, ever be on the look-out. After my wandering away, some of you may have fine temples in prosperous conditions, towers and halls and holy books all decorated in gold and silver, and devotees may noisily crowd into the grounds ; some may pass hours in reading the sūtras and reciting dhāranis, and sitting long in contemplation, may not give themselves up to sleep ; they may, eating once a day and observing the fast-days, and, throughout the six periods of the day, practise all the religious deeds. Even when they are thus devoted to the cause, if their thoughts are not really dwelling on the mysterious and untransmittable Way of Buddhas and Fathers, they may yet come to ignore the law of moral causation, ending in a complete downfall of the true religion. All such belong to the family of evil spirits ; however long my departure from the world may be, they are not to be called my descendants. Let however there be just one

individual, who may be living in the wilderness in a hut thatched with one bundle of straw and passing his days by eating roots of the wild vegetables cooked in a pot with broken legs; but if he single-mindedly applies himself to the study of his own [spiritual] affairs, he is the very one who has a daily interview with me and knows how to be grateful for his life. Who should ever despise such a one? O monks, be diligent, be diligent!"

In India, the Buddhist monks never eat in the afternoon. They properly eat only once a day as their breakfast is no breakfast in the sense an English or American breakfast is. So, the Zen monks too are not supposed to have any meal in the evening. But the climatic necessity in China and Japan could not be ignored, and they have an evening meal after a fashion; but to ease their conscience it is called "medicinal food (藥石)." The breakfast which is taken very early in the morning while it is still dark, consists of rice gruel and pickled vegetables (*tsukemono*).

The principal meal at 10 a.m. is rice (or rice mixed with barley), vegetable soup, and pickles. In the afternoon, at four, they have only what is left of the dinner—no special cooking is done. Unless they are invited out or given an extra treatment at the homes of some generous patrons, their meals are such as above described, year in year out. Poverty and simplicity is their motto.

One ought not, however, to consider asceticism the ideal life of Zen. As far as the ultimate signification of Zen is concerned, it is neither asceticism nor any other ethical system. If it appears to advocate either the doctrine of suppression or that of detachment, the supposed fact is merely on the surface; for Zen as a school of Buddhism more or less inherits an odium of the Hindu discipline. The central idea, however, of the monkish life is not to waste, but to make the best possible use of things as they are given us, which is also the

spirit of Buddhism in general. In truth, the intellect, imagination, and all other mental faculties as well as the physical objects surrounding us, our own bodies not excepted, are given us for the unfolding and enhancing of the highest powers possessed by us as spiritual entities and not merely for the gratification of our individual whims or desires, which are sure to conflict with and injure the interests and rights asserted by others. These are some of the inner ideas underlying the simplicity and poverty of the monkish life.

III

As there is something to be regarded as peculiarly Zen in the table manners of the monks, some description of them will be given here.

At meal time a gong is struck, and the monks come out of the Meditation Hall in procession carrying their own bowls to the dining room. The low tables are laid there all bare. They sit when the leader rings the bell. The bowls are set,—which are by the way made of wood or paper and well lacquered. A set consists of four or five dishes, one inside the other. As they are arranging the dishes and the waiting monks go around to serve the soup and rice, the *Prajñāpāramitā Hridaya Sūtra*⁽¹⁾ is recited followed by the “Five Meditations,” 五觀, on eating, which are: “First, of what worth am I? Whence is this offering? Second, accepting this offering, I must reflect on the deficiency of my virtue. Third, to guard over my own heart, to keep myself away from faults such as covetousness, etc.,—this is the essential thing. Fourth, this food is taken as good medicine in order to keep the body in healthy condition. Fifth, to ensure spiritual attainment this food is accepted.” After these “Meditations,” they continue to think about the essence of Buddhism: “The first mouthful

(1) An English translation of this short sutra will appear in the following number of this magazine.

js to cut off all evils ; the second mouthful is to practise every good ; the third mouthful is to save all sentient beings so that everybody will finally attain to Buddhahood."

They are now ready to take up their chop-sticks, but before they actually partake of the sumptuous dinner, the demons or spirits living somewhere in the triple world are remembered ; and each monk taking out about seven grains of rice from his own bowl, offers them to those unseen, saying, "O you, demons and other spiritual beings. I now offer this to you, and may this food fill up the ten quarters of the world and all the demons and other spiritual beings be fed therewith!"

While eating quietude prevails. The dishes are handled noiselessly, no word is uttered, no conversation goes on. Eating is a serious affair with them. When a second bowl of rice is wanted, the monk folds his hands before him. The monk-waiter notices it, comes round with the rice-receptacle called *ohachi*, and sits before the hungry one. The latter takes up his bowl and lightly passes his hand around the bottom before it is handed to the waiter. He means by this to take off whatever dirt that may have attached itself to the bowl and that is likely to soil the hand of the serving monk. While the bowl is filled, the eater keeps up his hands folded. If he does not want so much, he gently rubs the hands against each other, which means "Enough, thank you."

Nothing is to be left when the meal is finished. The monks eat up all that is served them, "gathering up of the fragments that remain." This is their religion. After a fourth helping of rice, the meal generally comes to an end. The leader claps the wooden blocks and the serving monks bring hot water. Each diner fills the largest bowl with it, and in it all the smaller dishes are neatly washed, and wiped with a piece of cloth which each monk carries. Now a wooden pail goes around to receive the slop. Each monk gathers up his dishes and wraps them up once more, saying, "I have

now finished eating, and my physical body is well nourished : I feel as if my will-power would shake the ten quarters of the world and dominate over the past, present, and future : turning both the cause and the effect over to the general welfare of all beings, may we all unfailingly gain in powers miraculous!" The tables are now empty as before except those rice grains offered to the spiritual beings at the beginning of the meal. The wooden blocks are clapped, thanks are given, and the monks leave the room in orderly procession as they came in.

IV

Their industry is proverbial. When the day is not set for study at home, they are generally seen, soon after breakfast, about half past five in summer and about half past six in winter, out in the monastery grounds, or in the neighbouring villages for begging, or tilling the farm attached to the Zendo. They keep the monastery, inside as well as outside, in perfect order. When we say, "This is like a Zen temple," it means that the place is kept in the neatest possible order. When begging they go out miles away. Commonly, attached to a Zendo there are some patrons whose houses the monks regularly visit and get a supply of rice or vegetables. We often see them along the country road pulling a cart loaded with pumpkins or potatoes. They work as hard as ordinary labourers. They sometimes go to the woods to gather kindlings or fuel. They know something of agriculture too. As they have to support themselves in these ways, they are at once farmers, labourers, and skilled workmen. For they often build their own Meditation Hall under the direction of an architect.

These monks are a self-governing body. They have their own cooks, proctors, managers, sextons, masters of ceremony, etc. Though the master or teacher of a Zendo is its soul, he is not directly concerned with its government. This is left to the senior members of the community, whose characters have

been tested through many years of discipline. When the principles of Zen are discussed, one may marvel at their deep and subtle metaphysics and imagine what a serious, pale-faced, head-drooping, and world-forgetting group of people these monks are. But in their actual life they are after all common mortals engaged in menial work, but they are cheerful, cracking jokes, willing to help one another, and despising no work which is usually considered low and not worthy of an educated hand. The spirit of Hyakujo is ever manifest among them.

It was not only the monks that worked but the master himself shared their labour. He tilled the farm, planted trees, weeded the garden, picked tea-leaves, and was engaged in all other kinds of manual work, together with his disciples. Making use of such opportunities he gave them practical lessons in the teaching of Zen, and the disciples too did not fail to appreciate his instructions. When Joshu was sweeping the courtyard, a monk asked him, "How does the dust come into this holy ground?" When Nansen was working outdoors with his monks, Joshu who was told to watch over fire suddenly cried out "Fire! fire!" Isan said to Kyozan while both were picking tea-leaves: "I hear your voice all day but I do not see you, pray show yourself out." While working on the farm a monk happened to cut an earth-worm into two with his spade whereupon he asked the master Chōsha (長沙景岑), "The earth-worm is cut in twain and both parts are still wiggling; in which of them is the Buddha-nature present?" One day Obaku was weeding with a rake, and seeing Rinzai without one asked, "How is it that you do not carry any rake?" Another day observing Rinzai, resting on a rake, said Obaku, "Are you tired?" For brevity I have cut out the rest of the dialogues that follow the initial questions, but those who know know well that all these manifestly trivial events of daily life, thus handled by the masters, grow full of signification.

V

The monks thus develop their faculties all around. They receive no literary, that is, formal education which is gained mostly from books and abstract instruction. But their discipline and knowledge are practical and efficient; for the basic principle of the Zendo life is "learning by doing." They despise the so-called soft education which is like those pre-digested foods meant for the convalescent. When a lioness gives birth to her children, it is proverbially believed that after three days she will push them down over a deep precipice and see if they can climb back to her again. Those that fail to come out of this trial are not taken care of any more. Whether this is true or not, something like that is aimed at by the Zen master who will treat the monks with every manner of seeming unkindness. The monks have not enough clothes to put on, not enough food to indulge in, not enough time to sleep, and, to cap these, they have plenty of work to do, menial as well as spiritual. The outer needs and the inward aspirations, if they work on harmoniously and ideally, will finally end in producing fine characters well trained in Zen as well as in the real things of life. This unique system of education which is still going on at every Zendo is not so well known among the laity even in this country. And then the merciless tides of modern commercialism leave no corner uninvaded, and before long the solitary island of Zen may be found buried, as everything else, under the waves of sordid materialism. The monks themselves are beginning not to understand the great spirit of the successive masters. Though there are some things in the monastic education which may be improved, its highly religious and reverential feeling must be preserved if Zen is at all to live for many years yet to come.

Theoretically, the philosophy of Zen transcends the whole range of discursive understanding and is not bound by rules of antithesis. But this is very slippery ground, and there

are many that fail to walk erect. When they stumble, the result is sometimes quite disastrous. Like some of the Medieval mystics, the Zen students may turn into libertines, losing all control over themselves. History is a witness to this, and psychology can readily explain the process of such degeneration. Therefore, says a Zen master, "Let one's ideal rise as high as the crown of Vairochana, [the highest divinity,] while his life may be so full of humility as to make him prostrate before the baby's feet." Which is to say, "if any man desire to be first the same shall be last of all, and servant of all." Therefore, the monastery life is minutely regulated and all the details are enforced in strict obedience to the spirit already referred to. Humility, poverty, and inner sanctification—these ideals of Zen are what saves Zen from sinking into the level of the Medieval antinomians. Thus we can see how the Zendo discipline plays a great part in the teachings of Zen and their practical application to our daily life.

When Tanka, 丹霞天然 (738-824), of the T'ang dynasty stopped at Yerinji of the Capital, it was so severely cold that he finally took one of the Buddha images enshrined there and made fire with it in order to warm himself. The keeper of the shrine seeing this was greatly exercised.

"How dare you burn up my wooden Buddha?"

Tanka said, as if searching for something with his stick in the ashes, "I am gathering the holy *sariras*⁽¹⁾ in the burnt ashes."

"How," said the keeper, "could you get *sariras* by burning a wooden Buddha?"

Retorted Tanka, "If there are no *sariras* to be found in it, may I have the remaining two Buddhas for my fire?"

The shrine-keeper later lost his eye-brows for remonstrating against the apparent impiety of Tanka, while the Buddha's wrath was never visited upon the latter.

Though one may doubt its historical occurrence, this is

(1) 舍利, indestructible substance formed in the body of a saint.

a notable story, and all the Zen masters agree as to the higher spiritual attainment of the Buddha-desecrating Tanka. When later a monk asked a master about Tanka's idea of burning a Buddha's statue, said the master,

“When cold, we sit around the hearth with burning fire.”

“Was he then at fault or not?”

“When hot, we go to the bamboo grove by the stream;”—
this was the answer.

Whatever the merit of Tanka from the purely Zen point of view, there is no doubt that such deeds as his are to be regarded as highly sacrilegious and to be avoided by all pious Buddhists. Those who have not yet gained a thorough understanding of Zen may go to all lengths to commit every manner of crime and excess, even in the name of Zen. For this reason, the regulations of the monastery are very rigid that pride of heart may depart and the cup of humility be drunk to the dregs.

When Shuko (株宏) of the Ming dynasty was writing a book on the ten laudable deeds of a monk, one of those high-spirited, self-assertive fellows came to him, saying, “What is the use of writing such a book when in Zen there is not even an atom of a thing to be called laudable or not?” The writer answered, “The five aggregates (*skandha*) are entangling, and the four elements (*mahābhūta*) grow rampant, and how can you say there are no evils?” The monk still insisted, “The four elements are ultimately all empty and the five aggregates have no reality whatever.” Shuko, giving him a slap on his face, said, “So many are mere learned ones; you are not the real thing yet; give me another answer.” But the monk made no answer and went off filled with angry feelings. “There,” said the master smilingly, “why don't you wipe the dirt off your own face?” In the study of Zen, the power of an all-illuminating insight must go hand in hand with a deep sense of humility and meekness of heart.

Let me cite, as one instance of teaching humility, the

experience which a new monk-applicant is first made to go through when he formally approaches the Meditation Hall. The applicant may come duly equipped with certificates of his qualifications and with his monkish paraphernalia consisting of such articles as already mentioned, but the Zendo authorities will not admit him at once into their company. Generally, some formal excuse will be found: they may tell him that their establishment is not rich enough to take in another monk, or that the Hall is already too full. If the applicant quietly retires with this, there will be no place for him anywhere, not only in that particular Zendo which was his first choice, but in any other Zendo throughout the land. For he will meet a similar refusal everywhere. If he wants to study Zen at all, he ought not to be discouraged by any such excuse as that.

The persistent applicant will now seat himself down at the entrance porch, and, putting his head down on the box which he carries in front of him, calmly wait there. Sometimes a strong morning or evening sun shines right over the recumbent monk on the porch, but he keeps on in this attitude without stirring. When the dinner hour comes, he asks to be admitted in and fed. This is granted, for no Buddhist monasteries will refuse food and lodging to a travelling monk. After eating, however, the novice goes out again on the porch and continues his petition for admittance. No attention will be paid to him until the evening when he asks for lodging. This being granted as before, he takes off his travelling sandals, washes his feet, and is ushered into a room reserved for such purposes. But most frequently he finds no bedding there, for a Zen monk is supposed to pass his nights in deep meditation. He sits upright all night evidently absorbed in the contemplation of a *ko-an*. In the following morning he goes out as in the previous day to the entrance hall and resumes the same posture as before expres-

sive of an urgent desire to be admitted. This may go on three or five or sometimes even seven days. The patience and humility of the new applicant are tried thus hard until finally he will be taken in by the authorities, who, apparently moved by his earnestness and perseverance, will try somehow to accommodate him.

This procedure is growing to be somewhat a formal affair, but in olden days when things were not yet settled into a mere routine, the applicant monk had quite a hard time, for he would actually be driven out of the monastery by force. We read in the biographies of the old masters of still harder treatments which were mercilessly dealt out to them.

The Meditation Hall is regulated with militaristic severity and precision to cultivate such virtues as humility, obedience, simplicity and earnestness in the monkish hearts that are ever prone to follow indiscriminately the extraordinary examples of the old masters, or that are liable to put in practice in a crude and undigested manner the high doctrines of a Śūnyatā philosophy such as is expounded in the *Prajñāpāramitā-śāstra*. A partial glimpse of such life we have already gained in the description of the table manners as above.

VI

There is a period in the monastic life, exclusively set apart for mental discipline, and not interrupted by any manual labour except such as is absolutely needed. It is known as great "Sesshin"* (攝心), and lasts a week, taking place once in a month during the season called the "Summer

* I cannot tell how early this "Sesshin" originated in the history of Zendo. It is not in Hyakujo's Regulations, and did not start in China but in Japan probably after Hakuin. The sojourn period generally being a "stay at home" season, the monks do not travel, but practise "Sesshin" and devote themselves to the study of Zen; but in the week specially set up as such, the study is pursued with the utmost vigour.

Sojourn" and the "Winter Sojourn." The summer sojourn begins in April and ends in August, while the winter one begins in October and ends in February. "Sesshin" means "collecting or concentrating the mind." While this period is lasting, the monks are confined at the Zendo, get up earlier than usual, and sit further into the night. There is a kind of lecture every day during a "sesshin." Text books are used, the most popular of which are *The Hekiganshu* (碧巖集) and *Rinzairoku* (臨濟錄), the two being considered the most fundamental books of the Rinzai School. The *Rinzairoku* is a collection of sermons and sayings of the founder of the Rinzai Zen sect. The *Hekiganshu*, as has been noted in a previous number of the present magazine, is a collection of one hundred Zen incidents with critical annotations. It goes without saying that there are many other books used for the occasion. To an ordinary reader, such books generally are a sort of *obscurum per obscurius*. After listening to a series of lectures, he is left in the lurch as ever. Not necessarily that they are so abstruse, but that the reader is still wanting in the insight into the truth of Zen.

The lecture is quite a solemn affair. Its beginning is announced by a bell, which stops ringing as soon as the master appears in the hall where what is known as "Teisho" * takes place. While the master is offering incense to the Buddha and to his departed master, the monks recite a short Dharani-sūtra called *Daihiyu* (大悲咒) which means "great compassion." Being a Chinese transliteration of the Sanskrit original, mere recitation of the Sutra does not give any intelligent sense. Probably the sense is not essential in this case, the assurance is sufficient that it contains something

* That is, 提唱 (*Teisho*). *Tei* means "to show forth" or "manifest," and *sho* "to recite." Thus by a Teisho the old master is revived before the congregation and his discourses are more or less vividly presented to view.

auspicious and conducive to spiritual welfare. What is more significant is the way in which it is recited. Its monotone punctuated with a wooden time-keeper known as "Mokugyo," 木魚 (wooden fish), prepares the mind of the audience for the coming event. After the Dhāraṇī which is recited three times the monks read in chorus generally the exhortatory sermon left by the founder of the monastery. In some places nowadays Hakuin's "Song of Zazen" is often chanted. The following are translations of Hakuin and of Musō Kokushi whose last exhortatory sermon is one of the most popular.

MUSŌ KOKUSHI'S* ADMONITORY SERMON.

I have three kinds of disciples: He who, vigorously shaking off all entangling circumstances, and with singleness of thought applies himself to the study of his own [spiritual] affairs, is of the first class. He who is not so single-minded in the study, but, scattering his attention, is fond of booklearning, is of the second. He who, covering his own spiritual brightness, is only occupied with the dribblings of the Buddhas and Fathers is called the lowest. As to those minds that are intoxicated by secular literature and engaged in establishing themselves as men of letters, they are simply laymen with shaven heads, they do not belong even to the lowest. As regards those who think only of indulging in food and sleep and give themselves up to indolence, could such be called members of the Black Robe? They are truly, as were designated by an old master, "clothes-racks and rice-bags." Inasmuch as they are not monks, they ought not to be permitted to call themselves my disciples and enter the monastery and sub-temples as well; even a temporary sojourn is to be prohibited, not to speak of their application as student-monks. When an old man like myself speaks thus, you may think he is lacking in all-embracing love, but the main thing is to let them know of their own faults and, reforming themselves, to become growing plants in the patriarchal gardens.

HAKUIN'S SONG OF MEDITATION.

All sentient beings are from the very beginning the Buddhas:
It is like ice and water;
Apart from water no ice can exist,
Outside sentient beings, where do we seek the Buddhas?
Not knowing how near the Truth is,

* The founder of Tenryūji, Kyoto. He is known as "Teacher of Seven Emperors," 1274-1361.

People seek it far away, what a pity!
 They are like him who, in the midst of water,
 Cries in thirst so imploringly;
 They are like the son of a rich man
 Who wandered away among the poor.
 The reason why we transmigrate through the six worlds,
 Is because we are lost in the darkness of ignorance;
 Going astray further and further in the darkness,
 When are we able to get away from birth-and-death?

As regards the Meditation practised in the Mahayana,
 We have no words to praise it fully,
 The Virtues of Perfection such as charity and morality,
 And the invocation of the Buddha's name, confession, and ascetic
 discipline,
 And many other good deeds of merit,—
 All these issue from the practise of Meditation.
 Even those who have attained it even for one sitting,
 Will see all their evil karma wiped clean;
 Nowhere they will find the evil paths,
 But the Pure Land will be near at hand.
 With a reverential heart, let them to this Truth
 Listen even for once,
 And let them praise it, and gladly embrace it,
 And they will surely be blessed most infinitely.

For such as, reflecting within themselves,
 Testify to the Truth of Self-nature,
 To the Truth that Self-nature is One-nature,
 They have really gone beyond the ken of sophistry.
 For them opens the gate of the oneness of cause and effect,
 And straight runs the path of non-duality and non-trinity.
 Abiding with the Not-particular in particulars,
 Whether going or returning, they remain ever unmoved;
 Taking hold of the Not-thought in thoughts,
 In every act of theirs they hear the voice of Truth.
 How boundless the sky of Samadhi unfettered!
 How transparent the perfect moon-light of the Fourfold Wisdom!
 At that moment what do they lack?
 As the Truth eternally calm reveals itself to them,
 This very earth is the Lotus Land of Purity,
 And this body is the Body of the Buddha.

The lecture lasts about an hour. It is quite different from an ordinary lecture on a religious subject. Nothing is explained, no arguments are set forward, no apologetics, no reasonings. The master is supposed simply to reproduce in words what is treated in the text-book before him. When the lecture ends, the Four Great Vows are repeated three times, and the monks retire to their quarters. The Vows are :

“How innumerable sentient beings are, I vow to save them all,
 How inexhaustible our evil passions are, I vow to exterminate them,
 How immeasurable the holy doctrines are, I vow to study them,
 How inaccessible the path of Buddhas is, I vow to attain it.”

VII

During the “sesshin,” they have beside lectures what is known as “sanzen (參禪). To do “sanzen” is to go to the master and present one's views on a *kō-an* (公案) for his critical examination. In those days when a special “sesshin” is not going on, “sanzen” will probably take place twice a day, but during the period of thought-collection—which is the meaning of “sesshin”—the monk has to see the master four or five times a day. This seeing the master does not take place openly,⁽¹⁾ the monk is required to come up individually to the master's room, where the interview goes on in a most formal and solemn manner. When the monk is about to cross the threshold of the master's room, he makes three bows prostrating himself on the floor. He now enters the room keeping his hands folded, palm to palm, before the chest, and when he comes near the master, he sits down and makes another bow. Once in the room, all worldly convention is

(1) Formerly, this was an open affair, and all the *mondos* (askings and answerings) took place before the whole congregation, as is stated in the Regulations of Hyakujo. But later on undesirable results followed, such as mere formalism, imitations, and other empty nonsense. In modern Zen, therefore, all sanzen is private, except on formal occasions. This too is often attended with evils.

disregarded. If absolutely necessary from the Zen point of view, blows may be exchanged. To make manifest the truth of Zen with all sincerity of heart is the sole consideration here, and everything else receives only a subordinate attention. Hence this elaborate formalism. The presentation over, the monk retires in the same way as before. One "sanzen" for over thirty monks will occupy more than one hour and a half. To have this four or five times a day must be a kind of ordeal for the master himself, if he is not of robust health.

An absolute confidence is placed in the master as far as his understanding of Zen goes. But if the monk has sufficient reason to doubt the master's ability, he may settle it personally with him at the time of sanzen. This presentation of views, therefore, is no idle play for either of the parties concerned. It is indeed a most serious affair, and because it is so the discipline of Zen has a great moral value outside its philosophy. How serious this is, may be guessed from the famous interviews between the venerable Shōju (正受) and Hakuin (白隱), father of modern Zen in Japan.

One summer evening when Hakuin presented his view to the old master who was cooling himself on the veranda, the master said, "Stuff and nonsense!" Hakuin echoed this loudly and rather satirically, "Stuff and nonsense!" Thereupon the master seized him, boxed him many a time, and finally pushed him off the veranda. It was soon after rainy weather, and the poor Hakuin rolled in the mud and water. Having recovered himself after a while, he came up and bowed to the teacher, who then remarked, "O you, denizen of the dark cavern!"

Another day Hakuin thought that the master did not know how deep his knowledge of Zen was and decided to have a settlement with him anyhow. As soon as the time came, Hakuin entered the master's room and exhausted all his in-

genuity in contest with him, making his mind up not to give away an inch of ground this time. The master was furious, and finally taking hold of Hakuin gave him several slaps and let him go over the porch. He fell several feet at the foot of the stone-wall, where he remained for a while almost senseless. The master looked down and heartily laughed at the poor fellow. This brought Hakuin back to his consciousness. He came up again all in perspiration. The master, however, did not release him yet and stigmatised him as ever with "O you, denizen of the dark cavern!"

Hakuin grew desperate and thought of leaving the old master altogether. When one day he was going about begging in the village, a certain accident made him all of a sudden open his mental eye to the truth of Zen, hitherto completely shut off from him. His joy knew no bounds and he came back in a most exalted state of mind. Before he crossed the front gate, the master recognised him and beckoned to him, saying, "What a good news have you brought home to-day? Come right in, quick, quick!" Hakuin then told him all about what he went through that day. The master tenderly stroked him on the back and said, "You have it now, you have it now." After this, Hakuin was never called names.

Such was the training the father of modern Japanese Zen had to go through. How terrible the old Shōju was when he pushed Hakuin down the stone-wall! But how motherly when the disciple after so much ill-treatment finally came out triumphantly! There is nothing lukewarm in Zen. If it is lukewarm, it is not Zen. It expects one to penetrate into the very depths of truth, and the truth can never be grasped until one comes back to one's native nakedness shorn of all trumperies, intellectual or otherwise. Each slap dealt by Shōju stripped Hakuin of his insincerities. We are all living under so many casings which really have nothing to do with our inmost self. To reach the latter, therefore, and to gain the

real knowledge of ourselves, the Zen masters resort to methods seemingly inhuman.

VIII

In the life of the Zendo there is no fixed period of graduation as in a school education. With some, graduation may not take place even after his twenty years' boarding there. But with ordinary abilities and a large amount of perseverance and indefatigability, one is able to probe into every intricacy of the teachings of Zen within a space of ten years.

To practise the principle of Zen, however, in every moment of life, that is, to grow fully saturated in the spirit of Zen is another question. One life may be too short for it, for it is said that even Śakya and Maitreya themselves are yet in the midst of self-training.

To be a perfectly qualified master, a mere understanding of the truth of Zen is not sufficient. One must go through a period which is known as "the long maturing of the sacred womb (聖胎長養)." The term must have originally come from Taoism; and in Zen nowadays it means, broadly speaking, living a life harmonious with the understanding. Under the direction of a master, a monk may finally attain to a thorough knowledge of all the mysteries of Zen; but this is more or less intellectual, though in the highest possible sense. The monk's life, in and out, must grow in perfect unison with this attainment. To do this a further training is necessary; for what he has gained at Zendo is after all the pointing of the direction where his utmost efforts have to be put forth. But it is not at all imperative now to remain in the Zendo. On the contrary, his intellectual attainments must be further put on trial by coming in actual contact with the world. There are no prescribed rules for this "maturing." Each one acts on his own discretion in the accidental circumstances in which he may find himself. He may retire into the mountains and

live a solitary hermit, or he may come out into the market and be an active participant in all the affairs of the world. The Sixth Patriarch is said to have been living among the mountaineers for fifteen years after he left the Fifth Patriarch. He was quite unknown in the world until he came out to a lecture by Inshu (印宗). Chu, the National Teacher, (南陽忠國師) spent forty years in Nanyang and did not show himself out in the capital. But his holy life became known far and near, and at the urgent request of the Emperor he finally left his hut. Isan (潑山) spent several years in the wilderness, living on nuts and befriending monkeys and deer. However, he was found out and big monasteries were built about his anchorage, he became master of 1,500 monks. Kwanzan (關山), the founder of Myōshinji, Kyoto, retired to Mino province, and worked as day-labourer for the villagers. Nobody recognised him until one day an accident brought out his identity and the court insisted on his founding a monastery in the capital.⁽¹⁾ Hakuin became the keeper of a deserted temple to Suruga which was his sole heritage in the world. We can picture to ourselves the scene of its dilapidation when we read this: "There were no roofs and the stars shone through at night. Nor was there any floor. It was necessary to have a rain-hat and to put on a pair of high *getas* when anything was going on in the main part of the temple. All the property attached to it was in the hands of the debtors, and the priestly belongings were mortgaged to the merchants."—This was the beginning of Hakuin's career.

There are many other notable ones; the history of Zen abounds with such instances. The idea however is not to practise asceticism, it is the "maturing," as they have properly designated, of one's moral character. Many serpents and adders are waiting at the porch, and if one fails to trample them

(1) As to the life of his teacher, Daito, reference is made elsewhere.

down effectively, they raise the heads again and the whole edifice of moral culture built up in vision may collapse even in one day. Antimonianism is also the pitfall for Zen followers, against which a constant vigil is needed. Hence this "maturing."

IX

In some respects, no doubt, this kind of education prevailing at the Zendo is behind the times. But its guiding principles such as simplification of life, not wasting a moment idly, self-independence, and what they call "secret virtue," are sound for all ages. Especially, this latter is one of the most characteristic features of Zen discipline. "Secret virtue" means practising goodness without any thought of recognition, neither by others nor by oneself. The Christians may call this the doing of "Thy will." A child is drowned, and I get into the water, and it is saved. What was to be done was done. Nothing more is thought of it. I walk away and never turn back. A cloud passes, and the sky is as blue and as broad as ever. Zen calls it a "deed without merit," and compares it to a man's work who tries to fill up a well with snow.

This is the psychological aspect of "Secret Virtue," when it is religiously considered, it is to regard and use the world reverentially and gratefully, feeling as if one were carrying on one's shoulders all the sins of the world. But this ought not to be understood in the Christian sense that a man must spend all his time in prayer and mortification for the absolution of sin. For a Zen monk has no desire to be absolved from sin, this is too selfish an idea, and Zen is free from egotism. The Zen monk wishes to save the world from the misery of sin, and as to his own sin he lets it take care of itself, as he knows it is not a thing inherent in his nature. For this reason it is possible for him to be one of those who are des-

cribed as "they that weep as though they wept not; and they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy as though they possessed not; and they that use this world as not abusing it."

Says Christ, "When thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth; that thine alms may be in secret." This is the "secret virtue" of Buddhism. But when he goes on to say that "thy Father who seeth in secret shall recompense thee," there we see a deep cleavage between Buddhism and Christianity. As long as there is any thought of anybody, whether he be God or Devil, knowing of your doings, Zen would say, "you are not yet one of us." Deeds that are accompanied by such thoughts are not "meritless deeds," but full of tracks and shadows. If a Spirit is tracing you, he will in no time get hold of you and make you account for what you have done. The perfect garment shows no seams, inside and outside; it is one complete piece and nobody can tell where the work began and how it was woven. In Zen, therefore, there ought not to be left any trace of consciousness after the doing of alms, much less the thought of recompensation even by God. The Zen ideal is to be "the wind that bloweth where it listeth, and the sound of which we hear but cannot tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth."

Lieh-tze (列子), the Chinese philosopher, describes this frame of mind in a graphic manner as follows: "I allowed my mind without restraint to think of whatever it pleased and my mouth to talk about whatever it pleased; I then forgot whether the 'this and not this' was mine or other's, whether the gain and loss was mine or other's; nor did I know whether Lao-shang-shin was my teacher, and whether Pa-kao was my friend. In and out, I was thoroughly transformed; and then it was that the eye became like the ear, and the ear like the nose, and the nose like the mouth; and there was nothing that was not identified. The mind was concentrated, and the

form dissolved, and the bones and flesh all thawed away: I did not know where my form was supported, where my feet were treading; I just moved along with the wind, east and west, like a leaf of a tree detached from the stem, I was not conscious whether I was riding on the wind or the wind riding on me."

X

As I stated before, the Zen followers do not approve of Christians, even Christian mystics, being too conscious of God who is the creator and supporter of all life and all being. Their attitude towards the Buddha and Zen is that of Lieh-tze riding on the wind; a complete identification of the self with the object of thought is what is aimed at by the disciples of Jōshu, Ummon, and other leaders of Zen. This is the reason why they are all loath to hear the word Buddha or Zen mentioned in their discourse, not because indeed they are anti-Buddhists, but because they have so thoroughly assimilated Buddhism in their being. Listen to the gentle remonstrance given by Hōyen (法演), of Gosozan (五祖山), to his disciple Yengo (圓悟):

Goso said, "You are all right, but you have a trifle fault." Yengo asked two or three times what that fault was. Said the master at last, "You have altogether too much of Zen." "Why," protested the disciple, "if one is studying Zen at all, don't you think it the most natural thing for one to be talking of it? Why do you dislike it?" Replied Goso, "When it is like an ordinary everyday conversation, it is somewhat better." A monk happened to be there with them, who asked, "Why do you specially hate talking about Zen?" "Because it turns one's stomach," was the master's verdict.

Rinzai's way of expressing himself in regard to this point is quite violent and revolutionary. And if we were not acquainted with the methods of Zen teachings, such passages as are quoted

below would surely make our teeth chatter and our hair stand on end. The reader may think the author simply horrible, but we all know well how earnestly he feels about the falsehoods of the world and how unflinchingly he pushes himself forwards through its confusion worse confounded. His hands may be compared to Jehovah's in trying to destroy the idols and causing the images to cease. Read the following, for instance, in which Rinzai (林際) endeavours to strip one's spirit off its last raiment of falsehood.

“O you, followers of Truth, if you wish to obtain an orthodox understanding [of Zen], do not be deceived by others. Inwardly or outwardly, if you encounter any obstacles, kill it right away. If you encounter the Buddha, kill him; if you encounter the Patriarch, kill him; if you encounter the Arhat or the parent or the relative, kill them all without hesitation: for this is the only way to deliverance. Do not get yourselves entangled with any object, but stand above, pass on, and be free. As I see those so-called followers of Truth all over the country, there are none who come to me free and independent of objects. In dealing with them, I strike them down any way they come. If they rely on the strength of their arms, I cut them right off; if they rely on their eloquence, I make them shut themselves up; if they rely on the sharpness of their eyes, I will hit them blind. There are indeed so far none who have presented themselves before me all alone, all free, all unique. They are invariably found caught by the idle tricks of the old masters. I have really nothing to give to you, all that I can do is to cure you of the diseases and deliver you from bondage.

“O you, followers of Truth, show yourselves here independent of all objects, I want to weigh the matter with you. For the last five or ten years I have waited in vain for such, and there are no such yet. They are all ghostly existences, ignominious gnomes haunting the woods or bamboo-groves,

they are elfish spirits of the wilderness. They are madly biting into all heaps of filth. O you, mole-eyed, and wasting all the pious donations of the devout! Do you think you deserve the name of a monk, when you are still entertaining such a mistaken idea [of Zen]? I tell you, no Buddhas, no holy teachings, no disciplining, no testifying! What do you seek in a neighbour's house? O you, mole-eyed! You are putting another head over your own! What do you lack in yourselves? O you, followers of Truth, what you are making use of at this very moment, is none other than what makes a patriarch or a Buddha. But you do not believe me and seek it outwardly. Do not commit yourselves to an error. There are no realities outside, nor is there anything inside you may lay your hands on. You stick to the literal meaning of what I speak to you, but how far better it is to have all your hankerings stopped and be doing nothing whatever!" etc., etc.

This was the way Rinzai wanted to wipe all the trace of God-consciousness in the mind of a truth-seeker. How he wields Thor-like his thunder-bolt of harangue!

XI

The state of mind in which all traces of conceptual consciousness are wiped out is called by the Christian mystics poverty, and Tauler's definition is: "Absolute poverty is thine when thou canst not remember whether anybody has ever owed thee or been indebted to thee for anything; just as all things will be forgotten by thee in the last journey of death."

The Zen masters are more poetic and positive in their expression of the feeling of poverty, they do not make a direct reference to things worldly. Sings Mumon (無門):

"Hundreds of spring flowers; the autumnal moon;
A refreshing summer breeze; winter snow;

Free thy mind of all idle thoughts,
And for thee how enjoyable every season is!

Or according to Shuan (守安):

“At Nantai I sit quietly with an incense burning,
One day of rapture, all things are forgotten,
Not that mind is stopped and thoughts are put away,
But that there is really nothing to disturb my serenity.”

This is not to convey the idea that he is idly sitting and doing nothing particularly; or that he has nothing else to do but to enjoy the cherry-blossoms fragrant in the morning sun, or the lonely moon white and silvery: he may be in the midst of work, teaching pupils, reading the sutras, sweeping and farming as all the masters have done, and yet his own mind is filled with transcendental happiness and quietude. He is living in God as Christians may say. All hankerings of heart are departed, there are no idle thoughts clogging the flow of life-activity, and thus he is empty and poverty-stricken. As he is poverty-stricken, he knows how to enjoy the “spring flowers” and the “autumnal moon.” When worldly riches are amassed in his heart, there is no room left there for such celestial enjoyments. The Zen masters are wont of speaking positively about their contentment and unworldly riches. Instead of saying that they are empty-handed they talk of the natural sufficiency of things about them. Yogi (楊岐), however, refers to his deserted habitation where he found himself to be residing as keeper. One day he ascended the lecturing chair in the Hall and began to recite his own verse:

“My dwelling is now here at Yogi; the roofs and walls, how
weather-benten!
The whole floor is covered white with snow crystal,
Shivering down the neck, I am filled with thoughts:”

After a pause he added the fourth line:

“How I recall the ancient masters whose habitat was no better
than the shade of a tree!”

Kyōgen (香嚴) is more direct apparently in his allusion to poverty:

“My last year’s poverty was not poverty enough,
 My poverty this year is poverty indeed;
 In my poverty last year there was room for a gimlet’s point,
 But this year even the gimlet is gone.”

The aim of Zen discipline is to attain to the state of “non-attainment” as it is technically expressed. All knowledge is an acquisition and accumulation, whereas Zen proposes to deprive one of all one’s possessions. The spirit is to make one poor and humble thoroughly cleansed of inner impurities. Learning, on the contrary, makes one rich and arrogant. Because learning is earning, the more learned, the richer, and therefore “in much wisdom is much grief; and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.” It is after all “vanity and a striving after wind.” Zen will heartily endorse this too. Says Laotze (老子), “Scholars gain everyday while the Taoists lose everyday.” The consummation of this kind of loss is “non-attainment,” which is poverty. Poverty in another word is emptiness, *śūnyatā*. When the spirit is all purged of its filth accumulated from time immemorial, it stands naked, with no raiments, with no trappings. It is now empty, free, genuine, assuming its native authority. And there is a joy in this, not that kind of joy which is liable to be upset by its counterpart, grief, but an absolute joy which is “the gift of God” which makes a man “enjoy good in all his labour,” and from which nothing can be taken, to which nothing can be put, but which shall stay for ever. Non-attainment, therefore, in Zen is positive conception, and not merely privative. The Buddhist modes of thinking are sometimes different from those of the West, and Christian readers are often taken aback at the idea of emptiness and at the too unconditioned assertion of idealism. Singularly, however, all the mystics, Buddhist or no, agree in their idea of poverty being the end of their spiritual development.

In Christianity, we seem to be too conscious of God, though we say that in Him we live and move and have our being. Zen wants to have even this last trace of God-consciousness, if possible, obliterated. That is why Zen followers advise us not to linger even where the Buddha is and to pass quickly away where he is not. All the training of the monk in the Zendo, in theory as well as in practice, is based on the notion of "meritless deed." Poetically, this idea is expressed as follows:

"The bamboo shadows are sweeping the stairs,
But no dust is stirred:
The moonlight penetrates deep in the bottom of the pool,
But no trace is left in the water,"

XII

The monastery life is not all working and sitting quiet meditating on the *kō-an*. There is something of intellectual life, in the form of lecturing as has already been referred to. Anciently, however, there was no regular "sesshin," and all the lecturing or giving sermons to the congregation was carried on on the feast days, memorial days, or on other auspicious occasions such as receiving visitors, honourably discharging the officials, or completing given pieces of work. Every available opportunity was thus used intellectually to enlighten the earnest seekers of the truth. Those discourses, sermons, exhortations, and short pithy remarks so characteristic of Zen are recorded in its literature, the bulk of which indeed consists of nothing but these. While claiming to be above letters, Zen is filled with them, almost overfilled. Before giving some of such sermons, let me digress and say a few words about the Chinese language as the vehicle of Zen philosophy.

To my mind, the Chinese language is preëminently adapted for Zen, it is probably the best medium of expression for Zen as long as its literary side alone is thought of. Being monosyllabic the language is terse and vigorous, and a

single word is made to convey so much meaning in it. While vagueness of sense is perhaps an unavoidable shortcoming accompanying those advantages, Zen knows how to avail itself of it, and the very vagueness of the language becomes a most powerful weapon in the hand of the master. He is far from wanting to be obscure and misleading, but a well-chosen monosyllable grows when it falls from his lips into a most pregnant word loaded with the whole system of Zen. Ummon is regarded as the foremost adept in this direction. To show the extreme laconism of his sayings, the following are quoted.

When he was asked what was the sword of Ummon, he replied, "Hung!" (揭)

"What is the one straight passage to Ummon?" "Most intimate!" (親)

"Which one of the Trikāya [Three Bodies of Buddha] is it that will sermonise?" "To the point!" (要)

"I understand this is said by all the old masters, that when you know [the truth], all the karma-hindrances are empty from the beginning; but if you do not, you have to pay all the debts back. I wonder if the Second Patriarch knew this or not." Replied the master, "Most certainly!" (確)

"What is the eye of the true Dharma?" "Everywhere!" (普)

"When one commits patricide, or matricide, one goes to the Buddha to confess the sin; when however one murders a Buddha or patriarch, where should one go for confession?" "Exposed!" (露)

"What is the Tao [path, way, or truth]?" "Walk on!" (去)

"How is it that without the parent's consent one cannot be ordained?" "How shallow!" (淺) "I cannot understand." "How deep!" (深)

"What kind of phrase is it that does not cast any

shadow?" "Revealed!" (現)

"How do you have an eye in a question⁽¹⁾?" "Blind."
(瞽)

Just one monosyllable, and the difficulties are disposed of. The Zen master has generally nothing to do with circumlocution; if any one is a direct and plain speaker, he is the directest in hitting the point and the plainest in expressing his thoughts without any encumbering appendages. To these purposes, the Chinese language is eminently suited. Brevity and forcefulness are its specific qualities, for each simple syllable is a word and sometimes even makes a complete sentence. A string of a few nouns with no verbs or with no connectives is often sufficient to express a complex thought. Chinese literature is naturally full of trenchant epigrams and pregnant aphorisms. The words are unwieldy and disconnected: when they are put together, they are like so many pieces of rock with nothing cementing them to one another. They do not present themselves as organic. Each link in the chain has a separate independent existence. But as each syllable is pronounced, the whole effect is irresistible. Chinese is a mystic language *par excellence*.

As terseness and directness is the life of Zen, its literature is full of idiomatic and colloquial expressions. The Chinese, as

(1) Not an ordinary question asking enlightenment, but one that has a point in it showing some understanding on the part of the inquirer. All those questions already quoted must not be taken in their superficial or literary sense. They are generally metaphors. For instance, when one asks about a phrase having no shadow, he does not mean any ordinary ensemble of words known grammatically as such, but an absolute proposition whose verity is so beyond a shadow of doubt that every rational being will at once recognise as true on hearing it. Again, when reference is made to murdering a parent or a Buddha, it has really nothing to do with such horrible crimes, but as we have in Rinzai's sermon elsewhere, the murdering is transcending the relativity of a phenomenal world. Ultimately, therefore, this question amounts to the same thing as asking "Where is the One to be reduced, when the Many are reduced to the One?"

you all know, being such sticklers of classic formalism, scholars and philosophers did not know how to express themselves but in elegant and highly polished style. And consequently all that is left to us in ancient Chinese literature is this classicism, nothing of popular and colloquial lore has come down to posterity. Whatever we have of the latter from the T'ang and the Sung dynasty is to be sought in the writings of the Zen masters. It is an irony of fate that those who so despised the use of letters as conveyor of truth and directly appealed to the understanding of an intuitive faculty became the bearers and transmitters of ancient popular idioms and expressions which were thrown away by the classical writers as unworthy and vulgar from the main body of literature. The reason however is plain. Buddha preached in the vernacular language of the people; so did Christ. The Greek or Sanskrit (or even Pali) texts are all later elaboration when the faith began to grow stale, and scholasticism had a chance to assert itself. Then the living religion turned into an intellectual system and had to be translated into a highly but artificially polished and therefore more or less stilted formalism. This had been what Zen most emphatically opposed from the very beginning, and the consequence was naturally that the language it chose was that which most appealed to the people in general, that is, to their hearts open for a new living light. The Zen masters whenever they could avoided the technical nomenclature of Buddhist philosophy, not only did they discuss such subjects as appealed to a plain man, but they made use of his everyday language which was the vehicle appreciated by the masses and at the same time most expressive of the central ideas of Zen. Thus became Zen literature a unique repository of ancient wisdom. In Japan too when Hakuin modernised Zen, he utilised profusely slangy phrases, colloquialisms, and even popular songs. This neological tendency of Zen is inevitable, seeing that it is creative and refuses to express itself in the

worn-out lifeless language of scholars and stylists. As the result even learned students of Chinese literature these days are unable to understand the Zen writings, even their literal meanings. Thus has Zen literature come to constitute a unique class of literary work in China, standing all by itself outside the main bulk of classical literature.

XIII

It may not be inopportune in conclusion to give here some of the sermons by the masters as recorded in literature.

Jōshu (趙州)⁽¹⁾ says: "This thing is like holding up a transparent crystal in your hand. When a stranger comes, it reflects him as such; when a native Chinese comes, it reflects him as such. I pick up a blade of grass and make it work like a golden-bodied one⁽²⁾ sixteen feet high. I again take hold of a golden-bodied one sixteen feet high and make him act like a blade of grass. Buddha is what constitutes human feelings and human feelings are no other than Buddhahood." A monk asked,⁽³⁾

"For whom are Buddha's feelings stirred?"

"His feelings are stirred for all sentient beings."

"How does he rid of them then?"

"What is the use of ridding of them?" answered the master.

On another occasion he said: "Kashyapa handed [the Law] over to Ananda, and can you tell me to whom Bodhi-

(1) Jōshu (778-897) was one of the early masters of Zen in the Tang dynasty when it began to flourish in its vigorous freshness. He attained to the high age of one hundred and twenty. His sermons were always short and to the point, and his answers were noted for their being so natural and yet so slippery, so hard to catch.

(2) This means Buddha who is supposed by Buddhists to have been the owner of a golden-coloured body.

(3) Generally after a sermon the monks come out and ask various questions bearing on the subject of the sermon, though frequently indifferent ones are produced too.

Dharma handed it over?" A monk said: "How is it that we read about the Second Patriarch's getting its marrow from Dharma?"

"Don't disparage the Second Patriarch," so saying, Jōshu continued: "Dharma claims that one who was outside got the skin and the inside one got the bone; but can you tell me what the inmost one gets?"

A monk said, "But don't we all know that there was one who got the marrow?"

Retorted the master: "He has just got the skin. Here in my place I do not allow even to talk of the marrow."

"What is the marrow then?"

"If you ask me thus, even the skin you have not traced."

"How grand then you are!" said the monk. "Is this not your absolute position, sir?"

"Do you know there is one who will not accept you?"

"If you say so, there must be one who will take another position."

"Who is such another?" demanded the master.

"Who is not such another?" retorted the monk.

"I will let you cry all you like."

The sermons are generally of this nature, short, and to outsiders unintelligible or almost nonsensical. But, according to Zen, all these remarks are the plainest and most straightforward exposition of the truth. When the formal logical modes of thinking are not resorted to, and yet the master is asked to express himself what he understands in his inmost heart, there are no other ways but to speak in a manner so enigmatic and so symbolic as to stagger the uninitiated. However, the masters themselves are right in earnest, and if you attach even the remotest notion of reproach to their remarks, thirty blows will be instantly on your head.

The next are from Ummon (雲門, d. 966).

Ummon ascended the platform and said: "O you venerable monks! Don't get confused in thought. Heaven is heaven, earth is earth, mountains are mountains, water is water, monks are monks, laymen are laymen." He paused for a while and continued, "Bring me out here that hill of Ansan and let me see!"

Another time he said, "Bodhisattva Vasudeva turned without any reason into a staff." So saying he drew a line on the ground with his own staff, and resumed. "All the Buddhas as numberless as sands are here talking all kinds of nonsense." He then left the Hall.

One day when he came out in the Hall as usual to give a sermon, a monk walked out of the congregation, and made bows to him, saying, "I beg you to answer." Ummon called out aloud, "O monks!" The monks all turned towards the master, who then came down from the seat.

Another day when he was silent in his seat for a while, a monk came out and made bows to him; said the master, "Why so late!" The monk made a response, whereupon the master remarked, "O you, good-for-nothing simpleton!"

Some day his sermon was somewhat disparaging to the founder of his own faith; for he said, "Ishvara, great lord of heaven, and the old Śākyamuni are in the middle of the courtyard and discoursing Buddhism; are they not noisy?"

Another day he said:

"All the talk so far I have had—what is it all about any way? Today again not being able to help myself I am here to talk to you once more. In this wide universe is there anything that comes up against you, or puts you in bondage? If there is ever a thing as small as the point of a pin lying in your way or obstructing your passage, get it out for me! What is it that you call a Buddha or a Patriarch? What are they that are known as mountains or rivers, the earth, sun, moon, or stars? What are they that you call the four

elements and the five aggregates? I speak thus, but it is no more than the talk of an old woman from a remote village. If I suddenly happen to meet a monk thoroughly trained in this matter, he will, on learning what I have been talking to you, carry you off the feet and put me down the steps. And for this would you be blamed? Whatever this may be, for what reason is it so? Don't be carried away by my talk and try to make nonsensical remarks. Unless you are the fellow really gone through the whole thing, you will never do. When you are caught unawares by such an old man as myself, you will at once lose your way and break your legs. And for which am I at all to be blamed? This being so, is there any one among you who wants to know a thing or two about the doctrine of our school? Come out and let me answer you. After this you may get a turning and be free to go out in the world, east or west."

A monk came out and was at the point of asking a question when the master hit his mouth with the staff, and descended from the seat.

One day when Ummon was coming up to the Lecture Hall he heard the bell, whereupon he said, "In such a wide, wide world, why do we put our monkish robes on when the bell goes like this?"

Next time simply saying, "Don't you try to add frost over snow. Take good care of yourselves, good-bye," he went off.

"Lo, and behold; the Buddha Hall has run into the monk's quarters." Later his own remark was, "They are beating the drum at Lafu, and a dance is going on at Shōjū."

Ummon seated himself in a chair before the Congregation, there was a pause for a while, and he remarked; "Raining so long, and not a day has the sun shone."

Another time, "Lo, and behold! No life's left!" So

saying, he acted as if he were falling. Then he asked, "Do you understand? If not, ask this staff to enlighten you."

As soon as Yōgi (楊岐), an ancient master of the Sung dynasty, got seated in his chair, he laughed loudly, "Ha, ha, ha!" and said, "Don't long for the rivers where in May or June we have our angling lines ready and go out singing, 'Let's Go Home.'"

One day Yōgi ascended the seat, and the monks were all assembled. The master, before uttering a word, threw his staff away and came right down jumping from the chair. The monks were about to disperse, when he called out, "O monks!" The latter turned back, whereupon said the master, "Take my staff in, O monks!" This said, the master went off.

Yakusan (藥山) gave no sermons for some little time, and the chief secretary came up to him asking for one. The master said, "Beat the drum then." As soon as the congregation was ready to listen to him, he went back to his own room. The secretary followed him and said, "You gave a consent to give them a sermon, and how is it that you uttered not a word?" Said the master, "The sutras are explained by the sutra specialists, and the śāstras by the śāstra specialists; why then do you wonder at me? [Am I not a Zen master?]"

One day Goso (五祖法演) entered the Hall and seated himself in the chair. He looked one way over one shoulder and then the other. Finally he held out his staff high in his hand and said, "Only one foot long!" Without a further comment he descended.

The foregoing selections from Unmon and Jōshū and others will be sufficient to acquaint the reader with what kind of sermons have been carried on in the monastery for the intellectual consumption of the monks. They are general-

ly short. The masters do not waste much time in explaining Zen, not only because it is beyond the ken of human discursive understanding, but because such explanations are not productive of any practical and lasting benefits for the spiritual edification of the monks. The masters' remarks are therefore necessarily laconic; sometimes they do not even attempt to make any wordy discussion or statement, but just raising the staff, or shaking the *hossu*, or uttering a cry, or reciting a verse, is all that the congregation gets from the master. Some, however, seem to have their own favorite way of demonstrating the truth of Zen; for instance, Rinzai (臨濟) is famous for his cry known as "*Katsu*" (喝) in Japanese, Tokusan (徳山) for his flourishing staff, Gutei (俱胝) for his lifting up a finger, Hima (秘魔) for his bifurcate stick, Kwasan (禾山) for beating a drum, and so on. It is wonderful to observe what a variety of methods have sprung up, so extraordinary, so ingenious, and so original, and all in order to make the monks realise the same truth, whose infinite aspects as manifested in the world may be comprehended by various individuals, each according to his own capacity and opportunity.

This article has grown already too long while there are some more things to write about the life in the Meditation Hall, and I must refrain from going further on. Taking all in all, Zen is emphatically a matter of personal experience; if anything can be called radically empirical, it is Zen. No amount of reading, no amount of teaching, and no amount of contemplation will even make one a Zen master. Life itself must be grasped in the midst of its flow, to stop it for examination and analysis is to kill it leaving its cold corpse to be embraced. Therefore, everything in the Meditation Hall and every detail of its disciplinary curriculum is so arranged as to bring this idea into the most efficient prominence.

The unique position maintained by the Zen sect among other Mahāyāna schools in Japan and China throughout the history of Buddhism in the Far East is no doubt due to the institution known as the Meditation Hall or Zendo.

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