

RECORDS OF THE LIFE OF THE VENERABLE MASTER HUA, CONTINUED

THE DEMON OF SICKNESS

While a young student of the Buddhadharma, seventeen or eighteen years old, the Master once had an arrogant thought: "Everyone is afraid of demons," he said, "but I'm not. Demons are afraid of me! Heaven demons, earth demons, god, ghost, and human demons — I'm not afraid of any demons at all."

Soon after he said this, a demon of sickness came and frightened the Master. He was so sick that he lay on his bed from morning to night, unable to eat or drink. "I spoke foolishly," he thought, "and now a demon of sickness has found me and there is nothing I can do."

The Master was so sick he went into a coma and was on the verge of death. Suddenly he saw the three Filial Sons of the Wang Family of Manchuria. Two of them, a Buddhist Bhikshu and a Taoist Master, had left the home-life, and the third was a layman. They came and took the Master out to play. As soon as they went out the door, their feet left the ground and they rode the clouds and drove the wind. They took off from the roof of the house and when the Master looked down, the house was already very small.

They met a lot of people and traveled everywhere to temples, on Mt. Wu Ta'i, Mt. O Mei, Mt. P'u T'ou and others. They also visited foreign lands and saw people who had blond hair and blue eyes. It was like a movie, scene after scene quickly passed. Frame after frame, they actually went to those places and heard those things. When they returned, the Master opened the front door and saw himself lying on the bed inside the house. "How can this be?" he thought, and as soon as he was aware that there were two of him, the two changed into one and he opened his eyes and looked up at his mother and father. "He's alive!" they cried joyfully. "He's not going to die after all!"

The Master had been unconscious for six or seven days; he hadn't eaten, drunk water, spoken, or even opened his eyes in all that time. Having awakened, he now knew that he had died and yet not died. In fact, he was a living dead person, one who had been born again. After that, he never spoke recklessly, because he knew that if one brags that one doesn't fear anything, something will happen to make one afraid.

--to be continued