

The Spirit of the Hills

By P'u Sung-ling

A man named Li, of I-tu, was once crossing the hills when he came upon a number of persons sitting on the ground engaged in drinking. As soon as they saw Li they begged him to join them, and vied with each other in filling his cup. Meanwhile, he looked about him and noticed that the various trays and dishes contained all kinds of costly food; the wine only seemed to him a little rough on the palate. In the middle of their fun up came a stranger with a face about three feet long and a very tall hat; whereupon the others were much alarmed, and cried out, "The hill spirit! the hill spirit!" running away in all directions as fast as they could go. Li hid himself in a hole in the ground; and when by-and-by he peeped out to see what had happened, the wine and food had disappeared, and there was nothing there but a few dirty potsherds and some pieces of broken tiles with efts and lizards crawling over them.¹

¹ Mr. Li had, doubtless, taken "a drop too much" before he started on his mountain walk.