

Death By Laughing

By P'u Sung-ling

A Mr. Sun Ching-hsia, a Director of Studies, told me that in his village there was a certain man who had been killed by the rebels when they passed through the place. The man's head was left hanging down on his chest; and as soon as the rebels had gone, his servants secured the body and were about to bury it. Hearing, however, a sound of breathing, they looked more closely, and found that the windpipe was not wholly severed; and, setting his head in its proper place, they carried him back home. In twenty-four hours he began to moan; and by dint of carefully feeding him with a spoon, within six months he had quite recovered.

Some ten years afterwards he was chatting with a few friends, when one of them made a joke which called forth loud applause from the others. Our hero, too, clapped his hands; but, as he was bending backwards and forwards with laughter, the seam on his neck split open, and down fell his head with a gush of blood. His friends now found that he was quite dead, and his father immediately commenced an action against the joker; but a sum of money was subscribed by those present and given to the father, who buried his son and stopped further proceedings.