

THE MOST FRUGAL OF MEN CHINESE TALE

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A Man who was the most frugal in the kingdom heard of another man who was the most frugal in the world. He said to his son: "We live upon little, but if we were more frugal we might live upon nothing. It will be worth while for us to get instruction in economy from the most frugal of men," The son agreed, and the two decided that the son should go and inquire whether the master in economic science would take pupils. An exchange of presents being a necessary preliminary to closer intercourse, the father told the son to take the smallest of coins, one farthing, and to buy a sheet of paper of the cheapest sort. The boy by bargaining got two sheets of paper for the farthing. The father put away one sheet, cut the other sheet in halves, and on one half drew a picture of a pig's head. This he put into a large covered basket, as if it were the thing which it represented—the usual gift sent in token of great respect. The son took the basket, and after a long journey reached the abode of the most frugal man in the world.

The master of the house was absent, but his son received the traveller, learned his errand, and accepted the offering. Having taken from the basket the picture of the pig's head, he said, courteously, to his visitor: "I am sorry that we have nothing in the house that is worthy to take the place of the pig's head in your basket. I will, however, signify our friendly reception of it by putting in four oranges for you to take home with you."

Thereupon the young man, without having any oranges at hand, made the motions necessary for putting the oranges into the basket. The son of the most frugal man in the kingdom then took his basket and went to his father to tell of thrift surpassing his own.

When the most frugal man in the world returned home his son told him that a visitor had been there, having come from a great distance to take lessons in economy. The father inquired what offering he brought as an introduction, and the son showed the small outline of the pig's head on thin brown paper.

The father looked at it, and then asked his son what he had sent as a return present. The son told him he had merely made the motions necessary for transferring four oranges, and showed how he had clasped the imaginary oranges and deposited them in the visitor's basket. The father flew into a rage and boxed the boy's ears, exclaiming: "You extravagant wretch! With your fingers thus far apart you appeared to give him large oranges. Why did n't you measure out small ones?"

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