

王右丞集卷之十八 狀文書記

18.5

與工部李侍郎書

一昨出後。伏承令從官將軍車騎至陋巷見命。恨不得隨使者詣舍下謁。才非張載。枉傳玄以車相迎。德謝侯生。辱信陵虛左
4 見待。古人有此。今也未聞。所以竦踊惕息。通夕不寐。維自結髮。即枉眷顧。侍郎素風。維知之矣。宿昔貴公子。常下交布衣。盡禮髦士。絕甘分少。
8 致醴以飯。汲汲于當世之士。常如不及。故夙著問望。為孟嘗平原之儔。及乎晚歲

From *Juan 18: Reports, prose pieces, letters, and records*

18.5

Letter to Li, Vice Minister of Works¹

A while ago, after I was released from prison, I received an invitation from you via one of your attendant officials, who brought an entourage of carriages and horsemen to my humble lane. I regretted that I was unable to follow the messenger on his return and pay a formal visit to you. I do not have the talent of a Zhang Zai, who inspired Fu Xuan to pay him a visit by carriage; and my virtue is inferior to Master Hou's, who publicly humiliated the Lord of Xinling when he attended upon him with his left carriage seat vacant.² This sort of thing was common among the ancients, but is never seen nowadays. Because of this I was plunged into a state of nervous anxiety; worried and breathless I could get no sleep the entire night.

Ever since I came of age and bound up my hair, you have bothered to look out for me; and I have been well aware of your integrity. In the past, you, a member of the nobility, stooped to form associations with commoners, and to extend fullest courtesy to courageous soldiers; you deprived yourself of delicacies and divided with them the little you had, bringing them ale and food. You were zealous in serving the gentlemen of the age, always assuming your actions were inadequate. You have been known for this for some time and have been considered the peer of the Lords of Mengchang and Pingyuan.³

1 Wang Wei sent this letter in 758 to Li Zun 李遵, then in high favor at Suzong's court. Wang had been briefly imprisoned for treason the previous year before being pardoned.

2 The third-century writer Zhang Zai so impressed the court official and exegete Fu Xuan with one of his rhapsodies that Fu personally went to his home to chat with him. For Master Hou, see note to 6.1.

3 Both Warring States noblemen famed for their acquisition and patronage of retainers.

時危。益見臣節。草莽之中。乘輿播越。
 列郡或棄車走林。畏賊顧望。貢獻不至。
 12 莫有鬪心。侍郎慨然。枕戈泣血。
 奮不顧命。捍衛聖主。楊奉之以兵奉迎。
 蕭何之運糧致饋。曹洪之以良馬濟。
 趙衰之以壺飧從。收合亡騎。繕完棄甲。
 16 喻以大義。慰而勉之。然後以劍率卒。
 執戈前驅。浹辰之間。六軍響振。
 以成興復之業。豈非侍郎。忠節蓋世。
 義貫白日。垂名竹帛。為一代宗臣。
 20 誠可愛也。或曰。宗子與國同休。
 不得不爾也。夫仁弱自愛者。且奔竄伏匿。
 偷延晷刻。窮蹙既至。即匹夫匹婦。
 自經于溝瀆。安能決命爭首。慷慨大節。
 24 死生以之乎。而能不邀寵于上。不干功

1 Yang Feng rescued Emperor Xian in 195 CE when he was fleeing from a rebel uprising. Xiao He, one of the Han founder Gaozu's strategists, brought grain to Gaozu's army when they were in want during a siege. Cao Hong was a cousin of the warlord Cao Cao; he once saved him following a military defeat by giving him his horse on which to flee. During the Spring and Autumn period, when the future Duke Wen of Jin was a refugee, his retainer Zhao Shuai followed him and kept him supplied with rations.

Then in your later years, in times of danger, you demonstrated even more the steadfastness of a subject. When the imperial carriage took flight in the wilderness, many officials of the various commanderies abandoned their posts and fled into the forest, where for fear of the rebels they observed things from a distance. Local tribute did not arrive, and no one had a heart to fight. You then demonstrated your passionate courage; with a spear for your pillow and weeping blood, you exerted yourself with no concern for your own life, intent on guarding our sagely lord. You were Yang Feng, welcoming the emperor with his troops; you were Xiao He, who transported grain and brought it to Gaozu; you were Cao Hong, rescuing Cao Cao with a horse; you were Zhao Shuai, following in attendance with gruel in a pot.¹ You reassembled the cavalry that had fled, and you repaired the armor they cast aside; you explained to them the righteous cause, heartening them and urging them on. And then you led the troops forth by sword, grasping a pike in the forefront. Within a dozen days the reputation of the imperial army resounded once more.² Isn't the success of the imperial revival due to you? Your loyalty dominates the age; your sense of justice pierces the sun itself; you will leave a name in the records of bamboo and silk as the model subject of an entire era. This is truly admirable. Someone has said that the scions of the imperial house share in the fortunes of the state; and this must certainly be so.

Now those who cherish themselves and are weak in benevolence will scurry in flight and go into hiding, just so they can extend their lives for a moment or two. And when hard times come, they will end by strangling themselves in a ditch like some common man or woman.³ Could *they* risk their lives and vie to be in the vanguard, fervent in integrity, putting their lives on the line?

2 Literally “six armies,” a common term for the various administrative divisions that made up the sum of the imperial forces.

3 In Analects 14.17, Confucius defends the Qi minister Guan Zhong’s decision to serve the ruler even though he had brought about the death of his brother: “Do you demand from him the petty loyalty of ordinary men and women, who would kill themselves in a ditch somewhere with no one knowing anything about them?”

于下。不怠邦政。不受私謁。時與風流
儒雅之士。置酒高會。吟詠先王遺風。
翛然有東山之志。善矣。維雖老賤。

28 沈跡無狀。豈不知有忠義之士乎。亦常延
頸企踵。響風慕義無窮也。然不敢自列于
下執事者。以為賤貴有倫。等威有序。
以閒人持不急之務。朝夕倚門窺戶。

32 抑亦侍郎之所惡也。而猥不見遺。思曹公
命吳質。將何以塞知已之望。報厚顧之恩。
內省空虛。流汗而已。輒先馳狀。候涼時
即躬詣門下奉謝。王維頓首。

Moreover, you never curry favor with those above you, nor seek recognition from those below; nor are you lazy in the administration of the state; nor do you receive guests intent on private gain. From time to time you do associate with refined and scholarly gentlemen, holding banquets and lofty assemblies; then you celebrate the cultural legacy of the former kings, demonstrating the natural inclinations of an East Mountain recluse.¹ How wonderful!

Even though I am old and lowly, and have concealed myself out of shame, how could I not know that loyal and just gentlemen exist? Indeed, I am always eager to meet you, possessed as I am of an endless admiration of your superior nature. Yet I dare not enlist myself among your lower attendants, for I believe that there is noble and base in human relations and a set order to social status. For an idle person to take up some unimportant duty where he leant on a gate or watched the door from dawn to dusk – that would probably be something you would detest. And yet you have not rejected me, to my own shame. It makes me think of the way Lord Cao summoned Wu Zhi² – and yet how would I answer the expectations of one who knows me well, or repay the favor of one who has treated me so generously? Upon examining myself I find mere falseness, and I can only break out in a sweat. I have hurried right away with this reply to you; and when the weather cools then I will come on my own to your gate and offer my thanks. Wang Wei offers his humble salutations.

1 See note to 2.23.1.

2 When Cao Pi became emperor, he sent his personal entourage to summon the scholar Wu Zhi to his side.

18.6

山中與裴秀才迪書

近臘月下。景氣和暢。故山殊可過。足下方溫經。猥不敢相煩。輒便獨往山中。

憩感配寺。與山僧飯訖而去。比涉玄灞。

4 清月映郭。夜登華子岡。輞水淪漣。與月上下。寒山遠火。明滅林外。深巷寒犬。

吠聲如豹。村墟夜春。復與踴鍾相間。

此時獨坐。僮僕靜默。多思曩昔。攜手

8 賦詩。步仄逕。臨清流也。當待春中。草木蔓發。春山可望。輕儻出水。白鷗

矯翼。露濕青皋。麥隴朝雊。斯之不遠。

儻能從我遊乎。非子天機清妙者。豈能

12 以此不急之務相邀。然是中有深趣矣。無忽。因馱黃蘖人往。不一。山中人王維白。

18.6

In the hills: a letter sent to Flourishing Talent Pei

Towards the end of the twelfth month the weather grew temperate, and so it finally became possible to visit the hills. You were busy with your studies at the time, and so I didn't dare disturb you, and went off to the hills right away by myself. I took my rest at Ganpei Temple, shared a meal with the mountain monks, and then took my leave. By the time I crossed the Black Ba, the clear moonlight was shining on the ramparts. I climbed Huazi Ridge at night, and the ripples of Wang Stream rose and fell with the moon. Distant fires on the frozen mountain flared then faded beyond the wood; shivering dogs barked in remote lanes, their voices like the growl of panthers. The sound of grain being pounded in the village at night mingled with the intermittent temple bells. Then I sat there, alone, and my servants too fell silent. I thought long upon the past, when we used to go hand in hand, composing poems, strolling on narrow trails and looking down upon clear currents.

If we can wait until spring, then the plants and trees will have spread out, and the vernal hills will be a sight worth seeking. The carefree minnows will dart from the water and white gulls will extend their wings; dew will soak the green riverbanks, and pheasants will call at dawn in the barley fields. It won't be long now – perhaps you'll be able to go out with me? Whomever could I invite to such a trifling matter save you, possessed as you are of such a lofty and subtle disposition? Nevertheless, there is a profound appeal to all of this, so don't dismiss it.

Because the man who peddles cork tree bark has arrived, I'll stop for now.¹

-- Wang Wei, from the mountains

¹ The peddler will deliver the letter to Pei Di for Wang Wei.

18.7

與魏居士書

足下太師之後。世有明德。宜其四代五公。
克復舊業。而伯仲諸昆。頃或早世。惟有
壽光。復遭播越。幼生弱姪。藐然諸孤。

4 布衣徒步。降在阜隸。足下不忍其親。
杖策入關。降志屈體。託于所知。身不
衣帛。而于六親孝慈。終日一飯。而以百
口為累。攻苦食淡。流汗霖霖。為之驅馳。
8 僕見足下。裂裳毀冕。二十餘年。山棲谷
飲。高居深視。造次不違于仁。舉止必由
于道。高世之德。欲蓋而彰。又屬聖主搜
揚仄陋。束帛加璧。被于巖穴。相國急賢。
12 以副旁求。朝聞夕拜。片善一能。
垂章拖組。況足下崇德茂緒。清節冠世。

18.7

Letter to Layman Wei¹

You, Sir, are a descendant of the Grand Tutor, and your family has demonstrated illustrious virtue for generations.² It is apt that you have produced five dukes over four reigns, all active in restoring the imperial legacy.³ And yet your own uncles and elder brothers have died prematurely in recent times. There was only Shouguang, who was forced to flee several times; he fathered your nephew when he was still young, who became an orphan when still an infant; and *he* was then reduced to commoner status and demoted to a lowly post. Yet you cherished this kinsman and hurried by horse to the capital; you humbled your pride in order to promote him among those you knew. Though you were not garbed in silk, you demonstrated filial kindness to all of your clan; and though you only partook of one meal a day, you made a hundred hungry mouths your concern.⁴ You undertook a bitter task, forcing yourself to eat the most flavorless of dishes; you were drenched in sweat as you galloped about on his behalf. I had seen you rip up your robe and cap of office over twenty years earlier, to roost in the hills and drink from the valley streams, to live a lofty existence of profound insight, never casting off benevolence, and demonstrating conduct that always derived from the Way. But a virtue that surpassed the age was destined to be revealed, even if it wanted to conceal itself. Once more a sagely ruler sought out lowly worthies, going as far as the cliff caves, intending to sash them in silk and grant them jades; and the ministers of the state, eager to find talent, assisted in this universal search. Those who were heard of in the morning were appointed by evening. Even those who merely possessed a single virtue or talent soon had seals dangling from their cords of office. It was even more likely that you would be sought, with a lofty virtue inherited from a noble

1 Composed ca. 758. The recipient has not been identified.

2 Grand Tutor: Wei Zheng 魏徵, who was a prominent statesman from the early seventh century.

3 The Eastern Han official Yuan An's 袁安 family accomplished this feat.

4 Hundred mouths: idiomatic for one's extended family household.

風高于黔婁善卷。行獨于石門荷條。

朝廷所以超拜右史。思其入踐赤墀。執牘

16 珺筆。羽儀當朝。為天子文明。且又祿及其室養。昆弟免于負薪。樵蘇晚爨。

柴門閉於積雪。藜牀穿而未起。若有稱職。

上有致君之盛。下有厚俗之化。亦何顧影

20 踯步。行歌采薇。是懷寶迷邦。愛身賤物也。豈謂足下利鍾釜之祿。榮數尺之綬。

雖方丈盈前。而蔬食菜羹。雖高門甲第。

而畢竟空寂。人莫不相愛。而觀身如聚

24 沢。人莫不自厚。而視財若浮雲。于足下實何有哉。聖人知身不足有也。故曰欲潔

line, with clear integrity that is preeminent in the world, with a manner loftier than Qian Lou or Shan Juan, and with conduct as distinctive as the keeper of Stone Gate or the recluse with his weed basket.¹ And so the court appointed you Historian of the Right, thinking to have you frequent the palace stairs, with wooden tally in hand and writing brush tucked in your cap, to assist at the court assemblies, and to act as a literary light for the Son of Heaven. Moreover, your salary and recompense for household expenses made it possible for your siblings to avoid manual labor. And you could no longer live hand-to-mouth each day, with your scrap-wood gate shut tight against the drifts of snow, and with your pigweed couch full of holes, from which you would never rise.

If the right position could be found, then you would bring about the flourishing of the ruler's virtue and would increase the moral transformation of the people. Indeed, why look back and hesitate to go forward, picking bracken as you sing your hermit song? This is cherishing your own gem within and endangering the country; loving yourself while holding all other things cheaply. How could we think that you would covet a salary of pecks or bushels, or relish the prestige of a few inches of an official's hatstrings? Though dish after dish is spread before you, yet you make do with simple vegetarian gruel; though there are lofty gates and splendid mansions, yet in the end you live in empty stillness. Though all are desirous of each other, you see the self as nothing but an assemblage of froth; though all try to make much of themselves, you see wealth as nothing more than floating clouds. Then what difficulty is there, as far as you are concerned?²

1 Qian Lou: see note to 12.15.12. Shan Juan: see note to 12.15.11. Keeper of Stone Gate: in *Analects* 14.38, the keeper of Stone Gate in Lu remarks to Confucius' disciple Zilu that his master insists doing things that are hopeless. Recluse with weed basket: see note to 4.16.15.

2 Wang Wei is suggesting that since Wei has a proper attitude towards the impermanence of the world and would maintain his virtue under any circumstances, there is no reason for him not to serve the government, if he can make a positive contribution.

其身。而亂大倫。知名無所着也。故曰欲使如來。名聲普聞。故離身而返屈其身。

28 知名空而返不避其名也。古之高者曰許由。挂瓢于樹。風吹瓢。惡而去之。聞堯讓。臨水而洗其耳。耳非駐聲之地。聲無染耳之跡。惡外者垢內。病物者自我。此尚不能至于曠士。豈入道者之門歟。降及嵇康。亦云頓纓狂顧。逾思長林而憶豐草。頓纓狂顧。豈與俛受維繫有異乎。長林豐草。豈與官署門闈有異乎。異見起而正性隱。32 36 色事礙而慧用微。豈等同虛空。無所不遍。光明遍照。知見獨存之旨邪。此又足下之所知也。近有陶潛。不肯把板屈腰見督郵。解印綬棄官去。後貧乞食詩云。叩門拙

The sagely person knows that the Self is not worth possessing. Therefore, he says, “If you wish to remain pure, you bring disorder to moral standards.”¹ He knows that fame has nothing that really manifests itself; therefore, he says, “I wish to cause the Tathāgata’s reputation to be universally known.” Consequently he is not attached to the Self and so he abases the Self to serve; he knows that fame is empty, and yet he does not avoid that fame. A lofty one of old said, “Xu You hung his gourd from a tree; but because the wind blew through it, he disliked it and tossed it aside. When he heard that Yao had abdicated, he came to the river and washed out his ears.”² But the ears are not the place to block sounds, nor do sounds have traces that stain the ear; rather, if one despises things on the outside, one is polluted within; and a dislike for external things springs up from within the Self. Someone like this cannot attain the status of a truly open-hearted man. How is this truly entering the gate of the Buddhist path? And when it came to Xi Kang, he as well has said, “When a deer is captured, it will toss its head wildly to throw off its bonds, and will long more and more for its tall forest trees and will pine for its lush grasses.”³ “Tossing its head wildly to throw off its bonds” – how is that any different from lowering one’s head and accepting the restrictions of office? “Tall forest trees and lush grasses” – how is that any different from the gates leading to government office? When discriminating views arise, then the true nature is obscured; when sensuous phenomena intervene, then our ability to apply wisdom weakens. How could this be a viewpoint that allows for the sole existence of a vision that sees all things as equally empty, so that emptiness pervades all things and brings illumination to all? This is also something that you know.

More recently, Tao Qian was unwilling to take up his tablet of office, to bow at court and to attend upon the Regional Inspector; so he removed his seal of office, his official cap, and resigned his post. Later he was impoverished, and his poem “Begging for Food” says:

1 In *Analects* 18.7, Confucius’s disciple Zilu uses similar language in arguing that not taking office disrupts the social order.

2 When Yao offered the throne to Xu You, he had to wash out his ears in order to cleanse them of Yao’s polluting words.

3 This is from Xi Kang’s famous “Letter Breaking off Associations with Shan Ju-yuan.” Xi Kang was acting as the sort of unbending recluse that Wang Wei is criticizing.

40 言辭。是屢乞而多慙也。當一見督郵。
 安食公田數頃。一慙之不忍。而終身慙乎。
 此亦人我攻中。忘大守小。不庄其後之累
 也。孔宣父云。我則異于是。無可無不可。
 44 可者適意。不可者不適意也。君子以布仁
 施義。活國濟人為適意。縱其道不行。
 亦無意為不適意也。苟身心相離。理事俱
 如。則何往而不適。此近于不易。願足下
 48 思可不可之旨。以種類俱生。無行作以為
 大依。無守默以為絕塵。以不動為出世也。
 僕年且六十。足力不強。上不能原本理體。
 補裨國朝。下不能殖貨聚穀。博施窮窶。
 52 偷祿苟活。誠罪人也。然才不出眾。德在
 人下。存亡去就。如九牛一毛耳。
 實非欲引尸祝以自助。求分謗于高賢也。
 略陳起予。惟審圖之。

1 *Analects* 18.8.

2 Or, "this comes close to a state of non-change."

3 "Immovable" not in the sense of inflexible, but not allowing false distinctions
 disturb one's serenity.

“I knocked on the gate, I stuttered out a few words.” He was greatly ashamed because he often had to go begging. If he had just gone to see the Regional Inspector once, he could have lived peacefully off of a few acres of public land. But because he could not stand a single instance of shame, he endured shame to the end of his life! This is indeed setting up a conflict between Other and Self, preserving the petty and forgetting the significant, and thus not avoiding later entanglements. Master Kong has said: “But I am different from these men [recluses]. I do not make rules over what is absolutely permissible and not permissible.”¹ “Permissible” in this case means what is in keeping with what one desires; “not permissible” means what is not. But what the true gentleman desires is extending benevolence and justice, preserving the state and aiding the people. If he is unable to give free rein to his Way, he will indeed have no intention to do what he does not desire. But if one is detached from Mind and Self, and if inner reality and external phenomena are both part of *Thusness*, then where can one go and not find it suitable? This is rather difficult;² but I hope that you can think about this viewpoint on “permissible” and “not permissible.” Let yourself live together with all creatures; take the negation of the difference between non-action and activity as your chief reliance; realize that the true transcendence of the worldly does not lie in quiescence; and to be immovable is the true way to transcend the world.³

I am about to turn sixty. My remaining strength is little; I can no longer seek out the roots of governing principles so as to aid the court and country; nor can I add to my own family’s store of wealth so as to relieve our poverty. I am truly a miscreant, having dragged out my existence through a salary unjustly earned. Thus my talent is ordinary, my virtues are below the average; whether I live or die and what course I should choose to take are of no more importance than a single hair lost from a herd of cows. It really is not that I wish to bring in the Master of the Funeral for my own aid; nor am I hoping to have one of lofty virtue like yourself share my own burden of guilt.⁴ I have briefly related things I have learned from others, and I hope you will consider them carefully.

⁴ *Zhuangzi*, chapter 1: “Though the cook may not govern his kitchen, the impersonator at the funeral [a ritual position] does not leap over the ritual vessels to replace him.” A metaphor for interfering in matters that do not concern one.

18.8

冬筍記

會心者行。表行者祥。故行藏于密。
而祥發于外。欲人不知。不可得也。夫孝。
于人為和德。其應為陽氣。筍陽物也。

4 而以陰出。斯其效歟。重冰閉地。密雪
滔天。而綠籜包生。不日盈尺。公之家執
德庇人。仗義藩國。忘身于王室。不家于
朱戶。公世載盛德。人文冠冕。又天姿
8 大賢。庭訓括羽之日。諸季式亦克用訓。
我爾身也。共被為疎。禮庇身焉。禦侮
無所。花萼韡韡。爛其盈門。兄弟怡怡。
穆然映女。且孝有上和下睦之難。尊賢容

1 The lack of concrete background details in this piece suggests that it is not complete, though it seems to be a piece celebrating the miraculous appearance of bamboo shoots in winter and arguing that it is a reflection of the virtue of the gentry family he describes.

2 I.e., your family does not belong to the nobility.

3 A common idiom for closeness between brothers.

4 *Shijing* 164 celebrates solidarity among brothers. Lines 13–14: “Though brothers may quarrel within their walls, / they will defend against insults from without.”

18.8

A record of bamboo shoots in winter¹

When one's mind fully comprehends, one acts; and if one's actions can provide a model, then they are auspicious. For that reason, though one's actions may be hidden in secret, the auspicious omen they create will issue forth. You may want no one else to know, but that will prove impossible. Now filial conduct applied to others will result in a compliant virtue, which calls forth a response with yang energy. Bamboo shoots are yang things; so if they are produced in the midst of yin, is that not the result? Heavy ice seals up the earth; dense snow floods the sky; and yet the sprouts grow a foot high in no time at all, wrapped in their green sheaths.

The lord's family shelters the people through the virtue it possesses; it upholds justice and protects the nation. The lord disregards his own life in protecting the royal house, though he does not occupy a vermillion-gated mansion.² For generations his family was possessed of flourishing virtue, and have been officials gifted in the humane arts, all with the character of great worthies. From the days when the lord and his brothers received instruction from their father and became effective young men, they took his teachings as their model and followed them. They considered themselves as one – even those who share the same blanket would seem distant by comparison.³ Under the shelter of their propriety, there was not a single offence from outside that they needed to defend against.⁴ “When flower blossoms glow so bright”, “their light will fill the house.”⁵ “When brothers are harmonious,” this is reflected solemnly in you, bamboo shoot.⁶

⁵ *Shijing* 164, ll. 1–4: Are not the blossoms of the cherry tree magnificent? Of all the men of the world, none come up to brothers.” “Their light will fill the house”: from *Shijing* 261. *Analects* 13.28: “With brothers, a gentleman should be harmonious.”

⁶ Interpreting informal second-person pronoun 女 here as referring to the shoots, whose growth in winter is an auspicious sign of the virtue of the household. Wang Wei's line here (written in the style of a *Shijing* line) link the bamboo shoots to similar uses of flowers in the *Shijing* to reflect the majesty or virtue of individuals.

12 眾之難。厚人薄己之難。自家刑國之難。
加行之以忠信。文之以禮樂。斯其大者遠
者。況承順顏色乎。況溫清枕席乎。如是
故天高聽卑。神鑒孔明。不然筭曷為出哉。
16 視諸故府。則昔之人。亦以孝致斯瑞也。

Now filial piety can help with the difficult task of harmonizing those above and below; the difficult task of honoring the worthy and accommodating the masses; the difficult task of being generous to others and being hard on oneself; the difficult task of having one's own household serve as a model for the nation. Its conduct can be supplemented through trustworthiness and loyalty, and ornamented with ritual and music – then how far-reaching will its greatness extend! Far beyond simply modeling one's conduct based on parents' expressions or warming or cooling their pillow and mat. When this results, heaven (though lofty) heeds those below, and the spirits investigate what is brilliant. Otherwise, how could this bamboo shoot emerge?

When I investigate records of old, I find that filial piety among former men could also produce this auspicious omen.