

wide fame, with a strong intelligence and penetrating wisdom and remarkable acumen. The disciple of Asaṅga was Buddhasīmha, a man whose secret conduct was unfathomable, of high talent and wide renown.

These two or three worthies had often talked together in this way: "We all are engaged in framing our conduct so as to enjoy the presence of Maitrêya after death.⁵³ Whoever of us first dies and obtains the condition (*of being so born in the heaven of Maitrêya*), let him come and communicate it to us, that we may know his arrival there."

After this Buddhasīmha was the first to die. After three years, during which there was no message from him, Vasubandhu Bôdhisattva also died. Then six months having elapsed, and there being no message either from him, all the unbelievers began to mock and ridicule, as if Vasubandhu and Buddhasīmha had fallen into an evil way of birth, and so there was no spiritual manifestation.

After this, Asaṅga Bôdhisattva, during the first division of a certain night, was explaining to his disciples the law of entailing (*or conferring on others*) the power of *samādhi*, when suddenly the flame of the lamp was eclipsed, and there was a great light in space; then a Rîshi-dêva, traversing through the sky, came down, and forthwith ascending the stairs of the hall, saluted Asaṅga. Asaṅga, addressing him, said, "What has been the delay in your coming? What is your present name?" In reply he said, "At the time of my death I went to the Tushita heaven, to the inner assembly (*i.e., the immediate presence*) of Maitrêya, and was there born in a lotus flower.⁵⁴ On the flower presently opening, Maitrêya, in laudatory terms,

⁵³ This was the desire of the early Buddhists after death to go to Maitrêya, in the Tushita heaven. It is plainly so in the Gayâ inscription, referred to above. Afterwards the fable of a Western Paradise was introduced into Buddhism, and this took the place of Maitrêya's heaven.

⁵⁴ This idea of being born in or on

a lotus flower gave rise to the name of "the lotus school," applied to the Tsing-t'u, or "pure land" section of Buddhists. But it is a belief not confined to any one school. The mediæval legend of the flower which opens in Paradise on the death of a pure child is a touching survival of the same thought.