CHINESE LITERATURE

Monthly

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Front Cover: *Sending Spring Festival Gifts*
a scissor-cut by Lin Hsi-ming

Chinese lunar New Year or Spring Festival, which usually occurs in February, traditionally is a time of family reunions, feasting and celebration. Traditional too are the artistic scissor-cuts which women and girls in the countryside make and decorate the windows and walls of their homes with during this gay holiday period.

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A Heart-Warming Snowy Night

At first the night was so dark you wouldn't have been able to see your fingers if you held up your hand. Then a snowstorm blotted everything out. We lost the road and wandered across the desolate wastes. Our four horses, straining and neighing, pulled our cart forward, while the worried old carter shouted them on, cracking his whip sharply. I don't know how long we travelled in this way through the bone-chilling night. We had no idea where we were.

Mounting the crest of a hill, suddenly, in the distance, we saw a myriad of electric lights. Ah, there it was! We were sure that after all our twisting and turning we had stumbled on the county seat at last. In spite of the snowstorm, we all became very cheerful. Someone started to sing. Even the horses grew more spirited, and our big cart flew in the direction of the shining glow.

But when we came closer, our carter cried in surprise, "Why, this is the big dyke!"

Sure enough, we had reached the bank of the Sungari River. At the moment, the dark bulk of the dyke blocked our view of the brightly lit area. Drawn by the lights in the windows of a row of buildings near by, we decided to go in and get warm before continuing our journey. That

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had to be done first, regardless of anything else. And we could also inquire about the road.

As we pushed open a heavy wooden door and entered, a rush of warm air struck our faces. A red brick wall was heated by flues in its hollow interior. After I stood next to one for only a few minutes, the icy particles clinging to my eyelashes melted into tears.

The building was a crude temporary affair. It was warm because it was next to the kitchen, from which emanated the delightful odour of potato and sour cabbage soup. The room we were in was plainly an office. A bulb covered by a frosted glass shade hung over a table and shone on men bent over their work. Hanging on a reed-matted wall was a book entitled *Project Daily Progress Report.* A number of maps and charts were pasted up beside it.

Against the rear wall stood a large brick platform bed, with a number of multicoloured quilts. Surveying tripods and red and white markers were piled at the head of the big platform, in addition to a black leather instruments bag. Among this jumble of equipment and in this atmosphere

of bustling work I was interested to observe a violin case resting on the lid of a big packing crate.

Perhaps because of the felt strips tacked to the frame of the doorway, or maybe because they were too wrapped up in what they were doing, none of the occupants heard us enter. They continued concentrating on their work. Then a girl who had been drawing with a ruler, biting her lower lip, raised her head and tossed back her braids. Seeing us, she scrambled to her feet in astonishment.

"Aiya! Why have you come so late? The visiting group yesterday also arrived after dark!"

It was as if someone had tossed a stone in a placid pool. The quiet office rippled to life. The girl dashed in and out, bringing benches, hot tea, peppering us with questions, showering us with information. Several times I opened my mouth to explain, but she wouldn't let me get a word in edgewise. She popped out of the room before I could say anything. The moment she returned, she went on with her account of the day's work.

She told us solemnly that the man in charge was out on the project; she would lead us to him after we had rested a while. Like a small whirlwind, in a few seconds she had everything arranged for "the visitors." I exchanged a wink with my companions. We tacitly agreed to play up to the role she had assigned us. The carter, now that he was warm again, gave me a grin and went out to feed his horses.

A howling wind drove big snowflakes directly against the lighted windows.

Before we had finished half a glass of hot tea, the girl draped a red scarf over her head and said:

"Let's go! Come and see our work site!"

A young fellow on the other side of the drafting table rose. "Little Kuan," he said to the girl, "it's snowing hard. I'll take them."

"No, no, Little Chang, I'll go," the girl called Little Kuan insisted. She hurriedly pushed us out the door.

We plodded our way through the snow and climbed the dyke. Ho! What a sight! The floodlights had made the place light as day. Then it dawned on me. This must be

the construction site of the Wanchin Agricultural Co-op's pumping station. The caisson was nearly finished. A big tube was sucking water out of it like a black python, and a pump engine was putt-putt-putting in a mat shed.

Men in boots and rubber pants were working in the icy water. Prefabricated slabs of concrete, suspended from a pulley on a long cable between two towers, sailed through the air. Half the foundation wall of the pump room had already been laid. Steady streams of men flowed up and down the catwalks around a huge excavation, carrying cement and earth. Dangling electric bulbs swung in the wind. Snow swirled and danced like a roll of twisting white pile cloth.

The girl brought us to a man who was waving his hands and shouting on a height beside the excavation. Could this be the project engineer? I wondered. When we came closer I saw that he was a very unusual young fellow. Not only was he young, he was very short. In spite of the severe cold, he wore no hat. His long bristly hair stood straight upright, like a sheet of black flame. And he had an air of seriousness that belied his years. The girl ran towards him, shouting eagerly, but for some reason she grew suddenly timid when she actually reached him, and fell back a step.

He was watching the slabs of concrete sliding along the cable. Mid-way they were halted by a scaffolding that had just been erected. The young man glared at the girl, took a wide-legged stance and bellowed to some bricklayers to shift one of the towers so that the concrete slabs could be delivered unimpeded.

"These comrades have come to visit us," the girl shouted in a hurt voice. "I've brought the visiting group here. . . ." She lost her lively loquaciousness, and seemed ill at ease.

In the darkness, he stretched forth a frozen hand and shook hands with each of us. "My name is Little Lin," he said hoarsely. "Lin Li-ko. Technician. Please step this way, comrades."

He led us to the river's edge. Beneath a string of electric lights that ended at the icy white surface of the Sungari, people were digging a canal in the frozen ground.

"Big storm today," said Little Lin, "but we've got more drive than the storm. Just look at them. All members of the agricultural co-op! And look over here." His extended arms, as he turned, were like the wings of a soaring eagle. "This grassy plain has wonderfully rich soil, black heavy loam nourished by the milk of the Sungari. But for thousands of years it was covered over with grass. Nobody thought of tilling it. Nobody dared."

I looked in the direction he was pointing, but I couldn't see a thing in the darkness. The young fellow's gesture was very graceful, and the girl's eyes mirrored happiness and loving admiration.

"The fires of the big leap forward are burning in this frigid wilderness too. We're going to finish this station before May First. It will be our May Day contribution! Once we start pumping, that road you came on won't exist any more. We'll have thousands of *mou* of glistening green rice fields there."

It was one o'clock in the morning by the time we got back to the office. The technicians, the draftsmen and the workmen who were off duty were sleeping soundly on

the brick platform bed. Relentlessly, the snowstorm beat against the roof and walls of the building.

The moment we entered the door, Little Lin shooed the girl off to bed. "Go on, Little Kuan. There's nothing for you to do here. Go to sleep!"

I could see him clearly in the light of the hanging bulb. He couldn't have been much older than she.

Little Kuan's frozen red lips pouted. He gave her a tender glance. She picked up her unfinished drawing, her ruler and pencils, and left the room with lowered head.

He didn't remove his overcoat, but sat down beside the flaming cookstove. That black coat had been ripped and scorched in a dozen places. Snow and mud had congealed it into a solid slab. Looking after the departing girl, he said admiringly:

"She simply doesn't know what it means to be tired!" Lowering his voice, he added in a mischievous tone that revealed how young he was: "She won't really go to sleep. . . ."

Then he coughed and said as if it had just occurred to him: "Why have you come in the middle of the night? Are you in a hurry to set up an irrigation works too?"

"We got lost in the storm. The lights here drew us like moths to a flame," one of my companions answered. After our long fatiguing journey and the severe cold, the warmth of the room made us drowsy. Before long most of my companions were asleep on the benches beside the heated wall.

This young fellow interested me exceedingly. He was as young as his workmates, but he was much more serious. Although exercising the duties of a project engineer, he was in fact only an ordinary technician.

The lights seemed to get brighter and brighter, and the room warmer and warmer. From the platform bed, from the foot of the heated wall came the rhythmic breathing of the sleepers. Little Lin's lean face was pink and flushed; his smiling eyes shone. After the noisy bustle of the construction site, it was easy to start chatting in the silence of the deep night.

"Well, how goes it?" I asked him. "Your work must be pretty tiring."

"So what? Work makes me happy. I'm a farm boy. Ever since I was a kid I made up my mind I'd never let myself be cooped up in an office. I like the wide-open spaces, the sun and the fresh air. That's why I studied irrigation in the agricultural school. Graduation year, when we filled out our work applications, I wrote that I preferred surveying, that I wanted to travel all over the country. One of my teachers asked me, 'Do you know how tough it is out doing field work?' I knew all about it — the heat, the cold, the wind, the rain, camping in the open, hunger, mosquitoes, fleas . . . but that was the life I wanted."

He was just a lively youngster now, with fuzz on his upper lip and his eyes shining with happiness and hope. After we had chatted a while, he wiped the steam from the window with his sleeve and peered out. "The machines are running well. . . ." he murmured, and went on with his story.

". . . I got my wish. I've a canvas rucksack, a toothbrush, a couple of books on irrigation and two changes of clothing. That's how I've travelled the past two years. All over the rivers and mountains of Heilungkiang. I've worked on dams and pumping stations. On the sites I work barefooted, in an undershirt, helping the workers mix cement. It's wonderful! Then, after you get all hot and sweaty, you jump into the clean fresh river water to cool off. Everybody who works on these jobs knows how to swim. . . .

"Once I was caught in a flash flood. It was really a killer. It came tearing down the mountain and in a couple of minutes, the river, the village and the road all disappeared under the rolling waves. Our work site was completely demolished. What to do? I simply took my drawings and instruments and swam my way out. . . ."

Little Lin made light of his personal difficulties, he joked about them, but when he talked about the project he frowned in concentration. I could see that this youngster was on the way to becoming a serious, responsible man. He had been just a fledgling sheltered under the wings of project engineers. But then the older eagle had flown away.

"When I came here — the Wanchin Co-op — I ran into trouble. Everybody told me how important this project was, so I came ready to work. But when I got here, I found that they didn't have a thing. No work site director. No project engineer. No machinery. No materials.

"I and two other technicians — that girl Little Kuan and Little Chang — surveyed the whole area, and drew a terrain map. But what were we going to do for materials and labour? After the first month, the co-op really pitched in and helped. They gave us as many people as we needed. No matter wind or snow, everybody turned out and cut ditches in the frozen ground.

". . . The more enthusiastic they were, the more impatient we became to speed up construction, but we kept falling behind. The county Irrigation Section Chief came out. I told him we were still waiting for our machinery and materials. 'Yes,' he said, 'this is a very important project.' That was all. Then he left.

"The villagers here were very enthusiastic about the project. They'd ask me several times a day: 'When are our machines coming? . . . We've got to finish this pumping station before May First! . . . We can't get big yields unless we can irrigate! . . .' What could I say? I would have given anything if I could have built the pumping station for them overnight with my own two hands. . . . I kept watching the road from the county seat, but there wasn't even the shadow of a truck, to say nothing of our materials. Hai! Every day I stood on the big dyke, watching. It didn't do me a bit of good!

"One day I sat on the dyke, brooding, angry and hurt. This rich black soil — practically pure fertilizer, a farmer's gold mine . . . was it important or was it not? Of course it was . . . but we couldn't put it into action. I was ready to weep with impatience. At that moment, someone came and sat down beside me."

"Who was it?"

"Little Kuan — Comrade Kuan Ying, I mean." His voice grew respectful. "She chattered of this and chattered of that, she talked, she sang, until I couldn't stand it. 'Go

away, will you?' I begged her. 'Can't you see how upset I am?' 'Upset?' she said. 'What about? . . . Look at this plain. It's immense. Some day, when the flowers bloom, they'll be ploughing here with tractors, then the rice will grow. . . .'

"She was spattered with mud from head to foot. Obviously, she had just been helping the villagers with their ditch digging. I was very irritable. 'Hai!' I said, 'that's in the future. What I'm worried about is right now!' And I poured out all my grievances.

"She listened till I finished. Then she said seriously, 'We're Communist Youth Leaguers. Where do you think the Party ought to send us? To places where everything is going smoothly? Just look at the people here, listen to the eager way they talk. You ought to be glad, not upset. What if no project director or engineer has shown up? We can do the job ourselves. The pumping station has to be built. Who are you waiting for!'

"I was stumped. Of course she was right. What I should have been doing was thinking of the meaning of the words: *I am a Communist Youth Leaguer.* . . .

"That night I wrote a long, long letter. The next morning I sent it off by messenger to the first secretary of the county Party committee. At dusk the same day I was sitting beneath an oil lamp with Little Kuan and Little Chang working on our drafting plans when somebody rapped on the window and said Little Lin was wanted at the township Party committee for a meeting. I ran all the way. . . .

"When I entered the door, I stopped short. Who was pacing back and forth beneath the oil lamp but the first secretary of the county Party committee! He was very thin, and he was wrapped in thought. On the table was my letter. Several Party and administrative comrades were seated around the table. I walked in and let loose with both barrels.

"I'm a man who wants to do a job right or not at all, I told them. I've heard a lot of talk about how important this project is, but I haven't seen any action where it comes to delivering materials and machinery. When the thaw sets in, the highway will turn to mud. Trucks won't be

able to get through. Without supplies, we'll be in a fine mess. . . .

"Before I could go any further, the Party secretary stepped up to me and shook my hand. 'Comrade Lin,' he said, 'I like a man like you. I'm in favour of a bold determined approach to work too.' His words went right to my heart, like warm sunlight. That night at the township Party committee was the real turning point, comrade, I can tell you; it sparked all of our inventiveness and hard work.

"Soon we had electric lights on the plain, steel, gravel, cement and pumps. The place rang with the sound of trucks, carts, motors, human voices. I was so happy I wanted to write home about it. . . ."

The door leading to the next room opened and Little Kuan stuck her head in. "You forgot about the last day of the lunar year," she reminded him, "when we sank the caisson and the county head and the first secretary of the county Party committee came and worked with us. What fun it was that night! A sea of people, men and women, young and old, drums beating, cymbals clashing. . . ."

Her big eyes shone, like the fiery clouds at sunrise over the great plain. "Even the truck drivers rolled up their sleeves and grabbed picks and shovels. They dashed into action like an assault squad."

"What about you?" I asked her.

She coloured. Standing there gracefully in the doorway, she swung her two long braids behind her with a toss of her pretty head. "I danced. The village women and I beat drums on the dyke and danced."

"All right! All right!" Little Lin again rubbed the window with his sleeve. As if this were a signal, Little Kuan disappeared.

The young fellow's youthful air also vanished. An invisible burden seemed to settle on his shoulders. He frowned thoughtfully and stood with his legs wide apart, his hands shoved in his pockets, his eyes fixed motionlessly on the table.

"You just mentioned your home," I said softly. "Are you married? . . ."

"No, no," he laughed, cocking an eye at the door that the girl had closed behind her. "All I have is that violin," he said, pointing at the instrument lying on the packing case.

A glow of light touched the windows. The stove was a cherry red. I'd better let him get some sleep, I thought. He probably has to go out in that storm again the first thing in the morning. Who knows what was going through his mind. He looked at me and said in a matter-of-fact voice, "You ought to go to sleep, comrade." And he strode out through the door.

Little Kuan burst in from next room. The heat added a rosy hue to her cheeks. "He's always like that," she complained. "Never gets enough rest. Careless about himself, sloppy! That's got to change!" She picked up the blue scarf Little Lin had left on the table and hurried after him.

I couldn't resist rubbing the steam from the window and looking outside. It was already daybreak. Silvery snowflakes continued to fall. Electric lights glistened like crystals on the big dyke. Machines were still throbbing vigorously. Little Lin was mounting the dyke with big steps. Holding the scarf, Little Kuan was pursuing him, leaning against the gale, her hair flying in the wind. The weather didn't seem to bother her as she flew after the young technician.

I turned away. The men sleeping in the room were breathing deep and rhythmically. My heart was full of warmth.

Translated by Sidney Shapiro
Illustrations by Lu Chih-hsiang

HSI YUNG

The New Member of the Family

So-chu put his name down to join the Youth Shock Brigade that was going off to build a reservoir at Yatsetan, fifty *li* from the village. But after the meeting, which took place on the evening of the 23rd of the twelfth lunar month, he was rather uneasy. It was not so simple for him to leave, for his relationship to his family was somewhat unusual.

Originally So-chu had not been a member of the Hung-kuang Co-op. He came from the Yuanchin Co-op, fifteen *li* away, and had moved here only after he married Wang Ching-chih, a member of this co-op.

There were several reasons for his coming to live with his wife's family. She was an only child and her parents, who were past fifty, longed to adopt a good, capable son-in-law to be the man of the family and support them in their old age.

Ching-chih had never mentioned their wish to So-chu for fear that he might laugh at her and say she had backward ideas, but he was bright and guessed it from her hints. He did consider the custom of adopting a son-in-law backward, nevertheless, he truly sympathized with the old people in their loneliness. He had lost his parents in his childhood and it would be more convenient if the old folks could look after the house once they were married. Moreover, it is the duty of children to care for their parents, he did not wish to make his wife's family a burden on the co-op as long as he and Ching-chih could support them. He

Hsi Yung is a young writer of novels and short stories. One of his short stories, *Old Sung Goes to Town,* was published in *Chinese Literature* No. 4, 1956.

agreed cheerfully and went to live with them. The old people were very pleased. The mother, particularly, became more conscientious in her work and talked more pleasantly to the old man. In a fortnight So-chu won the hearts of both old people with his strength, industriousness and sweet tongue. He was courteous and always addressed them after their daughter. "It is said that a son-in-law equals half a son, but our So-chu is a son in every sense of the word. He is as good as any real son," said the mother happily.

The old people could not do enough to show their affection for So-chu. At every meal Ching-chih's mother sat beside him, adding choice bits to his rice bowl. The old man showed his concern in a different, more subtle way. For instance, a few days ago, when the co-op called for men to transport fertilizer from another county, the old man, thinking that the meals on the way might be irregular or they may have to sleep out one night, volunteered to go in his son-in-law's place.

Such care made So-chu feel accepted, but on the other hand, he was very embarrassed. A strong, capable, young man being treated like a little baby! He decided this must not continue. Without consulting any member of the family he signed up for work on the reservoir, yet he was worried. What if they did not permit him to go? But his mind was set, he was going anyway. The Youth League called for a great leap forward and how was he to answer the call if he allowed the family to tie him down.

So-chu went home after the meeting. It was nearly midnight, but Ching-chih was still up, sewing by the lamplight.

"Why aren't you in bed yet? Can't you sleep?" asked So-chu.

"I'm waiting for you. What was the meeting about?"

"The great leap forward."

"Now, come on! You never give details! What was it all about?"

"Nothing," he laughed. Then sitting beside her he said softly, "There is something I would like to discuss with you."

"What is it?" She looked at him, surprised.

"Promise you'll agree to it."

"You must let me know what it is first," she insisted. "I would agree to whatever is good, but do you want me to agree to bad things too?"

"It's a good thing. It really is a good thing, but I'll tell you only when you say you'll agree, no matter what it is."

"All right, I agree." She put away her sewing. "Now out with it."

So-chu was glad. He poured a cup of water from the thermos flask and drank it down in big gulps. Then he told her about the meeting to mobilize a shock brigade to build the Yatsetan Reservoir. At the end of his account he put away the cup and took his wife's hands in his as he said, "I've joined the Youth Shock Brigade and probably won't be back for the Spring Festival. What do you say?"

Ching-chih did not reply immediately. She looked at his ruddy, young face and thought he was more lovable than ever. Although they had been married for only a fortnight, they are so close to each other that she felt they were inseparable. Yet, she was a Youth League member and knew what was right. She fully approved of his going to the reservoir. It would be hard to part, but she didn't show her feelings.

Ching-chih jumped down from the *kang* and began sorting out clothes, shoes and socks for So-chu to take along. While she packed they discussed how they could break the news to her mother. It would be difficult to get her consent. At last Ching-chih thought of a plan. "You set out early tomorrow morning. By the time she finds out she won't be able to do anything about it."

As they talked, the door-latch clicked. Quickly jumping off the *kang*, So-chu walked over to the door and listened.

"Who is it?" he asked.

"It's me."

It was mother. So-chu dared not let her in. He looked at Ching-chih for advice.

She shook her head. "What do you want, mother?" Ching-chih called out. "Leave it till tomorrow. I'm in bed."

"Nonsense," the mother was angry. "You were just talking loudly."

So-chu opened the door. "What are you going to do, my son?" asked the mother eagerly, as soon as she entered the room.

"Nothing, mother." Ching-chih answered for him.

"Don't keep it from me. I happened to walk past your room and heard everything. The Spring Festival is at hand, my son, how could you go away? Father is planning to spend a happy holiday with you in our family this year and has already arranged to buy plenty of pork and wine. If you go away, what would we say to father when he comes back."

So-chu was at a loss for words. He looked at Ching-chih, hoping that she would say something. Seating her mother on the *kang*, she said, "Don't you know, mother, that we are making a great leap forward this year? We are building a reservoir so that our co-op will be able to increase production. This is a good thing. All the young men in the co-op are taking part in it, how could he stay behind? Wouldn't people talk if he doesn't go?"

"They can go if they want to, but you won't. There are so many other young men in the co-op, it wouldn't matter if he stays behind. The work got done before he came to our co-op."

"Yes, but one more person is added strength. Who would go if everyone thought like that?" Ching-chih tried to reason with her.

Looking for another reason, the old mother said, "You have been married for just a few days and it's your first Spring Festival together. Can't you be spared for that?"

"That's not a proper reason either," laughed Ching-chih.

"I am young and healthy and there is no reason for me to stay home," protested So-chu.

"Couldn't you say that you are not feeling so well?" grumbled the mother.

This made them both burst out laughing.

Failing to persuade them, the mother walked out, saying, "You must get your father's consent before you let him go."

The door banged. "Tell me what to do now," said So-chu, fastening the latch.

"It doesn't matter. Father has the last word. No matter how angry she seems, when he comes back she won't contradict him."

"What if father starts to blame her for not stopping me?"

"Don't worry. I'll be here." And the couple went to bed.

The following morning So-chu and Ching-chih got up before daybreak. Ching-chih had his things ready and after breakfast he started for Yatsetan, disregarding the opposition of the old mother.

In the afternoon of the third day, the father, who had been out transporting fertilizer, came back. As soon as his wife told him that their son-in-law had gone to Yatsetan he flared up and scolded her. Ching-chih joined in the argument. She took the blame up on herself, but at the same time she explained to her father that everyone was making a great leap forward and the young people should be in the lead. Then she whispered to him, "Don't you know, father, So-chu is in the organization! How could he not be taking an active part?"

What's this, in the organization? Then he must either be a member of the Youth League or the Party. The old man had a great respect for Party and Youth League members, for he had seen many of them in the Hungkuang Co-op, all first-rate peasants, in the lead of every movement. Since his son-in-law was one of them, he too must be in the lead.

The mother, not knowing what silenced him, thought he was furious, and continued to scold her daughter.

"So-chu has just come into our family and you sent him right off to work. Won't people say that because he was not born into our family we are not treating him properly?"

To her surprise, the old man did not agree with her, instead he stopped her abruptly. "What do you know? Better keep your mouth shut. Why don't you prepare our food?"

The sky was overcast. A northwest wind blew all morning long. And it began to snow.

Ching-chih's mother could not sit still. She ran in and out, looking anxiously at the sky, worried about So-chu. Would he get proper food and lodging at the work site? Would he catch cold working in the freezing weather? She was restless and ill at ease.

The old man hurried in from the outside. His coat was covered with snow. "Find some clothes for me to take to So-chu," he ordered his wife.

"Where are you going?"

"I'm transporting grain to the construction site."

"Couldn't you go some other day?" The old woman looked out the window and said: "It's snowing so heavily."

"There are so many people working there. What are they going to eat? Do you like to skip a meal?" The old man was in a bad temper.

He took the clothes from her and walked away, but she called him back. "You talk to his leaders there and see to it that he comes back for the Spring Festival."

"Stop worrying about it." The old man shook his head impatiently.

The snow-fall was heavy, turning everything white.

The old man cracked his whip till his three mules sweated and strained. They reached Yatsetan by dusk. He unloaded the grain, got his receipt, fed the mules and then went to look for So-chu at the reservoir.

The wind and snow had subsided. The work site was lit up as bright as day. Here and there red flags marked the spot where groups of people were shouting, singing and working in high spirits, oblivious to the snow and frost. The old man asked the Party secretary of the co-op whom he met where So-chu was. "Your son-in-law is a remarkable chap," said the secretary. "He's very capable. He has led our shock brigade into the water since yesterday."

The old man was shocked. "What water has he gone into?"

"Why, he's working there on the river-bed, preparing it for the reservoir."

Once again the old man started worrying about So-chu's health. In such weather even a padded suit was not enough to keep the cold out. How could he stand the cold water? He quickened his pace to the reservoir.

The reservoir was quite big, with a diameter of more than 300 feet. Four or five kerosene lamps shed a bright light. Five donkey-engines were smoking and roaring as they drew muddy water from the river. About twenty people, all covered with mud, were working in water up to their waists. It was not possible to recognize So-chu. In answer to the old man's call, somebody came to the bank. Then the father saw him, barefooted, his padded coat drenched, he was a muddy figure from head to foot. The old man felt a chill go through him.

"Aren't you cold?" asked the father with great concern.

"It's hot while working," So-chu answered. "What have you come for?"

"I brought grain here in my cart. Mother wanted me to bring you a coat."

"But I can't wear it now."

"Put it on. You'll catch cold." The old man held out the coat as if intending to throw it into the water.

One of the workers, who was shovelling mud, glanced at the old man and grumbled, "Please get out of the way. We are all grown-ups here. We know how to take care of ourselves."

"Old dad, how can he wear fur in the water?" laughed another young man. "Wait till he comes up. You better wait for him at the hostel over there. This shift is coming in soon."

There was nothing for the old man to do but take the fur coat to the living quarters, a shed built of *kaoliang* stalks. Inside, several stoves were burning merrily and a group of young men, with muddy hands and legs, were warming themselves at the fire. They were talking and laughing at the same time.

The old man lit his pipe. He wanted to ask them whether they were cold in the water when suddenly one of them pointed to the clock, saying, "It's time. Get ready for our shift, comrades." They all ran out noisily.

The old man sat beside the stove musing while he smoked. Here it was the twelfth lunar month, yet these young men did not seem to feel the cold.

Soon, another group of young men, including So-chu, came in. The old man quickly wrapped the fur coat around him.

"I'm not at all cold," said So-chu. "We are even sweating."

Wine was prepared for those who worked in the water and they each drank some before they sat down to rest. The old man was eager to talk to So-chu, to remind him to take care of himself and ask him whether he would be back for the Spring Festival. But he never got a chance. The chatter and laughter of the young men dominated the room.

"Our team can't lag behind. We must dig another metre before dawn."

"Yes, we'll challenge the shock brigade of the Sukuang Co-op. We'll guarantee that every one will be in the water, regardless of snow or wind, on the Spring Festival."

"Every plot of our land will be irrigated when the reservoir is finished."

"This will send the Dragon King to his death."

They chatted and sang. Cold, fatigue and dark nights seemed to have lost their power over these young men.

The old man no longer tried to speak to So-chu. He felt that it was even difficult to think of those things before these young men. Listening to them, looking fondly at their faces, so youthful, wholesome and attractive, he felt young himself. How he would like to go down into the water with them, rest and sing with them. How happy their lives were!

Ching-chih's mother sat up waiting for the old man till late in the night. From the frost on his eyebrows and beard she could guess how cold it was outside. She immediately asked about their son-in-law.

"Wonderful, these young men are really wonderful." The old man spoke with deep feeling as he ate a late supper. "They are living gods!"

"How's that?"

"In the twelfth lunar month, a drop of water would turn to ice instantly. But they were working right in the water. Have you heard of anything like that?"

"Was So-chu among them?"

"He was not only among them, but the leader of the shock brigade."

The old woman was very disturbed. She grumbled about their son-in-law's inability to take care of himself and their daughter's stupidity to have let him go. She was on the point of blaming her husband for not telling So-chu to come back when he saw him in the water, but the old man interrupted her.

"The young men of today are afraid of nothing and are capable of everything. Not one of them complained. I said something about catching cold at the reservoir and the young men laughed at me."

"I don't believe they are really so tough," she said.

"You don't believe me? What do you know?" The old man put down his bowl and said sarcastically, "Don't you know there's a great leap forward? I certainly know more than you do since I'm out every day."

Ching-Chih's mother had to admit this fact, but still she blamed the old man for not bringing So-chu home. Of course he was the best of all sons-in-law, but still he was not a son. The old man probably did not try to urge him to come back when he said no. She must inform her daughter about it. Waking Ching-chih, she said in an anxious tone.

"Your dad is back and he says that So-chu has caught cold from working in the water."

Not quite awake, Ching-chih got the impression that her husband was really ill. "Has he come back?" she asked.

"No, your dad's good for nothing," complained the mother. "You better go and bring him back tomorrow."

"Is he really ill?" Ching-chih asked.

"Don't listen to your mother. How could he be ill?" said the father from the other room.

"You must go and have a look if he's ill or not. Tell him to come back. How could he go into the water at this time of the year."

Ching-chih promised to go. After breakfast the following morning she went with her father on his cart. She was not going to ask So-chu to come back, but just to visit him and see the reservoir. She was curious to know how big it was and how they were working.

At the work site, while the old man was unloading the grain, Ching-chih walked towards the living quarters. She met the Party secretary, who asked her laughingly. "For whom have you come, Comrade Ching-chih?"

"I have come to see you," she answered jokingly.

"Oh, no. You must have come for So-chu."

"I heard that he is ill, is it true?"

"Ill?" the secretary was surprised. Then he noticed that Ching-chih was smiling, so he said seriously. "Yes, he's ill. Do you want to see him? Come along with me."

She followed him to the living quarters. So-chu's shift had just come back and they were eating.

"Don't you see the patient?" The secretary pointed at So-chu. "Three big bowls of rice each meal. His case is quite serious!"

Everyone laughed.

So-chu didn't know what to say in the presence of so many people. He just sat there smiling. A young man snatched the steamed bread out of his hand, wrapped a coat around him and said, "Come on, you, she has come so far to see you. Haven't you got anything to say to her? Go outside. There are too many people here. Go and talk outside."

So-chu was pushed out by several young men and Ching-chih followed him.

"Why have you come in such cold weather?" asked So-chu.

"I have come to see the reservoir," said Ching-chih.

"I doubt it. You must have been sent by mother."

"Then you know, but never mind, show me the reservoir and tell me what it is going to be like."

"Follow me," said So-chu.

While she walked along, Ching-chih looked at the work site. Everywhere she saw people working and singing. They were sweating, arms bared, shouldering carrying poles and pushing. There was no sign of winter. Ching-chih felt as though it were spring and she visualized a field of green grass dotted with red flowers.

The young couple stood under the red flags on the banks of the river which dominated the whole work site. "Look at the size of the reservoir," said So-chu, pointing. "There are more than a dozen fountain-heads down below with water coming out continuously. That's where we are working these days. Several donkey-engines pump the water out day and night, but there's still some water left. When the base is ready, three machine rooms will be built. See the two big wooden boxes. Those are the two engines which have just been brought here. They each have three hundred horsepower and will pump water up for irrigation in the future. Now look towards the east and the north. Do you see the little red flags there? They mark the main irrigation ditches. The ditch in the east will irrigate the land of our Hungkuang Co-op. The fields of the Hsinghuo and

Hsingfu Co-ops will also be irrigated and then we will no longer worry when there is no rain."

"When will it be finished?" Ching-chih was fascinated.

"According to headquarters, it needs about another fifteen days of work."

"Why aren't the women asked to join in the construction of such a big project?"

"It's too difficult for them to work in the water in this weather. When the work on the ditches is started, the women will be asked to come and help."

"I will come. Have you any idea when it will be?" asked Ching-chih eagerly.

"According to the county leadership it should be after the Spring Festival, but the workers here didn't agree and suggested that we spend the holiday here. As a matter of fact, it's more jolly here. Just listen to the singing."

Songs of all kinds could be heard. The red flags and the music inspired Ching-chih. In her mind's eye she saw a beautiful picture: machines roaring, water flowing, rich crops growing in the fields. . . . Her homeland was changing so fast. It would be so beautiful.

"I must come to work on the ditches," said Ching-chih.

"Will your mother agree?"

"It doesn't matter. I'll ask our brigade leader to let me come first thing tomorrow."

As soon as Ching-chih returned, her mother demanded to know all the news from the work site. "He's ill," said Ching-chih.

"Why didn't you bring him back?"

"He's too weak, it was impossible," Ching-chih said, but instead of looking serious, she burst out laughing. Discovering that Ching-chih was playing a joke on her, the mother scolded, "Both you and your father play tricks on me. Everyone in this family goes his own way. All right, you may do as you like."

After supper that night, Ching-chih went out to ask the brigade leader for permission to work on the reservoir. She met him on the way. "I was just coming to see you,"

he said. "Headquarters of the reservoir construction site has called for reinforcements, men as well as women, everyone who can possibly go. The reservoir is to be finished in ten days."

Ching-chih jumped with joy. "That's just what I've come for."

She ran home and packed her things, but she didn't say a word to her father or mother.

It was the eve of the Spring Festival. The villagers bustled about. They were not preparing for the festival, but for the trip to the reservoir.

Ching-chih urged her father to hitch up the cart as soon as they had finished eating. "Are you going again today?" asked the mother.

"So-chu needs something."

"What does he need? Let your father take it along."

"I would like to go myself."

Her seriousness made the old man feel that it must be something connected with the Youth League again, so he turned impatiently to the mother and said, "Let her go, why are you so talkative?"

When her mother discovered that Ching-chih had a quilt with her, she asked in surprise, "Why are you taking the quilt?"

Ching-chih was at a loss for words, but the old man came to her aid again. "You *are* talkative. Now that's enough."

When they arrived at the work site, Ching-chih took her bedding to the living quarters. Thinking that she was bringing the things to So-chu, her father didn't pay much attention to her. He was busy unloading his cart. By the time he got the receipt from the headquarters it was quite late in the afternoon. He was anxious to leave for home immediately to prepare for the Spring Festival, but he couldn't find his daughter in the living quarters, nor at the work site. He was worried until he learned from an acquaintance that she was at the ditches in the east.

He saw her digging there and called, "Ching-chih, let's go home."

But she replied, "I'm not going back, father. The other women are coming here tomorrow. Why should I go back?"

At last her father understood what she was up to. He stood there dumbfounded. "But tomorrow is the festival, why don't you come a day later? Your mother will be alone." He tried to talk her into going home.

"Let her prepare the meat dumplings for herself," said Ching-chih. "If you would like to come back here, you can bring us the pork and wine we bought. Then the three of us will have our feast here."

The old man did not know what to say. Several young men who were watching them laughed and finally he, too, laughed.

It was quite dark when the old man reached the village. The roads were lit by lamps and torches. Crowds of people were on the road.

"Where are you going?" the old man asked a group of women.

"To the work site," they replied.

"Jump on my cart. I'll take you there right now."

"You've just come back and haven't taken your meal yet," somebody said.

"Never mind the food." The old man was animated by the spirit of the great leap forward. "We'll start right away. I just want to fetch some things from my home."

The mother was busy making dumplings and as soon as she saw him she asked, "Where's our son-in-law?"

"He's not back."

"Where's our daughter?"

"Also not back."

"Not back for the Spring Festival?"

"Don't shout. Neither am I coming back tomorrow." As he spoke he snatched a basket and shoved wine, pork and dumplings into it.

"What are you trying to do? Are you crazy?" The mother was shocked.

But the old man laughed and said, "Have you forgotten that tomorrow is the festival? Our daughter and son-in-

law are not coming back. You won't be able to eat all this by yourself." And he rushed out with the basket. It was only then that the mother understood what was going on. Everyone was going to the work site. She dashed out and called, "Here's a catty of sweets, take it along."

"Leave them," the old man waved his hand. "They can eat them when the work is done."

Was she to sit at home alone and wait for them to finish the reservoir? She suddenly had a bright idea. She hastily put on her padded coat and locked the door. "I'm coming too," she called out. "I'll boil the dumplings for you there. The dumplings I prepared must be cooked by me." With this she climbed on his cart defiantly.

The night was pitch dark. The old man forgot how tired he was as he happily drove the cart which was crowded with women, including his wife, to the work site at Yatsetan.

Once the cart left the village, they could see a string of lights in the distance.

Translated by Yu Fan-chin
Illustrations by Lin Wan-tsui

Lilies

Mid-autumn, 1946.

When our coastal command decided to launch a general offensive against the Kuomintang forces, some of us in the concert group were sent by the commander of the leading regiment to lend a hand in different combat companies. Probably because I was a woman, the commander kept me till one of the very last before finally assigning me to a first-aid post near the front. I put on my rucksack and followed the messenger sent to show me the way.

It had rained that morning, and though the weather had cleared the road was still slippery, and the crops on either side sparkled fresh and green in the sunlight. There was a moist freshness in the air. If not for the sporadic booming of the enemy artillery which was firing at random, you could have imagined you were on your way to a fair.

The messenger strode along in front of me. Straight off, he put a distance of about a dozen yards between us. Because my feet were blistered and the road was slippery, try as I might I could not catch up with him. If I called to him to wait, he might think me a coward; but I couldn't hope to find the post alone. He began to annoy me.

The funny thing was that he seemed to have eyes in the back of his head, for presently he stopped of his own accord. He didn't look at me, though, just stared ahead. When I had nearly struggled up to him, he strode off again, promptly leaving me a dozen yards behind. Too exhausted to catch up, I plodded slowly along. But it was all right.

Ju Chih-chuan, a woman writer, works on the editorial staff of *Literature Monthly*, Shanghai.

He neither let me fall too far behind nor get too close to him, keeping at a distance of a dozen yards. When I quickened my step, he swung along with big strides; when I slowed down, he started sauntering too. Oddly enough, I never caught him looking back at me. I began to feel curious about this messenger.

I had barely glanced at him at regimental headquarters. Now I saw he was a tall young fellow, but pretty strong judging by his strapping shoulders. He was wearing a faded yellow uniform and puttees. The twigs in the barrel of his rifle seemed put there more for ornament than camouflage.

Though I couldn't overtake him, my feet were swollen and smarting. I called out, suggesting that we stop to rest, and sat down on a boundary stone. He sat on another stone further on, his gun across his knees and his back to me, ignoring my existence completely. I knew from experience that this was because I was a girl. Girls always had trouble like this with bashful young fellows. Feeling rather disgruntled, I went over and sat down defiantly opposite him. With his young, ingenuous round face, he looked no more than eighteen at the most. My closeness flustered him. He didn't know what to do. He hardly liked to turn his back on me, but it embarrassed him to look at me and he couldn't very well get up either. Trying hard to keep a straight face, I asked where he was from. Flushing up to his ears, he cleared his throat and told me:

"Tienmushan."

So we were from the same district!

"What did you do at home?"

"Helped haul bamboo."

I glanced at his broad shoulders, and through my mind flashed a picture of a sea of vivid green bamboo, with a narrow stone path winding up and up. A broad-shouldered lad with a square of blue cloth over his shoulders was hauling young bamboos whose long tips rattled on the stones behind. . . . That was a familiar sight in my home village. At once I felt drawn to my young fellow countryman.

"How old are you?" I asked.

"Nineteen."

"When did you join the revolution?"

"Last year."

"Why did you join?" I couldn't help asking the questions, though I realized this sounded more like a cross-examination than a conversation.

"When the army withdrew to the north,* I came along with it."

"What family do you have?"

"Mum, dad, a younger brother and sisters, and an aunt who lives with us."

"Are you married?"

". . . ." He flushed and fumbled with his belt, looking more sheepish than ever. With his eyes on the ground, he laughed awkwardly and briskly shook his head. It was on the tip of my tongue to ask if he had a fiancee, but I bit the question back.

After we had sat there, tongue-tied, for a while, he looked at the sky and then at me, as if to say: "Time to move on!"

It was two in the afternoon by the time we reached the first-aid post. This was set up in a primary school three *li* from the front. Six buildings of different sizes were grouped roughly in a triangular formation, and the weeds in the yard between showed that classes has stopped for some time. We arrived to find several orderlies there preparing dressings, and the rooms filled with doors taken off their hinges and laid across bricks to serve as beds.

Presently a cadre from the local government came in, his eyes bloodshot from working late at night. To shade his eyes from the light, he had stuck a cardboard visor under his old felt hat. He had a gun over one shoulder, a scales over the other, and was carrying a basket of eggs and a large pan. He walked in, panting, put down these things, and between sips of water and bites at a ball of cooked rice produced from

*After the Japanese surrender in 1945, in an attempt to give the whole country peace, the Communist Party conducted peace talks with the Kuomintang and withdrew from south of the Yangtse. Not long after, the Kuomintang went back on its word and launched fierce attacks on the liberated areas.

his pocket apologized for the state things were in. I was so fascinated by the speed with which he did all this that I hardly heard what he was saying, simply catching something about bedding which we would have to borrow. I found out from the orderlies that as the army quilts had not arrived, but casualties who had lost blood were extremely susceptible to the cold, we had better borrow quilts from the villages. Just one or two dozen mattresses would be better than nothing. Anxious to be of some use, I volunteered for the job; and because it was urgent asked my young fellow countryman to help me before he left. After a second's hesitation he agreed.

We went to a nearby village, where he turned east, I west. Before long I had handed out three receipts for two mattresses and one quilt. Heavily laden as I was, my heart was light, and I had decided to deliver these and come back for more when the messenger walked over — empty-handed.

"What happened?" The people here were so solidly behind the Party and so hospitable that I couldn't understand why they had refused to lend him bedding.

"You go and ask them, sister. . . . These feudal-minded women!"

"Which house? Take me there." He must have said the wrong thing and annoyed someone. Getting one quilt less didn't matter, but offending the local people would have serious consequences. He stood there as if nailed to the ground till I reminded him quietly how important it was not to offend the masses and what a bad effect this was likely to have. At once he led the way.

No one was stirring in the hall of the house we entered. A blue curtain with a red border on top hung over the door of the inner room, and on both sides were pasted in bright red characters: "Happiness." Standing there, I called several times; but no one answered though we heard movements inside. Presently the curtain was raised and a young woman appeared. She was very pretty with fine features, arched eyebrows and a fluffy fringe. Her clothes were homespun, but new. Since she had done her hair like a married woman, I addressed her as Elder Sister-in-law,

apologizing if the messenger had said anything to annoy her. She listened with a slightly averted face, biting her lips and smiling. When I had finished, she simply hung her head and went on biting her lips as if to keep from laughing. I scarcely knew how to bring out my request. But the messenger was watching me intently, as if I were a company commander about to demonstrate some new drill. Putting on a bold front, I asked bluntly for a quilt, explaining that the Communist Party's soldiers were fighting for the common folk. She listened to this without smiling, glancing from time to time back into her room. Then she looked first at me and next at the messenger, as if to weigh my words. The next moment she went in to fetch a quilt.

The messenger seized this chance to protest:

"Well, I never! I told her the same thing just now, but she wouldn't listen."

I threw him a warning glance, but it was too late. She was already at the door with the quilt. At last I understood why she hadn't wanted to lend it. It was a flowered quilt, completely new. The cover was of imitation brocade, with countless white lilies on a rich red ground. As if to provoke the messenger, she held the quilt out to me, saying:

"Here you are!"

Since my hands were full, I nodded to the lad. He pretended not to see. When I called him he pulled a long face, and with downcast eyes took the bedding and turned to rush off. There was a ripping sound — his jacket had caught on the door and torn at the shoulder. Quite a large rent it was. With a smile, the young woman went in to fetch needle and thread, but he wouldn't hear of her mending it. He went off with the quilt.

We hadn't gone far when some one told us that the

young woman was a bride of three days' standing, and this quilt was all the dowry she had. That upset me, and the messenger looked unhappy too as he stared in silence at the quilt in his arms. He must have felt as I did, for he muttered to me as we walked:

"How could we know we were borrowing her wedding quilt? It's too bad. . . ."

To tease him, I said solemnly: "Yes. To buy a quilt like this, ever since she was a girl she must have got up at dawn and gone to bed late, doing all sorts of extra jobs to make a little money. Think how much sleep she may have lost over it! Yet I heard someone call her feudal-minded. . . ."

He halted suddenly.

"Well — let's take it back!"

"You'd only hurt her feelings, now that she's lent it." I was amused and touched by the earnest, unhappy look on his face. There was something extraordinarily lovable about this simple young countryman of mine.

He thought that over and evidently decided I was right, for he answered:

"All right. Let it go. We'll wash it well when we've done with it." Having settled this in his mind, he took all the quilts I was carrying, slung them over his shoulders and strode quickly off.

Back at the first-aid post, I told him to rejoin regimental headquarters. He brightened up immediately, saluted me and ran off. After a few steps he remembered something, and fumbled in his satchel for two buns. He held these up for me to see, after which he put them on a stone by the road, calling:

"Dinner's served!" Then he flew off. As I walked over to pick up the two stale buns, I noticed that a wild chrysanthemum had appeared in his rifle barrel to sway with the other twigs behind his ear.

He was some distance now, but I could still see his torn jacket flapping in the wind. I was very sorry I hadn't mended it for him. Now his shoulder would be bare all evening at least.

There were not many of us in the first-aid post. The man from the local government found some village women to help us draw water, cook and do odd jobs. Among them was the bride, still smiling and pouting. She glanced at me from time to time, and kept looking round as if in search of someone. At last she asked:

"Where has that comrade gone?"

When I told her he had gone to the front, she smiled shyly and said, "Just now when he came to borrow bedding, I treated him rather badly." Then smiling she set to work neatly spreading the mattresses and quilts we had borrowed on the improvised beds made of door-boards and tables (two tables put together is one bed). She put her own quilt on a door-board under one corner of the eaves outside.

In the evening a full moon rose. Our offensive still hadn't started. As usual the enemy was so afraid of the dark that they lit a host of fires and started bombarding at random, while the flares that went up one after the other to hang like paraffin lamps beneath the moon made everything below as bright as day. To attack under these conditions would be very hard and would surely entail heavy losses. I resented even that round, silver moon.

The man from the local government brought us food and some home-made moon cakes. Apparently it was the Moon Festival!

That made me think of home. At home now, for the festival, there'd be a small bamboo table outside each gate, with incense and candles burning beside a few dishes of sunflower seeds, fruit and moon cakes. The children would be waiting impatiently for the incense to burn out so that they could share the good things prepared for the goddess of the moon. Skipping round the table, they would sing: "The moon is so bright; we beat gongs and buy sweets. . . ." or "Mother moon, please shine on me. . . ." My thoughts flew to the lad from Tienmushan who had hauled bamboos. A few years ago he had probably sung the same songs. . . . I tasted a delicious home-made cake, and imagined the messenger lying in a dugout, or perhaps at regimental head-

quarters, or walking through the winding communication trenches. . . .

Soon after that our guns roared out and red tracer bullets shot across the sky. The offensive had begun. Before long, casualties started trickling in, and the atmosphere grew tense in the first-aid post.

I registered the names and units of the wounded. The lighter cases could tell me who they were, but when they were heavily wounded I had to turn back their insignia or the lapels of their jackets. My heart missed a beat when under the insignia of one badly injured man I read: "Messenger." But I found he was a battalion messenger. My young friend worked in regimental headquarters. I resisted a foolish impulse to ask if casualties ever got left on the field, and what messengers did during combat apart from delivering dispatches.

For an hour or so after the offensive started, everything went swimmingly. The wounded men, as they came in, reported that we had broken through the first stockade, then the barbed wire entanglement, occupied the first fortifications, and started fighting in the streets. But at that point the news stopped. In answer to our questions, incoming casualties just told us briefly: "They're still fighting. . . ." "Fighting in the streets." But from the mud which covered them, their utter exhaustion and the stretchers which looked as if dug out of the mire, we could imagine the fierceness of the battle.

Soon we ran out of stretchers, so that not all the heavily wounded could be sent straight to the hospital in the rear. There was nothing I could do to alleviate the men's pain, except get the village women to wash their hands and faces, give a little broth to those able to eat, or change the clothes of those who had their packs with them. In some cases we had to take off their clothes to wash away the blood and filth in which they were covered.

I was used to work like this, but the village women were shy and afraid to attempt it. They all wanted to cook instead. I had to persuade the young bride for a long time

before, blushing furiously, she would consent. She only consented, though, to be my assistant.

The firing at the front was spasmodic now. I thought it must soon be dawn, but actually it was only the middle of the night. The moon was very bright and seemed higher than usual. When the next serious casualty was brought in, all the beds inside were occupied and I had him put under the eaves outside. After the stretcher-bearers laid him there, they gathered around and wouldn't go. One old fellow taking me for a doctor caught hold of my arm and said earnestly: "Doctor, you've got to think of a way to cure him! If you save him our stretcher-bearers' squad will give you a red flag!" The other bearers were watching me, wide-eyed, as if I had only to nod to cure the soldier. Before there was time to explain, the bride came up with water, and gave a smothered cry. I pushed through the bearers to have a look, and saw a young, round ingenuous face which had been ruddy but now was deathly pale. His eyes were peacefully closed, and the torn flap in the shoulder of his uniform was still hanging loose.

"He did it for us," said the old stretcher-bearer remorsefully. "Over ten of us were waiting in a lane to go forward, and he was just behind us when the bastards threw a hand-grenade down from a roof. The grenade was smoking and whizzing about between us. He shouted to us to drop flat, and threw himself on the thing. . . ."

The bride drew in her breath sharply. I held back my tears while I said a few words to the bearers and sent them off. When I turned back again, the bride had quietly fetched an oil lamp and undone the messenger's jacket, Gone was all her previous embarrassment, as she earnestly gave him a gentle rub down. The tall young messenger lay there without a sound. . . . I pulled myself together and raced off to find the doctor. When we got back to give him an injection, the bride was sitting at his side.

Bending over her work, stitch by stitch she was mending the tear in his uniform. The doctor made a stethoscope examination, then straightened up gravely to say: "There's nothing we can do." I stepped up and felt the lad's hand —

it was icy cold. The bride seemed to have seen and heard nothing. She went on sewing neatly and skilfully. I couldn't bear to watch her.

"Don't do that!" I whispered.

She flashed me a glance of surprise, then lowered her head to go on sewing, stitch by stitch. I longed to take her away, to scatter this atmosphere of gloom, to see her sit up and laugh shyly. At that moment I felt something in my pocket — the two stale buns the messenger had given me.

The orderlies brought a coffin, and removed the quilt. The bride suddenly turned pale. Snatching up the quilt, she spread half of it on the bottom of the coffin, leaving half to cover him.

"That quilt belongs to one of the villagers," an orderly said.

"It's mine!" She turned away. Her eyes were bright with unshed tears in the moonlight. I watched as they covered the face of that ordinary country lad, who had hauled bamboo, with this red quilt dotted with white lilies — flowers of true purity of heart and love.

Translated by Gladys Yang
Illustration by Lu Chih-hsiang

General Election (49.5 cm. × 22 cm.) →
Water colour by Shao Yu

Young Agronomist Wins over the Supernatural Hand

(a story-teller's tale)

I

Honan Province had an Erhlang Village; Erhlang Village had a Red Flag Agricultural Co-operative; Red Flag had a young member named Liu Sheng-chi. When Sheng-chi was in junior middle school, his thinking was progressive, he was good in his studies, and he joined the Communist Youth League. After graduation, answering the call of the League for young folks to become educated peasants, he returned to the Red Flag Co-operative to work in the fields.

Of medium height, with ruddy complexion, Sheng-chi was a positive fellow, direct and generous. He wore simple blue cloth tunic and trousers and a white towel head-covering knotted behind, its ends flapping boldly in the breeze.

Red Flag had been increasing its output every year by leaps and bounds, and it was as solid as iron. Sheng-chi was delighted to find it doing so well. He silently vowed to himself that he would help his village produce as much grain as the fertile areas south of the Yangtse River.

Sheng-chi made a good showing during his first few months in the co-operative. People thought well of this hard-working youngster. After the autumn harvest, a Youth Shock Brigade was formed and Sheng-chi was elected leader. Because he liked research and experimentation, he

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Fan Nai-chung is a writer of popular literature.

was also made the co-op's agronomist. The time to sow the spring wheat was fast approaching. Sheng-chi was determined to produce a crop that would make people sit up and take notice.

It was September, only a little more than a month away from sowing time. Sheng-chi began his preparations. Every day when he returned home, he would sit himself down in his room and dig into his books — Michurin's theories, texts on wheat-growing. . . . He burned many a lampful of oil and squeezed out many a drop of brain-juice until one night, he finished drawing a plan for increasing the wheat harvest. Gathering his papers together, he set out at once to talk it over with the co-op's Party secretary.

The moonlight was like water that night, coating everything with a fine silvery sheen. Rustling poplar leaves laughed in the breeze. Sheng-chi could smell the fragrance of cassia blossoms, hear the gurgling of the stream. His roll of plans in his hand, he could picture endless waves of rippling wheat. His heart burst into flower, and he bounded gaily along the path. He could hardly wait to see the Party secretary and get his approval.

The light was still burning in the co-op's office. Sheng-chi found the Party secretary working at his desk.

"Good news!" shouted Sheng-chi as he came in the door.

The secretary looked up in surprise. "What's the good news? You're too young to get married, if you've fallen in love!" he jested. He could see Sheng-chi was bubbling over with some startling information.

"Huh, who's thinking of that! It's about the wheat. I want to talk to you."

The Party secretary liked this young fellow's honest drive. He patted Sheng-chi on the shoulder. "Come on, sit down, sit down. What's it all about?"

"We can gather 5,000 catties of wheat per *mou* next year."

"That's bold thinking. All very good. How are we going to do it?"

"Here, take a look at this plan!"

The secretary read the plan carefully. Then he struck the desk with his fist.

"Good! Good! You go to the crux of the problem and make the best use of the co-op's advantages. Plough one foot deep, sow thirty catties of seed to the *mou*, lots of water and plenty of fertilizer — I'm going to propose that this plan be considered and approved immediately!"

Just think, friends — 5,000 catties to a *mou* of land! Who ever heard of such a thing? What's more, the land of Red Flag was sandy and low-lying. When it didn't rain, the ground was parched. When it did rain, the ground was water-logged. Any wind would raise a yellow dust cloud that hung ten feet in the air. What kind of crops could you produce on soil like that? The old-timers said the yellow earth was no good for raising a family; it was only good for burying them.

Of course after the co-operative was formed, irrigation and afforestation cured that problem. Each *mou* of land was producing 200 catties — a big improvement over the old yield of fifty. Two hundred, all right, but five thousand? That was an increase of twenty-five times! But Sheng-chi's plan had been worked out in every detail. Who wouldn't be excited?

"Party secretary, do you have any instruction for me?" he asked.

The Party secretary thought a moment and said, "You must be prepared for a battle, Sheng-chi. I've had this experience many times. Whenever something new appears, the conservatives always fight it. Your five thousand catties of wheat won't be any exception! But I'll support your brigade fully. Whatever you need, just speak up. I'll be your brigade's supply department. You must convince everybody that this yellow soil of ours can produce not only 200 catties per *mou*, but 1,000, 2,000, 5,000. You've got to drive out conservatism the way the autumn wind sweeps the leaves from the poplar trees. Let the whole world know that China is a wonderful country. Bringing in 5,000 where we used to get 200 — that will really be something!"

So that's how important it is, thought Sheng-chi. He felt more determined than ever. "Don't worry, Party secretary," he said. "We guarantee to do the job."

They talked it over and agreed. This year they'd try it on an experimental basis; next year they'd use the method in a big way.

Sheng-chi hurried back to his brigade and urged them all to get ready. But I won't say any more about that.

The next morning a meeting of the co-operative management committee was called to discuss Sheng-chi's plan. Sheng-chi was also asked to attend. The meeting was very lively. Tobacco smoke filled the room. After a heated debate, a vote was taken. "Those in favour raise your hands." In a flash all hands went up. The plan was approved unanimously, the committee adding some supplementary provisions.

Beaming, the Party secretary held the plan out to Sheng-chi. "Congratulations. It's been approved."

Sheng-chi was about to accept it, ceremoniously, with both hands. But before his finger-tips could touch the paper a voice outside exclaimed loudly:

"Not so fast! I have something to say!"

A vigorous silver-haired old man with a healthy red face rushed into the room, perspiring and panting hard. When he caught his breath, he pointed at the plan in the secretary's hand with his long pipe and rapped out as decisively as driving nails through an iron plank:

"I'm opposed to it!"

Who was the objector? The Supernatural Hand. Who was the Supernatural Hand? How did he get the name? Listen, and I'll tell you.

His real name was Liu Ching-yu. In all of his sixty-two years he had never left the farm. He was born and raised on the land, and his skill as a farmer was remarkable. Others had to peg out strings to run their seed drills straight, but he would just measure a plot with his eye, start down the field, and his furrows were never off more than half an inch!

That was nothing. He could plant corn or sorghum as widespread or as dense as you wanted. The sprouts never had to be thinned or replanted, and they all came up. Superstitious people said only the gods could make crops grow like that. They named him the Supernatural Hand.

His technique was really excellent. In this new society if he had been a little more modest, and continued diligently working out new improvements, there would have been no limit to his future.

But all his life he had heard nothing but praise of his ability in farming, and he was rather proud of himself. Although he had received some political education in recent years, his old habits were rooted in more than half a century; he couldn't change overnight. It had nettled him when Sheng-chi was appointed agronomist. A child like that, what does he know about farming? thought the Supernatural Hand.

Now let's come back to Sheng-chi's plan for 5,000 catties of wheat per *mou*. After Sheng-chi had spoken to the Party secretary, news of the plan had spread from one end of the village to the other within a matter of hours. There were "ooh's" and "ah's" of admiration, there were people who supported the plan and others who shook their heads. There were also those who were neutral.

Soon the news reached the ears of the Supernatural Hand. What? Sow each *mou* with thirty catties of seed and aim for a harvest of five thousand catties of wheat? Who ever heard of such a thing? Pure bluff! The Supernatural Hand was indignant. That silly kid is only going to make a mess of the co-op's fields. I'm going to speak to the Party secretary about this!

He immediately started down the road. Several other old conservatives went with him. But none of them had his energy. On the way they fell behind one by one.

The Supernatural Hand arrived at the management committee just after the vote was taken on Sheng-chi's plan. The Party secretary greeted him with a smile.

"If you have any objections, old uncle, please tell us about them."

"I certainly will. But first let me ask Sheng-chi. Does that 5,000 catties include the wheat stalks? If it's just the grain, all I can say is that I've never seen such a thing in all my sixty-two years!"

Sheng-chi caught the sarcasm of the remark, and he remembered the Party secretary's warning about the battle. He was prepared for it.

"I'm talking only about the grain — pure wheat grain!" he said firmly. "5,000 catties to a *mou*, not an ounce less. Maybe you've never seen it before, but you're going to see it now!"

"Fine! A miracle! Talk is cheap!"

The Party secretary had been trying to win over the Supernatural Hand from his conservative ways. He knew it could only be done through concrete proof. Tapping his forehead with his left hand, he made up his mind.

"Sheng-chi, tell the old uncle your plan in detail," he instructed. "He can help you improve it."

The young agronomist was very familiar with the plan. He rattled off the whole story — Michurin's theories, applying them to our own experience, working out new methods, the richness of the soil that still hadn't been tapped. . . .

Spreading his hands, the old man shook his head. "I don't understand. . . ." The fact was he hadn't been listening. "It seems to me we ought to change the part about sowing 30 catties of seed to a *mou* and aiming for 5,000 catties."

"Change it? Never!" cried the Party secretary, with iron in his voice. "The mountains and rivers may move, but our plan will never give way! We'll try it first on ten *mou*. Tomorrow we'll put up a sign reading: 'Experimental Wheat Plot. 5,000 catties per *mou*.' Let everybody know! We'll start at once!"

The Party secretary talks about camels but he doesn't mention the ants — he's interested in big projects but he forgets about the details, thought the Supernatural Hand. His pride hurt, the old man decided to show the Party secretary how much better an agronomist he was than young Sheng-chi.

Slapping himself on the chest, he said to the secretary, "I'll sow ten *mou* of wheat too. I won't put up any signs and I won't make any boastful promises about five or six thousand catties. We'll add up the score on the threshing ground. If I can't produce more than the Youth Shock Brigade I'll invite them all to a feast, call Sheng-chi my master three times, pay for a red congratulatory banner and place it in your hands personally!"

"Are you drunk?" asked one of the members of the management committee.

"I haven't touched a drop. My word's my bond. What do you say, Sheng-chi, do you dare to hit hands on it?"

A challenge, and a very cocksure one at that! The Party secretary turned to the young agronomist.

"What about your brigade, Sheng-chi? Do you dare?"

Knowing that the secretary supported him, and remembering the verve of his team-mates, Sheng-chi was fearless.

"Why not? We dare, dare, dare!" At the first "dare" he stepped up to the Supernatural Hand, at the second he raised his right arm, at the third there was a sharp "slap, slap, slap!" as he brought his palm three times in contact with that of the old man.

His challenge accepted, the Supernatural Hand promptly departed. He wanted to start immediately.

Sheng-chi returned to his brigade and told them what had happened. They went into action too. Of course the Party secretary and the management committee also had arrangements to make. We don't have to go into detail.

The competition is about to begin, friends. If you want to know who won and who lost, listen to what follows.

II

From that day on, Sheng-chi and his Youth Shock Brigade worked without cease. Deep ploughing, spreading fertilizer, selecting seeds and sowing them — they went at it vigorously and full of confidence, sticking close to scientific principles.

The Supernatural Hand brought every bit of his half century of experience into play. To loosen the soil, he harrowed his land straight and cross-wise. The harrow moved across the ground like a dragon uncoiling its tail, a phoenix spreading its wings. The old man combed that land like a maiden combing her hair — till it was black and glossy, in neat even rows.

The Party secretary kept a close watch on both competing plots. He soon discovered they were quite different from each other. The Supernatural Hand had sown twelve catties of seed to the *mou;* the Youth Brigade thirty. Not only had they used different strains of seed, but the old man's seed had been sun-dried before sowing, while the youngsters' seed had been first chemically treated and soaked in warm water. Both teams had spread fertilizer before sowing, but the Youth Brigade applied ammonium sulphate as well as manure. The Youth Brigade's shoots came up greenly glistening in thick bunches; those of the old man appeared in straight orderly rows, like a carpet of fine swan's-down. The plots were as different from each other as the methods the Eight Immortals used to cross the sea, but each had its merits.

One day the Party secretary came to Sheng-chi and said, "Let's go over to the Supernatural Hand's field and see what you can learn from him."

Sheng-chi was surprised. "What? Study his old-fashioned methods?"

"His old-fashioned methods have a lot that's good in them," the secretary said sternly. "When it comes to preparing and sowing the ground, he's three to five years ahead of you!"

Obediently, Sheng-chi went with the secretary to look at the experimental plot of the Supernatural Hand. True to his name, the old man had laid out his land with beautiful symmetry. It was nothing like the youngsters' uneven ground and crooked furrows. They were full of enthusiasm, but they didn't have the old man's experience.

"Well?" asked the Party secretary.

"Ours isn't so good," admitted Sheng-chi.

"What are you going to do?"

"Do? Pitch in! We can catch up!"

Sheng-chi and his boys went to work, copying every one of the good points of the Supernatural Hand's plot. In three days, they had caught up with him and passed him by.

Then the secretary called on the old man. "Come on," he invited. "Let's go see what the young fellows are doing."

"What for? I know the kind of work children do."

"You can help them correct their mistakes."

"You rate me too highly!"

"They're trying a few new techniques. Maybe you can make use of them."

"I rely on ability and hard work. I'm not interested in their new-fangled tricks."

"Use their good points and avoid their mistakes. It won't hurt you to look."

The old man shook his head. "Why should I go?"

"You really won't go?"

"I'll go when it's time to measure the threshed grain," the Supernatural Hand said coldly. He had made up his mind to teach those youngsters a lesson. He'd show them what came of breaking all the established rules!

Seeing how stubborn he was, the Party secretary decided to let the facts convince him.

Not only did the Supernatural Hand refuse to examine the experimental plot of the Youth Brigade that day, but even later, if he happened to be in the neighbourhood, he would go out of his way to give it a wide berth.

By November, the shoots in both plots were growing fast. But it was obvious that the wheat on Supernatural Hand's ground was paler and more widely spaced. Everyone in the co-op was talking about it. Feelings were divided. Some wanted to help the youngsters; some wanted to help the old man.

One afternoon, a group of people went to see the Supernatural Hand as he was standing in his field. There had just been a fine drizzle, and the young wheat looked lovely with the droplets of water clinging to it. Although the

rows were so wide apart that the dark earth was visible amid the green wheat, the old man gazed at his field with much satisfaction.

His callers told him the wheat of the Youth Shock Brigade was growing so thick and lush, you couldn't see the ground between the shoots. They said it looked as if the old man was going to lose.

The Supernatural Hand laughed scornfully. "Anyhow, their wheat will make good fodder!"

"What do you mean?"

"I'll tell you what I mean. A few years ago when I wanted sorghum stalks to build a hut, I planted a *mou* with sorghum, very dense. I did it that way on purpose, and I got what I wanted — stalks, not grain. That's what happens when you plant too close. Those young fellows will get grass, but the wheat won't ear. When it's used up the nourishment in the soil, it will turn yellow. It won't grow more than two feet high."

Word of this remark quickly got to Sheng-chi. That's right! he thought. Without enough water and fertilizer, there is the danger that the wheat will become grass. We've got to make sure that our wheat gets plenty of both.

It snowed shortly before the lunar New Year. Sheng-chi and his team collected snow and piled it on their field. Though it was very cold, the youngsters worked at great heat. Watching them from afar, the Supernatural Hand laughed to himself. He was sure their labours would be in vain.

When the snow melted in the second month of spring, everywhere the earth was green. But the Shock Brigade's wheat began to turn dry and yellow. Of course, the close planting uses up too much of the soil's nourishment, thought the old man. His own shoots were darkly green, an omen of rich full ears. The prestige of the Supernatural Hand again rode high in the co-operative.

Although he never went to the young people's experimental plot, news travelled fast; the old man was well informed. He said to everyone he met, "They'll get into trouble if they don't listen to me. Tell those kids to thin out their shoots, leave one for every three. That way they can still harvest 80 per cent of their crop. Remind them there's no medicine that can cure regret!"

But would the youngsters take his advice? Certainly not, for that would mean surrender. Still, Sheng-chi was worried. Their wheat was in a critical state. Who came along and helped them in their time of need? The Party secretary.

That experimental plot was the apple of his eye. He came to look at it several times a day. "Don't worry," he told Sheng-chi. "Worrying never does any good. It's a question of proper care. You've been a little careless. There's nothing wrong with your original plan. The problem can still be solved. What do you need?"

"We've talked it over, and we've come to the same conclusion — we weren't careful enough at the beginning of spring. What we need most is 300 catties of chemical fertilizer, 20 catties of 666 insecticide and a waterwheel pump."

"Right. You'll have them within an hour." The Party secretary hurried back to put through a phone call to the supply and marketing co-operative.

The Youth Shock Brigade pitched a tent in their field and hung up a red banner that fluttered in the

breeze. They worked steadily all day and all night without a stop — irrigating the land, spreading fertilizer, spraying insecticide. The slosh of the water and the hiss of sprayer blended with the boys' singing into a symphony of labour. Soon the wheat shoots were again strong and green.

News of this quickly reached the Supernatural Hand. "Naturally," he said, "if you put extra work in, the wheat will grow a couple of inches. What's strange about that?"

He secretly called a meeting of his own team and said, "Men, we've got to spread fertilizer too. I always use this method, but this time they beat me to it. We've got to catch up. But since we don't want anyone to think we're copying a team of youngsters, we'll do it at night. Of course we could win without this extra fertilizer, but we'll spread it anyway, so as to win by an even bigger margin!"

The Supernatural Hand had no doubts about his victory. At his urging, his team-mates also added fertilizer to their field. Thereafter, each time the Youth Brigade spread fertilizer, the team of the Supernatural Hand did the same. The youngsters worked openly, with noisy enthusiasm. The old man and his team on the surface were placid and relaxed, but in the dark of night they laboured strenuously.

Nor was that the only difference between the teams. One strove to advance, diligently, modestly, trying to learn. The other was conservative, proud, contemptuous.

Supernatural Hand's team, in spite of its night drives, ended spraying insecticide one time less, spreading fertilizer two times less, and irrigating their plot three times less than the Youth Shock Brigade. By the time the wheat grew rapidly into stalks both competing plots looked equally good. Each was praised by its supporters.

Time passed quickly. At the beginning of June, when the wheat began to put out ears, the situation changed. The wheat ears of the Youth Brigade were full, seven inches long, and so dense they could have covered the ground standing upright. When the breeze blew, the plot was a rippling sea of gold.

The wheat on the Supernatural Hand's plot, although very handsome, was a far cry from that of the youngsters. Here the stalks were five inches shorter; the ears were nearly an inch shorter. These wheat ears might have covered the ground too, but only if they were laid flat, not standing upright.

Arguments among the co-op members waxed hot, and news flew more rapidly than ever. Of course people told the Supernatural Hand all about the youngsters' fine wheat. The old man was stunned for a moment. Then he scoffed, "Their field will never ripen into grain. They'll harvest a fine crop of weed seeds!" His listeners laughed and nodded.

Before you knew it, the wheat was ripe. When the Supernatural Hand heard the cuckoos call, he went into action. Day and night, his team wielded their sickles among the fragrant, swaying wheat.

"How much will it be?" they asked each other.

"At least a thousand catties per *mou*!" some insisted.

The Supernatural Hand was happy. With typical farming co-op efficiency, people and carts flowed in and out of his experimental plot, reaping, carting, delivering the harvest of his ten *mou* to a threshing ground. Lovingly, the old man piled the wheat into a huge golden mound that could be seen miles away.

The Youth Shock Brigade worked fast and clean, not missing a single grain. But I don't have to tell you in detail. Soon their wheat was also piled on a threshing field.

By agreement the Supernatural Hand's team threshed first. The Party secretary and Sheng-chi were asked to come and help — actually the old man wanted them to be witnesses to his high yield. Watching the Supernatural Hand as he worked, Sheng-chi admired the way he threshed and winnowed the wheat. The old man was really a master at every kind of farm work. After the weighing was finished, it was announced that the Supernatural Hand had averaged 1,030 catties of threshed grain per *mou* — a new county record! The Party secretary immediately wrote out a congratulatory proclamation and hung it high on the co-op's main entrance gate.

The day it was the turn of the Youth Brigade to thresh, the old man ate his breakfast very early and hurried to the brigade's threshing ground. This was the crucial day that would show who produced the most, whose technique was best. Everyone worked hard and rapidly. As the figures of the weighing began coming in, Sheng-chi's smile grew broader and broader, and the Supernatural Hand's face went alternately red and white.

Golden threshed grain was piling up, measure by measure, peck by peck. No one spoke. Except for the hissing of wheat as it poured into the scales, the threshing field was breathlessly still. Everyone was watching tensely.

Then the final count was announced: "An average yield per *mou* of 5,200 catties!" Everyone burst into thunderous applause.

The old man was paralysed. For a long time, all he could say was: "They've done it! They've done it! . . ."

At a time like this, the egotistic individualist, the seeker after empty glory, the kind who is very concerned about face, first blushes with shame, then begins to argue angrily, offering reasons and excuses, twisting the facts, refusing to admit he was wrong and learn from experience.

Another type of person, when confronted with reality, suddenly sees the light and recognizes his error. Realizing the harm he has been doing to the co-operative, he berates himself, confesses to having lost, and modestly examines into his own faults.

The Supernatural Hand was the latter type. A stubborn fellow, when he gave his word, eight oxen couldn't drag it back. But once he recognized his mistake, eight oxen couldn't drag him into committing it again. Although he had thought too highly of his own technique and had no faith in Sheng-chi's plan, he was completely devoted to the interests of the co-op.

Now that his ideas were refuted, he was very ashamed of himself. Courageously, he flung his prestige to the nine levels of hell and back. Clasping his hands together in a contrite salute, he said:

"Party secretary, brigade leader, I admit I was wrong. Tonight I shall give a feast, present a banner, and publicly examine my faults. In the presence of everyone I will call Sheng-chi 'New Master Agronomist' three times. I promise!" He turned to go.

The Party secretary grasped both of the old man's hands in his. "Not so fast. I have something to say!" How could they accept the old man's magnanimous gesture? "I think it would be much better if we all sat down and talked this thing over!"

You mustn't imagine the Supernatural Hand lost only because he neglected close planting. Fertilization, irrigation and pest control are also necessary before the close planting can get the most out of the soil. This method has a scientific basis.

The old man hadn't believed in science and stuck to his hidebound rules. That's why he thought the 5,000 catties per *mou* target was impossible. It was all due to his conservative thinking.

At the meeting which the Party secretary called on the spot, the backward ideas of the Supernatural Hand changed. First of all, the facts were right there before him. Second-

ly, he used to be a tenant peasant and had an advanced political outlook. So he corrected his mistakes promptly.

He felt wonderfully relaxed once he recognized his error. To Sheng-chi, he said:

"Son, from now on I'm going to learn new technique from you."

"I have a long way to go in agriculture," Sheng-chi said hastily. "I hope, grandpa, you'll teach me many things."

"I've always depended on intense, careful work in the fields. Now I see that you have to place progressive thinking ahead of them all!" The old man paused. "Party secretary, Sheng-chi, I'm not afraid of making a fool of myself. I have another proposal."

"What is it?"

"With next year's wheat, I'm going to aim for 10,000 catties per *mou!* I'm putting that figure to the Youth Shock Brigade as a challenge. What do you think of my idea, Sheng-chi?"

"Excellent!" cried the young man. Accepting the challenge, he asked the secretary to witness as they struck hands on it. A big proclamation of the contest was written out and pasted on the wall.

In less than a quarter of an hour, the whole co-operative was agog with the news. The spirits of everyone, young and old, soared a hundredfold.

What will happen in this competition in the coming year? I'll tell you that story when next we meet!

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Translated by Sidney Shapiro
Illustrations by Wei Chi-mei

Selections From the Classics

CHI CHEN-HUAI

Han Yu's Life and His Prose

Han Yu was a native of Hoyang in present-day Honan, who was born in Loyang in 768. He lost his father at the age of three, and was brought up by his cousin Han Hui and his wife. Han Hui had literary tastes and opposed the euphuistic prose then in vogue because it lacked moral content. With his friends Liang Shu and Hsiao Ying-shih he advocated a return to classical prose. Han Yu shared their views from an early age. Because he was an orphan with no prospects, he needed no encouragement to study hard, and Han Hui's early death was an added incentive.

By the time he was nineteen, Han Yu had the reputation of a scholar in the capital and was impatient to enter upon an official career. His eagerness to get on in life was due as much to personal ambition as to his lack of means, for he was poor compared only with successful scholars, not with ordinary citizens. Though the civil service was the sole career open to him, he did not look upon it merely as a means of livelihood but longed to achieve great deeds and help the emperor to govern well and humanely. This, the

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highest ambition of the scholars of that time, had a positive significance since it reflected the aspirations of the people as a whole under feudal rule. Han Yu's troubles started when he tried to climb the bureaucratic ladder rung by rung. He sat for four tests set by the Ministry of Rites before passing, and failed three examinations set by the Ministry of Civil Affairs. Less ambitious scholars would have given up in despair, but Han Yu had more than his share of determination and self-confidence. He believed in himself and refused to be kept down. Again and again he recommended himself to powerful officials. Sometimes he was insolent, sometimes he indulged in self-pity, but nothing really daunted him. Not all his great gifts, however, could save him from the ill luck that dogged so many scholars in the feudal period. After seven or eight years in Changan without any official appointment, he left the capital sadly to seek advancement elsewhere.

Though Changan was then the metropolis, there were eight garrison areas in the empire which owed allegiance to the central government but did not always obey it, and the garrison commanders frequently had scholars as their protégés. In 796 Han Yu went to Pienchow, modern Kaifeng, and attached himself to the garrison commander of Hsuan Wu. Two years later, when this man died and there was a mutiny, he went to Hsuchow and entered the service of the garrison commander of Wu Ning. The next year this commander also died and there was another mutiny, but luckily Han Yu had already left. These uprisings after the garrison commanders' deaths showed the conflict between outlying areas and the central government, and Han Yu too was conscious of a contradiction between his desire to serve the government and the fact that he had to accept these warlords' patronage. Not till 802, when he was thirty-five, did he receive a minor appointment in Changan as imperial academician. The following year he was promoted to the post of censor, but almost immediately a clique with influence at court had him sent as a magistrate to distant Yangshan in what is now Kwangtung. He was later recalled, and remained in Changan and Loyang without

holding any office. In 817, at the age of fifty, for his part in an expedition against a rebel garrison commander he was appointed vice-minister of the Ministry of Punishments. But one year later he offended the emperor by his famous memorial criticizing the official reception of a relic of the Buddha. Though he escaped with his life, he was demoted and sent as a prefect to Chaochow, another post in the far south. When he next returned to the capital he served as libationer of the Imperial College and then as vice-minister of the Ministry of War. Finally in 822, because he succeeded in winning over another rebel general, he was made vice-minister of the Ministry of Civil Affairs. This was the highest position he ever attained, for in 824 he died.

Unlike most other scholars, Han Yu had political ambitions which he never abandoned even in the face of many reverses. Disappointed and indignant as he was at times, he would not consider going home to live in retirement. The life of a recluse had no appeal for him. His boldness and enterprise appear even more strikingly in the confidence with which he promoted the neo-classical movement. All the time that he was seeking promotion he was pressing for a return to state Confucianism and the classical style of writing. This movement had started in the middle of the eighth century, when Han Hui and other scholars sought authority for their ideas in the Confucian classics and tried to substitute for the empty euphuistic writing then so popular a prose as simple and logical as classical Chinese. Their aim was not actually to imitate ancient literature but to revive Confucian thought as expressed in the powerful and concise Confucian classics. Confucianism, which in the realm of politics advocates a strong central authority wielded by a benevolent emperor, was the official creed in China; but after reigning unchallenged in the Han dynasty its prestige had been weakened during the centuries that followed. Though the Tang rulers had advocated its revival, it remained powerless till the middle of the eighth century when it won new followers among the classical scholars. The immediate cause of this was the revolts of An Lu-shan and Shih Szu-ming, garrison generals in outly-

ing districts, between 755 and 762 which nearly destroyed the Tang empire. After eight years of war, involving fearful destruction, the revolts were finally crushed. But the general unrest and suffering were intensified, for a succession of military adventurers continually threatened the imperial house. The garrison commanders created by the emperor to strengthen his military control of the country had turned into his political rivals. And quite clearly the revival of Confucianism reflected the desire of the ruling class to reinforce the central authority by ideological means.

By the age of thirty Han Yu was known as a staunch Confucian. His friends advised him to write urging men to walk in the Way of the ancient sage and return to the good old days. And Han Yu had a sense of mission. He believed there had been such a Way in ancient times when the emperor, model of all virtues, ruled by benevolence and people lived in peace and happiness. "Yao passd it on to Shun, Shun to Yu, Yu to Tang, and Tang to Wen, Wu and the Duke of Chou. They in their turn handed it on to Confucius, and Confucius passed it on to Mencius. After Mencius died the ancient Way was lost." Han Yu clearly regarded Confucianism as "orthodoxy," and boldly assumed the role of the successor of Mencius. He made many friends and urged young men to extend his influence on the ground that "all men must have teachers, who pass on the truth and dispel ignorance." He did not share the usual objection to learning from others, and attempting to be a teacher, namely that "when two men are roughly equal in age and understanding, if one has a low social status it is humiliating; if one is a high official, it looks like flattery." He fearlessly set himself up as a teacher of men.

His two main objectives were to revive the orthodoxy lost for centuries and to oppose Buddhism and Taoism. Indeed, these two aims were inseparable. Buddhism and Taoism contained many elements of mysticism, other-worldliness and passivity compared with the rationalist realist tradition of Confucianism. And during the Tang dynasty their religious practices created political and economic problems. After An Lu-shan's revolt, to raise money for the

army the government sold admission into holy orders, and a monk or priest was exempted from conscript labour and taxes. Quite obviously, adherence to Buddhism or Taoism provided the rich with additional privileges, and the monasteries became places of refuge for those who wished to avoid conscription or evade taxes. Worse still, the Buddhist monks and Taoist priests became social parasites. In his famous memorial Han Yu wrote: "A single monk's food and clothing for one year cost over thirty thousand cash, which is more than five men can produce. We can see how much money is wasted if we consider all the monks in the empire. . . . Now six families eat grain for one that farms, six families need utensils for one that makes them, six families purchase goods for one that sells them. No wonder the people are ruined and become outlaws." In 819, when Emperor Hsien Tsung sent emissaries to welcome a relic of the Buddha, Han Yu saw hundreds of ordinary citizens burn themselves in their religious fervour, strip off their garments and make offerings. "This went on from dawn till dusk, each striving to outdo the rest. Old and young hurried hither and thither, forgetting their rightful business." Because Han Yu could not contain his indignation, at the risk of his life he submitted a memorial protesting against this worship of the Buddha's relic and reproaching the government for deceiving the people and squandering money. So although he attacked Buddhism and Taoism in order to uphold the Confucian orthodoxy, his criticisms reflected the common people's suffering, and his wish to use Confucianism to strengthen the tottering regime was in accordance with the popular will. For if the imperial house fell, the empire would split up and life would be even harder than under one centralized authority. This is why the revival of classicism which he led won the support of so many intellectuals.

This movement involved the reform of Chinese prose. Han Yu wanted to return to the teaching of Confucius and Mencius, and to the style of writing of the Chou and Han dynasties. In other words, he hoped for a classical revival in both form and content. Most of his contemporaries

wrote in the euphuistic style popular since the Six Dynasties period, which laid stress on tonal patterns and images without paying attention to content or ideas. The great bulk of such writing was stereotyped and formalistic. Han Yu believed that writing should first of all embody ideas or the Way, and that since the prose in current use could not convey the Way it should be reformed or ousted by "classical" prose. To his mind, "classical" prose was inseparable from the teachings of Confucius.

We cannot insist too strongly that the reform advocated by Han Yu concerned content rather than form. As the language of "classical" prose was created by the ancients, he believed that to emulate it his generation must follow the ancients' example and create their own language. They should adopt the old Confucian ideas, not the old sage's actual language. The problem was not a simple one, however, for a man accepting the earlier Confucians' ideas naturally tended to adopt their language too. Han Yu said of his own experience as a writer: "When I want to express any views, I make a point of dispensing with all outmoded expressions, which is no easy matter." Furthermore, if Han Yu's "classical" prose had simply meant putting old ideas into modern language, the result would have been a sort of translation rather than a genuinely original style. He therefore set himself the task of creating new phrases to express his meaning, and took over no ideas that he had not first absorbed thoroughly and made his own. Since his programme was in line with the political and social needs of his time, what he wrote could not be a mere repetition of old ideas but was bound to reflect contemporary reality. Moreover, there was a contradictory side to his neo-classical thinking. In his famous *Farewell to Meng Chiao* he described schools of thought other than the Confucian as the views of men "not at peace" with reality, the products of specific circumstances. He believed that a man who was "not at peace" should speak out. His own writing, of necessity, expressed ideas and fresh views conflicting with traditional Confucianism. Consequently in form as well as in content his "classical" prose was a new, original

style of writing. By "classical" he meant following the Confucian spirit in the use of language.

In most editions of Han Yu's works his prose is divided into the following categories: letters, prefaces, dirges, funeral orations, epitaphs, memorials and essays. This classification may not be too scientific but it gives some indication of the great variety of forms he used. So-called classical prose was a prose for practical use. Han Yu was such a versatile writer that he not only ousted euphuistic prose and continued the best traditions of classical prose, but raised written Chinese to a new and higher level. In all his compositions, whether long or short, serious or humorous, his language varies according to the subject matter. Of course the different forms he used can be traced back to earlier prototypes, but the style was entirely his own, created for a very practical purpose. Unfortunately much of its beauty is virtually impossible to reproduce in translation.

Han Yu's prose was a tool to uphold orthodoxy, refute Buddhism and Taoism, reflect reality and express what was "not at peace." Since he championed Confucianism in order to uphold the feudal state, he inevitably dealt with social problems. His well-known essay *About the Way* is a defence of Confucian orthodoxy in which he points out the harm caused by Buddhism and Taoism. But though there was truth in much of what he said, limited by his age and social position, he failed to recognize the main injustice of his time and seldom saw further than his immediate circle. While climbing the ladder of officialdom he met with many cruel rebuffs, and a number of his friends shared a similar fate. Thus his most realistic prose is that voicing his own and his friends' discontent. *A Farewell to Meng Chiao* expresses indignation on behalf of his friend because "Meng Chiao is being sent to work in the south, and seems reluctant to go." The essay written on the wall of the assistant magistrate's office in Lantien protests because Tsui Szu-li was demoted from his post as judge of the supreme court owing to an unwelcome criticism he made. Many of his letters reveal resentment more clearly. And

these expressions of personal grievances were often bold denunciations of the feudal examination system and bureaucracy. Indeed, *A Farewell to Li Yuan* is a scathing exposure of high officials and those who hanker after officialdom. It was precisely because Han Yu dared to speak out against the many abuses of feudal rule that his prose was able to break through the prejudices of the feudal ruling class and express reality in spite of the restrictions of the orthodoxy he himself advocated.

Han Yu's prose is characterized by concrete images. The short sketch *A Painting* gives a systematic, graphic description of every character and creature in the scroll. *Postscript to the Life of Chang Hsun* follows Ssuma Chien's excellent method of biographical writing, and shows how heroically Chang Hsun and Hsu Yuan defended their city to the last during the rebellions of An Lu-shan and Shih Szu-ming. The account of the strange competition in *Verses for the Stone Tripod* gives a striking picture of an unconventional priest. Though many of the epitaphs Han Yu wrote were eulogies, they usually depict distinctive individuals, unlike the general run of epitaphs fashionable at the time which simply enumerated the official posts of the deceased and exaggerated their virtues. Thus in his epitaph for Meng Chiao, Han Yu paints his friend as an impecunious poet who took great delight in poetry but remained obscure to the last. He presents Liu Tsung-yuan as a fine writer "well-versed in the classics, histories and hundred schools of thought," who was persecuted throughout his official career. The precision and vividness of his imagery is even more marked in his parables or stories.

Some other features of Han Yu's prose are freshness, clarity and simplicity. He achieved this to a large extent by his conscious rejection of outworn phrases and by keeping close to everyday speech. By basing himself on the vernacular, he naturally broke through the lifeless patterns of the euphuists and produced something different again from ancient Chinese, since the vocabulary and syntax of the spoken language are always changing. In consequence his prose is natural and easy to read. Many stock phrases

in modern Chinese are quotations or modified allusions from Han Yu, and this testifies to the great influence exerted by his writing as well as to its affinity to common speech.

Han Yu was probably the greatest prose writer between Ssuma Chien and Lu Hsun. He re-established the best traditions of Chinese prose and widened its scope for practical purposes — for use in daily life, for the expression of intimate thoughts, or for descriptions of scenery. All the great prose writers after him — Ouyang Hsiu, Su Shih, Wang An-shih, Kuei Yu-kuang, Fang Pao, Yao Nai and others — owed much to his influence. Indeed, for well-nigh a thousand years he remained unrivalled as a master of Chinese prose.

Prose Writings

ON TEACHERS

Since ancient times to learn all men must have teachers, who pass on the truth and dispel ignorance. As men are not born wise, who can be free from ignorance? But if ignorant men do not find teachers, they remain ignorant for ever. Some teachers may be born before me and have learned the truth before me; I should therefore learn from them. Some may have been born after me, but learned the truth before me; I should also learn from them. As I seek the truth, I need not worry whether my teacher is my senior or junior. Whether he is noble or common, elder or younger, whoever knows the truth can be a teacher.

Alas, since men have long ceased learning from teachers it is hard not to be ignorant. The old sages were far superior to common men, yet they sought the truth from teachers. Most men of today are far below those sages, yet they think it shameful to learn. That is why sages become more sage, while fools become more foolish. No doubt this is what makes some sages and others fools.

A man who loves his son chooses a teacher for him but is ashamed to find one for himself. This is entirely wrong. All a child's teacher can do is give him a book and tell him how to read it sentence by sentence. This is not the teacher I have in mind who can pass on the truth and dispel ignorance. If we want to learn to read but not to dispel ignorance, we are learning the lesser and giving up the greater, which is hardly intelligent.

Physicians, musicians and artisans are not ashamed to learn from each other. But if one of the literati calls another man his teacher and himself the pupil, people will flock to laugh at him. If you ask why, they will reply that the men are roughly equal in age and understanding. If one has a low social status, it is humiliating; if one is a high official, it looks like flattery. Clearly, to learn from a teacher is old-fashioned. Physicians, musicians and artisans are despised by gentlemen, yet they seem to be more intelligent. Is this not strange?

A sage has more than one teacher. Thus Confucius learned from Yen Tzu, Chang Hung, Shih Hsiang and Lao Tan. Men like Yen Tzu were inferior to Confucius, yet Confucius said: "Out of three men, there must be one who can teach me." So pupils are not necessarily inferior to their teachers, nor teacher better than their pupils. Some learn the truth earlier than others, and some have special skills — that is all.

Li Fan is seventeen. He is fond of ancient literature, and has studied the six arts, the classics and the commentaries, not confining himself to what is in vogue today. He has studied with me, and as I admire his respect for the old traditions I am writing this essay on teachers for him.

WANG CHENG-FU, THE PLASTERER

A plasterer's trade is humble and hard, yet I know one who appears content with his lot. His talk is to the point and covers the subject. When asked, he told me his name was Wang Cheng-fu.

"My folk were peasants outside Changan for generations," he said. "In the rebellion during the Tien Pao era, when men were conscripted for the army, I served as an archer for thirteen years and was given official awards. Then I gave that up and went home. As my land had gone, I made a living with my trowel. For the last thirty years I have rented a room in the market, and to pay for my board and lodging I see what prices are at the time and charge more or less for my labour. Whatever is left over I give to the maimed, the sick and the starving in the streets."

"Grain is grown by the farmers," he went on. "To make cloth or silk you must rear silkworms and weave. Our daily needs are supplied by the work of men's hands, and I need all these things. But as no man can follow every trade, each must do his part to help his fellows. The ruler orders the means by which we live, and his officers spread his influence. Some tasks are big, some small, and each does what he can like vessels of different sizes. If a man takes pay but slacks on his job, he must come to a bad end. That is why I have not dared leave my trowel for one day to have a little fun. Working with a trowel is easy and within my power, and the service is useful; so I am not ashamed to take payment for it, and my heart is at peace. It is easy to get results by using your brawn, but hard to increase your knowledge by using your brain — that is why it is right for workers by hand to serve and for workers by brain to rule. I have picked an easy job and one I have no cause to be ashamed of. Yes, I have gone for years now with my trowel to the homes of the rich and great. Maybe the second time the house is in ruins, maybe the third or fourth time. When I ask the neighbours what has happened they say: 'Oh, they were executed.' 'The master died and his heirs could not keep it up.' Or, 'After they died their property was confiscated.' As I see it, these are all cases of men who take pay but slack on the job and bring trouble on their own heads. They try to be clever without the brain for it, and take something on without stopping to think whether they are up to it or not. They behave disgracefully, and insist on doing what they know is wrong. Riches and rank cannot last when slight achievements go with great self-indulgence. Wealth is followed by want and cannot last for ever. Because I pity such cases, I do what I am fit for. It is not that I am different from other folk who like riches and rank and hate poverty and low position."

"Those with great achievements to their credit can keep themselves in luxury," he went on. "A man with a wife and children has to support them, and as I am not up to much and have not much to my credit either, I may as well

do without them. I am a manual labourer. If I had a family and could not keep it, that would prey on my mind too, and not even a sage could stand the double strain."

At first I was sceptical, but on second thoughts I decided he was a wise man, one of those who are content to look after themselves well. Yet I have some criticism too. Do those who do too much for themselves and not enough for others subscribe to Yang Chu's* philosophy? According to Yang Chu, a man should not pull out one hair of his head to benefit the world. This plasterer believes that to have a family would mean exercising his mind over his wife and children, and he refuses to do anything for others. Still, he is much better than those who worry about not having enough or losing something they have, men with wicked appetites who forget the Way and destroy themselves in the end. Indeed his words holds a warning for me. I set this down, then, as a mirror for myself.

A PAINTING

A small scroll of people and things, ancient and modern. Five horsemen; ten armed horsemen bearing weapons; a horseman at their head with a large standard; ten armed horsemen bearing weapons, moving away, some of them leading their mounts; two horsemen carrying loads; two carrying utensils; one with a hound; two pulling on the reins; three horsemen galloping; two men standing and holding the halter and reins; one horseman with a hawk on his arm, leaning against his steed; two horsemen galloping across a stream; two shepherds on foot; one seated man giving orders; seven men erect in armour and helmets, holding bows, arrows and axes; ten men in armour and helmets standing with flags; seven men carrying loads; two lying down to rest; one in armour and helmet dozing on foot; one fording a stream; one sitting down and taking off his boots; one warming himself by the fire; eight serving-men with

*A philosopher of the Warring States period (403-221 B.C.)

utensils; one man with a cottabus; eleven men camping and preparing food; four men pouring drinks; two pulling oxen; four riding donkeys; one man with a stick carrying a load; six women with children in carriages; three women getting down from or into carriages; nine children playing. In all there are thirty-two different actions, and one hundred and twenty-three people, each different from the rest.

Among the horses are nine large ones. Some are at the top of the scroll, some at the bottom. They are moving away, being led, fording the stream, jumping, raising their hooves, looking back, neighing, sleeping, waking, standing, rearing, champing, drinking, urinating, climbing up or down, rubbing against trees, panting, snuffling, frisking, kicking, biting, being fed, being ridden, galloping, cantering, carrying utensils or dead foxes and rabbits. There are twenty-seven different actions and eighty-three horses, each different from the rest.

There are eleven large and small oxen, three camels, one more donkey than there are camels, one hawk, thirty dogs, sheep, foxes, rabbits and stags. There are three carriages, and two hundred and fifty-one pieces of equipment, including bows and arrows, flags, swords, lances, shields, quivers, sheaths, suits of armour and helmets. There are jugs, bowls and other utensils for eating and drinking, as well as umbrellas, straw hats, baskets and pots. There are also games like cottabus and draughts. All are exquisitely drawn.

In the cyclic year of Chia Hsu* during the Chen Yuan era, I was in the capital with time on my hands. My fellow lodger, Tuku Shen-shu, had acquired this painting, but I was lucky enough to beat him at shovelboard and win it as my prize. I was enchanted by it, and doubted whether it could have been conceived by one painter, for it had the merits of many. I would not have parted with it for a hundred gold pieces.

The next year I left the capital and went to Hoyang. During a discussion with a few friends about the merits of

*A. D. 794.

different paintings, I showed them this. Among those present was Censor Chao, a true gentleman, who looked distressed and moved when he saw this scroll. Later he came to me and confessed with a sigh:

"That is a copy I made, which I lost nearly twenty years ago. When I was young, I was interested in painting. I found a scroll by a great master, and made the very best copy I could of it; but in Minchow I lost it. In my spare moments I often remember it, for I worked so hard to copy it and was so fond of it. But now that I have found it again, it is beyond my powers. I would like to get a painter to make me a rough sketch of it."

Attached as I was to this painting, I was so touched by Censor Chao's story that I presented it to him, having first listed the position and number of the people and objects in it to read from time to time, to console myself for my loss.

WRITTEN ON THE WALL OF THE ASSISTANT MAGISTRATE'S OFFICE IN LANTIEN

The assistant magistrate's task is to help the magistrate and look into everything that goes on in his county. Under him are secretaries with various functions. But though his status is high, he is too cribbed and encumbered to take any action.

When a document has to be issued, the clerk brings it to him — made out. Holding the forepart of the scroll tightly rolled in his left hand, he pulls out its end with his right, swoops down on the assistant magistrate and looks at him askance.

"Your signature, please!" he says.

The assistant magistrate picks up his brush and signs with care in the allotted place, glancing at the clerk for reassurance.

"All in order," says the clerk, and withdraws.

The assistant magistrate dares not look into the matter and has no idea what is at issue. Though his position is

high, he has less authority than the secretaries. But he is usually the first to be criticized, and is sometimes roundly abused for negligence. Is this why they created such a post?

Tsui Szu-li of Poling cultivated the arts and stored his mind with learning, broadening and deepening his knowledge from day to day. At the beginning of the Chen Yuan era, when he went to prove his worth at a test in the capital, he came first in two examinations. At the beginning of the Yuan Ho era, for a word out of season he was dismissed from the Supreme Court where he was a judge, and transferred to be assistant magistrate of this county.

Upon his arrival he sighed and said: "This post is not too low, but I may not prove up to it."

When he found his hands tied he sighed again and said: "What an appointment! I am not thankless, but this is a thankless task."

Then he took pains not to be sharp or cutting, trod in his forerunners' steps, and stood on no ceremony. An old wall inscribed with names in the magistrate's office was so dilapidated, cracked and soiled that the writing on it was illegible. Tsui replaced the beams and tiles, repaired and plastered the wall, and recorded all his predecessors' names. In the courtyard were four rows of old ash trees, and a thousand fine bamboos ranged solemnly by the south wall as if in attendance, while water gurgled past the steps. Tsui cleaned the place thoroughly and planted two pines in front of his office, where he chanted poetry every day.

When asked any question he made haste to answer: "I am busy with affairs of state. Please go away!"

A LETTER TO TSUI CHUN

Since you left the eastern capital, you have done me the honour of writing to me twice. I understand that you have reached Hsuanchow, that your host is a humane and excellent man and your colleagues true gentlemen; so though conscious that you are far from home, you are doing fairly

well there. A man should be able to find happiness anywhere, provided he accepts the will of Heaven cheerfully. This is how good men in the past dealt with circumstances, and you who are so much superior to all others will certainly not allow your spirit to be fettered by minor considerations. Though Hsuanchow is said to be cool and high, no place south of the Yangtse can compare with the climate of the north. For the sake of your health you should first regulate your thoughts, for once your heart is at ease no extraneous evils will be able to touch you, you will know how to adapt yourself, and will not suffer from any indisposition. If a man of your worth can remain happy even in a poor position, how should they feel who serve near the court, hold a highly paid office, and have all their dear ones beside them! I am dwelling on this because I consider a man of your calibre ought to fill an important position, and a secretary's post is unworthy of you. I speak out of love and respect, not that I imagine you need advice of this sort.

Since my boyhood I have spent seventeen years among acquaintances and friends. This is not a short time, and my associates number about a thousand — no small figure — including quite a few who have been as close to me as brothers. Some worked with me, others shared my interests, had gifts which I admired or were friends of long standing. With some I was not too intimate to begin with, but as we grew better acquainted and I found they had no great faults I kept up the friendship. Yet others were not entirely good, but they treated me so well that I could not break with them. I am speaking here of close friends, not casual acquaintances. You are the only man, though, before whom I am prostrated in admiration, in whose words and actions I can find no flaw, whose measure I cannot take, whose character is brilliant and unsullied, and whose greatness becomes daily more apparent. Dull though I am and lacking in understanding, I have read all the sages' books. I may not have mastered them in their entirety with all their subtleties and shades of meaning, but I have at least dipped into them. And certainly, in my judgment and estimation, you stand head and shoulders above your contem-

poraries — there is no gainsaying this. Between friends like ourselves, such explanations are needless. I have said this for fear you may think the number of my intimates shows a lack of discrimination. It is also wrong, of course, to claim to understand you more or less and yet be afraid that you misunderstand me. A friend of mine once said that while he agreed you were nearly perfect, he still had certain reservations. I asked him the reason.

"A gentleman should have his likes and dislikes, and must make them clear," he said. "Yet wise men and fools alike praise Tsui's good qualities and look up to him. That is why I have reservations."

"Wise men and fools alike consider the phoenix and the herb of immortality auspicious," said I. "Even slaves know that the brilliant sun and blue sky are clear and bright. It is the same with food — rare dishes from distant lands are appreciated by some and not by others, but one and all like rice and millet, and meat whether minced or cooked."

So I convinced the man. But whether others doubt you or not cannot detract from your greatness.

From ancient times there have been few men of talent but many mediocrities. Since I reached the age of discretion, I have seen many talented men meet with ill fortune while mediocrities received official honours. I have seen talented men unable to earn a living while mediocrities grew proud and mighty. I have seen talented men die young after holding some low position, while mediocrities lived to a ripe old age. I do not understand the Creator's plan. Can it be that he has different views from men? Or is he so forgetful that he does not care whether mortals live or perish, die in old age or in youth? There is no knowing. Some there are who despise the post of a minister and a fief of a thousand chariots, content with vegetable broth in a narrow lane. Since even human beings have such different standards, Heaven must differ even more. And there can be no harm in something which accords with Heaven's way but not with the way of men, much less with that which happens to accord with both. Take heart, then, Mr. Tsui!

I have no adequate means of support, but have grown poorer and poorer since taking up my post here. I should like to go and live by the banks of the Yi or the Yin, and I dare say I shall manage this eventually. Recently I have aged even more. My second molar tooth on the left grew loose and has come out for no apparent reason. My eyes are now so dim that I cannot distinguish faces at ten or twenty feet. Half the hair on my temples is white, as well as one-fifth on my head and even one or two of the hairs in my beard. My family is unlucky. As my uncles and elder brothers died young although their health was good, I can hardly hope to live to a great age. This depresses me, and I long to see you again to talk of everything that is in my heart. The sight of my children cannot but make me anxious. When will you be able to return north? I do not enjoy the south, and as soon as I have completed my term of office I mean to retire to the foot of the Sung Mountains. You might join me there — I shall not be leaving again. Look after your health, be careful what you eat and drink, and do not worry too much I beg of you. I send respectful greetings.

A FAREWELL TO MENG CHIAO

Most things when not at peace will sound. Plants and trees have no voice, but rustled by the wind they sound. Water has no voice, but ruffled by the wind it sounds, splashing when struck, gathering speed when obstructed, and seething when heated. Metal and stone have no voice, but when beaten they sound. And human utterances are the same: men speak out when forced to it. If they long for something, they sing; if they are sad, they weep. Sounds pass their lips whenever they are not at peace.

Music expresses what has been pent up, and chooses the most resonant substances for its sounds. Metal, stone, strings, bamboo, gourds, earthenware, leather and wood — these eight have resonance. It is the same with the seasons of the year: they choose the most resonant things to trans-

mit sound. Thus birds warble in spring, thunder rumbles in summer, crickets chirp in autumn, and the wind howls in winter; for while the four seasons rotate there cannot be peace.

It is the same with men. Language is the essence of human speech, literature the essence of language, and the most articulate are chosen as spokesmen. In the time of the sage kings Yao and Shun, Kao Yao and Yu were chosen as spokesmen for they were the most articulate, while Kuei spoke through the Shao dance since he could not express himself through literature. In the Hsia dynasty the five brothers spoke through their song. Yi Yin was the voice of the Shang dynasty, and the Duke of Chou of the Chou dynasty. The *Book of Songs*, the *Book of History* and the other classics are the best voice of that time. When the house of Chou declined, the followers of Confucius spoke out with a mighty voice which carried far and wide. True, indeed, was the saying: "Heaven will use the master as a tocsin." Towards the end of that period, Chuang Tzu spoke through his allegories. When the great kingdom of Chu fell, Chu Yuan spoke. Tsang Wen-chung, Mencius and Hsun Tzu spoke through their different doctrines. Men like Yang Chu, Mo Ti, Kuan Chung, Yen Ying, Lao Tan, Shen Pu-hai, Han Fei, Shen Tao, Tien Pien, Tsou Yen, Shih Chiao, Sun Wu, Chang Yi and Su Chin spoke through their art. In the Chin dynasty's heyday, Li Ssu's voice was heard. Ssuma Chien, Ssuma Hsiang-ju and Yang Hsiung were the best voice of the Han dynasty. The spokesmen of the Wei and Tsin dynasties were not the equal of the men of old, but there was never silence. The best literature of this period was light and clear in tone, swift and impetuous in rhythm, sentimental and extravagant in language, reckless and abandoned in spirit; and the ideas it expressed were confused and undeveloped. Was this because Heaven had condemned the age and was not watching over it? And if not, why were there no better singers?

When the Tang dynasty was founded, Chen Tsu-jang, Su Yuan-ming, Yuan Chieh, Li Po, Tu Fu and Li Kuan all sang in their different ways. Since their time Meng Chiao has

started to sing with his poems which surpass those of the Wei and Tsin dynasties and are worthy of the men of old, while others approach the Han poets. Of these my friends Li Kao and Chang Chieh are the best. The songs of these three men are undoubtedly fine. But does Heaven intend them to sing in harmony of the empire's prosperity, or, hungry and poor, weighed down by cares, to sing of their misfortunes? It is Heaven which decides the fate of mortal men. One may not be happy in a high position, or distressed in a humble one.

Now Meng Chiao is being sent to work in the south, and seems reluctant to go. It is to comfort him that I point out that men's fate is determined by Heaven.

A FAREWELL TO LI YUAN

South of the Taihang Mountains is Meander Vale. Its springs are sweet, its soil fruitful, and few men live in its well-wooded groves. Some say it is called Meander because the valley winds around to mountains. Others say that, secluded and difficult of access, it is a place where hermits love to wander. Here my friend Li Yuan dwells.

Li Yuan once said: "I know what is commonly meant by a great man — one who renders service to the people, whose fame adds lustre to his age, who has a seat at court, appoints and recalls officials, and assists the emperor in issuing edicts. If he serves in the provinces, flags are set up and bows and arrows displayed, guards before him raise a shout, his followers block the way, and attendants bearing objects for his use gallop down both sides of the road. When pleased, he gives rewards; when angry, he metes out punishments. He is surrounded by men of outstanding talent, who talk of past and present and praise his virtue, and whose speech is pleasing and gives no offence. Room after room of dainty, clear-voiced girls with arched eyebrows and plump cheeks, lovely and witty in light, long-sleeved gowns, wait idly with powdered faces and darkened eyebrows, jealous of his favourite and eager to charm him.

This is the life of a great man who is recognized by the emperor and can make his influence felt in the government. I am not opposed to this or anxious to avoid such a position, but it depends on fate, not on any turn of fortune.

"A poor man whose time is his own may climb a hill to gaze into the distance, sit in the shade of a fine tree all day, bathe in clear springs, pick sweet herbs on the mountain, or catch fresh fish in the pools. He gets up or lies down as the fancy takes him, prefers a blameless end to fame at the start, and an untroubled mind to physical pleasures. He receives no imperial honours and no harsh punishment either; he does not know whether times are good or bad, or which men have been degraded or promoted. This is the way of a great man who has not won recognition, and this is how I live.

"Others may wait at the gates of ministers, hurry in pursuit of the mighty, hesitate before each step, stammer in their speech, and feel no shame at their own degradation. They incur punishments or are executed, staking all on a single toss till they die of old age. My way is infinitely superior."

I, Han Yu of Changli, heard and approved this speech. I offered him wine and sang this song to him:

Meander Valley is your home,
Meander's soil you till;
Beside Meander's springs you roam,
And yours is every hill.
Meander is secure and blessed,
A quiet, hushed domain,
Whose mountains with their sloping sides
Wind round and back again.
No savage tigers dare come near,
And there no serpents coil,
For kindly spirits watch above
To guard its happy soil.
Then eat and drink and take your ease;
May all your dreams come true!
I'll wax my carriage, groom my steeds,
And seek Meander too,
To ramble in Meander Vale
With you my whole life through.

A FAREWELL TO OU TSEH

Yangshan is one of the poorest places on earth. Its precipitous crags are infested by tigers and leopards. Its fierce torrents are intersected by rocks sharper than swords and halberds, so that many boats veering from their course capsize or are wrecked. All is desert outside the county town, and the magistrate has no assistant. On the river bank, among the reeds and bamboos, live some dozen local officers' families with a bird-like tongue and barbarous appearance. At my arrival we had no common language, but had to draw on the ground to settle the amount of taxes or make appointments. There is no occasion for guests or travellers to call. Here I have stayed for the last six months, awaiting my punishment.

Now Ou Tseh has pledged me his friendship. He came from Nanhai by boat, and ascended the steps with an air of great dignity. As we sat and talked, he showed remarkable insight. Chuang Tzu said: "A man who has fled to the wilderness rejoices to hear human footsteps." How much more so when the visitor is Ou Tseh! When he comes in and hears my comments on the classics or on morality, he is in raptures and seems to share my ideas. At times we rest in the shade of some noble tree, or sit on a rock by the stream to fish with rods. He takes pleasure in such pursuits, and appears able to renounce fame and profit and to rest content with poverty and obscurity.

In the New Year he will go home to see his parents. After emptying a pot of wine, I write this to mark his departure.

A FAREWELL TO MONK KAO HSIEN

If a man can lodge his intelligence within in such a way that the springs of action respond to the mind and are not deterred by circumstances, his spirit will remain whole and sound. Though outward things assail him, they will not clog his mind. This was the case with the government

of Yao, Shun, Yu and Tang, with Yang Yu-chi's archery, the slaughtering of the ox described by Chuang Tzu, Shih Kuang's music, Pien Chueh's medicine, Hsiung Yi-liao's catapult, Chiu's draughts, and Liu Ling's drinking. Their lifelong enjoyment of these things prevented them from thinking of externals. Those who take pleasure in outward things and keep changing their occupation have not entered the hall of knowledge or tasted its fare.

In the old days Chang Hsu was a master of the rustic style of writing, who learned no other art. Whenever his heart was moved, whether he was happy, angry or distressed, worried, pleased or at ease, enraged or wistful, drunk, bored or resentful, he would express it in his calligraphy. Whatever he saw, mountains and streams, cliffs and valleys, birds and beasts, insects and fish, flowers, fruit, trees or plants, the sun, the moon and the stars, the wind and the rain, flood and fire, thunder and lightning, song and dance, raging battles, all the changing phenomena of earth and heaven, whether inspiring or fearful, he would embody it in his writing. Thus his calligraphy was well-nigh divine, passing men's comprehension. By devoting his life to it he made his name.

But is Kao Hsien today of the same mind as Chang Hsu when he practises calligraphy? If you try to do what he did, lacking his spirit, you will never equal him. To write like Chang Hsu you must be clear on all issues, scrupulously exact, filled with a burning passion, sharply conflicting desires, and a strong sense of gain and loss. If you pour this out in your writing, you will be a second Chang Hsu.

Now Kao Hsien is a Buddhist, unfettered by outward things, to whom life and death are one. His mind must be tranquil and dispassionate. He must have no worldly interests or earthly longings. But tranquillity combined with lack of interest result in complete surrender and abandon, untrammelled and unbridled. Then surely his calligraphy will express the principle of nothingness?

I have heard, though, that these Buddhists are skilled in creating illusions and in various arts. Kao Hsien may have such skill, for all I know.

VERSES FOR THE STONE TRIPOD

On the fourth day of the twelfth month of the seventh year of the Yuan Ho era,* a priest of Hengshan named Hsuanyuan Mi-ming came down from the mountains. He was acquainted with Liu Shih-fu, a scholar from the same district, and as he heard that Liu was in the capital he went to spend a night at his house on his way to Taipo Mountain.

Hou Hsi, a collator who had just won fame as a poet, was there to discuss poetry with Liu that night, and Mi-ming sat down with them. This priest was remarkably ugly, with a white beard, dark face, long neck and scrawny throat, and he spoke with a southern accent. Hou Hsi ignored him.

Suddenly that priest raised his eyebrows and spread out his clothes, pointing at the stone tripod on the stove.

"You claim to be a poet," he challenged Hou. "Can you write a verse on this with me?"

Liu had heard from some southerners that this priest, who was over ninety, could catch demons and goblins and hold captive sea-serpents, tigers and leopards. Although he could not be sure that this was true, he showed him respect on account of his great age. Not having known that the priest had literary tastes, he was delighted as he picked up a brush to write the opening couplet. He passed this to Hou, who took it eagerly and wrote two more lines.

"Is that the best you can do?" asked the priest with a laugh.

He put his hands in his sleeves and sat down with a shrug, his back against the north wall.

"I do not know the writing you use in the world," he told Liu. "Kindly take this down for me."

Then he chanted:

> Obtuse as dragon-head fungus,
> Bloated as porker's belly.

*A.D. 812.

This verse, which he tossed off, was aimed at Hou. The two scholars exchanged surprised and embarrassed glances, and, meaning to outdo the priest in quantity, Liu wrote more and more couplets, passing them on to Hou. Hou racked his brains too, determined to beat the priest. He chanted each new couplet in a tragic voice, and hesitated with the brush in his hand, yet still he could produce nothing noteworthy. Each time he passed a couplet to the priest, sprawled on his seat Mi-ming would call: "Take the pen, Liu! Here are my lines."

He tossed off some remarkable verses, quite out of the common, each a thrust at Liu or Hou, till Hou grew more and more exasperated. The two scholars made some dozen couplets apiece, but every time the priest capped them readily, and all his verses were barbed and had a sting.

After midnight Liu and Hou had to give up, having run out of ideas. They rose to apologize.

"You are no common man, master," they said. "We admit defeat and would like to be your pupils. We will never dare talk of poetry again."

But the priest exclaimed, "No, don't leave the poem unfinished. Take your pen, Liu. I'll finish it for you."

He chanted another forty words — eight lines — then told Liu to read them out.

"Is that finished now?" he demanded.

"Yes indeed," replied the two scholars.

"You are not worth talking to," retorted the priest. "That is not a poem. I wrote down to your level, not what I have learned from my master. You are not worthy to know what I can do — not only in literature either. As my words are wasted on you, I shall be silent."

The two scholars, overcome with awe, rose from their seats to bow.

"We dare not ask anything else, but one thing we long to know," they said. "You say, master, you cannot write like ordinary men. What script, pray, do you use? Please tell us this one thing."

The priest remained silent as if he had not heard them. Though they asked several times he made no reply, until

they returned crestfallen to their seats. Then the priest fell asleep against the wall, and his snores resounded like thunder. The two scholars, pale with fear, dared scarcely breathe. Soon the morning drum sounded, and they fell asleep from exhaustion where they sat. When they woke, the sun was high in the sky and they looked round apprehensively for the priest, only to find him gone. They questioned the servant-boy.

"Just before dawn the priest went out, looking as if he would soon be back," said the boy. "I was surprised when he was away a long time; but when I went out to look for him he had disappeared."

The two scholars, filled with remorse, reproached themselves bitterly for losing him.

When they told me this story I did not know what manner of priest this was. I once heard of a hermit named Mi-ming, and wonder if this can have been the same man.

AN EPITAPH FOR LIU TSUNG-YUAN

Liu Tsung-yuan's cognomen was Tzu-hou. One of his ancestors seven generations before him was Liu Ching, who served at court in the Toba Wei dynasty and was made Lord of Chiyin. His great-grandfather's elder brother, Liu Shih, a prime minister in the Tang dynasty, was executed with Chu Sui-liang and Han Yuan because they had offended Empress Wu during the reign of Emperor Kao Tsung. His father, Liu Chen, gave up his post as doctor of ceremony in order to care for his mother at home, asking for a magistracy south of the Yangtse. Later he lost his position as censor because he would not fawn on a powerful noble, and was reinstated only after that noble's death. He was known for his probity, and all his friends were famous in their day.

Tzu-hou was brilliant from boyhood, with a grasp of all branches of knowledge. Though still a lad at the time of his father's death, he had already distinguished himself by passing the examination in the capital. He was known as a worthy son of the house of Liu.

Later, having passed an examination testing erudition and literary talent, he was made a secretary in Chihsien Palace. Strikingly brilliant, fearless and incorruptible, he enforced his arguments with examples from the past and present, was well-versed in the classics, histories and hundred schools of thought, marshalled his facts as swiftly as the wind, and nearly always refuted his opponents. His fame spread far and wide, and he was greatly sought after. High officials competed to win him as their potégé, and had nothing but praise for him.

In the nineteenth year of the Chen Yuan era,* he was promoted from the assistant magistracy of Lantien to the post of supervising censor. Upon Emperor Shun Tsung's ascension to the throne, he was made a secretary of the Ministry of Ceremony. When later the ministers in power were punished, he was sent out as a prefect, but before reaching his post he was further demoted and made assistant prefect of Yunchow. While there he worked harder than ever, studying and writing essays. He stored his mind with learning till his knowledge was limitless, and took his pleasure among the hills and streams.

During the Yuan Ho era, he was recalled to the capital and sent out as a prefect again, this time to Liuchow. Once there, he exclaimed: "How much work needs to be done here!"

He drew up regulations which accorded with local customs, and the people of the district abided by them. It was the custom there to give children as security for loans. If repayment was not made on time and the interest amounted to as much as the capital, the children were taken as servants. Liu thought of a way to redeem all these young people, directing that when the parents were too poor to pay the son should furnish the value of the loan in labour, after which he should be returned. The intendant of the circuit introduced this method to his other districts, and in one year nearly a thousand children were redeemed.

*A.D. 803.

All the scholars south of Hengchow and Hsiangchow looked upon Liu as their master, and those who had his personal advice on writing mastered the principles and produced good work.

When he was summoned to the capital and made a prefect, Liu Yu-hsi of Chungshan was also appointed an official with a post at Pochow.

Tzu-hou shed tears and said: "Pochow is not fit for human habitation. And his mother is still alive. I cannot bear to see him in such straits, unable to tell the old lady where he is going. It is out of the question for her to accompany her son."

He gladly risked heavy punishment by pleading for Liu Yu-hsi at court and asking to be sent to Pochow himself instead of to Liuchow. When this was reported to the emperor, Liu Yu-hsi was transferred to Lienchow.

Ah! Adversity alone reveals a man's integrity! When all goes well, men may admire and befriend each other; eat, drink and take pleasure together; laugh at each other's jokes and flatter each other; clap hands or make a show of baring their hearts; point to the sun with tears in their eyes, and swear to be true till death — all this most convincingly. But when the least profit or risk is involved, be it slight as a hair, they will cold-shoulder you. If you fall into a pit, instead of stretching out a helping hand they will push you further in, or drop stones on you. This is happening every day. Even birds, beasts and barbarians would not stoop to such behaviour, yet these men pride themselves on their intelligence. They ought to blush when they hear of Tzu-hou's deeds.

As a young man, Tzu-hou championed the unfortunate and never spared himself, hoping to make a name for himself at once. That is why he was dismissed. After his demotion, as he had no influential friends to help him, he finally died in a desolate frontier region, his talents unused, his ideals unrealized. Had he held himself as much in check while a secretary as he did while a prefect, he would not have been dismissed. And after his dismissal, had some powerful official spoken for him, he could undoubtedly

have been reinstated. But if he had not been banished for so long and reduced to such poverty, though he might have distinguished himself he would never have written the works he did — works which will be handed down to posterity. So even if his wish had come true and he had served as a general or minister, it is clear which of these achievements is worth more.

Tzu-hou died on the eighth of the eleventh month of the fourteenth year of the Yuan Ho era,* at the age of forty-seven. On the tenth of the seventh month of the fifteenth year, his body was interred beside his ancestors at Wannien.

He had two sons. The elder, Chou-liu, was just four. The younger, Chou-chi, was born after his father's death. He also had two daughters who were still children. His funeral expenses were met by the intendant of the circuit, Pei Hsing-li of Hotung. Pei is an upright and worthy gentleman. He befriended Tzu-hou, who was a good friend to him too, and at the last it was he who saw to the funeral. Tzu-hou's brother-in-law, Lu Chun, escorted the coffin to the graveyard at Wannien. Lu Chun comes from Chuochow. He is prudent and steady, devoted to his studies. After Tzu-hou was demoted, Lu Chun went to live with him and remained with him till his death. After burying Tzu-hou he continued to care for his family, showing himself a true friend from first to last.

The epitaph runs:

> Here Liu Tsung-yuan doth dwell,
> Secure and sound
> Beneath the ground,
> May all his sons do well!

IN MEMORY OF MY NEPHEW

Seven days after I, your uncle, heard of your death, with heart-felt grief in this distant place I made Chien-chung prepare offerings of the season to sacrifice to your spirit.

* A.D. 819.

Alas! Left an orphan early, I grew up with no recollection of my father, brought up by my elder brother and his wife — your parents. When my brother was cut off in his prime in the south, you and I, still boys, went with your mother to Hoyang for the funeral, and later found a livelihood south of the Yangtse. Two lonely, fatherless lads, we were never parted for a single day.

My three elder brothers died young, leaving you as the only grandson and me as the only son to carry on our line — each the sole representative of his generation. Your mother used to pat you and point at me, saying: "You two are all that are left of two generations of the house of Han." You were too young to have remembered, and I, though old enough to remember her words, did not know the grief behind them.

At nineteen I went to the capital. Four years later I returned to you, and in four more years, when I visited our ancestral graves at Hoyang, I found you burying your mother there. Two years later you came to stay with me for a year while I was working with Minister Tung at Pienchow, and then you went home to fetch your family. Next year the minister died, I left Pienchow, and you were unable to join me. That year I was appointed to assist the governor of Hsuchow, but no sooner did I send for you than I had to leave again, so that once more you could not join me. I feared if you were to go with me to the east, where you too were a stranger, we could not stay there long. My best plan for the future was to return west, and fetch you after settling my household there.

Alas, who could have foreseen that you would so soon leave me and die? As we were both still young, I thought that after a temporary separation we would pass the long evening of our life together. That is why I left you to find a post in the capital, for the sake of a few bushels of government rice. Had I known that this would happen, I would not have parted with you for a single day, not for a dukedom or a ministership with a fief of ten thousand chariots.

Last year when Meng Chiao left, I wrote to you: "I am not yet forty, yet my sight is failing, my hair is greying, my

teeth are giving me trouble. Considering how early my uncles and brothers died, though all of them were strong men, how long can a crock like myself hope to last? I cannot leave my post, and you will not come. But if I were to die suddenly, you would be sorry ever after."

To think that the younger would die, and the elder live on! That the stronger would go, not the invalided! Alas! Is this reality or a dream? Perhaps the news is not true. If it is, how could the heir of a man as noble as my brother be struck down? How could one of your integrity not survive to carry on his line? Are the young and strong cut off, while the old and weak live on? I cannot believe it. But if this is a dream and the news was not true, why are Meng's letter and Keng Lan's report before me? Alas, it is true after all! My noble brother's heir has indeed died before his time! Despite your integrity and fitness to head the family, you did not survive to carry on his line! These untimely deaths are unpredictable, Heaven's will is hard to fathom, reason is difficult to deduce, and the span of mortal life cannot be known. But this year my grey hair is turning white, my loose teeth are falling out. I grow feebler every day, my mental powers are diminishing day by day, and before long I may follow you to the grave. If there is consciousness after death, I shall not be separated from you. If there is no consciousness, this sorrow will endure but for a little, and then no more sorrow for ever.

Your son is just ten, mine five. But if a man can be cut off in his prime, how dare we hope that children in arms will grow up? Last year you wrote to me: "From time to time I suffer greatly from dropsy."

"That disease is common south of the Yangtse," I thought, and was not unduly alarmed. Did you die of this, or of some other illness?

Your letter was dated the seventeenth of the sixth month, but Meng told me that you died on the second of the month, while Keng Lan's report gives no date. I take it Meng's messenger did not ask your family, and Keng Lan did not think to mention it. So when Meng wrote he questioned

the messenger, who gave him a wrong answer. Is this correct?

I have sent Chien-chung to make sacrifice to you and sent condolences to your children and foster-mother, asking her to stay there if she has the means till the period of mourning is over, when I shall go to fetch her. If she cannot do that, I shall bring her here now. I have told all the other servants to observe mourning. When I am able to rebury you, I shall lay your bones in our ancestral graveyard — only then can I rest content.

Alas! I did not know the hour of your illness, nor yet the day of your death. In life I could not watch over you at your side, and in death I could not weep over your corpse. At the funeral I could not touch your coffin, at the burial I could not stand by your grave. I have sinned against Heaven and caused your early death. I have failed in brotherly kindness, failed to help you in life or to be with you at the last — instead we were at opposite ends of the earth. In life your shadow could not cleave to my form, in death your spirit cannot enter my dreams. This is my fault, and mine alone. Heaven above, when will my sorrow cease? I shall take no further interest in human affairs, but find a few acres of land between the Yi and the Yin to pass the rest of my days. There I shall teach your son and mine, to make good men of them, and there I shall bring up our daughters till they reach the age of marriage. This will be all my care.

Ah, words fail me, but my love can never end. Do you hear me now, or has all consciousness left you? Alas! May your spirit come to the sacrifice!

Translated by Yang Hsien-yi and Gladys Yang

Travel Notes

WU WEN-TAO

A Visit to the Old Soviet Areas

The old Soviet areas refer to the revolutionary bases established during the Second Revolutionary Civil War (1927-1937). In October 1927, Chairman Mao Tse-tung led the First Workers' and Peasants' Revolutionary Army to the Chingkang Mountains, and later joined forces there with the revolutionary troops led by Comrade Chu Teh and established the first revolutionary base on the borders of Hunan and Kiangsi. Thereafter, under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, several revolutionary bases and Soviets were established from where the people's armed forces and political power began to take shape and steadily grow.

The author made a trip to those areas in September 1958. In a simple and clear style, he delineates the new looks of these historical places as they are today.

ABOARD THE S.S. CHIANG HAN

As dusk fell, the loudspeaker on the S. S. Chiang Han announced that we were nearing Kiukiang. Since I was to land there and make a trip via Nanchang to the old Soviet area in Kiangsi, I hastily said good-bye to Hsieh A-ken, a member of the crew I was having a chat with.

I got to know A-ken, a veteran of forty-two years on the river, the day after I boarded ship at Nanking. We had first met in the corridor between the dining-room and my cabin when he stopped me and asked: "Would you like to have your shoes shined, comrade? The service team is working right here!"

At first, I was not quite sure what this bright-faced man in seaman's uniform meant; but presently I found that "the service team" was composed of members of the crew who in their off-duty hours did odd jobs for the passengers and contributed their extra earnings to help build up the villages. Apparently there was also a "stevedore team" which had volunteered to load and unload the ship at every place of call so that the regular longshoremen could find time to do their spot of steel making.

When I asked A-ken if he took part in this, he seemed surprised. "Of course! Even our captain is on the team!" He continued with a note of pride: "When we get to Kiukiang you must come and see the iron and steel plant run by our Harbour Bureau!" I said I would and delighted him with an account of what I had seen in Nanking the evening before, when the night sky glowed red all over the city from the fires of the clusters of steel furnaces erected by the people to step up the steel production of the country, a sight to be seen everywhere on the way.

Our ship glided on smoothly. The autumn wind curled the waves over with a sound like heavy rain pattering on leaves. Sitting by A-ken, I listened to his story of the "leap forward" in socialist construction on this ship. Now the crew was smaller than before but they carried twenty per cent more cargo. All machinery and equipment transported were well taken care of. For several months now not

a single screw had been lost. The S. S. Chiang Han was the oldest vessel of its kind in the Yangtse shipping service, but it was making as good a showing as any of the new fast ships: it did the round trip between Shanghai and Wuhan in six days now instead of eight.

A-ken knew what liberation meant. In the old days China's coastal and inland water ways were open to all foreign ships and the imperialists controlled the shipping in those waters. Their voice was paramount in the matter of pilots and maritime administration. Chinese shipping firms found it necessary to employ foreign captains if they wanted to carry on their dwindling business even in China's own waters. Chinese crew were much discriminated against. Hsieh A-ken, who had tended cattle for a landlord from the age of nine, began to work as a cabin boy on a ship of the British Jardine and Matheson Company at eighteen. For thirty years he lived in conditions hardly fit for an animal.

Now, like the captain, A-ken has three free meals a day on board. Each meal consists of three dishes and a soup. Every year he has 52 days off duty. He enjoys a free medical service and, apart from bonuses, gets a wage of 66 yuan a month. He pays from four to five yuan only a month for the rent of his house in Shanghai and for electricity and water. His eldest daughter, a middle-school graduate and now a teacher, and his second daughter, a second-grade skilled worker, bring in together another one hundred yuan each month to the family income. They are all well fed and well clad and every month manage to bank some savings. It was not until liberation, A-ken told me, that he really began to live like a human being. This made him feel young and was the reason why he was working so hard. Already sixty-one, he could have retired on his pension, but he said he intended to work on several years more to do his bit to train the younger generation of China's seamen.

Only once before liberation did A-ken see the imperialists behave with a little less arrogance than usual. That was early in 1927 when the people of Wuhan and Kiukiang, led by the Communist Party, went into action and recovered

the British concessions there from the imperialists who had persecuted the revolutionary masses. That showed that imperialism was not so formidable—in a tough fight it would prove a paper tiger. A-ken shared the joy of victory that swept through all the Chinese working people at that time. It was only when the Chiang Kai-shek clique betrayed the revolution, gave its allegiance to the imperialists and began to attack the people that the imperialists resumed their old airs. When the U.S. and other imperialists bombarded Nanking in 1927, thousands of Chinese citizens were killed . . . this too was still fresh in A-ken's memory.

Then came the massacre of the Chinese people by the Kuomintang reactionaries on April 12, 1927. For twenty years Nanking had been the seat of the Kuomintang government, and during those years nearly every pebble at Yuhuatai on the outskirts of the city had been stained with the blood of revolutionary martyrs. "But the Chinese Communists and the people of China were not intimidated, subjugated or exterminated," wrote Chairman Mao Tse-tung in *On Coalition Government*. "They rose to their feet again, staunched their wounds, buried their fallen comrades and carried on the fight." This referred to the August First Uprising and the Second Revolutionary Civil War (1927-1937) which I shall come back to later.

BY THE RIVER HSUNYANG

Since ancient times, that part of the Yangtse on which Kiukiang stands has been known as the River Hsunyang. This is the place mentioned in the long poem *Song of the Lute* by the Tang poet Po Chu-yi (772-846) — "One night at the Hsunyang riverside, I bade farewell to a guest." Set among the warehouses here is a small temple and on its wall are written the following words: "This is where Po the prefect bade farewell to his guest." A memorial hall will soon be built here by the Cultural Bureau of Kiukiang to show the people's esteem for the great poet.

In the eyes of the Chinese people Po Chu-yi, who wrote over 3,600 poems "so plain and near to one's heart that they can be understood by every old woman," was a great poet whose name is immortal. Some of his poems are satires which sharply exposed the dark side of the society of his times, forcefully criticized the ruling class to which the poet himself belonged and castigated the unruly officials who were bleeding the people white. Because he took his stand on the side of the people, he earned the dislike of the leading court officials who had him banished to Chiangchow (present-day Kiukiang) as a prefect. On his arrival in Chiangchow the first thing that struck him was the poverty of the local inhabitants. This was the misery he wrote of in the lines:

> The forest trees are bare and downcast after the mountain storm;
> The roofs of the houses are hidden low among the river mists.
> The horses, fed on water grass, are too weak to carry their load;
> The cottage walls of wattle and thatch let the wind blow on one's bed.

This scene of misery which he described more than a thousand years ago remained unchanged under the rule of the Kuomintang reactionaries. Take Yangfuli Village near Kiukiang for instance. A few decades ago it had a thousand inhabitants. Towards the end of Kuomintang rule, schistosomiasis had killed every man in the village; hence its nickname the "Widows' Village." The whole place was deserted and fell into decay, yet corrupt Kuomintang officialdom did nothing about it. If there was any difference between the Kuomintang regime and the times of Po Chu-yi, it was that in Kuomintang times things grew even worse, and the people were exploited by the imperialists too.

Here on the Kiukiang riverside was "Foreign Street" where the Chinese did not even have free passage: at one end of the street were the Standard Oil and Asiatic Petroleum Companies, at the other the Jardine and Matheson and the Butterfield and Swire Companies, and I found

that Kiukiang, a city with a population of only sixty to seventy thousand in the past, had over a dozen foreign churches and cathedrals and still more organizations connected with the church. Old inhabitants could remember how seventy years ago hundreds of families living around Hsiaochia Street were forced to move because the American dignitaries wanted to build a church there. People paraded with incense sticks in their hands, begging that their homes should be spared, but these so-called philanthropists ignored their pleas. Streets and lanes surrounding the chapel were enclosed and turned into church property.

At one corner of the reception house of the Kiukiang Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, there is a stone tablet half buried in the earth. It was erected by the Kuomintang Headquarters of the Kiukiang Garrison and the Kiukiang county government in 1933. From what is visible of the inscription, you can see that this was established in testimony of a decision in favour of the foreigners in a dispute between the foreign church and the local Buddhist Temple of Nengjen over 8,385 square metres of land. Because half of the tablet was buried and I could not read the whole story, I paid a special visit to the Temple of Nengjen, first built in the time of Emperor Wuti of the Liang dynasty in the early 6th century, to learn more about the dispute.

At the temple I met a 48-year-old monk who told me the following story: In 1932, the foreign church seized part of the temple's property to build more houses. When the church ignored his protests, Abbot Huichan of the temple appealed to the Kiukiang county government. But the local garrison commander, his palms greased by the foreigners, ruled that the land should be given to the church and the abbot thrown into gaol. The Kuomintang authorities also forbade the abbot's return to the Temple of Nengjen when he was released on bail. Bitterly humiliated, he moved to Lushan where he died soon after in the Temple of the Blue Lotus.

All that is past now. Kiukiang's "Foreign Street" now belongs to the people, the imperialists have been thrown out

and the signs they painted on the walls have been removed. The people's Kiukiang is forging ahead to industrialization. This year, they are producing iron and steel in blast furnaces and small "native-style" converters, they are turning out 600,000 sets of axle bearings by handicraft methods; but they are also building a number of new industrial plants including a modern iron and steel complex with an annual capacity of 100,000 tons of steel. Every day large consignments of industrial equipment are shipped from here to other parts of Kiangsi. A railway will soon link Kiukiang with Wuhan. As to the once deserted Yangfuli Village, schistosomiasis has been wiped out by the health authorities and it has been restored to life. It is now a state farm with a beautiful orchard. When I went to visit it, people there proudly told me that they had just brought in the first crop of apples from the trees they planted a few years ago.

LUSHAN, YESTERDAY AND TODAY

Before I left for Nanchang, I took the opportunity of visiting Lushan because I had never seen this historic mountain.

Su Shih (Su Tung-po) of the Sung dynasty (960-1279) wrote about Lushan:

> Seen from in front it is a range,
> Seen from the side a peak;
> From afar it has one guise,
> From near by another;
> You can never tell what Lushan's true appearance is
> When you are standing in the midst of the mountain.

This beautiful mountain, with its constantly changing veil of mist and clouds, has played an important role in China's cultural history. Since ancient times, many poets and scholars have chosen to make their home among its peaks. The White Deer Cave College founded there in the early Sung dynasty was a cultural and academic centre until the beginning of the Ching dynasty. Lushan's beauty

naturally attracted the envious eyes of the imperialists who turned it into an exclusive summer resort. During the Kuomintang regime it was at Lushan that the reactionaries and their imperialist backers plotted their wars against the Chinese Communist Party and the people.

After the September 18 Incident in 1931, most of the important decisions of the Kuomintang diehards relating to their capitulation to the Japanese invaders and their frenzied plans for the "encirclement and annihilation" of the Soviet areas in Kiangsi were worked out in Lushan. The notorious Kuomintang Officers' Training Centre was established in Lushan in 1933 for the purpose of carrying on the war against the people. After the victory of the War of Resistance to Japanese Aggression, when the whole nation was longing for peace, Chiang Kai-shek's clique, urged by the U.S. imperialists, started the civil war. In July 1946, in the name of "mediation," George C. Marshall, the representative of the U.S. imperialists, paid eight melodramatic visits to Lushan to confer with Chiang Kai-shek. Each of these visits marked an extension of the Kuomintang's war against the people. Naturally the U.S. imperialists and Chinese reactionaries did not and could not realize that it was precisely these repressive measures against the people that determined the nation to carry the war of liberation to a victorious conclusion. Lushan was liberated in May 1949, three years after General Marshall's visits.

I went up Lushan by bus along a highway built in 1953 which looked like a huge jade dragon winding its way through the mountains. The scenery kept changing with dramatic suddenness. Kuling, 1,000 metres above sea level, is the terminus of this mountain road. Another round-the-mountain highway runs from here in two directions. The quiet valleys and mountain tops were green with pine trees. Streams ran sparkling between the rocks. Like flowers on a lawn, bright red roofs shone amidst the foliage. These were the luxurious villas and official residences of former landlords, bureaucrat-capitalists and imperialists. Now they have been turned into sanatoria and

rest homes where, throughout the year, thousands of working people and intellectuals come to recuperate or enjoy a holiday.

Sitting in the comfortable bus which runs smoothly up this mountain highway, it is difficult to imagine the method of travel here before liberation. In those days not only the autocrats who usurped Lushan and turned it into their pleasure-garden, but every pound of stuff they ate or used —chocolate bars, pianos and pet dogs--had to be carried uphill by sedan-chair along a steep mountain path with thousands of steps cut into it. "One trip uphill makes you foot-sore for a month, a trip downhill gives you a backache all night," the sedan-carriers used to say. Hsiang Kuo-sheng, a former sedan-carrier who since liberation has become a porter at the bus station, told me that one 10-kilometre stretch of the old mountain path was known as Strong Man's Slope, because only the strongest carrier could negotiate it. At the end of this stretch, all the carriers, four for each sedan-chair, would be gasping for breath, and even in dry weather the stone steps on the steep path would be wet from the sweat pouring off their backs.

One clear morning after several days of rain, Hsiang Kuo-sheng, in a brand-new raincoat and rubber shoes and with a 21-jewelled watch he had just bought on his wrist, showed me around the office of their trade union. It was spotlessly clean. Hsiang came from Huangmei County, Hupeh, I was told. When the Red Army set off for Szechuan and the Kuomintang re-entered the area, a search was made for Hsiang's father because his uncle had joined the Red Army in the Hupeh-Honan-Anhwei Soviet Region. The family fled and settled down in Lushan. In 1933 his father became a sedan-carrier. Hsiang was then only three. Life was hard. At thirteen he became a sedan-carrier too and toiled up and down the mountain paths until the day of liberation.

Other former sedan-carriers have gone to work in the state farms and communes at the foot of the mountain. Those who stayed on the mountain have left their old dank hovels to live in sunny buildings costing them only one or

two yuan a month in rent. This was beyond all their dreams in the past.

I learned from Director Tsai of the Lushan Administration that by the summer of 1956 over half of the floor space in Lushan had been used to set up fifteen large rest homes and seven sanatoria. I visited the sanatorium of the Union of Post and Tele-Communications' Workers. It had 130 beds and the latest medical equipment; convalescent workers were strolling in its grounds or lying on the lawn in the sun. As I was leaving Lushan, two large station wagons of the Nanchang Trade Union were taking men and women back to work after their holiday on the mountain. They looked fresh and energetic. Autumn had come to Lushan. It was growing cold, still I felt reluctant to leave this beautiful pleasure-garden of the people.

THE FIRE BURNS BRIGHT WHEN EVERYBODY ADDS WOOD TO IT

I found Nanchang caught up in the battle for iron and steel.

Workers, students and housewives, beating drums and gongs, were marching in groups carrying big posters mounted on red silk to the Nanchang Municipal Committee of the Chinese Communist Party to announce the good news: their native-style blast furnaces were turning out iron, their first heats of steel had come out from their small converters or they had succeeded in making simple blowers.

I had planned to see the relics of the August the First Nanchang Uprising before anything else, but I, too, was carried away by the drive for iron and steel. Just as in Nanking and Kiukiang, iron and steel were the prime topic of conversation among old and young, men and women — how to make better use of manpower, how women could take over certain jobs to free able-bodied men to build furnaces or dig ore. If you failed to find the people you wished to see it was because they were hard at work boosting the iron and steel production. Apparently all of

them were becoming skilled metallurgical workers. Every man and woman knew that iron and steel were the foundation for the socialist industrialization of the country, of mechanized farming and of national defence. To accelerate the rate of socialist construction, every second counts and every ounce added is important. The people of Kiangsi realize this and have organized themselves into an army, millions strong, to produce iron and steel in every corner of the province.

When the Kiangsi Provincial Committee of the Chinese Communist Party put out its slogan: "A Month's Shock Work to Boost Iron and Steel Production! Turn out 10,000 Tons of Iron a Day to Greet National Day!" I saw with my own eyes how the people of the old Soviet areas, with their proud old revolutionary tradition, responded. During my tour in the following two weeks I saw how they rose before dawn and refused to go to bed till late at night. They took food to eat by the ore workings in the mountains and slept beside their furnaces at night so as not to waste a moment's precious time, determined to wage the fight until the battle for steel was won.

Before I left Nanchang, however, I was able to visit all the memorable sites connected with the August Uprising. I saw the former Kiangsi Hotel, now the site of the Memorial Hall, where Comrades Chou En-lai, Chu Teh, Ho Lung and Yeh Ting, leaders of the Nanchang Uprising, held their meetings and worked out their plans. The headquarters of Comrade Ho Lung, then commander of the 20th Army of the National Revolutionary Army, is now a primary school on the windows of which bullet marks can still be seen. The headquarters of Comrade Yeh Ting, then commander of the 11th Army, is now the Nanchang No. 2 Middle School. The office of Comrade Chu Teh, then Director of the Bureau of Public Security of Nanchang, is now the site of the August the First Nursery. I also visited the place where the Kuomintang counter-revolutionary forces were wiped out by the troops under the command of Ho Lung, Yeh Ting and Chu Teh. All

these places and buildings have been restored to their original form or are marked for the convenience of visitors wishing to pay homage to the revolutionary heroes.

In the visitors' book in the Memorial Hall I found a page written by Comrade Chen Yi, one of the participants in the Nanchang Uprising and now Vice-Premier and Foreign Minister of the People's Republic of China. His comments on the historical meaning of the Nanchang Uprising are worth noting.

> The significance of the August the First Uprising lies in the fact that the Chinese Communist Party began to raise high its own revolutionary banner in answer to the Kuomintang's betrayal of the revolution and the imperialist attacks. It thus opened a new stage in the people's revolution in China, a stage in which the armed people fought independently against the joint attacks of the Kuomintang and the imperialists. This great task of revolution and of building up an army were initiated by the Nanchang Uprising, it went on until the winter of 1927 when the red flag was planted on Chingkang Mountains and the movement rolled on to become a tidal wave of joint action with the other revolutionary bases throughout the country. The enemy was thus forced to acknowledge the staunchness and courage of the Chinese people; the folly of the counter-revolutionaries who declared that the Chinese revolution had come to grief and could not be revived was amply demonstrated. This was the great political outcome brought about by our Party, with Marxism-Leninism in the command, by leading the people to build up their own army. This is worth commemorating and studying. Today, living in the new era of the "great leap forward" in China's socialist construction, we can learn much from the Nanchang Uprising by testifying the present with the past, the past with the present; and this comparison will serve to increase our efforts and energy during the "great leap forward." This is the main significance of this commemoration. The establishment of this Memorial Hall is an excellent thing. The sight of it fills me with great admiration and gratitude.
>
> Chen Yi, September 5, 1958

INTO THE OLD SOVIET AREA

Seventy-five kilometres southeast from Nanchang, I reached Linchuan, close to the old Central Soviet Area. To its northeast formerly was the Northeast Kiangsi Soviet Region founded mainly by Fang Chih-min, the beloved leader of the people in that area, who was unfortunately captured by the enemy while breaking through the Kuomintang encirclement in 1934 when, acting on the order of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, he was leading a contingent north to fight the Japanese invaders. He was later murdered in Nanchang. This hero will live for ever in the hearts of the people of northeast Kiangsi and the whole of China. In prison, Fang Chih-min defied the enemy's torture and refused to surrender, carrying on the struggle to the last. There he wrote *The Brief Story of My Revolutionary Career, My Beloved Country* and many letters, every word of which is imbued with revolutionary optimism and indomitable revolutionary heroism. In one of his letters, Fang Chih-min wrote:

> . . .So long as I live, I shall cry out for China. If I cannot live — if I died — a flower of revolution may some day grow at the place where I shed my blood or where my body is buried. That flower you may take as the shelter of my soul! In a gentle breeze, if that flower nods its head, take it as my revolutionary salute to the patriots fighting for the liberation of the Chinese nation! If that flower sways from side to side, take it as a sign that I am singing a revolutionary song to urge the fighters on!

These stirring words are filled with a profound patriotism! I meditated on these things as my jeep sped along the highway on the plain between the Kanchiang and Fuho Rivers.

In this delta known as the "Ukraine" of Kiangsi, a fight against nature was on. A water conservancy project for the full utilization of the resources in the Kanchiang-Fuho plain was started on May 1, 1958. In a year's time, there will be no more floods or droughts in the delta: the age-

old dream of a million people here will come true under the guidance of the Communist Party.

We arrived in Nanfeng at noon. Clusters of people were washing the sand which contains deposits of iron in this part of the Fuho and along its tributaries. Red flags were flying and songs could be heard everywhere — it was a wonderful scene. I was told that Taiho Township had been the first to extract iron ore from the sand. The practice dated back to the Soviet days when the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army organized the people of this locality to smelt iron and make hand-grenades. After the Red Army left for the north, this rich deposit of iron sand was gradually forgotten. Not long ago, when the secretary of the Nanfeng County Committee of the Party learned this, he immediately organized the people to extract the iron from the sand. Those with experience were urged to pass their skill on to others. A Red Army veteran Fu Hung-pi, now a man the wrong side of fifty, who used to be skilled in washing the sand and able to extract over 180 catties a day, was the first one to answer the call. For years he had longed for an iron and steel industry of the people's own, and now he had lived to see his wish come true. In great earnest he passed his knowledge on to others and in several days trained hundreds of young people. At present, the daily output of the iron sand of Nanfeng runs to 75,000 catties and its iron content is generally as high as fifty per cent.

Every visitor to Nanfeng is probably interested in one of its famous special products — the Nanfeng tangerine, known throughout China for its sweetness. The size of a walnut, it is seedless, and has a very thin skin. The local people told me that because these tangerines fetched high prices, landlords and officials during the days of the Kuomintang rule ruthlessly exploited the tangerine growers and bled them white. A Ming poet, Han Pang-chi, once wrote this about the life of the working people in localities producing special products:

The River Fuyang has the famous shad,
And on Mount Fuyang grows tea;
The fish is so choice that I have to sell my child,
The tea is so famed that my family is ruined.
The women who pick the tea
And the men who catch the fish
Are tortured and robbed by officials
Till not one has a whole skin.

This is a true picture of the life in such districts under the reactionary rule of the Kuomintang. It was only after liberation that the rich income from these tangerines began going into the pockets of the co-operative peasants who grew them. The area for growing these tangerines has been expanded and an institute to study their development has been set up by the government in Nanfeng. In the vicinity of the county seat, you can find groves of vivid green tangerine trees loaded with emerald fruits soon to ripen into a golden red. It is an enchanting scene.

It took us four hours by car from Nanfeng to Ningtu by way of Kwangchang. The country here is hilly, with a subtropical air, and trees and bamboos grow there in profusion. One moment our car would crest a hill overrun with green bushes, the next it would dip into a valley with whispering streams. Neat, terraced fields were succeeded by forest-clad peaks. The scene can best be conveyed by the lines of Lu Yu, a Sung dynasty poet:

Mountains and rivers interlace till it seems there can be no road ahead,
Yet another village emerges shaded by willows and bright with flowers.

We spent one night in Ningtu and set out for Juikin, capital of the former Chinese Soviet Republic, the following afternoon.

OLD NEIGHBOURS OF CHAIRMAN MAO

When I was a middle-school student in north China, Japan had just seized northeast China but the Kuomintang reactionaries were frantically engaged in their "encirclement and annihilation" of the Soviet areas. I cherished a secret admiration for the heroic red capital Juikin, with its well-known legendary pagoda, and longed to see for myself the city then representing the hope of the Chinese people. For several decades I continued to dream of Juikin. So when its old, white pagoda actually came into sight, my heart was beating as fast as if I were returning home after long years.

In November 1931, the First People's Congress of the Soviet areas gave birth to the Provisional Central Government of the Chinese Soviet Republic with Comrade Mao Tse-tung as chairman. The seat of the government was Yehping, a village of some forty households, seven or eight kilometres east of Juikin. On my way to Yehping, I passed the Juikin Museum of Revolutionary History and stopped to see the inspiring exhibits there. Among them were many important documents including the First Proclamation of the Provisional Central Government of the Chinese Soviet Republic signed by Chairman Mao Tse-tung in 1931; newspapers, periodicals and textbooks published in the Soviet area; badges and identity tags of the Red Army and guerrilla forces; deeds and diplomas issued by the government; banknotes and coins from the Central Bank of the Soviet area; photographs and many other exhibits to remind visitors of those difficult years in Juikin. All these things were preserved by the local people at the risk of their lives during the White Terror of the Kuomintang till the day of liberation. Today, every single item has high educational value for posterity. The museum is housed in a new two-storeyed building, on the front of which are written in characters of gold in Chairman Mao Tse-tung's calligraphy the significant words: "A Single Spark Can Start a Prairie Fire."

At noon we reached Yehping. All the villagers belong to the Hsieh clan whose ancestral hall was the General Office of the Central Government at that time. This hall, about ten by twenty metres in size, was damaged by the reactionaries in 1934 after the Red Army set off on the Long March, but the local people have restored it to its original form. Its walls were washed with red ochre. Both sides of the hall were partitioned into seven small cubicles of about four square metres, each the office of a ministry under the Central Government.

Two members of the Hsieh clan, one fifty-nine and one sixty, were eager to show me where their old neighbour Chairman Mao used to live. It was a two-storeyed building built of bricks made from loess, next to the General Office of the Central Government. The rooms on the upper floor were occupied by Chairman Mao Tse-tung, Commander-in-Chief Chu Teh, Comrade Chou En-lai and others, while some villagers lived on the ground floor. Behind the building were a forest of tall trees and a grove of bamboos, and beyond that was the square where the Central Government held mass meetings or reviewed troops. There was a tower to commemorate Chao Po-sheng, who led more

than 10,000 Kuomintang troops in an uprising at Ningtu to join the Red Army, and a Memorial Pavilion for Huang Kung-lueh, the commander of the Red Sixth Army Corps. Other government institutions, schools and hospitals were scattered in the surrounding villages.

What attracted me most behind Chairman Mao's house was a camphor tree, at least several hundred years old, so huge that half a dozen men would be needed to encircle its trunk. One of its branches was bent and twisted towards the ground. "After work Chairman Mao liked to sit reading with his back to this branch," my guides recalled. "Come and take a picture here! When Chairman Mao sees it, he'll feel he is back in his old home again."

In 1933, in preparation for the Second People's Congress of the Soviet areas and to avoid the Kuomintang planes, the Central Government moved from Yehping to Shachowpa, over ten kilometres southwest of Juikin. The Military Committee of the Party was located at Wushihlung near by, where Commander-in-Chief Chu Teh lived. There were pine forests around Shachowpa which provided excellent camouflage during air-raids, and in 1933 with the timber at their disposal the people of the Soviet area built a big hall accommodating 1,500 persons. It was in this hall that the Second People's Congress of all the Soviet areas was held in January 1934. When the Red Army set off on the Long March, the reactionaries completely destroyed this hall; but today the people have rebuilt it exactly as it was.

All the inhabitants of Shachowpa belonged to the Yang clan. Here Chairman Mao lived in a one-storeyed building in the same compound as the People's Council. The General Office of the Central Government was also housed in a hall where the Yangs had formerly conducted wedding and funeral ceremonies. Slogans written over twenty years ago giving support to the People's Congress of the Soviet areas are still vaguely discernible on the walls. Yang Yung-fu and Yang Yung-lien, chairman and Party secretary of Shachowpa People's Commune, told me that Chairman Mao Tse-tung had lived with the villagers as if they were his own kith and kin. They showed me the well,

sunk at the proposal of Chairman Mao Tse-tung and with his help, by a pond opposite the former General Office of the Central Government. I was told that before the sinking of this well, the villagers had to carry water from a considerable distance, so the sinking of this well proved a great boon. After liberation, they put up this inscription by the well:

> When you drink remember the man who sank the well—
> Chairman Mao is in our memory at all times.

"WE SMILE AS WE SING"

On my way to the club of the Shachowpa People's Commune, from some distance I heard an old song of the Soviet area called Young Pioneers. As I had sung this myself when a young man, it sounded especially familiar. When I reached the club I found that a dozen old ladies and seven or eight young women were learning a new song from the blackboard for National Day. During a break they had started humming this old favourite and then sung it in chorus.

To learn a song from the blackboard is not so simple—you have to be literate. But so they all were. Just as in other townships and districts of this county, since June 1958 illiteracy has been practically wiped out in Shachowpa. When this achievement was announced in June, the villagers' first thought was to tell the good news to Chairman Mao who is always thinking of them, for this is something of which people have dreamed in vain for the last thousand years. When the Kiangsi Provincial Committee of the Chinese Communist Party and the People's Council of Kiangsi learned that Juikin had been the first county in the province to wipe out illiteracy, they sent a telegram of congratulations, expressing the wish that this county which had made such a great contribution to the liberation of the Chinese people would win still greater glory.

Since then, the whole county has made a big leap forward in the field of culture. At the time of my visit, a mass movement for creative writing was in full swing. By mid-September, 437,000 works by the masses had been collected by the county committee of the Communist Party, mainly folk songs, impromptu verses, comedy dialogues, essays and short plays. Shachowpa Township, with its 1,300 households and population of 6,000, had so far published six issues of its mimeographed magazine *Shachow Literature*. One of the folk songs "Storm the Citadels of Culture" which appeared in the second number runs as follows:

> Fight hard, fight harder, harder yet!
> Fight day and night to learn to do sums and write!
> Write one thousand articles,
> Work and study go hand in hand.
> Everywhere someone is learning something new,
> Now illiteracy's wiped out we must go further:
> Let's have a great revolution in culture and technique,
> And change backward ideas for advanced.

To speed up socialist construction, the people are demanding a cultural and technical revolution, and in order to bring about this revolution wiping out illiteracy is of primary importance. Moreover when the people have become

masters in the cultural field, their socialist consciousness is bound to be raised. Here is another folk song from the same issue:

We smile all over our faces as we sing,
Determined to carry out the General Line;
Work hard, work steadily, and work harder still,
Taking the lead in every job you do.
The wonderful future before us
Makes us happy even in dreams.

Peasants whose fathers and grandfathers neither read nor wrote are now recording with their powerful pens their revolutionary heroism and boundless confidence in the future — this is a tremendous thing and a happy event! And because they can read and write, the following episode happened in Juikin one month before my visit:

When the villagers of Shachowpa and Yehping read the newspapers one evening and saw the directive Chairman Mao Tse-tung gave during his tour of Shantung: Nothing is better than to set up people's communes which merge industry (the worker), agriculture (the peasant), exchange (the trader), culture and education (the student) and defence (the militiaman) into one. They held a meeting that very same evening to discuss and study Chairman Mao's directive. After reviewing the facts and weighing the pros and cons, they made up their mind to turn their co-operatives into a commune. The next morning, beating drums and gongs, they went to the office of the county committee of the Communist Party with the good news. And their enthusiasm aroused a great wave of support for the establishment of communes in other parts of the county. By August 23, 1958, all 220,000 peasants of the county had signed their names in favour of the establishment of communes; soon they formed 49 communes.

At present, in Juikin County, there is in the main one people's commune to each township and the former agricultural producers' co-operatives have turned into production brigades. In the short period since their formation

it has been shown that the all-round management of the commune releases a large number of hands for work other than farming. I saw native-style coal-mines being developed on a large scale in the mountains near Shachowpa, while the commune was also constructing iron-smelting furnaces. . . .

A 72-line poem with seven characters to a line was recently posted on the big wooden board in the courtyard of the club of Shachowpa Commune. The title was *A People's Commune Is Really Grand.* Some of the characters were wrongly formed and the handwriting was somewhat childish but the ideas of the author were nevertheless brought out clearly and powerfully. Let me quote a few verses to give some idea of the whole:

Now Chairman Mao's sent out the call:
Communes are best for one and all;
Best for the state and every one;
With giant strides ahead we run!

Strengthen collective ownership,
Put others first — don't make a slip!
For once our collective spirit's high,
We'll win at anything we try.

Support the communes, I declare,
Division of the work is fair:
For old and young, for me and you,
There will be fitting work to do.

So well the people's commune's run,
A better life will soon be won;
Old, white-haired crones grow young once more,
And infants skip about the floor.

"MOTHERLAND, WE ARE READY! SAY THE WORD!"

I spent one afternoon visiting Changting County in Fukien, not far from Juikin. I took this opportunity to see the place where Chu Chiu-pai, one of the leaders of the Chinese Communist Party in its early years and a well-known writer and literary critic, was murdered. Changting

used to be the seat of the Soviet of Fukien Province and the then People's Provincial Government was situated in what is now the No. 1 Middle School of the county.

My car pushed on through a forest of trees that concealed the sky overhead; I was travelling in the Wuyi Mountain. Slogans in large characters written by the hands of working people appeared now and then on the rocks and larger tree trunks. Just as in all the plains and valleys I had passed, I saw signs everywhere in these rocky mountains of the people's wrath against the U.S. imperialists' occupation of our territory Taiwan, Penghu, Quemoy and Matsu islands and their military provocations. The only difference was that here we were closer to the front of our national defence.

In one very remote village, fresh slogans were printed in red on a white wall near such old slogans as "Long Live the Unbreakable Friendship Between the Peoples of the Soviet Union and China!" and "Firm Support for Our Arab Brothers!"

> We denounce savage U.S. imperialism,
> And support the stand of the government,
> Taiwan, Penghu, Quemoy and Matsu are Chinese,
> The liberation of our territory is a just cause!
> We shall produce more steel and more grain!
> Till we've driven the aggressors away.

Here were evidently the sentiments of these mountain-dwellers after reading the government's statement on Taiwan. The Chinese people, who struggled for so many years for liberation and have defeated more than one fierce imperialist aggressor, have full confidence in the liberation of their sacred territory. The U.S. imperialists cannot be allowed to interfere in any way in China's internal affairs. They must get out of China's territory, otherwise they are just asking for trouble.

Our car stopped outside the west gate of Changting, enabling us to see the dignified tower in memory of Chu Chiu-pai overlooking a hill where young peasants were building a mountain road. They were singing at the top of their voices. The scene brought vividly to my mind

the memory of tens of thousands of martyrs who laid down their lives for the cause of the people's liberation. On July 5, 1935, the Changting correspondent of the Tientsin *Ta Kung Pao*, a paper then in the service of the Kuomintang, reported:

> Chu Chiu-pai is one of the chief men in the Communist Party. In the middle of March this year he was captured by Chung Chao-kuei of the 14th Regiment of the Security Corps at Shuikow in Changting. Chu, who then called himself Lin Chi-hsiang, was detained for over a month without his real identity being revealed. But after his transfer to Changting and repeated cross-examinations by the Court Martial Section of the 36th Division, Chu frankly admitted who he was. . . . This morning news came that he was to be executed. Your correspondent, doubting the truth of this, went out of curiosity to visit the prisoner. When I entered his room, he was writing his last words. As soon as he had finished, he went to Chungshan Park. The whole place was utterly silent, for even the birds had stopped chirping. He made his way leisurely to the pavilion where four dishes and a jug of good wine were ready, and taking a seat he helped himself to food and wine. He talked and smiled as usual, as if nothing were amiss. After a few drinks he said: ". . . The greatest happiness a man can have is to die for the revolution. The philosophy of we Communists is to devote our lives to serving mankind — until our dying day." Then, as loud as he could, he sang the *Internationale*, breaking the silence of the air. After the wine was finished, he walked with dignity to the execution grounds, escorted by guards in front and behind. It was a most solemn moment. At one street corner his eyes fell on a blind beggar, and he looked back as if touched by the sight. When he reached the place of execution, a volley was fired and Chu left the world for ever!

No, Chu Chiu-pai is not dead! He will live for ever in men's hearts! The reactionaries murdered Chu Chiu-pai at Panlung Hill at the foot of Lohan Mountain, outside the west gate of Changting. After liberation, the people built a tower here to commemorate him. As I stood there, a large contingent of militia marched past the tower in perfect formation, shouting: "U.S. troops get out of Chinese territory!" "We must liberate Taiwan, Penghu, Quemoy and Matsu!" It was a stirring sight.

At sunset, I paid a hasty visit to the blast furnaces known for their high iron output run by the organizations under the county committee of the Communist Party. Then I visited the place where Chu Chiu-pai was detained and the pavilion where he had his last cup of wine and sang the *Internationale* before his execution. The building in which he was imprisoned is now part of the No. 1 Middle School of that county, and since Chungshan Park was just next to the school, it now forms part of the campus.

Classes were over and it was time for the students to go home, but in twos and threes they were hurrying to the place where big posters were displayed. They pasted up more posters protesting against the U.S.-Chiang provocations in the Taiwan Straits, against the shelling of schools in Amoy which had killed many students there. One poster with the heading "U.S. Imperialism Is the Sworn Enemy of the Chinese People," signed by more than ten students, said that during the Second Revolutionary Civil War, the U.S. imperialists supplied the Kuomintang reactionaries with cotton, wheat and munitions to slaughter the people of the Soviet areas; during the Japanese imperialists' invasion of China, they again provided the invaders with iron and steel to make weapons to kill the people. It was the U.S. imperialists again who, after the surrender of the Japanese, incited the Kuomintang reactionaries to launch a large civil war to increase the profits of monopoly capital. In another poster scores of students pledged themselves to study harder, take an active part in industrial production and farming as part of their work-while-you-study programme, and keep fit by physical training, so that the motherland would have all the grain, steel and men she wanted.

At the top of the wooden notice-board bearing these posters were large characters that leapt to the eye:

"Motherland, We Are Ready. Say the Word!"

THE YOUNGER GENERATION IN THE OLD REVOLUTIONARY BASE

The day after our return to Juikin from Changting, we set off early to Chingkang Mountains, where Chairman Mao Tse-tung founded the first revolutionary base in 1927. We broke our journey to spend one day at Kanchow, capital city of south Kiangsi, to visit several schools run under the work-while-you-study programme.

On our way to Kanchow, we had passed scores of covered lorries carrying singing college students to the mountains to dig iron ore. They were Kanchow students of agriculture, technology, education and medicine who, in accordance with the policy of combining education with productive labour, had organized themselves into shock brigades to mine iron ores in the hills. They would not return to school until a fortnight later.

When I reached the No. 5 Middle School of the municipality, the students were studying quietly in their class-rooms. But when I penetrated further I heard the clinking of metal — some of the third-year students were making ball-bearings to support the technical revolution in the countryside. Half a dozen rooms housed their workshops — the draughtsmen's office, the smithy, the cutting and shearing shop, the ball-making and assembly shops.

All the work except one process was done in the school. The exception was the grinding of the iron rings for the axle. Before the school installed its own small milling machine, the students had to go to an iron works in the east suburb for this. In future, when all the necessary machines are installed, experienced workers from the iron works will come to the school to pass on their knowledge to the students. The school teachers are already helping the workers to learn to read and write during their spare time, a sign of the close co-ordination between the school and the factory. In the big court outside the workshop, scores of students were carrying bricks and other materials to expand their

own steel plant so that they would be able to turn out 550 tons of steel before the end of the year.

I was told by the dean of the school that his students, besides working on the industrial front, also took part in agricultural production. Students of the lower forms did the light jobs while the senior students did heavier work such as steel making. Every three weeks each form, led by its teachers, would spend three successive days on physical labour so as to learn productive techniques. In some schools the students work for six successive days every six weeks. Thus every student, on the average, puts in one day of physical labour a week. Most of the income they earn is used as subsidies for the students, the rest as cash awards or funds to improve their cultural life and collective welfare.

The dean pointed out, however, that the aim of this work-while-you-study programme is not to make money but to raise the quality of education. Its purpose is to steel the students, accustom them to labour, make them hard-working and thrifty, help them to learn labour skills and give them a lasting love for the workers and peasants. It was his experience that this system now being put into practice throughout the country has brought new vitality to educational work. The students no longer despise or hate labour, as they were taught to do in the old society. Instead, they have a real love for labour; they are studying hard and learning to be industrious and frugal. There is a general improvement too in their health. Contrary to some people's fears, the policy of combining education with productive labour has greatly raised the quality of schooling instead of lowering it.

Pointing to the big characters "Carry on the Revolutionary Tradition and Win Even Greater Honour!" on the blackboard in the courtyard, he told me that they were bringing up the younger generation to become worthy successors to those now building up the old bases. They are taught the heroic and militant spirit of their fathers, the people of the old revolutionary bases who engaged in bitter struggles to

support the Red Army even though besieged by the enemy, the people who, after the Red Army marched north, despite all the reactionaries did to suppress them, firmly believed that "Chairman Mao is bound to come back."

As the bell for a break rang, some students gathered round us curiously. I asked one boy: "What do you want to do when you have finished your studies, young man?" He replied at once: "Go to the Chingkangshan Labour University." The dean told me that this is a new type of university opened on August 1, 1958. The undergraduates there combine work and study. With its headquarters in Nanchang, it has 30 branch institutes all over the hilly regions in the province, mainly in Chingkang Mountains, Tamao Mountain and other bases in the old Soviet areas. It is closely connected with the state reclamation centres in the hilly regions. Courses in agriculture, industry, forestry, animal husbandry, veterinary science or fishery are offered according to the nature of production of the different localities. The students are able to earn their keep, and some pocket-money by the work they do; and if they are short the government makes good the deficit. These students, whose courses last from two to four years, will become a very useful force to help in the construction of the old bases.

I learned later, at Chingkang Mountains, that after the establishment of the Labour University in Kiangsi was announced, middle-school students, ex-servicemen and young craftsmen with some schooling applied from all parts of the province and, indeed, of the country, to be admitted to the university. They considered it would be a special honour to study in the old Soviet area which contributed so much to the revolution during the Second Revolutionary Civil War, and to take part in the socialist construction there.

On the day of my arrival in Chingkang Mountains, I saw students of the Labour University at work building their college with the bamboos and pine trees they had felled themselves. Until the school buildings were completed and the necessary equipment installed, they were living in the homes of the villagers and attending classes in the meadows

at the foot of the mountain. That same day I also saw several hundred young men and women from Shanghai, carrying their own luggage and singing as they reached Chingkang Mountains, the place that has captured every imagination.

THE EXAMPLE SET BY CHINGKANG MOUNTAINS

Following the steps of the Red Armymen, a highway winds through countless precipices to the heart of Chingkang Mountains, Tzuping, running on to Tatsin, where Chairman Mao Tse-tung and Vice-Chairman Chu Teh once lived.

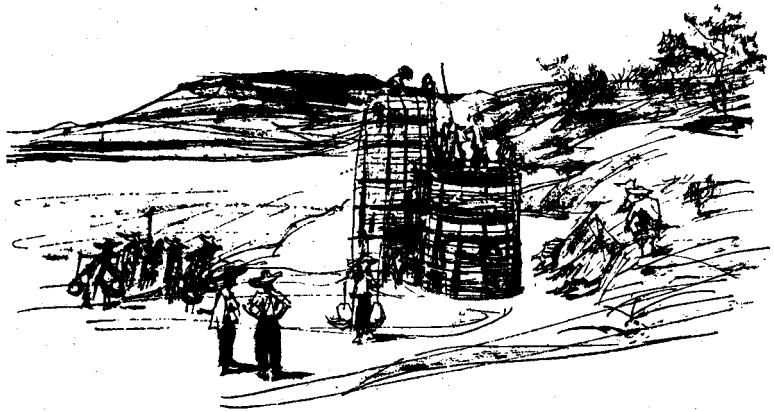
The very name Chingkang Mountains is sacred and inspiring! It brings to mind the Kuomintang reactionaries' betrayal of the revolution in the summer of 1927, their capitulation to imperialism, their brutal suppression of the revolutionary movement and their massacre of countless revolutionaries. . . . It was in 1927 that Chairman Mao Tse-tung organized the well-known autumn-harvest uprisings in the vicinity of Pingkiang and Liuyang in Hunan. In October of the same year, he led the First Workers' and Peasants' Revolutionary Army to Chingkang Mountains and established the first revolutionary base. That marked a new advance for the revolution.

In his *Why Can China's Red Political Power Exist?* and *A Single Spark Can Start a Prairie Fire*, written in 1928 and 1930, Comrade Mao Tse-tung elucidated theoretically why the development of the Red Army and the establishment of revolutionary bases in the countryside at that time were possible, and why these formed the main content of the revolutionary struggle. He told the Chinese people that since the revolution had received a setback from the powerful enemy in the cities and could not gain victory there for the time being, the only correct course was to arm the countryside in order to surround and eventually seize the cities occupied by the counter-revolutionaries. The development of the Chinese revolution in the following twenty years completely proved the accuracy of Comrade Mao Tse-tung's foresight. It also shows how wrong were those who

lost hope when the revolution faced temporary setbacks, who thought that the red regions could not survive. In the history of the growth of the people's revolutionary power under the leadership of the Party, Chingkang Mountains were the first place on which the red flag was planted, and the first centre of leadership, while Juikin, already mentioned, should be considered the second.

A light rain was falling when I reached Tzuping. Wrapped in mist, the distant surrounding mountain peaks looked from a distance like a lotus in bloom with Tzuping as the centre. This mountain village which formerly had only a few dozen households was once the seat of the Soviet Special District Government, occupied by the Rear Echelon of the Red Army, the Red Army Hospital, the ordnance field service, and the factory making uniforms and army quilts. Today Tzuping is still the political, economic and cultural centre of the people of Chingkang Mountains. The people's commune, the Chingkang Mountains reclamation centre in charge of the development of this mountain area and a branch of the Labour University are all located here. On the main street a bank, various shops, a post office, restaurant and hotel are being built or expanded.

Seven kilometres from Tzuping through a bamboo forest is Tatsin, where Chairman Mao Tse-tung and Vice-Chairman Chu Teh lived between 1927 and 1929. Accompanied by Comrade Tsou, Party secretary of the Tatsin Production Brigade of the people's commune, I went to see Chairman Mao's old residence first. Now, all that is left is one lonely smoke-stained wall. The place where Vice-Chairman Chu Teh lived is marked by nothing but a bush. Secretary Tsou told me that the Kuomintang reactionaries carried out their policy "Burn all, kill all and loot all" in this locality after the Red Army left. The inhabitants of Tatsin and four other villages near by fell victim to this savagery. In Tatsin, for instance, the reactionaries killed nearly all Tsou Wen-yao's family including his parents, two elder brothers, his sister-in-law and his uncle. Tsou Wen-yao's mother was killed in the kitchen where she was preparing the meal; and a bullet scratched her two-year-old grandson, but he



was afraid to cry, so the enemy thought he was dead. That night, Tsou Wen-yao came down from the mountain to give his loved ones a hasty burial. Finding his little son alive, he took the child and fled that very night, not coming back until the liberation in 1949. Today his son has grown up and become the very Secretary Tsou who was showing me round.

Tatsin Village, rebuilt on the ruins, now has more than 30 households again. As soon as the villagers had a roof over their heads, they started to reclaim the wasteland and develop production. With substantial help from the Party and government, very soon they began to lead a decent life. Their next step will be to rebuild their houses and restore the old residences of Chairman Mao Tse-tung and Vice-Chairman Chu Teh. I met Comrade Huang Kuan-fu, deputy Party secretary of the commune, by a group of blast furnaces just a stone's throw from Chairman Mao Tse-tung's old residence. He was busy smelting iron. Two of the five small blast furnaces, built of earth and brick with a capacity of 1.5 cubic metres, had already gone into operation. The big blower handled by three men made the fire in the furnace blaze magnificently. Here altogether 20 blast furnaces will be built with a daily output of 30 tons of iron.

Along a small mountain path overgrown by bamboos and bushes, we went to where iron was mined: it was only half

a *li* from the furnaces. Here 58-year-old Tsou Wen-yao was working. As there was not much to be done in the fields, nearly all the Tatsin villagers apart from those smelting iron had come here to extract iron ore. Only one man and one woman had remained in the community canteen to prepare food and boil water. Tsou Wen-yao told me that iron mines could be found all over the Chingkang Mountains. As we were talking, two cooks brought lunch up to us. The food included rice and two dishes, one was boiled pumpkin and the other fried green pepper. There were also two buckets of boiled water. Most people had brought along side dishes of their own, such as salted eggs. Tsou Wen-yao's daughter-in-law, wife of Secretary Tsou, was also there mining iron ore. Asked her opinion of the commune, she listed many of its advantages, saying that the women were especially pleased with the nurseries and community canteens. Pointing to a group of young women near by, she said: "But for the commune, we could hardly do our bit for the socialist industrialization of the country. We would still be tied to the kettle and the kitchen stove." Hearing this, everybody present burst into laughter.

When I said good-bye to the hard-working miners, Comrade Huang Kuan-fu gave me a small piece of iron from their first heat as a souvenir. Another young woman gave me a folk song the girls had recently composed. The words of this song are:

> A moon like a sickle is shining over the village,
> Men and women, old and young, are mining iron;
> We are smelting iron and steel to overtake Britain;
> A red flag will fly for ever over Chingkang.

EVERYONE HAS SEEN A BETTER TOMORROW

Leaving beautiful Chingkang Mountains, I started for home.

As the jeep sped on, I was in a brown study. I recalled the time of the Second Revolutionary Civil War, when the people of the Central Soviet Area and other revolutionary

bases led by the Communist Party risked their lives to fight against the Kuomintang reactionaries. Their outstanding contribution to the national liberation will be recorded in history for ever. From that time on, the insulted and injured, farmhands and cowherds, took up arms and fought all over the country. Many of them, trained according to the brilliant military principles of Comrade Mao Tse-tung and the Party, have since become top-notch military experts and generals. And with such fighters as these, the Chinese People's Liberation Army defeated the Japanese fascist invaders, defeated the counter-revolutionary army of the Kuomintang. Many high-ranking officers of the Chinese People's Volunteers, who recently came back in triumph from the Korean battlefield were fine sons of the Soviet areas. Then I thought of what was taking place today: I saw in my mind's eye a thousand horses galloping together. As if engaged in a battle, people are carrying out the General Line laid down by the Central Committee of the Party.

In the old Soviet area it was my experience that when you saw such slogans as "Learn from Juikin, Catch Up with Juikin and Overtake Juikin!" it meant that you had already left Juikin and entered a neighbouring county. And when you read "Learn from Yunghsin, Overtake Suichuan and Leave Lienhua Behind," you could be sure that you were now in Taiho, this year's red-flag county for the province where the women have raised many pigs and accumulated plenty of manure and the achievements in production are remarkable.

Yes, without exaggeration, there is emulation between individuals, communes and counties. . . . In the Party headquarters in Kanchow, they told me the following story: After the summer harvest this year, steps were taken in all parts of Kanhsien to increase the output of potatoes. Three days later, when neighbouring Nankang learned this, the whole county was mobilized to plant over 40,000 "potato piles" bigger and higher than those in Kanhsien. This was done in five days and five nights. When the secretary of

Kanhsien County Committee heard this and learned that the late rice in Nankang was growing better than in his own county, he called a telephone conference of all the Party secretaries of district committees in the county that very night. Then the people of Kanhsien were organized to add four *tan* of manure to each of their 330,000 *mou* of late rice and to plant more potato piles than Nankang. Incidentally, Kanhsien was the first county in south Kiangsi where government functionaries moved their offices to the fields to solve problems on the spot. Several days later, Nankang followed suit. Thus emulation between different counties, learning from each other, attempting to surpass each other in socialist construction, have become an essential feature of daily life.

But this does not mean that no consideration is shown for others, far from it. In the heat of emulation drives, full attention is paid to comradely co-ordination, the needs of others and their difficulties. There is full collaboration within the communes, as well as between different communes and counties. Yunghsin County, in the Chian Administrative Region, has recently appeared as an iron and steel district. To support the tens of thousands of men and women mining iron ore in the mountains, the local people raised the slogan: "Seven Ups!" Now pedlars go up the mountain, so do doctors and nurses, barbers, sandal-makers, cultural workers, postmen and vegetable vendors. Every county leader is responsible for a particular district, and works day and night with the masses by the furnaces or in the hills. They challenged other counties in the province by making their target 1,000 tons of iron a day. But still, they sent their best workers to other counties to pass on their skill in smelting iron, and gave their best ores and tools to other counties. . . .

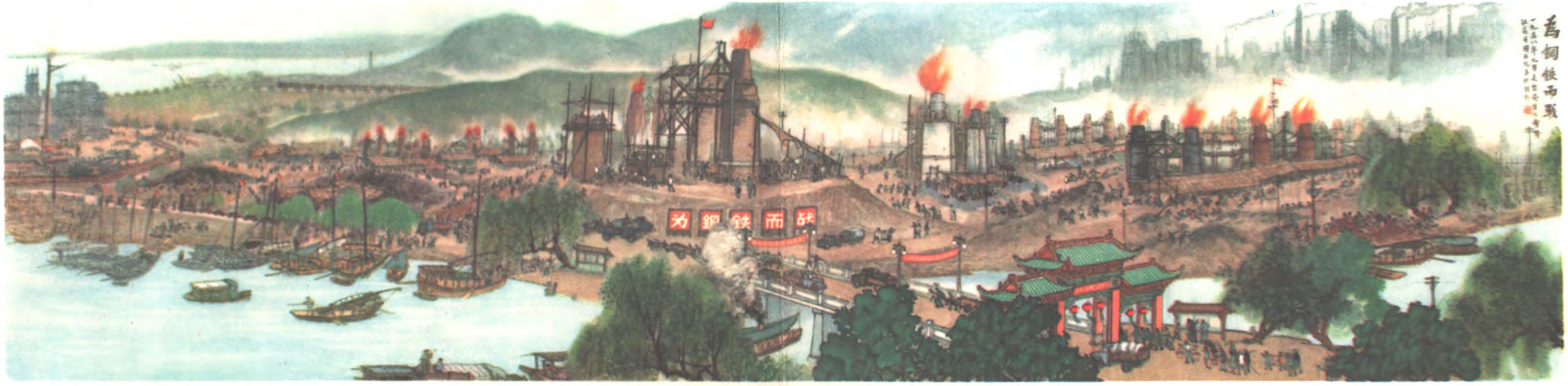
Each for all and all for each. Everyone has seen the freedom of life today, and the great promise that tomorrow holds. Wherever the Party points the way, the people will go. We have the support and sympathy of the great Soviet Union, the fraternal countries and the people of the whole world; we have all the prerequisites to build our mother-

land into a powerful, industrialized socialist state. Our productive capacity is not yet high, neither is our living standard; but China's "poverty and blank" are certainly going to be replaced by prosperity and great wealth. We Chinese ardently love peace. We will not bully others, nor shall we let ourselves be bullied. This is demonstrated by the struggle at Chingkang Mountains thirty years ago and the whole history of the revolution before and after it. "Embargoes" and "blockades" — how childish and ridiculous they sound! The U.S. imperialists' aggression and provocations against China have in the end served as "teachers by negative example." Their effect has been to make our people work harder and win ever greater achievements — this is the only logical result.

Translated by Jen Tai
Illustrations by Lu Chih-hsiang

Iron and Steel Furnaces Everywhere→
(443 cm. × 106.5 cm.)

A collective work by the Kiangsu Studio
of Traditional Painting


为钢铁而战

Keep the Red Flag Flying *(cont'd)*

THE STORY SO FAR:

The story opens at the beginning of the twentieth century, during the last years of the Ching dynasty.

Soching Village in Hopei is under the thumb of FENG LAN-CHIH, landlord, usurer, dyke trustee and village head. Two peasants, CHU KUNG and YEN HSIANG, are worsted in a clash with Feng over public property which he is appropriating for himself. Chu dies of rage, his daughter drowns herself, and his young son — CHU CHUNG — leaves the village to escape the landlord's persecution. Later Yen Hsiang too is intimidated into leaving his family and going to the northeast.

About twenty-five years after this, when warlords are fighting for the control of north China, Chu Chung returns to Soching with a wife and two sturdy boys, TA-KUEI and ERH-KUEI. On their way back they meet Yen Hsiang's son, YEN CHIH-HO, who is thinking of leaving home because life is becoming increasingly difficult since he and some friends were beaten by Feng in a lawsuit. Chu persuades him to go back and stand up to Feng, who is now abetted by his lawyer son, FENG KUEI-TANG, a university graduate with more modern ideas on money making than his father.

Yen helps Chu to build a house and make a fresh start, and his warm-hearted, intelligent sons, YUN-TAO and CHIANG-TAO, are soon close friends with Chu's boys.

Yun-tao is in love with pretty CHUN-LAN, a neighbour's daughter, who defies the feudal conventions by going about with him and getting him to teach her to read. One day she helps the four boys catch a rare finch. Feng, who wishes to have the bird as a pet, asks for it, but they refuse to give it to him; and in revenge the landlord has Ta-kuei conscripted into a warlord's army.

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Next spring after Yun-tao had hoed his family's field, he set out to look for work, a small bedding-roll on his back. Trudging north for over a dozen *li,* he came to the market-town where he picked up odd jobs for two days until rain set in. Then he found a porch where he could sit and read. The rain continued all day, from morning till evening.

This porch faced north, overlooking a large marsh. A cedrela tree grew at the gate, with a well beneath it, and all day the rain dripped and splashed on the coping of this well. By late afternoon Yun-tao was hungry but did not like to break into his two days' wages. While he was wondering what to do, the door opened and someone came out.

It was a man in his thirties, round-shouldered and swarthy with a black moustache. He was dressed like any peasant in white trousers and jacket and black cotton shoes : "Where are you from ?" he asked Yun-tao. "You've been sitting here all day!"

Yun-tao looked up at him. "I'm from Lesser Yen Village. I came out as a day-labourer, but ran into rain."

The other had a look at the book he was reading. "*Water Margin*!" he exclaimed. "How many years were you at school?"

"Two years. Since then I've taught myself."

The stranger nodded. "What does your family do?"

"My father's a mason. Besides farming I can weave and do odd jobs."

The other nodded again and said to himself: "A village intellectual!"

Yun-tao gave an embarrassed laugh. "I'm no intellect . . . whatever you said. . . . All we country folk know are a few characters."

"If country folk can read *Water Margin,* that's not bad!"

Yun-tao was glad of a chance to talk with this man, who obviously had some education. From reading they went on to speak of writing, then of the "national revolution."

As the elder man sat in the doorway, puffing at Yun-tao's pipe, darkness had fallen before they knew it. Young Yun-tao was obviously honest and unassuming. After looking him up and down, the stranger said: "It's too dark for you to go now. Why not spend the night here?"

"Thank you!" said Yun-tao, and asked his host his name. When he learned that this was Chia Hsiang-nung, a senior primary school teacher home on a visit, he smiled all over his face. Yun-tao had never talked to a man with schooling before. No wonder they were hitting it off so well! He volunteered his own name.

Chia took him inside to a gatehouse used as a cowshed, where an old ox was munching hay. Opposite the door was a small *kang,* next to it a manger. Chia told him to put his bedding on the *kang* and rest. Then staring thoughtfully upward, he asked mildly: "Life is growing harder all the time now for the peasants. Can you tell me the reason?"

Sitting on the manger with his elbows on his knees, cupping his chin in his hands, Yun-tao answered slowly: "There are a whole lot of reasons! The peasants' crops aren't worth money, but daily household needs like oil, salt and cloth are very dear. A hoe costs a couple of dollars. . . . Most peasants are short of food and fuel. If you borrow money, the interest is very high. If you rent land, the rent is very heavy. You can't earn much as a day-labourer or farmhand. Things are going from bad to worse."

Yun-tao's well-founded reply gave Chia food for thought. He rubbed his hands and nodded. "Quite right! Daily necessaries are dear while agricultural products are cheap. Rent and interest are heavy, and things are going from bad to worse for the peasants!" He blinked and asked: "Are there any other factors?"

"Factors?" repeated Yun-tao. For all his lack of schooling, he could guess the meaning of this word. "Though rent is heavy and interest high, they only fall due once a year. But nowadays we're snowed under with levies and taxes. The poll tax has been collected for ten years ahead,

and then there's the school tax, the police tax. . . . I tell you, they're too many to count!"

Before Yun-tao could finish, Chia tucked up his jacket and sat down beside him, smiling. "Good! Your estimate is absolutely right! You understand all these things. Fine! We need men like you in the country today to spread knowledge. Let's make friends—then you can come here more often to talk."

Rather overwhelmed, Yun-tao edged away and grinned sheepishly. "That's nothing. What do peasants know about deep questions? I was just telling you the way things are."

Chia rubbed his hands with delight. "That's just it! The hardships you've known are the peasant problem today!" He stood up and walked briskly out, to return presently with a large bowl of rice and vegetables, two maize buns and a small dish of pickles. "There I was talking, forgetting you hadn't eaten."

Yun-tao hastily stood up. "I was just feeling hungry."

"Go ahead, then. When you've finished we'll go on talking." He lit a small oil lamp and hung it on the wall near by.

As Yun-tao was eating, he heard the rain in the yard. "If I hadn't met this Mr. Chia," he thought, "I'd have had nowhere to sleep and nowhere to eat."

After the meal Chia asked him about his family and himself. The next day the rain continued: Yun-tao could not leave, nor could Chia go back to the city. The teacher brought in a small *kang* table, and took off his shoes to sit on the *kang*. Suspended from a beam was a basket plaited of millet stalks, from which he took brush, ink and paper. As they talked he jotted down notes. Yun-tao was eager to know how the country could be put into better shape. Chia told him: "We must drive out imperialism and overthrow the feudal powers." Then he explained the principles of revolution. A great light suddenly dawned in Yun-tao's heart. He nodded. "That's it! You're right!"

"I'm going to ask you to help me," said Chia, writing various headings on a sheet of paper. "For instance, how

many different taxes and levies are there? What do they actually mean to the peasants in terms of blood and sweat? What's the highest land rent and the lowest? What's the highest interest and the lowest? . . . Can you do that for me?" He cocked his head, waiting for Yun-tao's reply.

Yun-tao was no fool. It was clear to him that Chia was someone out of the common run. He knew that a "Communist Party" had appeared in the cities and that this was the "Poor Men's Party." But he had never met a Communist. He was almost sure that Chia Hsiang-nung was one. His face burned, and he answered with a nervous chuckle: "I'll do the best I can. It's a fine thing for me to have a chance to consult you."

"Good! I hope you'll come often. You're the sort of fellow I like. Come whenever you can and tell me about your life, your difficulties and your hopes. I used to live in town, I'm new to the country. Everything still seems strange to me." Presently he suggested: "Suppose we arrange that you come here every Sunday afternoon. It's a Sunday today. Come again seven days from now." Once more he cocked his head, waiting for Yun-tao's reply.

Yun-tao was so excited that his hands were trembling and his heart was pounding. "If I can get regular help from you, that'll be fine." He grinned.

"Peasants are straightforward and good-hearted. Once they come into contact with the revolution, they're bound to understand a lot of things. Do you know what the word revolution means?"

Yun-tao shook his head.

Chia told him: "Those rotten warlords and crooked politicians can't propel society forward—they're the enemies of society. The suffering people — that is, the peasants and workers—must rise up to overthrow these politicians and take the management into their own hands. Understand?"

More than ever now, Yun-tao saw light. His heart seemed on fire. His face and hands were burning. His eyes crinkled in a smile. "I'll go back and talk it over with my dad!" His lips quivered uncontrollably as he spoke.

Chia was put out by this answer. "It's enough if you yourself know what you're doing, friend," he said. "Don't mention it to anyone else!" After a pause he added: "Not unless you know someone absolutely reliable."

Chia Hsiang-nung was the secretary of the county committee of the Chinese Communist Party here. His father was a factory worker in Tientsin, and after two years in high school he had worked in a factory himself. His father introduced him to the Party and he became a Communist. He had been arrested and tortured for opposing the warlords' civil war and bad rule. Owing to the effects of torture, even now his lips trembled when he spoke and his hands shook. He had been released from prison the previous winter, but because the warlords were out to arrest him again, he could not stay in Tientsin. The Party sent him home to the country to start work there. He was a teacher in the senior primary school.

After another night there, Yun-tao left early in the morning. The sun was out as he hurried home with his bedding-roll. When he and his father were eating their midday meal, he told him what had happened. Yen Chih-ho put some pickle in his mouth and slowly savoured its taste. For a long time he kept his head lowered and said nothing. Mrs. Yen was quiet too. The whole family ate in an oppressive silence till at last Yen heaved a long sigh. "Those three lawsuits I fought with Feng Lan-chih taught me a lesson I shan't forget in a hurry. Let's not meddle in anything, but go about our business with bent heads."

He was silent again till Yun-tao said: "He didn't seem to me an ordinary chap. . . ."

His father cut in: "Take care! Don't follow in Ta-kuei's footsteps. These local bullies are poison!"

Since his father did not see eye to eye with him, Yun-tao decided: "I'll go to Uncle Chu. He'll take it quite differently!" Having finished his meal, he pushed his bowl away and walked quickly off down the path behind their house. He found Chu Chung resting on his doorstep, and told him how he had met Chia Hsiang-nung.

Chu listened intently and his face lit up. He lowered his head in thought, then said: "Good, good! This fellow is deep. He's got something up his sleeve."

"That's what I think," agreed Yun-tao. "He asked the number of our taxes and levies, the amount of the highest and lowest land rents. . . . And he said if the poor want to be 'free,' they must overthrow the warlords and politicians. The peasants must rise up and manage their own affairs."

Chu clapped his hands and cried with a voice like a gong: "Aha! That's the way to talk! That's something like!"

"He told me to go and see him as often as I could. Should I, uncle?"

Chu stroked his beard, then hitched his stool closer to Yun-tao. "You go, my boy!" he whispered. "Go! You may find the right track. Many years ago, not far from here, on the border of Lihsien, there lived a great scholar called Li Shu-ku. Instead of trying to become an official he was interested in sensible, practical matters. . . . He was in touch with the White Lotus Sect who tried to drive out the Manchus and restore the Mings. . . ."

Yun-tao stared and asked huskily: "Is that a fact, uncle?"

Chu's eyes shone as he looked at the young man. "My father told me. He wanted to join the Boxers, too, and help drive the foreigners out. This fellow of yours must have backing."

Yun-tao rested his chin on his knees and reflected, round-eyed, for a time. "I've a pretty shrewd idea he's a 'Communist.'"

"A Communist?" Chu laughed exultantly. "I heard about them in the northeast. It seems in the Soviet Union the workers have come into power and downed the capitalists and landlords. The poor have stood up. . . . If you've found backing like that, you can go a long way!"

Yun-tao blinked and was silent again. He looked up slowly to ask: "Well, shall I go?"

Chu threw back his head with a great bellow of laughter. "Of course! But feel your way carefully."

After that, every Sunday Yun-tao went to Chia Hsiang-nung's home and after several conversations Chia discovered that he had a clear class stand. As for Yun-tao, each talk left him in such a fever of excitement that he worked and studied harder than ever.

From now on Yen Yun-tao had a definite goal. Some force greater than himself was urging him forward.

15

Some time after, Yun-tao and his father were at the well in front of their house watering their vegetables: Yen Chih-ho turned the windlass while Yun-tao opened irrigation channels. They were hard at work when a man approached from the north. He had on an old felt hat and long blue gown, and was carrying a small package under one arm. Yun-tao saw that it was Mr. Chia. He left his spade by a ridge and went over to ask: "Looking for anyone?"

"For you," said Chia.

Yun-tao smiled. "Well, here I am."

He walked back to the well and Chia followed. Yun-tao introduced his father.

Chia nodded to Yen. "At your age this is pretty hard work."

Yen Chih-ho smiled and left the windlass at the sight of this strange gentleman in a long gown. He took his tobacco pouch down from the date tree, wiped the mouthpiece of his pipe and offered it to the visitor. "Have a smoke."

"After you, uncle!" said Chia respectfully.

Yen's hands trembled with pleasure at this sign of consideration. You're an honoured guest, an honoured guest! Go ahead!" He turned to Yun-tao. "Go and ask your mother to boil some water for our guest."

Puffing at the pipe, Chia strolled through the vegetable plot. There were big yellow flowers on the pumpkin plants and some small fruits were already forming. The leeks

were coming up well too, and so were the onions and fennel. "Country folk are well off for vegetables," he remarked.

Yen Chih-ho was much taken with his friendly way. "We peasants are stuck in dirt and muck!" He puffed out his lips and laughed.

Coming back to the well, Chia retorted: "Who dares look down on peasants? Without them we'd have no food or clothes. We'd all freeze or starve to death!"

Immensely tickled, Yen chuckled. "No one's ever said such a thing to me before. Each time we go to town, I'm afraid they'll jeer: 'Country bumpkin—your head's stuffed with straw.' "

Chia laughed heartily, while Yen's teeth flashed in a grin. Since Yun-tao was still in the house his father went in to ask him: "Who is this man?"

"It's the friend I made last time I went out to work."

Yen could not believe that his son had picked up a friend like this so casually.

Yun-tao brought out a pot of tea and two rice bowls which he set on the well coping. Chia sat there sipping tea and chatting with them.

He asked: "How did you get on in propaganda work? What do the people think of our proposals?"

With both legs dangling over the well coping, Yun-tao answered: "Folk agree when we oppose feudalism or the local bullies. The gentry have done so much harm in the villages, grabbing other people's property, that everyone has seen or heard of some example. But when we talk about imperialism, that's not something folk hereabouts have smarted under. They don't understand that imperialism is the force behind the warlords, that the imperialists are ruling us through the warlords. Am I right in saying this? What do you think?"

Chia puckered his lips, then nodded. "Right! That is the problem. Peasants are practical people. You must make it clear to them how imperialism exploits the Chinese peasantry through foreign goods: paraffin, matches, thread, locks and so forth."

Yun-tao described their recent work in the village and the progress Chun-lan had made. When he spoke of her enthusiasm for the revolution, Chia burst out laughing.

"That's an intelligent, keen lass!" he cried. "But she mustn't be too conspicuous. You see, though our hearts may be bright as lamps, if you carry a lamp through the darkness it's very hard to see clearly what's around you. Don't forget we're surrounded by darkness. We have plenty of enemies!"

They went on to speak of other aspects of the work. Yun-tao, watching the willow down drift through the air, said from time to time: "Yes, you're right."

"You must get really close to the peasants," Chia told him. "You must help them in every little way. Some of our men insist on attacking superstition or old customs, but that simply antagonizes people. And you mustn't just talk about big questions and dry theories — that doesn't scratch where it itches. I've been to several places to have a look, and they're all making the same mistake. You must give specific examples of the way in which peasants are oppressed and exploited and tell them what causes their hardships." He put his head on one side to blink and smile. "Find out what the peasants have to put up with from the military and bandits, how they're ground down by officials and gentry, why their children can't have an education, why the crops are getting smaller every year. . . ."

When he had finished the tea and smoked a pipe, he stood up and looked into the distance. The long dyke was lined with poplars and fresh green shoots were springing from the soil, while behind were dotted cottages. "A fine bit of country!" he commented. Then he took off his gown and hung it on the date tree. "Come on, Yun-tao! Let's water the vegetables!" He started turning the windlass.

In the warm sunlight hens were pecking for food under the haystacks. A rooster on a stone roller craned its neck and flapped its wings to crow, waking a baby near by and making it cry. . . . Chia remarked with a smile: "A genuine village scene!" He slowly hauled up the bucket

and sloshed the water into the trough. Then he turned the windlass again and the bucket went creaking down. . . .

Yun-tao grinned. "You seem to have the knack of it."

Chia was rather out of breath. "No, I've only just learned. When I come home every week, after finishing my work I try my hand at farming. I was a factory apprentice for three years and had learned to work at the bench by the time I was arrested. In the country I must learn farming. A man should live by the labour of his hands."

"I should think you could keep your whole family by teaching."

"That's not the point. If I don't learn something about farming, how am I going to lead the work in the country?"

Yun-tao nodded as he came back from opening another trench. "What else do you want us to do?"

"Seems to me you might start organizing. Win over the young peasants and young women. A girl like Chun-lan can be trained as an activist among the young women. Get our proposals across: Down with imperialism, down with crooked officials and the local gentry! And give convincing arguments for driving out those three pests: Wu Pei-fu, Sun Chuan-fang and Chang Tso-lin.* There won't be an end to civil war till we've overthrown the feudal warlords. This is what we mean by a democratic revolution—understand? You can organize at the same time that you're doing propaganda work. Don't just talk without organizing!" Between turning the windlass and speaking, Chia was out of breath.

They discussed some other subjects for a little. Certain things Yun-tao understood, others he did not. He rolled his eyes reflectively. At midday Yen walked up and said: "Come and eat. You can go on talking afterwards."

Chia looked up and saw that it was noon. He took his gown and prepared to leave.

"What's this?" demanded Yen. "You'd keep Yun-tao to a meal at your house, wouldn't you?"

*The three most powerful warlords in north China at that time.

Since this made it impossible for Chia to leave, he followed father and son into the house. The *kang* table was set with cold noodles sprinkled with preserved vegetables. The bowls gave off an appetizing smell of garlic.

"My word!" exclaimed Chia. "You can't eat wheat flour more than once or twice a year, yet you're offering me white flour!"

Chiang-tao came in as they were eating, picked up a bowl of millet and fell to in silence. Chia called him over to sit on the *kang* and heaped the boy's bowl with noodles from his own. "Eat up, little brother," he said. "How old are you? You ought to be in senior primary school."

"He should be," said Yun-tao, "but we can't afford to send him. Dad would like him to study for a few more years. He's a bright lad."

"That's good." Chia chuckled. "If he wants to study, that's not hard. If you're short, I can help out." Still holding his bowl, he stopped eating. With his head on one side, his bright eyes scrutinized Chiang-tao.

Yun-tao said: "I know a little about farming, but nothing at all about schooling. I hope Mr. Chia will help us!"

"Of course. Just leave it to me."

After the meal, Chia paced their yard for a time and had more talk with Yun-tao on the threshing-floor before going back to town.

After the teacher had left, they started planning for Chiang-tao to go to town for his entrance examination. His mother told him to ask Chun-lan to make him a pair of cloth shoes and mend his jacket.

Chun-lan patched his jacket and promised to make him a sturdy pair of shoes.

"Mind you work hard," she said. "If you do well at school, the old folk will be pleased." She stepped indoors for a whisk to dust off his clothes. "There, now go!"

A few days later Mrs. Yen made Chiang-tao put on his clean clothes and new shoes and sent him off with Yun-tao to town. Once inside the city gate, they found the street full of carts and passers-by hurrying this way and that.

The shop fronts were most imposing. South of a stone archway they passed through a splendid big gate to a compound filled with whitewashed buildings, all with glass window-panes. Yun-tao led his brother to Mr. Chia's room. The teacher greeted them warmly, made them sit down and poured golden tea for them.

Yun-tao said: "Our folk have decided to let my brother study, but don't know whether he's up to it or not."

Chia said: "If peasants want to stop being oppressed and exploited, that's no easy matter. Apart from struggling, they've got to study and get knowledge. Progress in education is closely bound up with political progress. I'd like to start some part-time schools and popular schools in the country, to fit in talks on current events and politics."

Yun-tao and Chiang-tao stayed with Chia for two days till the results were published—Chiang-tao had passed!

It was now the end of May: the wheat was yellow, the willow leaves were green and the weather was warm and balmy. As they walked home the brothers were inexpressibly happy. Chiang-tao could not help marvelling that a man who was no relative and had seen them a few times only should treat them as such close friends.

"Brother!" he said to Yun-tao. "What's that exploitation and oppression he's always talking about?"

"They want poor folk like us to have a better life."

Chiang-tao stared hard. "Who are 'they'?"

Yun-tao glanced at him. "They? They're the Communist Party who are backing us poor men up. From now on Sun Yat-sen is going to help the workers and peasants too, and work with the Communist Party!"

But at that time Chiang-tao had no inkling of what he meant.

16

Back from town, Chiang-tao bounded happily home while Yun-tao, singing snatches from an opera, took the path behind their house to the Donkey Man's melon field. There

he saw Chun-lan sitting alone, some needlework on her lap. Having made sure that her father was nowhere in sight, he headed towards her. Chun-lan waved and called:

"Yun-tao! Come here!"

"What for?" Yun-tao walked over.

"Would you like a melon?"

"I certainly would!"

Chun-lan jumped down from her hammock and picked her way past some closely planted melons to gather a long green melon with dark stripes. "This ripened some days ago, but I didn't like to touch it before you came. If I'd touched it, the melon would have fallen. I covered it with the vines." She neatly split the melon open, revealing golden fruit and crimson seeds. The scent was delicious. She put both halves in Yun-tao's hands.

"How does it taste?"

"Grand! Sweet as honey. Why didn't you let anyone else have it?"

Chun-lan gave a ripple of laughter. "Why, nobody else was good enough!"

"What is this melon? I've never tasted one like it."

"This is a Golden Melon. Uncle Chu brought the seeds back from the northeast and gave my dad some." She sat down again. "Come here. Let's have a talk."

Yun-tao sat down beside her, leaning back against the bedding-roll.

"Have you been to town again?"

"Yes."

"What did Mr. Chia say last time he was here?"

"He said we mustn't just do propaganda: we should organize as well. For instance, you could secretly start a women's association. He blamed us too."

"What for?"

"For being too 'conspicuous.'"

"What does that mean?"

"It means like you, with 'Revolution' embroidered on your jacket!"

Chun-lan pouted. "Isn't that a good way to do propaganda?"

"It's good, but Mr. Chia says we mustn't forget we're surrounded by enemies!"

He leaned closer to Chun-lan, whose great black eyes were gazing at him tenderly. At this time in her life a girl feels unutterably happy. Chun-lan was no longer lonely when she worked. Her eyes were laughing all day, her lips were curved in a perpetual smile. Her heart was like a full moon surrounded by countless stars in the boundless sky, looking down on the world and finding all in it lovely. As she sewed alone in the melon field, she would lean back and think of the time when the revolution would succeed and the forces of darkness in the village would be overthrown. She and Yun-tao would be married then. They could do as they pleased and talk all day long as they tended the pear trees together. At dawn they would rise bright and early and listen in the cool of the morning to the birds in the boughs, as they bent to reap the wheat. . . . Late at night, by lamplight, they would grind the scythes. She would spray water while Yun-tao whetted the blades. And they'd have a plot of melons like this in front of the house, and set up a shed to watch the melon field. . . . How happy the two grandmothers and grandfathers would be when they had their first child! Uncle Chu too. She could just see him picking the chubby baby up and laughing as he kissed it.

Yun-tao's hopes were infinite too, though he did not dream of Chun-lan. He took it for granted that she would be his wife. How could she marry anyone else? He dreamed of the day when the revolution was won and they were one family—with Uncle Chu too—and nobody dared kick them around any more. Those crooked officials and local magnates deserved to have their heads cut off or be thrown into gaol. But before they were sentenced, the peasants must settle scores with the village office, settle the old, old scores of Thousand *Li* Dyke. Chia had told him that the day would come when the workers and peasants held the state power in their hands. When that happened he would have the run of the village office and might even work in the district or county. Life would be

splendid, and the peasants, when they went to court, would not lose their lawsuit because of underhand work. . . .

Now Feng Lan-chih had long had his eye on Chun-lan. Whenever there was any pretty girl in the village, Feng rooted around like Pigsy* in search of a juicy morsel. Though he seemed a dried-up stick, he was an old lecher. That day he had come over on the pretext of buying melons. But as soon as he passed the sorghum field and saw Yun-tao and Chun-lan laughing on the hammock, he tapped his nose with one long finger and scurried away. Turning the corner, he ran into Chun-lan's aunt with a child in her arms. He pointed towards the melon field, pursing his lips with a significant smile as he left. Chun-lan's aunt was a notorious village gossip. As soon as she rounded the corner and saw Yun-tao and Chun-lan alone together, she rushed home as fast as her two feet would carry her.

"Donkey Man!" she screamed! "Your Chun-lan's carrying on with a man!"

Her cries reminded the Donkey Man of what Feng Lan-chih had said that day near the village. He had never approved of the way Yun-tao kept coming to their house. Snatching up a spade, he rushed out, swearing: "The dirty dog! Sneaking into my house in broad daylight!"

Yun-tao was completely taken aback for a moment. To save Chun-lan from harm, he lifted her on his back and started running towards the dyke. The Donkey Man followed him, swearing.

When Yun-tao had run for half a *li,* he found his load heavier and heavier. Sweat was pouring off him, he was nearly exhausted. The Donkey Man was hot on his heels.

"Put me down, Yun-tao!" urged Chun-lan.

"I can't do that!" panted Yun-tao.

"We haven't done anything wrong. Why should we be afraid? Put me down and run for it!"

"I can't. He'd kill you."

*A well-known figure in the Ming dynasty novel, *Pilgrimage to the West.*

"I'm not afraid. You must run!"

The Donkey Man was nearly on them now. In one last burst Yun-tao struggled up the dyke. There he broke off a willow branch and whirled round.

"You dare. . . ."

Chun-lan's father was in such a passion that his hair was standing on end, his eyes were bloodshot. But Yun-tao had not the heart to hit him as he charged. The Donkey Man swung his spade. Yun-tao dodged and the blade flashed harmlessly past his eyes.

"Run, Yun-tao! Run!" screamed Chun-lan.

Shouting curses, the Donkey Man charged with his spade again and Yun-tao ran down the dyke. Instead of chasing him, the old man caught Chun-lan by the hair. His beard was bristling, his face was working, he was shaking with fury. Not wanting to kill his daughter outright, he beat her with the handle of the spade, cursing: "Dirty bitch! Slut!" When Yun-tao ran back to protect Chun-lan, her father struck out at him. By now quite a crowd had gathered but no one dared go near. If anyone attempted to intervene, he bared his teeth and snarled like a mad dog.

Chun-lan's mother hurried up, weeping. The Donkey Man struck her on the back with his spade. "A fine daughter you raised," he growled. "A fine mother you are!" She fell back, tears streaming from her eyes.

Alone on the dyke, the Donkey Man belaboured Chun-lan.

"Beat me at home, dad, not here!" she begged.

He paid no attention, just went on thrashing her. Chun-lan clenched her teeth and held her breath until her face was red to keep from crying out. She was not in the least repentant. When she fainted, the Donkey Man dragged her home by the legs and put his spade to her throat. He was just going to slash when the cold metal revived her. Chun-lan opened her eyes and turned pale.

"Dad, dad!" she pleaded. "Don't kill me! Who'll burn paper money for you when you're dead?"

"Let her off!" begged Chun-lan's mother. "Who's to nurse you next time you have a fever if you kill her?"

This was the first argument to carry any weight with the Donkey Man. He threw down his spade and pulled out a wooden chest. Into this he bundled Chun-lan, locking her in. "Let's see you gad about now!" he growled.

Chun-lan lay senseless in the chest for one whole day and night, not coming round till the next day. Her clothes had stuck to the chest where her blood had clotted. The least movement meant agony. The room was absolutely quiet. Presently her mother came in and sobbed over the chest.

"Mum!" called Chun-lan. "Give me a drop of water!" Her voice was barely audible.

When her mother knew that she was still alive, she leaned down and whispered: "I can't. The old brute keeps threatening what he'll do to me if I give you anything. Let me think a moment. . . ."

"Never mind," said Chun-lan. "If I don't die I shall live. You've brought me up all these years — why starve me now?"

Her mother discovered a crack in the chest, through which she poured some water into Chun-lan's mouth.

The Donkey Man dug three ditches on the path leading to Yen's house and covered them with thorns to block the way. If anyone came near he started cursing. One day he was crouching there muttering to himself when a man came up. Before he had time to start swearing, he recognized Li Teh-tsai. The landlord's steward slouched towards him, saying:

"Brother, the two of us must have a talk."

The Donkey Man rubbed the dirt off his hands and went behind the house with Li for a smoke. After some casual talk, Li whispered to him: "Old fellow, you're in luck!" He screwed his face up in a smile.

"What?" demanded the Donkey Man loudly.

"Old Feng wants to make friends with your daughter."

The Donkey Man shook his head, puzzled, unwilling to believe his ears.

Li saw he had missed the point. "Old Feng wants your daughter to be his friend," he said. "She can have a good time with him."

The Donkey Man imagined that because Chun-lan and Yun-tao had disgraced themselves, Li meant to arrange a match for her. He shook his long head decisively. "That won't do. They're not of an age."

"Bah!" Li sneered. "What does age matter? This isn't a question of marriage."

The Donkey Man, in fury, gnawed his lips. But Feng Lan-chih was rich and powerful. Not daring to swear, he kept his head down and said nothing. Seeing he was displeased, Li went back to report to his master. Feng rolled his yellow eyeballs reflectively.

"I'll be generous. Offer him a plot of land and a big cart complete with harness," he said abruptly. "That'll last him to his grave."

Li went back to the Donkey Man with this proposal. When Chun-lan's father heard it, tears started to his eyes. Glaring at Li, he said hoarsely: "What does he take me for?" In a passion he lunged forward with flailing arms and slapped Li on the face. The steward staggered and nearly fell. He had to stumble off as fast as he could.

This business was much debated by the village girls. What a shameful thing to propose! Each time Chun-lan thought of it, she shuddered.

After that Yun-tao saw no more of Chun-lan. It was hard for a young fellow. But in those days, in the country, they were considered to have done a very wicked thing. The gossips never tired of discussing their case. Yun-tao spent all his time in his family's orchard or field instead of going to the village. He stopped telling stories and reading to the lads and lasses. Morning and evening he walked alone along Thousand *Li* Dyke, listening to the rushing of the Huto River and the cuckoos in the willows. He was wretchedly lonely. Once a man had a bad reputation, no other girl or young fellow would be seen with him. Sitting alone on the coping of the well, he sobbed. His mother patted his shoulder.

"Yun-tao!" she urged. "Forget her! It's all fate."

The next summer he slept in the orchard to keep an eye on the fruit. When the first peaches were ripe, merchants came with crates to buy; but for several days he did not turn the proceeds over to his father. One evening he strode alone to the east end of the dyke and back again. On tiptoe he gazed at the house where Chun-lan lived and the trees in her yard. Just to see those trees brought him comfort. He went to the back of the village and skirted her house. At the gate he hesitated, but did not go in for fear the Donkey Man would see him. Instead he climbed by a twisted elm on to the roof of the room where Chun-lan slept, and after tapping once or twice crawled to the eaves to look down. Chun-lan sat up when she heard someone on the roof, but guessing that it was Yun-tao did not call out. She tiptoed into the yard. Shading her eyes, she looked this way and that. At the sight of Yun-tao in the shadows, she shook her head and tears ran down her cheeks.

"What have you come for again?"

"I'm leaving," called Yun-tao softly. "I'm going to join the revolutionary army!"

He said no more.

"Wait a bit!" cried Chun-lan desperately and ran round to the back of the house while Yun-tao climbed down the tree. His heart beat wildly when she came out alone. Hand in hand they walked to Thousand *Li* Dyke and stood there for a while. Then they sat down under the willows east of the dyke.

Yun-tao heaved a long sigh. "This is the end. We shan't see each other again."

Chun-lan turned in consternation, wide-eyed. "What do you mean?"

"I'm leaving!"

She gave a short, scornful laugh. "You're afraid of the feudal powers. You're running off to find a nice place in the shade."

"That's not true. Mr. Chia is sending me south to join the revolutionary army. He says the Kuomintang and the

Communist Party are working together now, and the army of the revolution will soon be marching north."

"Then you must go. Go and down the local despots!"

A breeze had sprung up and was ruffling the willows till they rippled like the waves of the sea. The two young lovers talked beneath the trees till the first cock crowed in the village. Then Yun-tao stood up. "I must go now."

"Why are you in such a hurry? If you'd told me before, I'd have washed your clothes and made you shoes and socks."

"No, there's someone waiting for me at the end of the village. You'd better go back. If your father knows of this, he'll give you a hiding."

"No. I want to see you off. It's only this once. I don't care if he beats me to death. Let people talk!"

They walked on side by side for a couple of paces. Then Yun-tao stopped again. "I've something else to say."

"Go on."

"But you mustn't be angry with me for saying it."

"I won't be angry."

"I shall be going thousands of *li* away. I don't know when — if ever — I shall come back. In the army, you never can tell. . . ." He stopped again and gazed at Chun-lan, whose two great eyes were fixed on him. "Find someone else," he stammered. "Some decent chap. . . ."

Chun-lan stood as if turned to stone, unable to think. Then she dropped to the ground and buried her face in her hands to sob bitterly. Yun-tao stamped in desperation. Not telling her might have spoiled her chances of marriage. But how was he to know she would take it so hard? He bent down and put his arms round her. Chun-lan refused to get up. He had a hard time persuading her. She cried and cried. "This is the end for me!"

"What do you mean?"

"Just go. Never mind about me!"

He remembered his mother telling him how Chu Chung's sister had thrown herself into the river as soon as he left for the north.

"Are you willing to wait?" he asked.

"When you come back from the revolution, life will be good. . . ."

Yun-tao looked at her hard. "Whether you wait or not, I shall wait for you. . . ."

Chun-lan's face lit up. "If you've the guts to do that, I shan't kill myself."

They were walking east along the river bank. The eastern sky grew bright: it would soon be dawn. "I suppose I'd better leave you now," said Chun-lan. Yun-tao's brilliant eyes sparkled like stars as he looked his last at her. He wrung her hands and strode off.

Chun-lan watched him from the bank till he disappeared in the hazy light of dawn. The morning wind blew her long plaits, the poplar leaves on Thousand *Li* Dyke were rustling, the Huto River was swirling. . . .

She walked home alone, picking some vegetables before going in. Having put these on the steps, she fetched the buckets to draw water. Her mother leaned out of the window.

"Chun-lan!" she called. "What are you doing up so early?"

"I've been up for some time. I've picked the vegetables and drawn the water."

"Good girl! You're a real help."

17

The next summer, under Chia's guidance, Chiang-tao took part for the first time in a mass movement to boycott British and Japanese goods. Then there was a strike during which the students stopped classes to protest against the imperialists' massacre of the workers' leader, Ku Cheng-hung. Mr. Chia told Chiang-tao to give the other students a lead in writing slogans and distributing pamphlets. On the day of the meeting the streets were full of demonstrators carrying flags, among them peasants, farmhands, school teachers, students. . . . After a meeting in the theatre they started marching. Chiang-tao, in the front ranks of the parade, led the others in shouting slogans. The thunder of their shouts

shook the whole town. Shopkeepers and private citizens lined the streets to watch and thronged the main roads. When he looked back over his shoulder at the forest of raised fists, he knew that his family and Chu Chung's were not the only two to have been oppressed. They were not alone in opposing the forces of darkness.

He was deeply stirred by the mass enthusiasm. Tears gushed to his eyes. He was convinced that a brighter day was at hand. He was determined to join the Communist Party and keep closer to Mr. Chia.

After the meeting, Chiang-tao's heart was afire. He could neither sit still nor stand quiet. He walked to the classroom to fetch a book, but found he could not read it. He went back to the dormitory, but could not sleep. Dusk was falling and the sky was full of red clouds. Scarcely knowing what he did, he walked to Mr. Chia's room. The teacher was reading at his window, sipping tea.

Outside the window hibiscus was in flower. The scent of its umbrella-shaped petals carried quite a distance, and large moths with long antennae were fluttering over the pollen. Several times Chiang-tao was on the point of going in, but he did not know how to broach what was on his mind. The evening clouds scattered, the stars would soon be out. He took a few steps towards the dormitory, but then stopped. His mind made up, he lowered his head and plucked up courage to enter.

Mr. Chia looked up quickly when the door opened, and saw Chiang-tao standing before him. He put down his book to pat the lad on the head. "Well done!" he cried. "That was a good demonstration!"

Chiang-tao smiled in silence, his great, round eyes fixed on Mr. Chia. His throat was so parched that he could hardly speak. "Not all that good," he muttered hoarsely. "We must learn as we go." He stopped, embarrassed, a wry smile on his face.

Chia saw that the boy had something on his mind and offered him a cup of tea. After drinking it Chiang-tao's throat stopped feeling constricted, his fever abated. He

blurted out: "It's only today that I understand why Yun-tao joined the revolution, why he joined the Communist Party!"

Chia said: "When the oppressed join the Communist Party, they're in a better position to fight against reaction." He was delighted that Chiang-tao had raised this question. Patting his shoulder, he continued kindly: "If the underdogs want to change their bitter destiny, change the old order of things," he raised a clenched fist, "the only way is struggle and yet more struggle. . . . What do you mean to do when you leave school?"

"For my family's sake I want to join the revolution!" Chiang-tao described Chu Kung's death, his grandfather's escape to the northeast, his father's three lawsuits with Feng Lan-chih. The hot blood rushed to his face and he shook his fist. "I want to raise the red flag and lead a great army against those wicked reactionaries!"

Chia laughed. "Fine! For a little fellow, you talk big! We'll see whether you can or not."

Chiang-tao tried to repress his excitement. "I know I can!"

"So you want to join the revolution? You must live with the peasants, the factory workers or the miners. If you can really help to make them politically conscious and organized, that will be practical revolutionary experience for you. . . . All leaders without exception come from the masses."

Chiang-tao saw that the time had come for his request. "I want to join the Communist Party!"

"Very good. You're the son of a peasant — no, of an artisan. The Party welcomes people like you."

Chiang-tao's shining face was as rosy as a pink peony. His blood was racing through his veins, he felt ready to soar to the clouds. He threw out his arms: "Tell me what I have to do!" He thought there might be some procedure or ceremony to go through before you became a Communist.

Chia threw back his head to think, pacing up and down. "Let me see," he said. "You're still young. You'd better join the Youth League. . . ." He took a book from his shelf and passed it to Chiang-tao. "Your enthusiasm does you credit, so does your request. Now read that book carefully!

You've got to understand society, understand classes and the relation between them. . . ."

That was how Chiang-tao started studying Marxism.

The following autumn, Chiang-tao was reading one day in the lunch hour when his father arrived. Yen Chih-ho was laughing, his hands were trembling with excitement.

"Why, father!" cried Chiang-tao.

"It's grand! Something grand has happened!"

"What is it? What are you so pleased about, dad?"

Yen undid his jacket and produced a letter which he passed with trembling hands to his son. It was from Yun-tao! Chiang-tao's heart thumped and his fingers shook so much that he could hardly open it. He frowned and screwed up his eyes to hold back the tears. Yen laughed at his excitement and said: "Take it easy, there's a good lad! Don't get so worked up!"

July, 1926

Dear Father and Mother,

I left you and came all this way to the south to join the revolutionary army. After half a year in the ranks, I was sent to the military academy to study. That is a free school where even paper, pens and uniforms are provided. Now I have graduated, and my superiors have appointed me a probationary company commander. Father, you can be glad for your son's sake! From now on I shall stand in the front ranks of the revolution to overthrow imperialism, the warlords and the local despots and bullies.

Down here in the south is quite different from the north. There is tremendous excitement on every side. Everywhere you can see the revolutionary enthusiasm of the masses. The working people have stood up. Just wait a little, and the army of the revolution will reach our home and smash all the feudal powers and local despots!

Please forgive me for not letting you know when I left home.

As I am very busy I won't write any more. Give my respects to grandmother and Uncle Chu.

Wishing you all good health,

Your son,
Yun-tao

This letter set Chiang-tao's thoughts in a whirl. Yen saw his lips quiver speechlessly. "Here!" he cried. "I'm waiting for you to read it aloud." Chiang-tao looked up suddenly and laughed. He had actually forgotten his father's presence. He read the letter out.

Yen Chih-ho's long eyelashes fluttered as he took the letter back and stroked it. He turned it this way and that, unwilling to let it out of his hands.

"Come on!" he said. "Come and read this to your Uncle Chu and your grandmother. This will make them happy too!"

18

Chiang-tao started home with his father. They took the path to the river and ferried themselves across.

"Come along," said Yen. "We'll go and tell your Uncle Chu first. He'll be pleased."

They found Chu Chung sitting on a stone. He had gathered a load of grass and was feeding his brown cow which had given him a little brindled calf. At the approach of strangers the calf raised its head and lowed. Chiang-tao put his arms round it and whispered: "You little pet!"

"Brother!" cried Yen. "I've brought you some fine news!"

"What fine news?" asked Chu. "What are you so pleased about?"

"A letter has come from Yun-tao."

Chu jumped to his feet and stood speechless for a moment. "You mean — there's news of him?"

Mrs. Chu came rushing out when she heard this. She cocked her head and asked:

"What's the news of Yun-tao?"

Yen answered slowly and deliberately: "He's doing something rather out of the common."

Chu flung out his arms as if they were wings. "Good! Good! Every day since he left I've worried about the lad. I thought if he'd gone northeast I ought to have heard — I have so many friends there."

Mrs. Chu laughed. "Just look at him, tickled pink, ready to fly into the air!"

"Why shouldn't I be tickled?" demanded Chu. "I have a soft spot in my heart for that boy."

Chiang-tao said: "Down south is the home of the revolution. The revolutionary army is marching north."

"Here!" cried Chu. "Sit down and read the letter to me."

Chiang-tao sat on the stone, while Chu and Yen squatted one on each side of him. When Chu heard that Yun-tao had been half a year in the army and studied in the military academy, he interrupted:

"Chih-ho! What do you say to that? Didn't I tell you we'd have one scholar, one soldier? Now seems we've got one scholar, two soldiers. Ta-kuei's written to me too. He's learned all sorts of army drill and knows how to use a machine-gun. When they saw how sturdy he was, they made him carry the machine-gun; and carrying it for some time he learned to use it." He sketched a gesture with his right hand in the air. "Go on, Chiang-tao! Read us the rest!"

When Chiang-tao read out that his brother was a company commander, Chu opened his great mouth and shouted with laughter. He gazed round triumphantly. "Ha! A commander is an army officer! All these generations there's been no official in our family, but now Yun-tao has boosted up all our ancestors!"

"That's true," said Yen. "Who ever thought of such a thing?"

Chiang-tao said: "He writes, too, that down in the south is quite different from the north. Everywhere you can see the revolutionary enthusiasm of the masses. The working people have stood up. When the revolutionary army gets here, they'll smash all those dirty officials and local despots,

all the forces of darkness!" He quivered from head to foot as he was reading, eager to leap and jump.

Chu and Yen were hanging on his lips, afraid to miss a single word. When the whole letter had been read, Chu rubbed his ears, slapped his chest and cried: "When the army of the revolution marches in here, I'm going to settle scores with Feng Lan-chih for the bell and those three lawsuits. Looks as if our family is coming to the top." He threw back his shoulders and took up a boxer's stance. Leaping in the air, he slapped both feet in quick succession, then whirled in a circle before coming down to earth. He stood with arms akimbo, scarlet in the face, and bellowed with laughter. "There! I'm still young — nothing much wrong with these old bones, is there?"

"Look at the two of you!" teased Mrs. Chu. "Go on, Chiang-tao! I'm all in a flutter."

Rubbing his hands, Yen said to Chu: "Aha! You're in very good shape!" He thumped his chest. "I'm so happy, I don't know what to do!" He could not keep still, but wanted to jump for joy.

After Yun-tao's letter, they read the one from Ta-kuei.

"I tell you," said Chu, "my brain's in a whirl. All this happiness in my old age — what am I going to do?"

"What are you going to do?" retorted his wife. "Tell Yun-tao to come back and take you two with him to live in comfort."

"That wouldn't do," said Yen. "I'm lost without my mason's trowel."

"Go and fix his kitchen range for him then," she teased.

"The idea!" cried Chu. "Who ever heard of a high official's father fixing the kitchen range?"

"Joking apart," said Yen, "we're peasant-born. Let him be an official, but we'll go on with our building and farming."

Chiang-tao thought the old folk must be taking leave of their senses. "Dad!" he protested. "He's not an ordinary official."

"What sort of official is he then?" asked Yen.

"A revolutionary official."

Chu walked over and clapped Chiang-tao on the shoulder. "Tell us, what's different about a revolutionary official?"

"They're not out for position and money, but to overthrow the imperialists, the warlords and the local despots."

"What are those?" demanded Yen.

Chiang-tao had no time to go into detail. "Men like Feng Lan-chih," he answered.

"Fine!" cried Chu. "It's high time they were overthrown. That's worth more than making money from an official post."

"See here!" said Mrs. Chu. "The two of you had better keep your voices down. The walls have ears."

Chu, Yen and Chiang-tao started back to the Yens' home.

"Big news like this calls for a celebration," said Yen. "You go on ahead while I buy a little wine for the two of us." He ran back to get a pewter pot from Mrs. Chu, then climbed down the bank and crossed the marsh to West Soching.

Chiang-tao and Chu took the path past the field where the Donkey Man was hoeing. He looked up indignantly when he saw them, and was just going to fly out when he recognized Chu. "Brother Chu!" He smiled. "If it had been anyone else, I'd have let fly."

"You're getting on in years," retorted Chu. "It's time you learned more sense. Don't you feel a fool, grumbling and swearing all the time?"

"The earth here has been trampled hard," complained the Donkey Man. "Crops won't grow on it any more."

"It'd be more true to say you didn't want Yun-tao for your son-in-law."

The Donkey Man flushed, but before he could protest Chu went on: "Do you know that Yen Yun-tao has become an official? He's a company commander!"

"Is that true?" demanded the Donkey Man.

"It certainly is," replied Chu.

The Donkey Man shook his head and said nothing.

Since he looked ready to lose his temper, they went on. The Donkey Man bent again to deepen the ditch and stick

up the brambles which passers-by had knocked down. "No one dares come near now," he muttered.

Once home, Chiang-tao called: "Mum! Come here quick! Good news!"

His mother poked her head out of the window. "What's the matter? Is that you, Chiang-tao?" When she saw Chu Chung she guessed something must have happened, and hurried out with a smile. "Well, what is it?"

"My brother's written a letter," explained Chiang-tao. "He asks after you, mother, and after grandmother."

"Chiang-tao!" called his grandmother from the *kang*. "What's that you're saying?" Her eyes were still closed but she was smiling broadly.

Chiang-tao went in and called into her ear: "There's a letter from Yun-tao!"

Not opening her eyes, grandmother laughed. "I'm not deaf!" She crawled forward and kowtowed several times on the *kang*.

Chu Chung chuckled. "You're so happy you don't know what to do!"

"Is it really true, Chiang-tao?" demanded his mother.

Chiang-tao laughed. "Quite true!"

Mrs. Yen had been calm enough before. For Yun-tao she had wept her eyes dry, till they were a waterless well from which no more tears could be wrung. When she heard there was a letter her heart fluttered wildly. But she was afraid Chiang-tao might just be joking — he was a great one for jokes. Now that she saw from his face that it was true, her tears started falling like rain to wet her clothes. She hid her head in one corner of the room and gave way to a fit of weeping.

She had a mother's heart. When still a young bride, she made secret plans for the child moving in her womb about the clothes, the shoes and socks he should wear. . . . Her nimble fingers embroidered bright designs on his red bib and green jacket. Though she did not know whether the baby would be a boy or a girl, her heart was singing in secret. She put up in silence with days and nights of pain and sleeplessness. When Yun-tao was born, a boy child as

handsome as his father with arched eyebrows and big eyes, she patted him gently and whispered with a smile: "Baby, mother didn't have an easy time!" In cold weather she saw to it that he was warm, in hot weather that he was cool. When the baby was ailing, she worried and went without food for days at a time, clasping the infant to her breast and crooning to him. When the boy grew big and often disappeared in a flash, she would search high and low for him. "Where has the boy got to?" she fretted. At night when he came home late, she would go to the dyke to look out. This time his disappearance was like a knife in her heart. The long, long nights were almost unbearable, each day dragged like a year. Every morning she opened the gate before it was light, thinking: "Maybe, if the gate is open, Yun-tao will come in." She had risen early day after day, ten times, a hundred times; but Yun-tao had never come back. This letter's arrival was as bitter as it was sweet.

Seeing his mother in tears, Chiang-tao went to her and said: "Don't cry, mum! Don't cry! It's true, I tell you! It's true!"

"This is good news, sister!" cried Chu.

Mrs. Yen laughed through her tears. "What a silly I am — I wonder what set me off?"

"Who knows?" said Chiang-tao.

His mother looked up. "It was missing him like that!"

"He's joined the revolution," Chu Chung told them. "He's an official too. We'll write and tell him to come home and get married."

"He should have married long ago," said grandmother. "Who's to make shoes and socks, and cook and sew for the whole family? His mother's rushed off her feet."

"Whom shall he marry?" asked Mrs. Yen.

"Chun-lan, I should say!" cried Chu.

"Haven't tongues wagged enough?" said Mrs. Yen. "They'll be saying: 'First marred, then married.'"

"Well, there's no other man. . . ."

"They couldn't wash themselves clean, not if they jumped into the Yellow River," continued Mrs. Yen.

"There's no need to abide by all those rules," protested Chu. "I'll answer for it. Let me do a good deed for once."

In walked Yen with the wine, calling: "Mother! Prepare a few dishes for us! Brother Chu and I are going to celebrate."

"Are you drinking again?" she asked.

"If I don't drink today, when should I drink? I've never been so happy in my life, not even on the day I married you."

This set the whole room off. Chiang-tao laughed himself red in the face, while his mother boiled two salted eggs, made cracks at one end and scooped out the egg to go with the wine.

Smiling to himself, Chu went out and turned north, heading towards the Chu family graveyard. Out of the village, he took the path to Chu Ming's cottage. He found him resting from the heat under an old cedar, and told him about Yun-tao's letter.

Chu Ming put down his pipe and turned his sightless eyes towards the sky. After a long silence he laughed. "Can it be that we're going to see blue sky again?"

Chu Chung told him: "Yun-tao says the revolution is going strong down south. The working people have risen in revolt."

After another brief silence, Chu Ming said: "I only hope it's true. Well, we must get ready. Once the revolution comes and Yun-tao brings troops to our village we must rise too. First we'll deal with Feng Lan-chih, and finish off the whole Feng family. Good lad! Even if they try to shoot us, we must put the bastard behind bars."

"I'm with you there," cried Chu Chung. "When you deal with that scum you've got to remember the saying: A gentleman is no niggard, a true man is no weakling."

"That's true," said Chu Ming. "But we must be very careful. We must keep this quiet and not let word get out. The worse those scoundrels, the craftier they are. They have their spies everywhere. If they get wind of trouble, they'll make off with their title-deeds, gold, silver and

valuables. They'll go to Peking or Tientsin to hide in the foreign concessions and not come out."

Chu Chung breathed fast. "Yes! The proverb says: A man-eating lion never shows its fangs. Before the people's army comes, we'll have to bide our time quietly. They mustn't know what's in our minds."

"That's right!" Chu Ming was pleased. "You're right. When Yun-tao leads his troops here, the world will be ours. The poor will rise up, and our word will be law in the village!"

They smoked and talked with indescribable content till suddenly Chu Chung's face darkened and he said half to himself: "We'd better not count our chicks too soon. There are sudden changes in the weather and sudden changes in the affairs of men. If anything goes wrong now, what a come-down that will be!"

"There's no guessing what will happen in affairs of state," answered Chu Ming. "But to come back to what we were talking about: if Yun-tao brings soldiers here, his grandmother will see her grandson again, his mother will see her boy again, and old and young will be together again. Once these bullies here are overthrown, the poor will see the blue sky. Two birds with one stone!"

Chu Chung's eyes brightened and he sprang to his feet. "Then Yun-tao and Chun-lan can marry. Three birds with one stone!"

Chu Ming paused for a moment, then said: "That's not all either. We'll write a letter telling old Yen Hsiang to come home. Four birds with one stone!"

Chu Chung laughed heartily. "That sounds almost too good to be true. Come on, we'll go and get Chiang-tao to write that letter."

Chu Chung leading Chu Ming, they left the cedar grove. Above their heads magpies were chattering* and the old man beamed with delight.

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*According to Chinese folklore, a magpie's cry indicates good luck in store.

As they entered Yen's gate, Chu Ming called: "Grandmother Yen! Why didn't you tell me when you had such good news!"

At the sound of his voice, Yen, Mrs. Yen and Chiang-tao hurried out to help Chu Ming into grandmother's room. Chiang-tao fetched a bench for Chu Ming and Chu Chung.

"Who knows if it's good news or bad?" said grandmother. "A puff of air and you young folk go off your heads with joy!"

"It's only right that we should be glad," said Chu Ming. "Do you expect Feng Lan-chih to be pleased instead?"

"Not he!" chuckled Chu Chung. "He'll be in tears."

Yen Chih-ho clapped his hands and cried: "Mother's! We won't spare the dog, not even if he howls! We've got him by the throat and we shan't let go!"

"When that day comes," said Chu Ming, "we'll throttle him! Well, poor folk share happiness as well as trouble. Now that this has happened we must find a way to fetch old Yen Hsiang home."

Grandmother crowed with laughter and her hands trembled. "Oh, good! Hurry up and think of a way! I shall die of joy when the old man comes home!"

"Four birds with one stone!" cried Chu Chung. "How can you help being happy?"

After a family consultation they decided to ask Mrs. Chu to take Chun-lan a message; then Chu Chung would speak to the Donkey Man, and they would fetch Chun-lan to be Yun-tao's wife. When this was settled, they would tell Yun-tao to come home to get married. The letter to Yen Hsiang was enclosed as before in one to Chu Chung's friend at Heiho who was asked to find out the old man's address and forward the letter.

19

Chu Chung went home and told his wife their plan.

She said: "It would be just too good if the whole family could be together again! Chun-lan must be missing him!" Taking a basketful of grain, she set out with large steps to

Chun-lan's home to use their mill. As she left, her husband hurried after her.

"You'd better be tactful," he warned. "Don't blurt everything out in your usual way. She's an unmarried girl, remember!"

His wife smiled. "I know."

She went to the Donkey Man's house and found Chun-lan sieving flour by the mill-stone.

"Aunty!" the girl greeted Mrs. Chu. "Have you come to use the mill?"

She kept her head lowered as she spoke, her eyes on the sieve.

Mrs. Chu saw she was embarrassed. This tall, thin girl with her pale face looked quite different from the Chun-lan of old. "Poor child," thought Mrs. Chu. "How cruel they've been!" In her frank way she said: "I've come to grind a little flour. Why do we never see you about, Chun-lan?"

Chun-lan blushed and murmured: "I can't go out."

"Don't talk like that! We poor folk need pay no attention to those conventions."

"You may not pay attention, but people talk." Chun-lan's cheeks were burning, the rims of her eyes were red. Since the scandal she seldom went out but spent the whole day about the house, keeping out of people's way. When she was sewing alone, needle in hand, she would often fall into a study. At meal times she picked up the bowl, but very little rice or gruel went into her mouth. She liked to sit alone on the step watching the white wisps of cloud flying through the blue sky. Unable to admit her longing for Yun-tao to anyone, she could only grieve secretly. As time passed she grew thin and lost her colour.

She swept the flour from the mill-stone as they were speaking and poured Mrs. Chu's wheat on to it. Together, they turned the mill.

"I've something to tell you," said Mrs. Chu.

"What is it?"

Mrs. Chu whispered: "There's a letter from Yun-tao."

Chun-lan stiffened, her lips grew taut and she stared intently in front of her. Mrs. Chu had no idea what was in her mind. "Well?" she asked.

Still Chun-lan said nothing. She had been calm before, but now she was in a turmoil. Dizzy, her heart fluttering wildly, she felt as if Yun-tao's eyes were watching her. Ever since they fell in love, his image had been with her, closer than her own shadow. After he left she had tried her best to forget him. But it was not in her power. He had been in her mind all the time. Though she did not like to ask, she longed desperately to know what had become of him. As there was no one else in the yard, she stepped up to Mrs. Chu and said: "A letter? . . ." But then she drew back, hanging her head. "What difference does it make?"

"Poor, poor child!" thought Mrs. Chu. "Of course a woman misses her man," she said.

But that was an unfortunate remark. Chun-lan compressed her lips and looked offended. When they had turned the mill two rounds, she said: "You shouldn't say things like that, aunty! You'll make me die of shame."

Chun-lan had stopped going where there were other people. And as the Donkey Man had given up growing melons behind the house, she did not go to the melon patch any more. If she went out to pick some vegetables, she always hurried straight home again. She had lost all her energy and no longer dared to answer her father back. Like a moulting thrush, she hung her head and drooped. If Yun-tao's name was mentioned in her presence, she immediately flushed crimson.

When Chun-lan saw that Mrs. Chu was silenced, she looked down and smiled to herself.

"Now what possessed me to say a thing like that?" cried Mrs. Chu. "I'm growing soft in the head." But she was thinking: "Young folk change quickly. She may have forgotten him."

Chun-lan was upset to think she had misjudged Mrs. Chu, and wanted to open the subject again but did not know how to start. She stared at the mill as it turned till

she was dizzy. When Mrs. Chu swept up the flour and started to sieve it, Chun-lan leaned over the mill-stone to rest.

Mrs. Chu saw how weak she was and asked, "Aren't you well?"

"Just dizzy," said Chun-lan. She kept her head down, thinking: "Why not ask even if it kills me? It's too late now for any false pride." She looked up and shook back her hair with a sudden laugh. "Aunty! Tell me where Yun-tao is. Is he having a hard time?"

Mrs. Chu looked up slowly. "Ah! So you do think of him after all." She bent again over her sieving.

Chun-lan blushed and smiled. "Who said I don't?"

"He's joined the revolution." Mrs. Chu stopped again. Chun-lan was grasping the mill tight, listening quietly with bent head.

"He's not having a hard time. He's become an army officer. The army of the revolution will be fighting its way up here."

Chun-lan gave a choking laugh. "What a thing to say, aunty!" She raised her head to stare at the branches of the distant trees, which were rocking in the high wind like her own galloping heart. "Is it true?" she demanded.

"Do you think an old woman like me would make up a story?"

Chun-lan's face lit up. She threw back her head and laughed. Delightful visions flashed through her mind again.

Mrs. Chu went home to report this to her husband, who went to see the Donkey Man about the match.

In the Donkey Man's view the damage was already done — what did it matter? As a matter of fact, he had a soft spot for Yun-tao. But in that period of civil war, the times were very unsettled and there was no knowing which army was going to win. "I tell you what," he said. "We'll wait and see."

When Yen heard that the Donkey Man sounded fairly agreeable, he began to consider what preparations to make for Yun-tao's return. He must repaper the walls and repair the kitchen stove for Yun-tao's marriage to Chun-lan.

20

The army of revolution was marching north, the feudal forces would be overthrown, Yun-tao and Chun-lan would be married. . . . So many good things were happening together that any other boy would have gone round with a broad smile on his face, exulting. Not Chiang-tao, though. He had always been quiet, even as a child, but he had speaking eyes. When he read Yun-tao's letter, faint creases appeared at the corner of his eyes and spread slowly over his face — his equivalent to delighted laughter. Apart from this, he remained in contented silence. To him, silence was lovely beyond compare. In class he listened quietly, wide-eyed. When lessons were over, he would take a book and jump over a low, crumbling mud wall to sit reading on the steps of an old temple. After reading he would stroll quietly through the grass. By temperament self-contained, he had merry, expressive eyes. In moments of excitement, his long, thick lashes would flutter and his glance would sparkle like waves in the sunshine.

That day, when Chiang-tao had done all that was asked of him, alone, humming a ballad, he forded the river and took the path back to town. Stopping at the post office to post the letter to his grandfather, he went back to school.

As it was a Saturday, most of his class-mates had gone home for the week-end. The playing-field was deserted except for a few of the older boys who were having a set of tennis. A plot of dahlias at one end of the field glowed in the evening sun. He went to his class-room, but it was empty too. The setting sun cast a rosy light over window-panes, walls and everything in the room. He took a book to the dormitory to read, but found himself too excited to concentrate. Before he knew it dusk had fallen, while he dreamed of a bright, enchanting future.

A sharp rap sounded on the window. Imagining it was some practical joker, he went out to have a look. Mr. Chia was standing there in the gloaming.

Without a word he followed the teacher to his room.

"What is it, sir?" he asked.

Chia Hsiang-nung chuckled. "You're a little fellow, but you behave like a grown-up. You've acquired class consciousness and are making quick progress. You have a good grasp, too, of what you read. Today we're going to go through a ceremony together."

It was a moment before Chiang-tao understood: Mr. Chia was going to admit him to the Youth League! His heart started pounding wildly. Joy nearly choked him. The whole compound was as quiet now as the old temple. It was a summer evening, and the thin piping of a flute was carried to them from some distant village. He listened, rapt. The smoking lamp on the table cast an amber light on the wall.

Mr. Chia took a sheet of red paper from his cupboard and spread it on the table. He cut out a flag, drew a hammer and sickle on it, and put this up on the wall. He said: "This bright red flag is the flag of the Chinese Communist Party. The hammer and sickle stand for the united strength of the workers and peasants. From now on you are a member of the Communist Youth League." He added: "A red fighter must do all in his power to protect the Party, protect the interests of the proletariat. . . ."

Chiang-tao stood there, wide-eyed, listening quietly. Chia Hsiang-nung's husky voice and absolute sincerity brought tears of happiness and emotion to his eyes.

Chia took his hand and said: "Now, raise your fist!"

Chiang-tao raised his tightly clenched fist over his head and with Chia sang the *Internationale*. . . .

All around was so still that you could hear your heart beating. The blood seemed to be racing madly through his veins. . . .

Chiang-tao raised his right hand. Facing the Party flag and Mr. Chia, he repeated his oath with lips that quivered. He pledged himself to serve the Party, the proletariat and the suffering people of China. He said: "I've made up my mind to fight all my life for the Party, for the working class and for the Chinese people's revolution. . . ."

After this ceremony, Chia told him stories of the fearless men and women who had given their lives to the Party and

fallen at the hands of the class enemy. Back in his dormitory, Chiang-tao could not sleep. His whole body was burning hot. He flung out one arm as if to greet the revolution. The northern expedition, the high tide of revolution, the aroused masses . . . all seemed just before his eyes. He dreamed that he was rushing to join in the struggle. . . .

For a long time after Chiang-tao joined the Youth League no letters came from his brother. Though he wrote to Yun-tao several times, he received no reply. Yen Chih-ho knew that fierce battles were raging in the south, and the whole family was anxious for Yun-tao's safety.

The next spring, when Chiang-tao graduated from the senior primary school, Mr. Chia urged him to go home and consult his father about continuing his education. "There's a Number Two Normal School in Paoting," said Chia, "which is subsidized by the government. It's a progressive school. If you study there for a few years, you can get political experience at the same time."

Yen Chih-ho was under the poplar watering the orchard when he saw Chiang-tao approaching in the distance along the dyke. He stopped turning the windlass to bend down and ladle some cold water over his head. Beads of water were caught in his hair and beard. After washing his face he wiped his sun-burned back with a towel, took down his pipe from the tree and lit it.

Chiang-tao handed him his diploma.

Yen took it and squatted down with his back against a pear tree. He stared at the diploma for a long time. "H'm, it's got a chop on it too!" he commented. "This wasn't easy to come by. This has cost us a good sixty or seventy dollars. . . ." He pulled on his pipe.

Chiang-tao said: "All my class-mates are going to take entrance examinations. . . ." He explained that Mr. Chia wanted him to continue his schooling and he himself was eager to study, then waited for his father's reply.

Yen lowered his head to consider this for some time. He puffed out a mouthful of smoke, cleared his throat and said slowly: "In times like these, I can't see my way to it. A full day's work on the scaffolding only brings in fifty cents.

No one builds in a bad year like this. I'm busy at this windlass day and night, but at the market a load of vegetables fetches less than half a dollar. A sack of millet sells for four or five dollars. Nothing we can grow is worth anything. What's to be done? . . ." The burden of living lay heavy on Yen Chih-ho. His mother was old, Yun-tao was away, there was only his wife to help keep the family going. To provide for Chiang-tao's schooling as well was beyond him. He turned to look at the boy from under his long, dark lashes. "Take some of the load off my shoulders, lad!" he said. After this appeal he was silent. He frowned and lowered his long lashes again.

His father's indecision made Chiang-tao's heart sink. If he couldn't afford to go on studying, what would he do? The outlook seemed black. Then he thought: "I don't mind giving up school and a career, but I mustn't leave the revolution. . . ."

In his father's eyes Chiang-tao was not merely a good student. Like his brother, he had grown up on the land. He had learned to herd cattle, cut grass, collect fuel and manure, reap wheat. In a word, he could do every kind of farm labour. Since Yun-tao left, his father had been looking forward to the time when he would be big enough to help. But he insisted on studying. His father looked at Chiang-tao's large, brilliant eyes, his arched black eyebrows. The boy was silent, staring hopelessly at the sky where a few white clouds were floating and a skylark was soaring. . . . With a sigh Yen said, "It's a crime, good crops on a poor soil. It's hard for your old father. . . ." He decided not to send Chiang-tao back to school, but to keep him at home to help till the land as a peasant.

When his father simply smoked his pipe in silence, Chiang-tao's eyes grew red. Awkwardly, he started turning the windlass to water the orchard. He wondered: "Must I really give up school? The best time to study and work for the revolution is when you're young." A lump came into his throat. This was all the result of economic oppression and the hard times. Suddenly he remembered Chu Chung. Ever since Chu came back from the northeast

his word had carried great weight with Yen who took his advice in everything.

They watered the orchard till time for the midday meal. Then Chiang-tao filled a bowl with millet, picked up his chopsticks, and helped himself to some salted vegetables. Without stopping to eat, he took his bowl to East Soching. He found Chu Chung eating in the shade of his south wall. Chu smiled and said: "So Chiang-tao's back. Aren't you going to graduate very soon?" He told Erh-kuei to fetch a stool and made Chiang-tao join them at the table, pushing the bowl of vegetables towards him.

Chiang-tao said: "Graduation means the end of my schooling, the end of my career."

Chu stopped eating and stared hard. "What do you mean?"

"Dad finds the family too much of a burden and can't provide for me. He wants me to stay at home and farm."

Chu slapped his thigh and bellowed: "He can't do that! Farm? We've plenty of young fellows fit for farming. Erh-kuei here, Ching-erh and Hsiao-tun are all cut out to be farmers. Hsiao-hsun now, he's a natural carpenter. Ta-kuei is a natural soldier. As for you, as soon as I set eyes on you I said: Here's one cut out to be a scholar!"

Mrs. Chu chipped in: "That's it! You can see he's a bookworm."

"It's no use," said Chiang-tao. "My father's made up his mind."

"If he's made up his mind, I still want my say," retorted Chu. "You'll study if I have to sell my trousers and pawn my jacket!" He bolted his meal and told his wife to feed the cow. Then he lit his pipe. "Come on, Chiang-tao! Let's go and see your father."

They went to Lesser Yen Village. As soon as they rounded the corner of Yen's house, they saw him resting by the well under the poplar. Chu Chung greeted him with: "What's this I hear about not letting Chiang-tao go to school?"

Yen laughed and said: "When he disappeared like that from the table, I guessed he had gone to fetch help." He stood up and went over to Chu. "You know how things

are. When Yun-tao comes home he's got to marry; his grandmother is old and ailing; and now this lad wants to go to school."

"Come what may, we've got to carry out our plan of one scholar and two soldiers," insisted Chu. "If we only have soldiers, no scholar, that won't fill the bill."

Yen sighed. "Times are hard!"

"Even if they get harder, I'll help you. Besides, now Yun-tao's a company commander. When the Northern Expedition succeeds and the forces of darkness are beaten, no one else need put his hand in his pocket — these school fees will be a small sum to Yun-tao."

On bowed legs, Yen stepped forward. "But right now how are we to make ends meet? Studying in the prefectural town isn't like going to a village school. Food, clothes, lodging, it all mounts up. . . ."

Before his father could finish, Chiang-tao cut in: "There's a Number Two Normal School in Paoting, dad. It's government subsidized. Board, lodging and tuition are free. All I'd need would be a few books and some clothes."

"That's just the place for poor working folk like us!" cried Chu.

Yen squatted down by the well again. With bent head he knocked his pipe out on the ground, saying nothing for some time. Evidently Chu was set on sending Chiang-tao to school. "You know my means, don't you?" he demanded desperately. "How can I afford to keep a normal school student?"

Yen could be as obstinate as a mule, as Chu was well aware. He said: "Let's not light a lamp in the dark which shows only our own feet. We'll tighten our belts for a time. Once Chiang-tao has finished his studies and Yun-tao is an officer of the revolution, their sons and grandsons after them can live in comfort. The trouble with you is you see no further than your nose."

Yen said: "Judging by what you say, you're going to spend more money on Chiang-tao's school — but that isn't fair to Ta-kuei and Erh-kuei!"

Chu slapped his leg angrily. "Why must you always make a fuss over nothing?" He stared at Yen indignantly. "When Yun-tao comes back and Chiang-tao has finished his studies, won't they be able to help Ta-kuei and Erh-kuei? When Ta-kuei and Erh-kuei have sons of their own, won't Yun-tao and Chiang-tao see they get an education?"

Yen's bitter experience all these years and living on the edge of starvation had broken his spirit. By trudging east and west to look for work he simply succeeded in living from hand to mouth, with no security for the future. He was working himself to a shadow to feed his family, yet now Chiang-tao wanted more money to study. What could he say? He coughed and smoked, unwilling to disappoint either Chu Chung or Chiang-tao. But he was already strained almost past endurance. If there were a bad year or any accident happened, he would have to borrow money. And once he could not pay his debts that would be the end. He sighed and said: "Food must come first!" But Chiang-tao was top of his class in composition, he had got A for his calligraphy and in his second year come first in three subjects. Yen braced himself and stood up, slapping his thigh. "All right! I'll put up with a few more years of hardships. In spring and winter I'll go to Peking and Tientsin and see if I can't get some building jobs there. We may be able to swing it." To Chu he said: "What do you say to that, brother?"

Chu laughed. "That's the spirit. I'm going back to figure it out with my missis. We'll make shift to help you too."

As he was leaving, Chu said: "Chih-ho, listen to me! Let the boy go. This won't last very long. Yun-tao is in the revolutionary army and Ta-kuei has written home too. Won't it be fine to have Chiang-tao in normal school?" Smiling, he strode lightly off to East Soching.

"That's all very well," said Yen. "Mind you work hard, Chiang-tao! If you get into that school, you'll have your chance to study. If not, you'll have to turn to something else." All he could promise him each year was thirty to forty dollars.

Chiang-tao was admitted to the Number Two Normal School. Mr. Chia told him: "You were the only one in our county to pass. However you look at it, that's pretty good!"

Yen went, beaming, to see Chu.

"What did I tell you, Chih-ho?" cried Chu. "He's a young hopeful!" In the Chu and Yen families everyone was pleased that Chiang-tao was going to normal school. Only his mother's heart ached when she knew that he would be studying in Paoting and must leave her. She thought: "They're like birds. When they're too small to fly, they stretch out their beaks for mother to feed them. When their wings are strong, one by one they fly away. They all leave the nest, not one of them cares for his mother! . . ." She wept in despair, sitting quietly on the well coping and wiping her eyes with her sleeve. Chiang-tao saw how upset she was, and put his arms round her.

"Don't cry, mum! Don't cry!"

"I'm sorry I didn't have a daughter!" She sobbed even more bitterly. "There's no one to clean or sew or wash. No one to help me grind rice and cook the meals. When you were a small boy you were just like a little girl, kind-hearted and gentle. I'd made up my mind to keep you at home, like a daughter. Now you're going, how can mother help crying?"

Yen walked up and puffed out his beard as he stared at her. "What are you crying for now? He's going to study, not to prison!" Red in the face, panting indignantly, he stood and looked at her sternly.

Mrs. Yen turned away. "I won't cry," she said. "There's no need to fly into one of your tempers." She dried her tears with one corner of her jacket.

The day before Chiang-tao went to school, she quietly made ready a good, warm quilt. Chiang-tao carried water and prepared some lime for her to wash it clean. Then they starched it with rice gruel. That evening she sat up till midnight to sew it up by the oil lamp. When at last she lay down on the *kang* she could not sleep. She got up again and went to sit beside Chiang-tao, watching his fair

face in the dark as he slept peacefully. Fetching the lamp from its niche in the wall, she gazed at him intently. Alone she watched the moonlight on the window, then stepped into the yard. The moon, hidden by clouds, was gleaming faintly through rifts between them. There was no wind and the village was utterly still. She stood by the well till a breeze began to ruffle the poplar leaves, and then she went in. Chiang-tao was sleeping still. She touched his fine, long hair and stroked his arm. "Good muscles he's got!" she murmured. The tears she could not hold back fell like pearls from a broken string on Chiang-tao's face. He opened his eyes and she hastily blew out the lamp. Chiang-tao felt the salt tears on his cheek and knew that his mother was crying, but had no idea how to comfort her. He clasped her arm and gazed at her for a while, then pressed his face to hers.

"Yun-tao hasn't come back and we've no daughter-in-law," she said. "I shall be all on my own. I shall be thinking of you but you'll be gone. I shall be thinking of your brother, but he's gone. What am I going to do, boy?"

"Ask Chun-lan to come over and lend you a hand. She'll be company for you."

"How can I do that? She hasn't married into our family yet."

Chiang-tao blinked as he reflected. "Other girls wouldn't agree, but Chun-lan will. I'll go over and tell her. She'll be only too glad."

"No, a village isn't like the town. She wouldn't dare. She'd never hear the end of it if she came."

She lay down on the *kang* by Chiang-tao and fell asleep.

Chu Chung got up early the next morning to feed the cow. Then he secretly took a shabby bag from a hidden cleft in the wall, and extracted ten silver dollars. He clinked the money in his hands as he walked to Yen's house and went in calling: "This is the day Chiang-tao's going to school in Paoting!" He threw the bright silver dollars on the table.

Yen stared, round-eyed. "What's this now? Well, I never!"

"I'm as good as my word," said Chu. "After the autumn harvest I can bring some more."

He bent, smiling, over his silver. "This is that calf I raised so carefully. When I heard Chiang-tao was going, I sold it for ten dollars to help pay for his schooling."

Yen's lips quivered with pleasure. "I don't know how to thank you. I was worrying how we were going to make do!" From the fifteen dollars he had meant to give Chiang-tao, he now secretly deducted five. They were very short.

Chiang-tao put out a trembling hand to take the silver and there were tears in his eyes. His long black lashes were moist. He was deeply moved by his mother's love, his father's deep affection and Uncle Chu's kindness. When he left the gate his grandmother called from her window: "Chiang-tao! Come here. Let me have one last look at you. I may never see you again!"

Chiang-tao ran in and called into her ear: "I shan't forget you, granny! How can you say you'll never see me again?"

Grandmother laughed with closed eyes. "Don't say that! One day passed is one day less to live. Time goes in a flash. Ah, you're big now, leaving home."

As he left the village her voice was still in his ears, her face before his eyes.

There were rosy, fish-scale clouds in the sky. His father was helping him carry his luggage to Paoting. Chu saw them to the pear orchard, where he took Chiang-tao's hand in his strong grasp. "Now you're going to the prefecture to study. Mind you don't forget your home, the soil, and your origin! When you rise in the world, you must see what you can do for us poor folk."

"I will, uncle," said Chiang-tao. "I shall do as you say."

"Don't forget our hoes and sickles and the hardships of farming folk!"

"I won't, uncle."

"Don't forget our oxen and fields!"

" . . . . "

" . . . . "

When they reached Paoting, Yen took his son to call on Yen Chih-hsiao, Yen Shang's eldest son, who was Chinese teacher in the Number Two Normal School. Yen Chih-ho asked him to keep an eye on Chiang-tao, and Yen Chih-hsiao consented. He said: "He looks a clever lad. . . . If you're short of a few dollars, just come to me."

So Chiang-tao started studying in Paoting, and got to know Yen Chih-hsiao's daughter, Yen Ping.

(to be continued)

Translated by Gladys Yang

I Asked the Lass

Beneath a spreading tree I asked the lass:
"Say, lovely maiden, have you never wed?"
Her brilliant cheeks flushed crimson as the rose,
While tossing back her head she laughed and said:

"I shall not wed till streams obey our will,
I shall not wed until the hills are green;
Green hills and streams shall be my bridal-chair,
The flowers and fruit shall be my go-between."

—folk song from Hopei

Notes on Literature and Art

AN CHING

Chinese New-Year Pictures

During the Chinese lunar New Year many brightly coloured woodcuts are displayed for sale all over the country. The working people like to buy colourful pictures symbolizing good fortune and happiness to paste on their newly brushed walls at this time, to give their rooms a festive New-Year spirit. Since these pictures printed from wood-blocks are usually sold only during the festival, they are known as New-Year pictures.

This is one of the most popular forms of pictorial art in China, with its strong national colour and deep roots in life.

In the old days when the labouring people, especially the peasants, were ground down the whole year round by officials and landlords, after each year of hunger, trials and hardship, they longed for happier days in the coming year. So during the lunar New Year they liked to have something lucky in the house. Their favourite pictures were those symbolizing prosperity like "May All Your Wishes Come True," "Bumper Harvest," or "Abundant Happiness," those symbolizing a large family such as "May Your Sons Become Officials" and "May You Have Five Scholarly Sons," or those representing legends or merry-making like "The Wedding of the Mice" and "Children at Play." Some pictures, however, poisoned men's minds by spreading superstition and feudal ideas of morality. Examples of these are "Twenty-four Acts of Filial Piety," "The Three Obediences and Four Wifely Virtues" and the various door gods, kitchen gods and tutelary deities.

As far back as the Tang (618-907) and Sung (960-1279) dynasties, merry or lucky pictures were being painted. "A Good Harvest" by Han Huang of the Tang dynasty is one of these,

very similar to the later New-Year paintings, which may, indeed, have been influenced by these early works.

Since China's first New-Year pictures were printed on wood-blocks, their development is closely linked with that of wood-block printing. Books and pictures were printed in China as early as the Tang dynasty, while by the Ming dynasty different colours were being used and technical innovations had been made; but very few New-Year pictures of the Ming dynasty can be found today. The reigns of Yung Cheng (1723-1735) and Chien Lung (1736-1795) early in the Ching dynasty were the best period for New-Year pictures; for the empire was enjoying peace and prosperity, there was a flowering of art, an imperial academy of painting was set up, and Western modes of painting were introduced. All these factors helped to widen the range of subject matter and to improve the technique of these New-Year pictures.

The two chief centres for New-Year pictures during this period were in Taohuawu, Soochow, in the Yangtse Valley, and Yangliuching near Tientsin in North China.

The Soochow prints appear so like paintings that they have been mistaken for such. Indeed, when different shades of colour are added after the printing, these pictures are remarkably gay and vivid. This is a characteristic of the Taohuawu prints. The larger prints are more than three feet long, the smaller about one foot — suitable sizes for the homes of labouring people.

The Tientsin prints are in the tradition of those of the Sung and Yuan (1279-1368) dynasties, simple and clear in colour and in style. The later New-Year pictures of Yangliuching are neater, compact and decorative in their composition. Most of them were coloured after printing; few coloured wood-blocks were used. Faces were tinted with rose or gold, and all was vividly coloured. This is a distinct feature of the Yangliuching prints.

New-Year pictures were also printed and sold in Shantung, Szechuan, Kwangtung and elsewhere.

After lithographic printing was introduced in China, fewer New-Year pictures were printed on wood-blocks, and the older tradition began to die out. By the time of the First World War, the chief subjects of New-Year pictures were calendar prints and beautiful women. As a result, the sale of wood-block prints fell off, and not until after liberation did this old art form really revive.

One variety of New-Year pictures is the small "Ox prints" made by the peasants themselves and usually pasted on cattle sheds. A peasant's livestock was very precious to him and each year he hoped his cattle and poultry would prosper; but since it was difficult to find New-Year pictures to fit a shed, he made them himself. These prints though crude, have simplicity and charm.

During the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression a new type of New-Year pictures developed which dealt with the people's daily work and struggle rather than the legends, superstitions and feudal morality which had so often formed the themes of the old pictures. These prints first developed in the revolutionary base in the Taihang Mountains where conditions were extremely difficult. The people's forces were constantly on the move, and the printing facilities were limited. But the revolutionary artists who lived among the people looked for new themes, co-operating with folk artists, designing, making blocks and printing themselves. The pictures of that time reflect the heroism of the Eighth Route Army, the solidarity between soldiers and civilians, labour and life in the army. As these were the themes most familiar to the people, these New-Year pictures were widely popular. And as people came to realize from their struggle and production that only by resolute fighting and hard work could they win real freedom and happiness, they ceased to put their trust in illusions. That is why these new pictures reflecting real life in the revolutionary bases so quickly took the place of the old type of print. Since then artists have produced new pictures every year, maintaining this splendid tradition to this day. In fact, the designing of New-Year pictures is also a required course in our art colleges.

After Chairman Mao's *Talks at the Yenan Forum on Art and Literature* in 1942 made it clear that art and literature should serve the workers, peasants and soldiers, a great improvement took place in New-Year pictures, and this art became a favourite form among the masses.

The establishment of New China, followed by the unprecedented rise in living standards, has given fresh impetus to the development of New-Year pictures. Every year artists produce several hundred new designs on different subjects to satisfy the increasing demand. These works carry forward the folk tradition as well as applying certain features of traditional

painting; they reflect the major events in political and economic life since the founding of the People's Republic of China, and the new achievements in socialist construction; they show our people's new life and new moral standards, the emergence of heroes and model workers, and the Party's care for the nation's livelihood. Many striking and impressive works have been produced, like "Defend Peace" by Teng Shu, "Seeing Off Our Delegate" by Yun Yi-tsang, "A Tractor Has Come to Our Co-operative" by Ku Sheng-chang, "Good Mother and Daughter-in-Law" by Yang Wen-hsiu, and "Chairman Mao in a Mountain Village" by Chin Chih-yuan. During the past year the output of New-Year pictures has doubled. More than two thousand have been printed or reprinted, totalling nearly one hundred million copies and including a number of excellent pictures reflecting new happenings and heroes in the great leap forward. "A Record Harvest" by Yang Wen-hsiu is one of these. The five happy children here, delighting in their magnificent fruits and vegetables, give a splendid picture of the harvest.

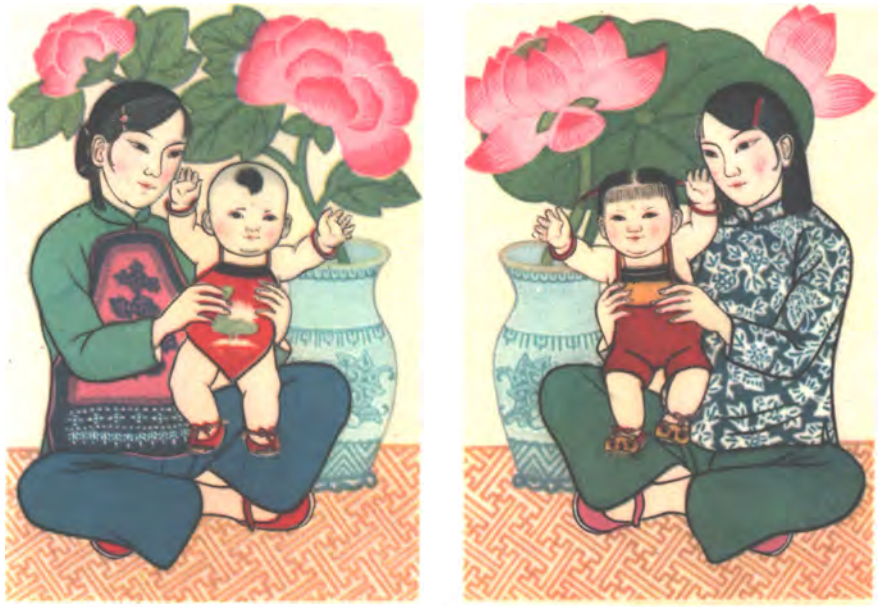
The type of wood-block prints popular in the old liberated areas began to reappear this year. "Catching up" by Chang Chien-wen has the simplicity and directness of folk art in its treatment of the subject, in composition and colour.

Successful attempts have been made in the Central Institute of Applied Art to combine the best in traditional and Western painting. This can be seen in such collective works as "Every Township Is Building Factories," "There Is No Winter" and "Collecting Manure." The traditional style of composition is used to make hills, plains, rivers, power plants, factories and villages one organic whole, producing an effect of boundless space and infinite variety.

Prints which show a mastery of the best features of folk art include "A Girl at Her Embroidery" by Shih Lu, "Peace and Happiness"* by Shan Ying-kuei, and "Prosperity for Our Household" by Yang Peng.

Developed from the traditional wood-block prints, these New-Year pictures are a vigorous form of Chinese art. In the past few years tremendous progress has been made, but to satisfy the needs of our people all artists must redouble their efforts, as they are doing now.

*Peace is symbolized in one of the two pictures by the lotus flower, *ho* and the vase, *ping*, which make up the word *ho-ping*, meaning peace.



Peace and Happiness (New-Year Pictures) by Shan Ying-kuei

Prosperity for Our Household (New-Year Picture) by Yang Peng

WU HSIAO-JU

New Traditions in Chinese Prose

A brief survey of Chinese prose from the Sung dynasty to the end of the Ching dynasty

The classical revival of the Tang dynasty did not long survive Han Yu and Liu Tsung-yuan, for the social upheavals and widespread suffering towards the end of the Tang dynasty hampered the development of literature and art. After a period of continuous fighting during the Five Dynasties (907-960), in the beginning of the Northern Sung dynasty (960-1127) a somewhat empty euphuistic style gradually came to the fore again as an ornament to an era of peace; but since the examination system of the time was less rigid than during the Tang dynasty and education was more widespread, scholars in general wrote free prose. In the second half of the eleventh century a new classical revival was initiated, which gained complete ascendancy under the leadership of Ouyang Hsiu, the most important prose writer of the time.

Ouyang Hsiu was for simple, easy and fluent prose, and opposed ornateness and verbiage. He believed that writing should be natural and close to speech. All the great writers of his school — Tseng Kung, Su Hsun, Su Shih (Su Tung-po) and Wang An-shih whom he greatly admired — shared his views. They were in favour of upholding Han Yu's tradition and learning from the early prose of the Warring States period as well as from Ssuma Chien, to produce writing with a significant content couched in clear language. Thanks to the principles they advocated and practised, the tradition of classical prose was once more carried forward. Thus the sixteenth century critic Mao Kun dubbed Han Yu, Liu Tsung-yuan, Ouyang Hsiu,

This is the last of three articles on Chinese prose by the same author, the first two *The Early Chinese Prose* and *Euphuistic Prose and Free Prose* were published in *Chinese Literature* Nos. 5 and 6, 1958.

Tseng Kung, Wang An-shih, Su Hsun, Su Shih and Su Cheh the Eight Great Prose Writers of the Tang and Sung dynasties, for they were responsible for introducing and developing the tradition of free prose in this period.

Parallel with the classical revival of the Sung dynasty, another new prose genre came into fashion. This was *belles-lettres* in the form of anecdotes and personal reminiscences. Writing of this sort dated back to the Six Dynasties period, but had never been highly regarded by the ruling class. When Han Yu championed classical prose he took as his models the prose of the Chou, Chin and Early Han dynasties. But even among the Han dynasty writers he only considered Chia Yi, Ssuma Chien, Liu Hsiang, Yang Hsiung and a few others as masters, and did not concern himself at all with the anecdotes and tales of the Six Dynasties period; but these had an influence on the Tang dynasty romances and indirectly affected the classical movement. During the Northern Sung dynasty such writing began to be noticed and accepted by men like Ouyang Hsiu, Su Shih and later Huang Ting-chien, who wrote anecdotes and reminiscences in the same vein. Some of the letters of Su Shih and Huang Ting-chien are outstanding. Here are two short passages by Ouyang Hsiu and Su Shih:

Lord Chen prided himself on being a skilled archer, second to none in his age. He was practising archery in his garden one day when an old oil-vendor came by and put down his load to watch. The old man stood there for a long while, but although he saw Lord Chen hit the target nine times out of ten he merely nodded in approval.

"Can you shoot?" asked Lord Chen. "What do you think of my marksmanship?"

"This is nothing," said the old man. "You simply have the knack of it."

"How dare you make light of my skill!" Lord Chen was angry.

"I know from my own experience in pouring oil."

The old fellow placed a copper cash on top of a gourd on the ground, then proceeded to pour oil into the gourd through the hole in the copper without so much as wetting the edge.

"This is nothing either," he said. "I simply have the knack of it."

Lord Chen laughed and sent him away.

— From Book I of Ouyang Hsiu's
Notes During Retirement

On the night of the twelfth day of the tenth month of the sixth year of the Yuan Feng period, I had just taken off my clothes and gone to bed when I noticed the moonlight through the door. It looked so enchanting that I got up for a walk. Regretting that there was no one to enjoy the night with me, I went to Chengtien Monastery to look up Chang Huai-min. Chang was not in bed either, and together we strolled in the courtyard. The court seemed full of water, clear and bright, interlaced with seaweed — the shadows of bamboo and cypress. There is a moon every night, while bamboos and cypresses may be found anywhere, but there may not always be two fellows at a loose end as we were.

— From Su Shih's ***A Visit by Night to Chengtien Monastery***

The Southern Sung dynasty saw more writers of *belles-lettres* who recorded the beauties of nature or wrote diaries like the travel notes of Fan Cheng-ta and Lu Yu. This type of travelogue developed to such an extent by the end of the Ming dynasty that Hsu Hung-tsu's *Travel Notes of Hsu Hsia-keh* is an enormous work which took him a lifetime to complete.

From the Northern Sung dynasty onwards there were in effect two varieties of free prose: classical prose and *belles-lettres*. By "classical prose" we mean the long, carefully constructed works on serious themes, by *belles-lettres* the notes and anecdotes written in a lighter vein. The first type of writing was mainly historical or philosophical, while the second was literature in the narrow sense. This was a new development after the Sung — especially the Southern Sung — dynasty. The intellectuals of the landed gentry naturally considered "classical prose" as orthodox and *belles-lettres* as mere trifles; but from the standpoint of the present we can see that the latter was the significant new force in literature with a relatively progressive tendency.

The literature of the townsman, which arose in the middle of the Tang dynasty, flourished in the Sung and reached maturity during the Yuan and Ming dynasties. These ballads, folk plays and tales had one common characteristic: the language was close to that of everyday speech. And the intellectuals of the time were naturally influenced by this trend too, as is

apparent not only in poetry but also in prose.* It is particularly true of such *belles-lettres* as anecdotes and tales which were naturally couched in more easy and popular language than the scholarly classical essays. Indeed, the authors of works of this kind were the most willing to accept and learn from the literature of the townsman. This was even more true by the end of the Ming dynasty; but among certain circles there was a vogue for the imitation of ancient writing — a sort of literary regression. The forces of progress struggled with those of conservatism, and were ultimately triumphant.

The best exponents of the orthodox classical style in the first thirty years of the Ming dynasty were Kao Chi, Liu Chi and Sung Lien, none of whom, however, were writers of the highest calibre. From the fifteenth century onwards this type of prose declined steadily — a reflection in literature of the decadence and decline of feudal society and its ruling class. Unconsciously the intellectuals of that time felt impelled to go back to the past. In the earlier half of the sixteenth century there were two literary groups with seven famous scholars in each, the first headed by Li Meng-yang and Ho Ching-ming, the second by Wang Shih-chen and Li Pan-lung, who made repeated efforts to revive classical prose. They advocated a return to ancient models in order to counteract the tendency towards decline, and their insistence that content was as important as form had a certain positive value at the time. But since their direction was wrong, their efforts were wasted. As they merely aped the authors of ancient times, their works are faked antiques, lifeless and insipid. Among prose writers there were at first Wang Shen-chung, Kuei Yu-kuang, Tang Shun-chih and Mao Kun who were for carrying on the Tang and Sung traditions to oppose these classicists. By the beginning of the seventeenth century the Kungan School headed by the three Yuan brothers, Yuan Tsung-tao, Yuan Hung-tao and Yuan Chung-tao had arisen. Accepting and absorbing the ideas and language characteristic of the literature of the townsman, they were for certain reforms in prose, claiming that it should be able to hold readers' interest and possess evocative qualities or a distinctive style. They maintained that new literary forms alone could express genuine feeling and significant ideas, and that only writing with an individual style and appeal could be considered as literature. Their aim was to break the fetters of feudal morality and achieve the emancipation of the individual. They inherited the tradition of *belles-lettres* from the Sung dynasty onwards, were for popular writing and against the imitation of the classics, and hoped to achieve the emancipation of the individual personality through the emancipation of prose. Sometimes, however, their writing tends to be shallow, loosely constructed and wordy. The Chingling School, headed by men like Chung Hsing and Tan Yuan-chun, evolved an elaborate and difficult style as a reaction against the worst features of the Kungan School; but the prose of this school is at times obscure and colourless. Chang Tai, at the end of the Ming dynasty, succeeded in combining the best points of both schools. His language is free and fluent, forceful yet subtle and evocative. The following anecdote may serve as an illustration:

> In the twelfth month of the fifth year of Tsung Chen I went to the West Lake. After three days of heavy snow neither human voices nor bird cries could be heard there. At midnight I hired a small boat and, wrapped in felt and carrying a brazier, went alone to the Lake Pavilion to watch the snow. Mist was over everything. All above and below — the sky, clouds, hills and water — were uniformly white. The only shadows on the lake were the gash made by the long dyke, the blotch made by the pavilion, the dot made by my boat, and the specks made by the two or three men aboard. At the pavilion I found two men sitting opposite each other on a rug, while the wine their boy was heating was just beginning to bubble. They were delighted to see me, crying: "Heavens! Here is someone else on the lake!" They made me drink with them, and forced me to empty three cups before I left. When I asked who they were, I discovered they were from Nanking. As I went back to my boat, the boatman muttered to himself: "This gentleman is not the only one touched in the head."

The best writing of this sort is a kind of prose poem. Unfortunately this type of prose was not highly regarded by the classicists, who even condemned it as heterodox; thus after the fall of the Ming dynasty this tradition was temporarily interrupted.

*The prose mentioned here does not include fiction in general. For information on Chinese fiction see Lu Hsun's *The Historical Development of Chinese Fiction* in *Chinese Literature* Nos. 5 and 6, 1958.

Another striking feature of Ming prose is the number of fables and parables written. When the Ming dynasty was first established after the fall of the Yuan dynasty, there was a strong tendency to return to ancient traditions; and writers like Liu Chi or Sung Lien imitated the orators of the Warring States period, using parables to express political views. Another factor was the ruthless autocracy of the Ming emperors. During the reigns of the first emperor and his son Yung Lo there were large-scale persecutions of scholars, while after the state power fell into the hands of eunuchs in the middle of the Ming dynasty a rule of terror was maintained. Thus writers with a sense of justice used parables or fables to combat the forces of reaction and satirize contemporary society. Ma Chung-hsi's parable about Master Tungkuo and the wolf is a typical example.

At this time the literary form to do the greatest damage to Chinese writing, especially to prose, was the *paku* essay which originated in the Ming dynasty and continued in the Ching. This type of prose was required for the civil service examinations. Indeed, scholars had to be able to write it if they wanted an official career. Such essays, which consisted simply of quotations from the Confucian classics and had no other content, were a deliberate instrument to fetter the minds of scholars and discourage original ideas. The phrases and sentences used in *paku* essays were taken from early classical works, but the influence of euphuism was evident in the use of parallelisms and definite rhythmic patterns; thus this prose was a kind of word-play propagating the orthodox views of the feudal ruling class. Great prose writers of the Ming dynasty like Kuei Yu-kuang and Yuan Hung-tao wrote excellent descriptions of family life, nature or daily happenings in a fresh and wholesome style; yet their prose is sometimes tainted by vulgarity or pedantry due to the evil influence of the *paku* essay which they had studied intensively. Even today in China the term *paku* is a synonym for jargon or dogma.

Ching dynasty prose can be roughly divided into three schools: the Tungcheng School which followed the classical tradition of the Tang and Sung dynasties, the Euphuistic School which continued the Six Dynasties' tradition, and the Reformist School which arose under the influence of Western capitalist culture. At the beginning of the Ching dynasty Hou Fang-yueh and Wei Hsi observed the principles of the Tang and Sung

prose masters, and they were followed by scholars of Tungcheng County in Anhwei — men like Fang Pao, Liu Ta-kuei and Yao Nai — who stated explicitly that writers should emulate Han Yu and Ouyang Hsiu, learning the art of prose from classical masters. Though these writers had carefully worked out ideas on writing, they could not free themselves completely from the influence of the *paku* essay which required the use of fixed patterns for different kinds of writing. The merit of the Tungcheng School was that it helped beginners to write prose which was well constructed, well proportioned and fluent without being vulgar or pedantic; its weakness was that its writers frequently wrote too much by rule, paying too much attention to finely turned sentences and style for its own sake, and their work was therefore monotonous and empty.

The chief representatives of the Euphuistic School are Wang Chung and Yuan Yuan, good scholars with a literary flair whose devotion to the ancient classics made them indifferent to or even contemptuous of Tang and Sung writers. They did not write entirely in a euphuistic style, but paid great attention to elegance of diction. Chen Chi-nien, Wu Hsi-chi, Kung Kuang-shen and Hung Liang-chi, who also wrote good euphuistic prose, may be considered as belonging to this school.

Towards the end of the Ching dynasty both these schools underwent certain changes. Writers of the Tungcheng School like Mei Tseng-liang borrowed certain rhythmic patterns and literary devices from the euphuists, while men like Yen Fu and Lin Shu imitated the archaic language of the *Tso Chuan* or Ssuma Chien's *Historical Records* in their translations of Western classics, not being satisfied with the prose of the Tang, Sung or Ming dynasties. Others to write in the style of the Early Han and Six Dynasties included Wei Yuan and Kung Tzu-chen, who propagated patriotic and democratic ideas, Kang Yu-wei the reformist who later became a royalist, and Chang Pin-ling who advocated a nationalist revolution. Though these men had different political views, their prose style belongs to one tradition, and they were alike in writing to propagate progressive and revolutionary ideas. They were actually reformists influenced by modern capitalist culture.

The real leaders of the Reformist School were Liang Chi-chao and his precursor Tan Ssu-tung. Tan Ssu-tung was more radical than Liang Chi-chao, but he often used archaic sen-

tence constructions and a difficult vocabulary. After Liang Chi-chao fled to Japan following the failure of the Reform Movement in 1898, he started writing for the *Hsin Min Gazette* of which he was the editor, introducing Western ideas and attacking imperialism and feudalism. He wrote with passion in a moving and stirring prose quite different from earlier polemical writing. Thus originated the popular "Hsin Min style."

All the prose writers of the Ching dynasty, including the later reformists, wrote in classical Chinese. Writings in the vernacular did not appear in any quantity until after the May the Fourth Movement and therefore belong to modern Chinese literature.

The foregoing short analysis indicates the long, rich and varied traditions of Chinese prose. The early narrative and philosophical prose of the Warring States period laid the foundation for writers for the next two thousand years, while Ssuma Chien's *Historical Records* in the Han dynasty paved the way for biographical literature. From the Later Han to the Tang dynasty we can see the clear differentiation between the euphuistic style and free prose, and note that while the euphuistic tradition was dominant for several centuries, during the same period short tales and anecdotes in free prose gave writers a fresh viewpoint and later influenced the *belles-lettres* of the Sung and Ming dynasties. The classical revivals of the Tang and Sung dynasties opened up fresh possibilities for free prose and founded a new tradition. Then from the Northern Sung dynasty onwards the miscellaneous writings or *belles-lettres* which appeared owing to the influence of the literature of the townsman became a new force in prose. The imitation of ancient styles in the Ming dynasty was a regression, but the fables and miscellanea written towards the end of this dynasty were fine achievements. Though many Ching dynasty scholars followed the classical tradition of the Tang and Sung dynasties, they were influenced by the *paku* essay and could not completely shake off the fetters of formalism. Those who admired Han dynasty and Six Dynasties prose tried to create a new style, but because they were scholars rather than men of letters they did not produce much real literature. At the end of the Ching dynasty progressive intellectuals influenced by modern Western culture wrote stirring prose to propagate revolutionary

ideas, thereby opening up new vistas for Chinese prose. The prose written after the May the Fourth Movement was a further development from this tradition; but since that belongs to the field of modern Chinese literature we shall not deal with it here.

MAO TUN

Rambling Notes on Literature *(cont'd)*

On Socialist Realism and Other Subjects

III. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THESE FACTS IN THE HISTORY OF CHINESE LITERATURE

From the very brief analysis made above we can at least perceive the following facts:

1. The history of Chinese literature has seen a long, continual struggle between realism and anti-realism. Our realist literature originated in very ancient times. The realist method was first created and developed by the oppressed masses, whose literature during certain periods of history influenced some of the literati of the ruling class. Indeed these were the great ages of literature described by past historians, and these achievements form the finest part of feudal civilization. At the same time we should point out that when scholars of the ruling class were influenced by the people's realist literature, the depth of realism in their writing depended on their attitude towards the society of their time: if they considered the social conflicts and national and class struggles of that day from the people's standpoint, the realism in their works found a higher expression, for the stronger a man's righteous indignation the more profound the realism in his writing. If he looked at

society from the ruling class viewpoint or held aloof and felt no concern, he could copy only the form of the people's realist literature, not its spirit. There are also many such works in our history, which cannot be regarded as realist literature.

When we speak today of our heritage of classical literature, we include the folk songs in the *Book of Songs*, the *yueh-fu* of the Han and Wei dynasties, the popular stories of the Sung dynasty, works by folk artists whose names are unknown to us, as well as realist writing by scholars who were influenced by these works. The great writers of the last category did much to develop our realism and enrich the treasure-house of our realist literature.

2. Anti-realist literature has appeared repeatedly in different historical periods in the form of "orthodoxy." This was the formalistic literature which sought beauty in form to amuse the ruling class, described the rulers' life and was written for them. Another type of anti-realist literature which also appeared in different historical periods did not necessarily pose as "orthodox." This was the hermit or recluse school of writing, a sort of escapism. Of these two types of anti-realist literature the former usually emerged when a dynasty was powerful, an exception being the early and middle period of the Tang dynasty; the latter usually emerged when the feudal authority was weak, when the government was corrupt and society in a turmoil.

3. Scholars of the ruling class launched many movements to oppose the formalistic orthodox literature, but owing to their own inner contradictions they could not make too great a contribution towards the development of realism. We must not under-estimate their influence, however.

Sometimes the struggle between realism and anti-realism was sharpest at a time when there was no movement, as is clear from the steady growth and extension of influence of the realist literature of the people themselves. It was the people who created such new literary forms as the novel and the drama, who developed the literary language on the basis of daily speech. This body of writing produced by the oppressed classes and steadily developed in the class society was so striking and splendid a phenomenon and exercised such a powerful influence on the people that the rulers of every dynasty took political action in an attempt to suppress it, burning these books and forbidding their publication. There are

many accounts of such actions in Chinese history. One of the "family precepts" for the upper class was a bar on reading such "frivolous books." These facts show the actual conditions of the struggle between realism and anti-realism in Chinese history: it was a fight to the death. But the people's realist literature was victorious, and many outstanding writers from ruling class families came over to the side of realism, contributing not a few immortal works to our realist literature. Before the Sung dynasty all their works were written in the classical language, but from that time onward there also appeared many works in the vernacular.

4. But although the realist writers in Chinese history have left us glorious works, in the field of literary theory up till the May the Fourth Movement they failed to establish a scientific and systematic literary theory dealing with our profound and ancient realist tradition. We praise Liu Hsieh's *Carving a Dragon at the Core of Literature** as a masterpiece of ancient literary criticism, but we must also admit its limitations, its tendency towards dualism. In the same way, while giving credit to Wang Kuo-wei,** we should point out the idealism in much of his thinking. In the fourteen centuries which separated Liu Hsieh from Wang Kuo-wei, many works of literary criticism were written, some of them quite outstanding. Unfortunately no systematic theories of art appeared.

A clear and relatively systematic theory of realism was brought forward only after the May the Fourth Movement in 1919. In the main this introduced the theory of realism of mid-ninteenth-century Europe. But because at that time we were trying to solve the problem of the classical language and the vernacular in order to make the vernacular the chief literary language, the right wing of the May the Fourth literary movement laid undue stress on the importance of reforming literary style, distorting the theory of realism and impeding its spread.

But this uncertainty and confusion were soon cleared up. The correct leadership of the Communist Party gradually

*The most celebrated work of literary criticism in ancient China, written at the beginning of the sixth century. See *Chinese Literature* No. 5, 1958, p. 132.

**A well-known scholar at the end of the Ching dynasty, who made a study of Sung and Yuan dynasty drama and the *tzu* form of poetry.

gained ground on the ideological front. The works of Gorky and the literature of the early period of the Soviet Union were introduced. Marxist literary theory defeated the bourgeois literary theory of Western Europe which had been popular in the first few years after the May the Fourth Movement, lighting up the way for writers all over China who wanted to move forward. Once the fine traditions of the Chinese realist literature created by the people in the centuries of feudal society and enriched by great writers in different dynasties became linked with Marxist literary theory they were bound to shine with new splendour. Lu Hsun's literary activities and magnificent achievements are the best prove of this. Chairman Mao Tse-tung's *Talks at the Yenan Forum on Art and Literature* in 1942 summarized the experience of literary movements since the May the Fourth period, drew Marxist-Leninist conclusions and gave directives on some of the basic problems of that time, bringing our revolutionary literary movement to a new stage—the stage of aspiring towards socialist realism.

These few points deduced from the historical development of Chinese literature help us to understand certain of the problems raised since 1956, some of which are still being heatedly discussed among writers the world over.

When was realism produced?

There are many different views regarding this question, but they can be classified into two schools: the first holds that realism has existed since very early times, the second that it emerged at a certain stage in human history. There are again two groups in the second school, one of which believes that realism came into being during the Renaissance, the other that it started towards the middle of the nineteenth century. Since all these differences stem from different definitions of realism, this leads to another problem: What are the chief characteristics of realism?

But this problem is also a complicated one. If we use the works of Balzac or Leo Tolstoy to exemplify the characteristics of realism, we shall naturally reach certain conclusions. Since this is not viewing the problem from the historical development of realism, however, but from the highest stage of its development, these conclusions are not satisfactory. Those who urge that realism arose in the Renaissance were able to refute their opponents by holding that we should view it from

the point of view of historical development. Yet if we agree that their premise is correct, we can ask: Is it possible to trace the development of the realism of the Renaissance to even earlier works? And if earlier sources exist, can they be considered as realist literature? This leads to yet another problem: When we speak of realism, do we use the term in its wide or its narrow sense? If we want to look at realism from the point of view of historical development, we must take realism in its widest sense. But those who believe that realism came into being at the time of the Renaissance apparently go half way only in this direction. They argue that the basic principle of realist writing is the depicting of character, which originated in the period of the Renaissance, denying that there is "realism in ancient mythology." But since there is no lack of character drawing in Greek and Scandinavian mythology, their contention is really untenable.

To consider realism as something that has existed since early times, or as a characteristic of literature which has always existed, does not mean that as a method of writing realism has never changed, that it was perfect from the very start and did not undergo a gradual evolution. The history of European literature provides many facts to substantiate this view, and critics abroad have written a great deal on the subject. The truth of this is even more apparent from the historical development of Chinese literature, as has already been said. European literature has its own historical background and laws of development. A certain stage in the development of Chinese literature may correspond to a certain stage in the development of European literature, but the similarity lies in specific aspects or forms only. For example, were there similarities between the Sung dynasty which produced vernacular tales and Renaissance Italy which produced realist literature? Yes, we can find similarities, such as the development of mercantile trade and handicrafts; but apart from these similarities there were some very marked differences: the movement against feudalism and demand for individual emancipation in Italy at that time had no counterpart in the Sung dynasty. So judging by the development of European literature we might hold that realism arose at the time of the Renaissance, but we cannot compare this with the Sung dynasty in China and consider the vernacular tales of that period as the beginning of Chinese realist literature. Chinese literature before the Sung dynasty shows

many examples of character portrayal too, including some of a high order; moreover from the Tang dynasty onwards scholars often took their themes from folk tales and popular anecdotes, as in the Tang dynasty prose romances and chantefables. All this goes to show that the popular tales of the Sung and Ming dynasties did not mark a beginning, but followed and developed an earlier tradition.

The history of Chinese literature, as I have already explained, shows that realism existed from the earliest times. The facts also reveal that the earliest realism was not aimed solely at depicting life faithfully. In other words, we do not regard the concepts of realism and truth to life as one and the same or consider the folk songs in the *Book of Songs* as realist works in that sense. Furthermore, the realism of these folk songs did not spring into being out of nothing: its source can be found in Chinese mythology. Although many of our early myths are lost or have come down to us in mutilated form they provide us with much food for thought. Our forefathers conceived of the origin of the universe in a relatively materialistic manner. According to an account by Hsu Chen of the kingdom of Wu during the Three Kingdoms period,* the myth of the creation was as follows: "Heaven and earth were one chaos like an egg, and into this Pan Ku was born. After eighteen thousand years heaven and the earth split apart: the bright and clear part became the sky, the dark and unclear part the ground. . . ." After Pan Ku died, "his breath became wind and clouds, his voice thunder, his left eye the sun, his right eye the moon, his limbs mountains, his blood rivers, his sinews the contours of the earth, his flesh clods of soil, his beard stars, and his hair plants. . . ." What is worth noting in this myth is that after Pan Ku's death he was transformed into various natural objects, instead of creating heaven and earth and becoming their ruler. As this myth is not to be found in earlier records, it is possible that it was made fairly late. However, earlier fragments of mythology — the stories about the shooting of the sun, the mending of the vault of heaven, the moving of mountains or the filling in of the sea — all give evidence of man's heroism and determination to transform nature and conquer it. The myths about the shooting of the sun and the patching up of heaven end successfully. In the

*220-265.

story of the moving of mountains, the gods yield to man's determination, while the tale of how the sea was filled in shows his stubborn resistance to the elements. This reminds us of the story of the giant Hsintien who, when his head is cut off, still battles against the gods; or the tale about the giant Kuafu, who beats the sun in a race and drains several rivers without quenching his thirst. He decides to run to the Eastern Ocean to drink its limitless water, but perishes of thirst before reaching it. Though Kuafu came off victorious in the contest, later commentators interpreted this myth as a warning to those who boasted of their own might, and so it lost its positive meaning. In short, ancient Chinese myths reflect the fact that our forefathers were unwilling to be controlled by fate, symbolized by the natural forces, and determined to take their fate into their own hands. Again, our ancestors always explained the origin of the universe and natural phenomena from a materialistic standpoint, as in the story of Pan Ku or of Chang O who goes up to the moon. This conception of the moon as an inhabitable globe is unique in world mythology. All these myths deny the existence of one supreme, omnipotent deity, regarding man as the master of the universe. This is the source of the humanism and realism we find in our earliest literature, the *Book of Songs*. From the fragments left of Chinese mythology we see there is reason to speak of realism in mythology, and no one is justified in laughing at this concept.

The historical development of Chinese literature also makes very clear the struggle between two types of culture, which reflects the class struggle in class society. This was a sharp and uncompromising struggle, as well as one that was thoroughly involved. The creativeness and vitality distinctive of the people's literature attracted many progressive men of letters, who came almost without exception from the landlord class, and by making them study popular literature extended the influence of realism. At the same time, however, this often had an adverse effect on the people's literature, weakening its ideological conflict and slowing up the growth of realism. Much of the popular literature recorded contains feudal dross, some times more dross than gold. And whereas this is partly the result of the polishing done by men of letters, we must also admit that the anonymous folk writers were not entirely free from feudal ideas and anti-realist views on literature.

In philosophy, one is either an idealist or a materialist. Dualism is actually a form of idealism. The same is true of a writer's world outlook. Yet writers often reveal a kind of dualism in their work, which we call the contradiction between their world outlook and method of writing. In connection with this problem, some hold the view that the method of writing determines everything. This gives rise to the theory that a correct method of writing (i.e. realism) can overcome backwardness in the writer's world outlook. It follows logically from this that a writer's method of writing can influence his world outlook, while his world outlook cannot affect his method of writing. Personally, I think it should be the other way round. In the history of literature, realist or anti-realist writers did not consciously choose their method of writing, but made the choice unconsciously under the influence of their world outlook. The writer's outlook is not altogether consistent either: he may have a progressive as well as a conservative or backward side; he may even have a reactionary side. Nor is his outlook immutable; it may vary from time to time for different reasons. Sometimes the progressive element dominates and overcomes the conservative and backward; sometimes the conservative, backward or reactionary elements dominate and make him lose his progressive features. Such complexities and changes in a man's world outlook are inevitably reflected in his writings; but this also is highly involved and may vary from his earlier to later works or even in one and the same work. Often works of critical realism may start from correct premises, aiming at exposing the contradictions in real life, but draw wrong conclusions about the way to solve these contradictions. We attribute this to ideological limitations. When these limitations are reflected in a work, some of the characters or incidents portrayed become unreal. The few idealized Confucian literati presented as positive characters in *The Scholars** are a case in point. This shows that certain aspects of the writer's world outlook sometimes affect his method of writing. As for discrepancies in a writer's works of different periods, there are even more examples. The early novels of Balzac lack his later penetrating analysis of life; so do the early poems of Tu Fu.

*A well-known novel by Wu Ching-tzu (1701-1754). The first chapters of this novel were published in *Chinese Literature* No. 4, 1954 under the title "Lives of the Scholars."

We cannot explain this away as due to technical immaturity but must seek the reason for it in the writer's philosophy and depth of understanding of life. For if we seek to explain it in terms of technical ability, arguing that the early works of Tu Fu and Balzac are less realistic because their technique was imperfect at the time, we cannot explain why Po Chu-yi, who wrote so many realistic poems in his youth, failed to write anything comparable in his later years.

If we subscribe to these arguments, we may pose the following hypotheses:

First, in the early days of class society the class struggle was reflected in the literature created by the exploited class; and because the class nature of the exploited and the nature of their struggle determined their demands on literature, their literature was close to the people and truthful in content, while its form was popular among the masses. So the realist method was evolved.

Secondly, opposed to the realist literature of the exploited class was the literature written by the exploiting class to strengthen its position and system, a literature praising the virtues of the exploiters, extolling their might, describing their system of exploitation as one decreed by fate, unchangeable and everlasting. This produced various anti-realist methods of writing, characterized, as far as content was concerned, by the falsification, concealment or distortion of reality to bemuse and deceive the exploited and amuse the exploiters themselves. As far as form was concerned, it emphasized literary polish, being characterized by pandering to the tastes of the exploiting class, artificiality, magniloquence, and the creation of a bizarre, unintelligible "inner beauty."

Thirdly, in class society the history of literature consisted fundamentally of the struggle between realism and anti-realism.

This does not mean, of course, that all literature and all writers in class society can be divided simply into two groups: realist or anti-realist. As I said above, the complexity of a writer's world outlook often found expression in his writing in the same complex manner, while his creative urge frequently led him to seek the modes of expression he considered the most satisfactory or adequate. Thus in the history of literature we find writers and literary works which are neither realist nor anti-realist; that is to say, methods of writing which are neither realist nor anti-realist, such as romanticism and the

works and method of writing of so-called decadent writers like Baudelaire. Some of these non-realist writers and their works were progressive, some reactionary; some played a progressive role at the time, but after circumstances changed, their progressive significance was lost or lessened. If we oversimplify the situation or try to apply a rigid formula, we shall fall into the quagmire of dogmatism.

Fourthly, so-called anti-realism should not be understood as one single method of writing, for it consists of various methods which are anti-popular and anti-realist in varying degrees. Its common feature is a separation from reality, an escape from reality, a distortion of reality, a blinding of its readers to reality. Thus in the political sense such literature serves the interest of the exploiting class.

Here I would like to attempt a short explanation of the term escapism or separation from reality. We often come across a very superficial interpretation of "escapism" which ranks all works not written about the real world as unrealist, and therefore separated from reality or escapist. This is only so viewed from the surface. If we analyse particular works, we find that some which appear to describe the real world are actually divorced from reality or escapist, while some which do not seem to deal with the real world are actually strongly realist — like Dante's *Divine Comedy*, for instance. I have no intention of discussing the *Divine Comedy* or similar works here, but would like to say something about works which describe reality but are not in fact realist. The romantic literature of Europe is usually divided into two categories, positive romanticism and passive romanticism. It is generally agreed that the passive romantic literature is separated from reality or escapist, even if viewed superficially these works describe reality. At the end of the nineteenth century some nihilist Russian writers also often lured readers away from reality by using reality as their theme. An obvious example is L.N. Andreev. (I do not cite him as an example of passive romanticism, for Andreev was a pessimist and nihilist whose method of writing came very close to naturalism.)

There are others who consider symbolism as a branch of passive romanticism. Whether this view is correct or not, I shall not discuss here, for the question is not important. What is more worth considering is the true nature of symbolist literature. I need not, I think, explain in detail why the symbolist

school in literature is not the same as the use of symbolism in descriptions. Since very early times, wide use has been made of such symbolism in the literature of virtually all nations, but symbolism as a school of literature arose towards the end of the nineteenth century. This symbolist school was the fashion once in Europe, and the chief opponent to realist literature before the ascendancy of the various "modernist" schools which appeared at about the time of the First World War. Actually, in the beginning the symbolist school was not entirely anti-realist, the writers known as symbolists were not all alike, and the works of individual writers, such as Maeterlinck, varied too. But when symbolism became a fashionable school in Europe, it was in the main a combination of "art for art's sake" plus "mysticism." It sought meaningless "beauty," (in poetry, for instance, it sought only a pleasing euphonious effect with no regard for the meaning) a hazy, nebulous "beauty." It sought "the union of the real world and the spirit world," and was pessimistic about life and optimistic about death. In other words, it considered the real world as ugly, sad and full of conflict, but the spirit world (the world after death) as beautiful, tranquil and harmonious. Symbolist literature with this type of form and content was the precursor of those later anti-realist schools known as "modernist." The "modernists," who appeared at the beginning of this century, passed like a series of hurricanes through certain European countries which had a rich literary tradition, and their influence is still strong today. We may consider them as a "hundred schools of thought contending" in the capitalist countries; but we should bear in mind that all these schools have one sole origin: subjective idealism, individualism — egoism. The contending of these schools has not resulted in any flowering of literature and art, but has simply introduced much that is abnormal and ugly to the realm of culture. The "modernists" claim that they "have dealt a blow at the vulgar tastes of the bourgeoisie," whereas actually they are merely serving the interests of the decadent bourgeoisie.

Let me add here that when these "modernists" were making the most noise, they were opposed in Europe by writers of critical realism as well as of "the most sober realism." These great writers who upheld realism were welcomed by the masses, while the only supporters of the "modernist" schools were a few hot-headed young members of the radical petty-bourgeoisie

(who were then extremely "left" but because they laid too much stress on their "freedom" could also turn fearfully "right"), and their patrons were the pot-bellied rich who used "modernist" works to decorate their sitting-rooms, just as their wives and daughters seized on every new fashionable hat whether pretty or ugly. This is a most interesting phenomenon, one worth the consideration of our friends who keep shouting that realism is out of date.

Today the world-wide struggle on the ideological front is exceedingly sharp and complex. We should oppose dogmatism, but even more we should oppose those who use "opposing dogmatism" as a pretext to peddle revisionism. In the realm of literature and art there are some who profess to support realism but oppose socialist realism. They claim that if we add "socialist" to realism, it ceases to be a method of writing. The truth of the matter is that they fear that the partisan nature of the proletariat, one of the basic principles of socialist realism, will restrict their "freedom" as writers. A hidden pit lies, however, in front of those writers who support realism but repudiate proletarian partisanship, and that is naturalism. Take care not to fall into the pit!

So the slogan we raised several years ago: "Oppose formalism and at the same time oppose naturalism!" is basically sound and remains valid today. In Europe the term "formalism" includes the abstract formalism of the "modernists" and the "art for art's sake" of the early symbolists. Chinese literature seems to have no place for abstract formalism, but we must beware of "art for art's sake." This type of formalism has deep roots in our history of literature.

Fifthly, class antagonisms and contradictions are the soil from which realism springs. The development of the class struggle expedites the development of realism. The development of realism is a complex process which is affected primarily by the development of the social economy and then by the laws guiding the development of the art of realism itself.

Since we agree that the development of realism accords with the development of the social economy and is affected by it, we cannot deny that capitalism must have a certain effect on the development of realism. On the other hand, we have no reason to suppose that the rise of capitalism corresponded with the rise of realism. It is true that the contradictions and struggles between dying feudalism and early capitalism extended the

vistas of realism and hastened its advance to a higher level, but we must not ignore the historical facts. We should see that the contradictions and struggles between the peasants and landlords in feudal society had already given rise to a realism which was a step forward from the earlier realism produced by the contradictions between the slaves and slave-owners in slave society. This development is apparent in the central themes of works of literature as well as in the method of writing, including the writing technique. When we compare such poems in the *Book of Songs* as "The Yellow Bird" or "I Walk in the Wilderness" with later works like *Southeast the Lovelorn Peacock Flies** and *The Western Chamber*,** the different stages of development are clearly evident. Hence it is counter to historical fact to declare that only with the rise of capitalism did realism appear, instead of admitting that it has a long history of development.

Sixthly, realist literature always breathes great optimism and an indomitable will to live. In this respect it is fundamentally different from the literature of anti-realism. Chinese realist literature has always emphasized that "well-doers will come to a good end, evil-doers to a bad end," revealing the dialectics of life directly or indirectly. (cf. Lao Tzu's view: In good fortune there may be hidden calamity, in calamity there may be good fortune.) Though descriptions of divine retribution and the vicissitudes of fortune may contain an element of the superstitious or fatalistic, they also reflect the people's firm faith in the ultimate triumph of truth and justice. The elements of superstition and fatalism only show the limitations of an age when science was in its infancy. There is no market among the people for despair and pessimism.

All these arguments I have given so far are concerned with one central problem: What are the characteristics of realism? How was realism produced and developed? I believe if we clear up this problem it will help us to see the basic differences between the realist method of writing and that of other schools.

(to be continued)

*A long narrative poem by an anonymous poet of the third century A.D.

**A famous poetic drama by Wang Shih-fu of the Yuan dynasty.

Books

YANG HUI

A Significant Work on the History of Chinese Literature

Thirty-odd third-year students in the Chinese Literature Department of Peking University, during their summer vacation in 1958, gathered together to form an editorial staff and in little more than a month wrote a *History of Chinese Literature* covering the development of literature from the earliest period down to the May the Fourth Movement in 1919. The book comes to nearly eight hundred thousand words.

These undergraduates, armed with Marxist-Leninist theory and a fresh outlook, have advanced many original ideas on a number of problems in the history of Chinese literature. This gives this book its unique value. Moreover, the fact that this work was done collectively by a group of young people makes it a significant event in academic research.

The salient feature and greatest merit of this history is that throughout the book the emphasis is placed on folk literature, thus giving a predominant position to the people's creative writing. Numerous facts are cited to prove that in the history of Chinese literature folk literature has been the guiding force, exercising a profound and wide-spread influence to build up the fine traditions of realism and positive romanticism. Marxists believe that the people are the masters of history. The labouring people not only create all the country's material wealth, but are also the sole inexhaustible source of spiritual wealth. The literature of the Chinese people, or folk literature, has played the decisive role in the development of Chinese literature. This view is entirely different from that of feudal and bourgeois scholars, who paid attention to folk literature only if it interested them personally, and who concentrated on a study of its form.

The *Book of Songs* has always been regarded as the earliest anthology by bourgeois scholars in the past who, when discussing the development of Chinese poetry, always gave credit to the feudal ruling class for the *Book of Songs*, and let themselves become involved in tortuous researches on origins, methods of selecting and editing, without clearly grasping the nature of this anthology. Most of the folk literature of the Chou dynasty which remains today can be found in the *Book of Songs*. Many of these folk songs are preserved in the *Kuo Feng* Section, a few in the *Hsiao Ya* Section. There are also songs written by nobles which had a certain positive content and came close to folk poetry; most of these figure in the *Hsiao Ya* Section, but there are also some in the *Kuo Feng* and *Ta Ya* Sections. This differentiation between folk songs, poems by court scholars and sacrificial odes naturally invalidates the old unscientific classification of the *Book of Songs*. It also makes it clearly evident that as early as three thousand years ago the Chinese people's literature, or folk literature, while waging its struggle against the orthodox literature of the ruling class, also influenced the writing of the noble literati, who unconsciously drew nourishment from the rich literary creation of the people.

During the fourth century B.C., in the Warring States period, a new form of poetry — *chu tzu* — arose in central south China in the kingdom of Chu. The most famous poet of this school was the great patriot Chu Yuan. When feudal or bourgeois critics studied this form of poetry and attempted to account for its origin, they attributed it to the geographical environment or historical background, some even tracing its creation to the ancient government offices of the Chou dynasty. Because they failed to see the relationship between poetry and the people, they could not give a satisfactory explanation. The young compilers of this history have proved the paramount influence of folk songs on Chu Yuan's poetry, an influence manifest not only in the form but also in the spirit, imagery and language. Chu Yuan's works grew from the soil of folk poetry and developed on this basis. This conclusion clears the problem of the origin of Chu Yuan's poetry from the fantastic speculations of

feudal and bourgeois scholars and gives it a really scientific solution. The authors of this book place the Nine Songs* among the folk songs of Chu, not among Chu Yuan's work, believing that although these songs may have been polished by some scholar — perhaps Chu Yuan himself — they should be counted as folk poetry created by the people.

Owing to the authors' deep appreciation of folk literature and the prominent position given to it, they naturally reach a number of new yet valid views on classical writers and their works, and are able to show the historical development of Chinese literature in a completely fresh light.

In evaluating the works of an author, the criterion throughout this book is always that politics comes first while art is secondary. For instance, in the past there has been nothing but praise for the Tang dynasty poets Wang Wei and Meng Hao-jan. Critics have approved their quiescent outlook and passive attitude to life, or singled out for appreciation their artistic technique in describing Nature, or praised both. In fact, this is empty praise, entirely unscientific. The authors of this book do not allow themselves to be bewitched by artistic brilliance: they correctly point out that the common denominator of that type of poetry is escapism, glossing over reality, the use of scenery, hills, streams and fields to express the passive, decadent sense of isolation of the exploiting class, which even advocated Buddhist mysticism. This school of poetry was derived largely from the pastoral poems of the Six Dynasties (220-589). But there were social and historical reasons for its appearance at this time. Because at the beginning of the Tang dynasty the government adopted certain measures which speeded up the development of the productive forces, for a century the feudal economy and culture flourished. Although the people had a hard life, with heavy taxation, military conscription and other impositions, the ruling class enjoyed a tranquil existence of luxury and idleness, and the outward peace blinded it to the people's sufferings and impending crisis. Moreover, the new civil service examination system, and the short-cuts for scholars to officialdom by posing as hermits or recluses, all were part of the social basis of this school of poetry. While condemning the general trend of this school, however, different evaluations are made of different writings by the same authors. Thus some

*Originally attributed to Chu Yuan.

of Wang Wei's earlier poems which reflect social realities and show a sense of justice are awarded due recognition, as is the artistic technique of Wang Wei and Meng Hao-jan in their nature poetry.

We find many penetrating and cogent analyses of the thought and art of various writers. For instance, when studying the ancient narrative poem *Southeast the Lovelorn Peacock Flies*, also known as *The Bride of Chiao Chung-ching*, the authors mention the feudal rules for divorce recorded in the Confucian *Book of Ceremony* to bring out the facts more clearly, showing that the tragedy of the husband and wife in this poem was no accident, but had deep social causes. In the analysis of the Tsin dynasty poet, Tao Yuan-ming, these two lines of his poetry are quoted:

> All men born on earth are brothers,
> Then why insist on ties of family?

This history comments: "Because Tao was dissatisfied with the nobility's taboo on mixing with people in the lower walks of life, as if there were an impassable gulf between them, he made this plea for equality. . . . This idea was evident throughout his life." There are also many useful analyses of his artistic technique. Past scholars often praised the unadorned simplicity of Tao Yuan-ming's poems, but none were able to explain why this was good art. On this problem the authors of the history comment: "Owing to his rich experience of life and his acute perception, he was quick to apprehend all that was beautiful and moving. Many events in daily life appear so ordinary that most people fail to see them, but the poet succeeded in depicting them as they are with their simple beauty, bringing them vividly before our eyes. This is inseparable from his artistic genius, his deep feeling for life, his single-mindedness in selecting, observing and reflecting different aspects of life. . . ." This conclusion that Tao Yuan-ming's art originated from life and his attitude towards it seems to us a very adequate answer.

Those bourgeois scholars who found that Po Chu-yi's poems, especially his political and social satires, were of little artistic value, were blinded by their class nature and literary prejudice. In this work, linking the characteristics of the realist method with the chief themes of these poems, the authors make a detailed and convincing analysis of the high artistic quality of

such poems as "The Old Man Selling Charcoal," "The Man Picking Rhubarb" or "The Old Man of Hsinfeng Who Had His Arm Broken," laying a good foundation for the further revaluation of these poems.

This work, written in the light of historical materialism and "making the ancient serve the needs of the present," gives a balanced, fair and matter-of-fact revaluation of past writers, and accords due recognition to great masters like Tu Fu, Li Po and Po Chu-yi for their achievements, while noting and criticizing negative features in their work. Instead of bowing before the ancients like most feudal or bourgeois scholars, these young authors reassess the classical masters and their works from a higher ideological plane which enables them to see their real worth as well as point out their shortcomings.

This history provides excellent summaries of the social and literary trends in different periods. For instance, when dealing with literature between the end of the Han and the beginning of the Tang dynasty, it points out that: "After the Wei dynasty (220-265) a ruling class of nobles was gradually formed and consolidated; the reactionary social system widened the gap between classes; literature became further separated from the people, losing its realist content and becoming a plaything for a small group of nobles. Finally the world of letters was dominated by metaphysical literature with its philosophy of complete abandon, writing about saints and immortals, hermits and escapists, mountains and rivers, erudite and abstruse knowledge, descriptions of the decadent life at court, or humorous stories and jokes."

This history of Chinese literature shows the complex relationship between the writing of different periods and the economics, politics and thought of those days. At the same time it gives a comprehensive picture of literary development; thus it avoids the error of past works which merely compiled certain facts in a formalistic manner. For example, in the section on the vernacular tales and popular histories of the Sung and Yuan dynasties, the authors relate the social causes for the development of these tales and their relationship to the earlier chantefables and popular sermons of the Tang dynasty. The appearance of these tales in the vernacular revolutionized the history of Chinese fiction. The authors summarize the two main ideological trends in these stories, giving specific illustrations, and revaluate some of the major works.

In the section dealing with the writing by the literati of the Northern Sung period, the authors show the struggle between realist and anti-realist trends, and scientifically analyse the three periods in the reform movement, pointing out the achievements and characteristics of each. This treatment enables us to see how the literary views of the time guided men in their actual writing. The class background and progressive tendencies of such writers as Wang An-shih, Su Tung-po and Ouyang Hsiu are carefully analysed to reveal the complex nature of the struggle between the reformers and the Hsikun School,* and it is shown that while the former played a progressive role, in essence their views were nevertheless reactionary and served the ruling class.

Earlier histories of Chinese literature have usually touched in the most perfunctory way on the period between the Opium War of 1840 and the May the Fourth Movement. Here, however, the development of literature in this period is well summarized and richly illustrated. The authors correctly link the development of writing with that of society and politics. Thus regarding the vogue of the novel towards the end of the Ching dynasty, they comment: "After the Sino-Japanese War, China seemed to be heading towards ruin, and men demanded the reasons for the country's weakness, eager to find a way to make it strong. After the movement for reform, in particular, bourgeois intellectuals felt an urgent need for a powerful weapon to expose abuses and spread progressive ideas; thus novels became increasingly popular. There was much theorizing about the writing of fiction, fully disclosing its social purpose; hence the novel was raised from the level of pure entertainment into a tool to reform society. Though many of these theorists tended to underestimate the special characteristics of the novel as a form of literature, and sometimes exaggerated its effect, such ideas did much to raise the status of the novel." This is original and accurate criticism.

By observing the criterion "politics first," the authors of this work were able to grasp the value of many classics more comprehensively than past historians. For example, they say of the late Ching dynasty novel *Exposure of the Official World:*

*The Sung dynasty poets Yang Yi, Liu Yun and Chien Wei-yen liked to use obscure and difficult allusions in their poetry, and their school was known as the Hsikun School.

"In this monumental novel of seven hundred thousand words, Li Po-yuan (Pao-chia) brings to life the ludicrous Manchu officials, exposing the different contradictions in the semi-feudal and semi-colonial society; those within the ruling class, those between the ruling class and the people, those between the ruling class and the imperialists, and those between the imperialists and the people. In this long novel we see clearly all the corruption, folly and shamelessness of the ruling class at the end of the Ching dynasty, while the accounts of high and low officials who try by every means to win rank and wealth show us the misery and suffering of the people. . . . Li Po-yuan's novel did to a certain extent arouse popular indignation against the feudal bureaucracy and hatred for the ruling class, destroying illusions and hopes for gradual reforms. In this sense it aided the cause of revolution and the democratic revolutionary struggle of the time. Even today this well deserves recognition. . . . Of course, the limitations in the author's world outlook injured his work, for passive elements in his philosophy of life made him unable to see reality from a higher plane. He could not grasp the true nature of the contradictions in society or what the future would be; sometimes he even sided with the reactionaries to attack the Boxer Uprising and the revolution. He was thus unable to create positive characters. He simply attributed the collapse of feudalism and the empire to the corruption of the officials, not realizing the decisive part played by imperialist aggression. This prevented him from making a more profound summing up, and his characters are not truly typical. Though he wrote many novels, they all lack depth of vision, strength and beauty." This is a full and adequate revaluation of Li Po-yuan's works and their social significance.

The above-mentioned are only some of the characteristics of this work, which offers new explanations for many hitherto unsolved problems. This book is remarkable because it has carried the study of the history of Chinese literature another step forward.

Recent Translations of Chinese Literature

In 1958 the Foreign Languages Press in Peking added many important titles to its list of translated literature, including novels, stories, poetry, plays, literary criticism, children's literature and folk tales published in English, French, German, Spanish, Japanese, Indonesian, Burmese, Vietnamese and Arabic. There was an increase of 67 per cent in the number of titles and a considerable increase over the number of volumes published in 1957.

Works of classical literature already translated by the Foreign Languages Press include Chu Yuan's *Li Sao and Other Poems,* collections of Tang dynasty prose romances (*The Dragon King's Daughter*) and vernacular stories of the Sung and Ming dynasties *(The Courtesan's Jewel Box),* Wu Ching-tzu's well-known novel *The Scholars,* Hung Sheng's poetic drama *The Palace of Eternal Youth,* and *Ancient Chinese Fables.* In 1958 appeared a selection of short stories of the Han, Wei and Six Dynasties *The Man Who Sold a Ghost,* which provides a systematic introduction to China's earliest tales, including ghost stories and anecdotes of famous men. *Stories of Old China,* selected and translated into English by the late Dr. W.W. Yen, includes twenty-three stories of different dynasties. The French edition of *The Dragon King's Daughter* has ten stories from the Tang dynasty dealing with romantic love and the supernatural.

1958 saw the seven hundredth anniversary of the dramatic career of the great thirteenth century dramatist Kuan Han-ching, who has been commemorated throughout the world. The Foreign Languages Press published an English translation of eight of Kuan Han-ching's plays, presenting different aspects of his work. Among these are tragedies of oppressed women,

histories written about past heroes, plays centring around famous trials, and tragicomedies dealing with everyday life. This selection is illustrated with reproductions of traditional woodcuts.

Fifteen Strings of Cash is an example of *kunchu* opera, one of the earliest forms of local opera with a history of more than four centuries. The playwright, Chu Su-chen, lived in the middle of the seventeenth century. The English translation published in 1957, as well as the French and Spanish editions produced in 1958, are based on a newly-revised version.

Among well-known works of the May the Fourth period previously introduced to readers abroad are two volumes of the selected works of Lu Hsun (four volumes in all will appear in English), *Selected Short Stories* by the same author as well as his *True Story of Ah Q;* Mao Tun's famous novel *Midnight,* and his collection of stories entitled *The Spring Silkworm;* and Kuo Mo-jo's historical drama *Chu Yuan.* In 1958 appeared English translations of Yeh Sheng-tao's novel *Schoolmaster Ni Huan-chih,* Pa Chin's novel *Family,* Kuo Mo-jo's anthology of poems *The Goddesses* and Tsao Yu's play *Thunderstorm,* which has also appeared in French.

Schoolmaster Ni Huan-chih describes the changes in the mind of a petty-bourgeois Chinese intellectual in the nineteen-twenties during the May the Fourth Movement, the May the Thirtieth Incident, and the revolutionary wars. The mental conflicts of the characters are well-depicted. Pa Chin's novel *Family* reflects the decadence of a large feudal family during the same period when China was a semi-feudal, semi-colonial country, and voices the discontent of certain young intellectuals.

The Goddesses contains the earliest poetry of Kuo Mo-jo. The anthology is characterized by unbridled passion, splendid imagery and lyrical beauty.

Following the May the Fourth Movement, there appeared many outstanding plays, two of the most famous of which are Tsao Yu's *Thunderstorm* and *Sunrise. Thunderstorm,* by means of the involved relations and clashes between different characters, gives a profound exposure of the corruption of the old society, sharply attacking the evils of feudal and bourgeois standards of morality. *Sunrise,* which describes the decadent life of a social butterfly, reflects the upheavals and confusion

in Chinese society between 1931 and 1935. This play will shortly be published in English and French.

Translations of modern Chinese literature include Chairman Mao Tse-tung's *Nineteen Poems,* the novels *Sons and Daughters* by Kung Chueh and Yuan Ching and *Defend Yenan!* by Tu Peng-chen, *Flames on a High Mountain,* twelve stories about the Chinese Red Army, and Wu Yun-to's *Son of the Working Class,* as well as many children's stories, collections of folk tales and poems.

The publication in 1957 of eighteen poems by Chairman Mao Tse-tung in the first number of the monthly *Poetry,* aroused great interest among poets and sinologues abroad. Our English translation was preceded by a Czech translation made by the famous Czech poet V. Nezval, published in Czechoslovakia, and a Bengali rendering of *Nineteen Poems* by the Indian poet Bishnu Dey. After *Chinese Literature* published the eighteen poems in May, 1958, the London *Daily Telegraph and Morning Post* reprinted one of the poems, and the Academy of Arts of the German Democratic Republic translated them into German. The German publisher wrote in the introduction that Chairman Mao Tse-tung is not only an outstanding statesman but also an outstanding poet; his eighteen poems reflect the achievements of our times, the Chinese revolution and its victory, and form a record of Chinese history from the War of Liberation to the final victory. He also commented that it was the combination of an old poetic tradition and revolutionary thought which gave these poems their literary charm and tremendous impact. The collection published by the Foreign Languages Press includes the nineteen poems and a letter written by Chairman Mao on Chinese poetry. The poems are arranged chronologically, notes are appended to each, and an essay by the poet Tsang Keh-chia at the end should help foreign readers in their understanding.

Sons and Daughters is one of the most popular Chinese novels abroad. It describes the guerrilla warfare waged by young peasants in Hopei under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party during the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression. Tu Peng-chen's novel, *Defend Yenan!,* takes as its setting the northwest battle-front during the war of liberation, and by following the adventures of a veteran commander and a company, gives a vivid and truthful picture of the People's Liberation Army.

Son of the Working Class is the autobiography of Wu Yun-to, a coal-miner. After he joined the revolution, to support the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, he and his comrades invented many new weapons and set up a munition factory, working hard and risking their lives over and over again. *Flames on a High Mountain* includes twelve stories about the establishment and struggles of the Chinese Workers' and Peasants' Red Army during the Second Revolutionary Civil War of 1927-37, written by actual participants. This book has been translated into English, Japanese and Vietnamese. The Japanese edition also contains stories about the Long March. The title of the Japanese and Vietnamese editions is *Stories of the Chinese Red Army.* This book has been given a warm welcome abroad.

In recent years Chinese folk tales and children's stories have proved popular with foreign readers, and translations have been made into English, French, German, Spanish, Indonesian, Burmese and Vietnamese. Four volumes of folk tales have already been published. The children's stories include *The Bee and the Earthworm* by Yen Wen-ching, *By the Seashore* by Hsiao Ping, *Little Star* by Wang Lu-yao, *Next-time Port* by Yen Wen-ching and *Big Lin and Little Lin* by Chang Tien-yi. These lively, interesting tales are favourites with young Chinese readers.

Other noteworthy publications are *Support Our Arab Brothers* and Chou Yang's *A Great Debate on the Literary Front.* The former includes poems, prose, sketches and cartoons revealing the Chinese people's support of the Arab resistance to imperialist aggression. Chou Yang's essay summarizes the achievements on the literary front after the Rectification Campaign and condemns revisionist ideas in literature and art, thus clearing the path for future development.

In response to requests from readers, the Foreign Languages Press has published the librettos of two popular local operas: the *pingchu* opera *The Forsaken Wife,* and the Cantonese opera *The Run-away Maid.* Both books are illustrated with stage photographs.

The Press has also published *A Brief History of Chinese Classical Literature* by Feng Yuan-chun, which gives a simple but concise account of the development of Chinese classical literature from the earliest times to the May the Fourth Movement.

This year should see further progress in the translation of Chinese literature. In addition to raising the output and improving the quality of translations, the Foreign Languages Press means to introduce Chinese literature more systematically. This year is the tenth anniversary of the establishment of the People's Republic. To commemorate the event, a series of works will be published, including the best literary works of the last ten years. Anthologies will also be compiled of classical literature, May the Fourth literature, and folk songs of recent years.

Dredging the River in the Moonlight

We dredge a thousand loads of mud
While high above the moon shines bright;
Our poles are bent like crescent moons,
Our men are swift as swans in flight.

The north wind howls, our faces steam,
As fast we fly across the plain;
This year a thousand loads of mud,
Next year ten thousand loads of grain!

—folk song from Chekiang

Chronicle

Workers Write Factory Histories

At the beginning of summer, 1958, following the great leap forward in industrial and agricultural production, a flowering of literature and art by the masses, manifested first in folk songs, began unfolding in China. At this time, the Union of Chinese Writers proposed that histories of factories and plants be compiled. Workers and employees of factories and mines throughout the country responded warmly and are taking an active part in the compilation. The movement spread from Tientsin, Shanghai, Peking, Shenyang, Wuhan, Chungking, Canton and other major cities to other parts of the country. This development is of historic cultural significance. For thousands of years, the exploiting classes not only usurped the creations of the labouring people, but also slighted the fact in their histories that these gains were achieved thanks to the people's efforts. History was written as records of feudal monarchies and bourgeois empires. The creations of the peasants and workers were rarely reflected in history books.

The factory histories will record the development of our industry and the maturing of our working class, and will reflect the richness, the complexity and the difficulty of these processes. The working class was steeled by hard work and privations and in their struggle against imperialists, capitalists and all kinds of reactionary forces and ideas. It went through turbulent revolutionary upsurges and suffered years of torment and difficulties under the rule of the Kuomintang White Terror. In writing the history of the factories, the workers will be telling the events of their own plant, some from personal experience. Naturally they are able to do this with great feeling and vividness.

Through the compilation of the factory histories and the exhibitions organized round it, many workers become politically more awakened and show more drive in their work. For instance, when the State Textile Mill No. 5, Tientsin, acquainted the workers with the revolutionary traditions of their

mill, the workers' sense of responsibility was heightened, and there was a general rise in labour productivity. Many of the young workers who went to see the exhibition on the mill's history were deeply moved by what they saw of the hardships and struggles of their predecessors in the old society. Some even shed tears. Many workers in factories and mines asked that the histories not only be written into books, but also compiled into pictorial albums or filmed so that the masses of the labouring people can also be politically inspired.

Many sections of society are helping in the compilation of the factory histories. Editors, writers and university history students are going to factories and assisting with writing. In Tientsin alone, histories are being compiled in 200 factories. Literary journals like *People's Literature* of Peking, *New Port* of Tientsin, *Bud* of Shanghai, *Red Rock* of Chungking, *Border Area Literature* of Yunnan, and *Grassland* of Inner Mongolia have recently carried outstanding selections from material already collected for factory histories. Millions are taking part in the compilation of the histories and it is certain that many talented writers will emerge.

Paintings of Workers, Peasants, and Soldiers

During the All-China Art Workers' Conference last year, the Ministry of Culture and the Union of Chinese Artists selected more than 800 pieces from 2,000 works of art by workers, peasants and soldiers, which were brought to the conference by the delegates. Exhibited in large showings in Peihai Park and the Art Exhibition Hall in Peking, they included drawings, murals, oil paintings, picture stories, cartoons, posters, sculptures, woodcuts, scissor-cuts and other forms — all portraying the great leap forward of industry and agriculture with rich and colourful imagery.

China's workers, peasants and soldiers not only achieved glorious results in production and in their struggle against the enemy but revealed the wisdom of the masses in the cultural revolution. Since the great leap forward in 1958, they have launched a mass movement for artistic creation. They paint themselves and the scenes they are most familiar with in their daily life and work. The people whose works were exhibited are mostly new artists who emerged in recent months. They range in age from 60-year-old greybeards to 12-year-old youngsters.

New Film by Joris Ivens

A new colour documentary film, *Early Spring*, edited and directed by the famous Dutch motion picture director, Joris Ivens, has been completed at the Central Newsreels and Documentary Film Studio, and will soon be shown in China. A "prose-poem" in film, it consists of three parts entitled "Winter," "Early Spring" and "Spring Festival" and records the impressions of Ivens during his tour in China between early March and late April 1958. The camera moves from the herdsmen's co-operatives on the Hulunbuir grassland in Inner Mongolia to water conservancy projects being built south of the Yangtse River and peasant homes on the banks of Taihu Lake. The film shows the immense drive of the Chinese people and their achievements during the great leap forward of socialist construction.

Ivens made his third visit to China in the spring of 1958 at the invitation of the Central Newsreels and Documentary Film Studio. Originally, he planned to film a full-length documentary called "Snow," but he was so impressed by what he saw of the great leap forward that he decided to make a short documentary about it called "A Letter from China." However, Ivens found at the completion of this short film that the situation in China was improving so fast that "the letter has arrived far too late."

Again he revised his plan and the outcome was the documentary, *Early Spring*, which he made in co-operation with Chinese colleagues.

Ivens showed great interest in the national art of China. While making *Early Spring* he studied Chinese painting, music, Peking opera and local operas. The musical accompaniment of the new film is played on traditional Chinese musical instruments. Many of the scenes are like beautiful Chinese paintings.

Ivens has long been a friend of the Chinese people. Early in the period of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, he filmed *The Four Hundred Million*, a documentary about the Chinese people's fight for freedom. He also sent a portable camera to Yenan. Before leaving China in 1958, Ivens promised to return in the spring of 1959 to co-operate with his Chinese colleagues in making a full-length documentary recording the tremendous changes that had taken place in the life of the Chinese peasants.

All-China Art Workers' Conference

From November 21 to 27, 1958, an All-China Art Workers' Conference was held under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture and the Union of Chinese Artists.

Delegates to the conference exchanged and summarized their experience in the popularization of art since the "great leap forward" on the industrial and agricultural front as well as the experience of professional artists who had gone to the countryside, the factories and the army to work and to help amateur artists; they also decided upon their future task. This is: in the light of the General Line, to carry on the mass line, go ahead rapidly with popularization work and on this basis raise the level of art, linking experts with the masses, professionals with amateurs, and art with productive labour to a greater extent than ever before. Artists will continue to carry out the policy, "Let a hundred flowers bloom and weed through the old to let the new emerge," striving to create newer and more beautiful works of art with a socialist content to serve the needs of socialist construction.

It was agreed that during the past year artists, like workers in all other fields, impelled forward by the great advances in industry and agriculture, had begun to set afoot a significant mass movement for the popularization of art. The chief feature of this movement was the flood of wall paintings and cartoons drawn by the people. Counties, townships and communes throughout the country had been gay with wall paintings; many workers had depicted the histories of their factories in picture form, and soldiers had painted excellent scenes of army life. These works had boosted production and played a part in political struggles, adding to the mass enthusiasm, beautifying the land, helping to change the appearance of the countryside and to satisfy the popular demand for art.

The view was expressed at the conference that the popularization of art among the workers, peasants and soldiers had laid a firm foundation for raising the level of art. Now it is the duty of professional artists to continue to live among the people, in villages, factories or the army, to hand on their own experience and skills, to support mass art and raise its level; at the same time they must continue to join in physical labour, learn from the workers, peasants and soldiers, arm themselves with communist ideas, improve the quality of their own art, and produce more good works combining revolutionary realism

and revolutionary romanticism. Special emphasis was laid on the need for art to "walk with both legs." In other words, there must be professional as well as amateur art, and specialists must be in close touch with the masses; for only so can present achievements be consolidated and the movement deepened and strengthened.

The conference was attended by more than 160 professional and amateur artists from all parts of China, as well as staff members of art colleges, folk artists and workers in cultural organizations.

The Korean Concert Troupe

The Concert Troupe of the Korean Democratic People's Republic, headed by Cho Ryung Chool, Director of the Art Department of the Ministry of Education and Culture, gave its first performance in Peking on November 19, 1958. The troupe consisted of 150 members including merited artists An Sung Hi and Kim Wan Wu.

The performances were rich in national flavour, with such famous Korean dances as the *Fan Dance, Sword Dance,* and the *Pearl Dancing Beauty.* Many of the items reflected the heroic spirit of the Korean people in their present socialist construction and sang of the deep friendship between the Korean and Chinese peoples who fought shoulder to shoulder against the American invaders. Dances such as *Molten Steel, Bumper Harvest* and *Meeting on a Hill* and the chorus *Good Steed* all received warm applause from the audiences. The troupe also performed many Chinese dances and folk songs. After Peking they also toured Canton, Wuhan and Shenyang.

A Single Spark Can Start a Prairie Fire

In celebration of the thirtieth anniversary of the Chinese People's Liberation Army, the compilation of an anthology was commenced. Entitled *The Glorious Chinese People's Liberation Army* it will reflect the scope of the Chinese revolution. The anthology will be arranged chronologically and divided into four collections. The first collection will cover the period of the Land Revolutionary War, the second, the period of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, the third, the period of the War of Liberation, and the fourth, the period of

defending the country's socialist construction. Each collection will be sub-divided into many parts, each with a single title. Two volumes of part one of the first collection, *A Single Spark Can Start a Prairie Fire*, were published in August 1958.

Daumier Exhibition

An exhibition to commemorate the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the birth of Honoré V. Daumier (1808-1879) famous French artist who was honoured in 1958 as one of the world's cultural giants opened in the Peking Art Exhibition Hall on December 13, 1958.

Daumier caricatured the greed, selfishness, degeneration, cruelty and slyness of the reactionary regimes of his day and praised the staunch struggles of the revolutionary masses. He linked his artistic career with the democratic revolution and constantly stood on the side of the French people in their fight for freedom and democracy.

Reproductions of about one hundred and seventy of his caricatures, oils and water-colours were exhibited.

"World Literature" in 1959

The magazine *World Literature,* devoted to translations of the best literary works and articles of foreign writers and critics, has decided to publish in addition articles on foreign literature and writers by Chinese writers and critics so as to help readers in their appreciation of foreign literature and encourage research in this field. The articles will deal with the best works of contemporary world literature and outstanding writers, Marxist-Leninist literary views, advanced literary theories, writers' experiences in creative work, and the development of world literature. Works to be published will be mainly contemporary literature of foreign countries, with the emphasis on socialist literature. Some space will also be devoted to classical literature. Progressive literature, particularly the national revolutionary literature of the Asian, African and Latin American countries, will also be introduced on a comparatively large scale.

The Tomb of the Prince of Po-ni

The Nanking Commission for the Preservation of Cultural Relics, during their recent investigation of ancient sites, rediscovered a Ming dynasty tomb of a prince of the Kingdom of Po-ni; this kingdom is the present-day Kalimantan in Indonesia. The tomb is situated in a southern suburb of Nanking; there are pairs of stone horses, stone sheep, stone tigers, stone generals and ministers leading to the tomb, and the sculptures are on the whole unspoilt. On a stone tablet, the words, "The Prince of Po-ni came to China . . ." is still clearly visible. According to records in the Sung dynasty and Ming dynasty histories, this kingdom had diplomatic relations with China as early as A.D. 977, and this king who died in China and was buried in Nanking came in the eighth month of the sixth year of Yung Lo (A.D. 1408) accompanied by more than one hundred and fifty followers, as well as his wife and children. He was royally entertained and stayed in the government hostel for distinguished foreign guests. In the tenth month of the same year, he caught sickness and died. He was then only twenty-eight years old. Because he expressed the wish to be buried in China before his death, the Ming dynasty government gave him a royal funeral and buried him in Nanking. The rediscovery of this tomb shows the ancient friendship that existed between the Chinese and Indonesian people.

"My Family"

My Family is an autobiographical novel by a mother, Tao Cheng. It tells how she and her family, each and every one of them, fought heroically for the cause of the revolution. The book was published in October 1958, by the Peking Workers' Publishing House after running serially in two Peking newspapers. The Peking Film Studio is planning to make a scenario of this novel and produce it.

1100 Anniversary of A. Rudaki

A meeting to commemorate the 1100 anniversary of the birth of Abulkhasan Rudaki, Tajik poet of the U.S.S.R. and founder of Tajik classical literature, was held in Peking in December 1958. The meeting was jointly sponsored by the Sino-Soviet Friendship Association, the Union of Chinese Writers, the

National Library of Peking and the Peking Sino-Soviet Friendship Association.

The meeting was held under the auspices of Shen Yen-ping, vice-president of the Sino-Soviet Friendship Association, and a report on the life and works of Rudaki was made by Ko Pao-chuan, vice secretary-general of the Sino-Soviet Friendship Association.

The 1958 October number of *Yi Wen* (World Literature) carried several poems by Rudaki and a collection of Rudaki's poems was published by the People's Literature Publishing House at the end of 1958.

Novels by Veteran Revolutionaries

Several works of fiction written by veteran revolutionaries, such as *Son of the Working Class, Changes in Sixty Years, Defend Yenan!, Tracks in the Snowy Forest, Keep the Red Flag Flying, Red Sun* and *Song of Youth,* have won public acclaim. At present quite a number of veteran revolutionaries, including the commanders of military areas, county and municipal Party secretaries and government personnel, are engaged in creative writing.

The Yenan Museum of Revolutionary Relics

A museum of revolutionary relics has been set up in Yenan, famous revolutionary centre of the past, and opened to visitors at the end of 1958. Members of the museum collected more than 25,000 revolutionary mementoes from many different villages in northern Shensi.

Visitors will be able to see revolutionary relics of the period from the eve of the birth of the Chinese Communist Party till the founding of the People's Republic of China. They graphically illustrate how the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party persistently led the people's revolutionary struggle forward despite extreme hardship and privations, until the rule of the enemy was overthrown and the people's state power was founded.

A Unique Sung Dynasty Edition

The Ancient Editions Bookshop in Shanghai recently bought some interesting collections from private owners, among them several very rare and valuable editions. These include a unique Sung dynasty edition of *Yi-Wen-Lui-Chu* (classified collection of art and literature). There is no similar edition of this work in China or abroad.

This monumental work was compiled by Ouyang Hsun and others in the Tang dynasty. It consists of more than one thousand and six hundred pages, divided into one hundred volumes, under forty-eight headings. One of the earliest encyclopaedic works in China, it contains quotations from many ancient works before the Tang dynasty. Much of its material can no longer be found elsewhere. The collection is therefore a valuable source of information for research students.

The best edition of this work known before was the Ming dynasty Chia Ching edition. More than twenty years ago the Commercial Press in Shanghai was planning to reprint it, but the plan was stopped because of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression. This Sung dynasty edition just discovered is far superior to that of the Ming dynasty. This unique work is now kept in the Shanghai Library.

New Museums

The great leap forward on the agricultural and industrial front has stimulated a new leap in museum work as well. Many provinces and counties have set up museums of their own. A network of museums has been established in China. By September 1958, China had a total of 937 museums; 13 times that of 1957.

Peking Film Laboratory Goes into Production

The Peking Film Laboratory, with a planned capacity of 60 million metres of film copy annually, went into production in October 1958. Up to the highest world standards in automatic equipment, the laboratory and the equipment were designed with the help of the Czechoslovak government and installed with the help of experts from Czechoslovakia.

The laboratory has automatic machinery for the development of 35 mm., 32 mm. (6x2) and wide-screen black and white and coloured films.

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