

CHINESE LITERATURE



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Nan Chi-chang

An Assistant After His Own Heart

Year in year out, bar rain or snow, old store-keeper Hsieh was up bright and early each morning slowly doing Chinese boxing outside the store. Then, full of pep, he set off with a broken wire-basket to scavenge the bits of cotton-waste, screws or chips of wood left lying about and to call a cheerful greeting to people coming to work. For the last few days, however, ever since the arrival of his new apprentice, although he did his Chinese boxing and scavenging as usual, the smile had vanished from his face. It was clear to all that he had something on his mind.

What was on Hsieh's mind? Well, an old man has his worries. The factory leadership had urged him two years before this to retire, but he had persuaded them to keep him on. A couple of days ago he had had his sixty-third birthday. Life was getting better and better just as sugar-cane grows sweeter and sweeter, and there was nothing wrong with his health. Still, he was over sixty. His sparse hair had turned white and his face was covered with wrinkles. Before long he would have to hand over his job to some youngster.

The thought of giving up his work always depressed him. Before Liberation, Hsieh had toiled like a beast of burden for his boss through long years of hardship and humiliation. Then at last the Communist Party rescued him and he became the "boss" of his own factory's store-room. Since then he had given his whole mind to his work, taking good care of this "family property". At the start all this "property" amounted to was a few cans of kerosene, a few shelves and one abacus. He still had that old abacus, but in the last twenty years his "property" had greatly increased. The store now comprised three bright, spacious rooms holding rows of glistening oil cans and shelves neatly stacked with paint, varnish, spare-parts and various other supplies, just like a department store. Hsieh would often put on his glasses to pace up and down past these rows of cans and shelves, fingering and rearranging his stock. His eyes always gleamed with pleasure at the sight; but this pleasure was tinged with sadness at the thought that soon he would have to leave all these "old friends".

On his sixty-third birthday, he was checking up his accounts with his old abacus when the Party secretary came in and asked, "Old Hsieh, you're sixty-three now, aren't you?"

"Yes." Annoyed to be reminded of his age, Hsieh did not even raise his head as he went on clicking his abacus. He thought: "You're trying to sound me out again. If you want to shadow-box, all right. Whatever you say, I'll stay mum."

The Party secretary knew what was in his mind. With a smile he said: "Look, I've brought you an apprentice."

Looking up from the abacus, Hsieh saw a young girl the picture of health, who was staring at him intently. With her rosy cheeks and long lashes, she reminded him of a doll. Hsieh sighed to himself: "H'm. A chit of a girl. Can she handle this job? Most likely she'll just make extra trouble for me."

"What's your name?" He forced a smile.

"Hsiao-mei." The girl lowered her eyes rather bashfully.

Her bashfulness worried him again. How could such a bashful girl take charge of the store-room? How would she cope with the workers?

"How old are you?"

"Sixteen and a half."

Hsieh's eyes lit up. At least his apprentice could give an accurate answer.

By now the Party secretary had left. The girl darted quick glances at the oil cans, the stacks of supplies, her master's spectacles and old abacus, eyeing all these unfamiliar objects with interest.

"Please give me something to do, Master Hsieh," she said shyly.

"You've just arrived and don't know the ropes yet. There's no hurry."

Hsiao-mei took the broom then and started sweeping the floor.

When the old man saw this, his eyes gleamed with pleasure again.

However, something happened the next day which completely spoiled his first good impression. Early that morning after his Chinese boxing, he went as usual to fetch his broken wire-basket from behind the door. But he could not find it though he searched everywhere. He distinctly remembered putting it there yesterday. Indeed, this had been his habit for many years. Puzzled and annoyed, he asked Hsiao-mei: "Have you seen my basket?"

"You mean that broken one, master?" In the act of wiping the table Hsiao-mei paused. "Yesterday when I cleaned up, I threw it away."

"Threw it away!" The old man glared at her.

That basket had served him well for more than twenty years. In it he had collected a whole mountain of scrap. How could she throw away such an irreplaceable treasure?

Hsiao-mei saw from her master's black look that she had done wrong. Her heart beat fast; she eyed him timidly.

"Where did you throw it?" the old man demanded.

"I'll... I'll fetch it..." As she started off frantically, her sleeve caught the old abacus on the edge of the table and it fell with a crash to the ground. Already worn-out, only held together with wire, it broke and its beads rolled off in all directions. Hsiao-mei turned a hectic red.

How true it is that misfortunes never come singly! This abacus was another of old Hsieh's treasures. He'd been using it before

Hsiao-mei was even born. In these twenty years and more there was no knowing how many calculations he had made on it to save the factory expense. Now the factory was doing well, conditions had improved enormously, and the old abacus was worn out; but he couldn't bring himself to get a new one. Instead he had repaired it time and again. He said: "This is a reminder to me: Waste not want not." Now Hsiao-mei, on her first day at work, had spoilt two of his treasures.

Hsieh's heart sank as he looked at his new apprentice crouching down to pick up the pieces of the abacus. "I'm out of luck," he thought. "How can I turn over my work to a girl like that?"

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Hsieh was incapable of disguising his feelings. Hsiao-mei, realizing how she had upset him, kept quiet after this, just doing her work in silence. And Hsieh would not trust her with any job requiring skill; he just assigned her simple chores: sweeping, dusting, distributing work gloves or sorting out cotton-waste. This didn't worry Hsiao-mei. She did her work seriously and carefully. Not wanting to stay idle, whenever she finished a job she tried to help Hsieh with whatever he was doing. But he always said: "Don't bother. Leave this to me." Before she had got her hands on anything, he would call out: "Put that down, put it down. Don't get things mixed up." Hsiao-mei would blink and smile, well aware what he was thinking. So after finishing her work, she would stand quietly by the old man's side watching him sort and check supplies, go through the accounts or distribute material.

As the days went by, Hsieh's attitude to his apprentice changed. He felt it was his duty to help educate the younger generation. "After all, she's just a child . . . quite hard-working, only a little on the careless side. . . . Training youngsters is just like planting and caring for saplings. . . ." Thinking in this way, he gradually forgot his resentment.

One afternoon as Hsieh and Hsiao-mei were cleaning some oil cans and chatting, a young worker from the milling section came

dashing in carrying an empty can. "How are things with you, old Master Hsieh?" he called.

Hsieh looked up through his spectacles. "What do you want?"

The youngster smiled. "Sure you know, Master Hsieh. More of the same. I need more oil."

As Hsiao-mei was about to take the can, Hsieh stopped her. He went to the desk and took out an account book. Having leafed through some pages he thumped the book with one finger. "You drew twenty litres of cutting oil only a fortnight ago, young fellow," he objected. "How is it you're back so soon?"

"Oil isn't lemonade—I don't drink it up!" The youngster grinned.

"You shouldn't waste state property," was Hsieh's serious reply.

"We've started an emulation campaign in our workshop. Since we're producing more, naturally we use up more oil."

"That fellow with a beard in your section isn't doing less than you. How is it that he only comes for oil once a month?" Hsieh retorted.

The youngster scratched his head. "Well, no two people are alike," he parried plausibly. "Be a good sport, Master Hsieh. I guarantee to learn from Big Beard in future and not waste oil. . . ."

"All right. We can't hold up production. I'll let you have the oil this time. But you must use it more sparingly in future." As Hsieh said this he filled the can for him.

Watching the young fellow go off, Hsiao-mei inquired: "What does he want oil for, master?"

"To cool his cutter."

"Why?"

"Over heating would spoil it."

"But why does he use so much?" the girl asked herself.

Hsieh was wondering the same thing. "H'm. These youngsters have only tasted sweetness; they don't know the bitterness of the past," he reflected.

"Couldn't he manage with less oil?" Hsiao-mei was lost in thought.

Before Hsieh's prejudice against his apprentice was completely dispelled, something else cropped up.

After finishing his accounts one day and making ready to leave, Hsieh decided to ask Hsiao-mei how the distribution of work gloves was going. He stepped outside to call her, but there was no answer. Re-entering, he noted with satisfaction that the floor was swept clean, the oil cans were spick and span, the cotton-waste was neatly piled in place. Then he spotted the list he wanted on the desk. So everything was in order. But where had the girl gone? He remembered that she had come up behind him when he was working as if she had something to say, but he had been too preoccupied to pay any attention to her. Still, she shouldn't have left her post.

Hsieh went to the workshop on the east side, then to that on the west side, and finally to the milling section. There he found Hsiao-mei standing watching something intently. Following her gaze, he saw that the object of interest was that plausible fellow who was hard at work milling. This youngster was known for his speed. His hands were moving as nimbly as butterflies, his whirling cutter kept up a steady rasping, and the acrid smell of oil fumes filled the air. As his hand moved, a gleaming metal part fell from the cutter; then he swept a pile of filings off the lathe. The energy with which he worked impelled Hsieh's admiration; but Hsiao-mei's presence as an onlooker displeased him. "Other people are working hard, but you just stand there watching..."

Catching sight of her master, Hsiao-mei skipped up to him as if she had made some great discovery. "Master, look..." she exclaimed.

Hsieh interrupted her. "What's there to look at? We all have our own jobs. You shouldn't be running around during working hours."

At this snub Hsiao-mei lowered her eyes, which had suddenly brimmed with tears, and Hsieh regretted having lost his temper. After all she was only sixteen, at an age to feel curious about everything. Why criticize her so harshly? He decided to have a good talk with her some time about labour discipline.

After this incident Hsiao-mei changed her ways. She never went

out during working hours, but stuck to her job in the store-room. When she had nothing to do, she would cup her chin in her hands and remain lost in thought. However, after lunch when the others were resting, she used to slip off somewhere. Once Hsieh noticed her prowling round a pile of metal filings, as if she were searching for something. Another time he saw her hammering something on a bench in the milling workshop.

Hsieh was nonplussed. What could the girl be doing? He came to the conclusion that she was dissatisfied with her work in the store-room and wanted to transfer to some other job. This annoyed him again. "She ought to realize that keeping the stores is a big responsibility; it shows that the Party and the people trust her."

Hsieh had a newspaper in his hand and was reading with avid attention. He had read the article three times already, but still wanted to read it again. That fellow in charge of the Weiming Refinery store was a man after his own heart. He kept the revolution in mind and economized on every drop of oil. Not only did he keep a careful record of the oil issued, he went beyond the call of duty by making investigations in the workshops so as to prevent any waste. He was a fine Party member, to be sure. This article increased Hsieh's pride in his work and gave him some new ideas. "Right! I'll investigate how the workers use oil too. That young fellow in the milling shop uses more than anyone else, so I'll start with him." He carefully folded up the newspaper and put it away in his drawer, resolving, "I must show Hsiao-mei this article, so as to raise her political consciousness."

As soon as he reached the milling section, the young fellow with the plausible tongue greeted him warmly: "How are you, Master Hsieh? You people are doing a fine job of work, even helping us in our section. We owe you thanks."

"We're just learning from the advanced experience of other units," answered Hsieh with a smile. "We haven't done anything yet. You've no call to thank us."

"Don't be so modest. That oil you sent us is a great help." The young man sounded very much in earnest.

"What oil?" Hsieh was nonplussed.

"Didn't you send your apprentice just now with oil? And she also..."

"What! Did she bring you oil?"

"Of course." It was the young fellow now who was nonplussed.

Hsieh turned and left, fuming: "This is going too far! Taking them oil without going through the proper procedure... Doing people favours with state property... This won't do! How can I turn over my job to someone like that?" Striding into the store-room he called out: "Hsiao-mei!"

"Yes, master," Hsiao-mei answered crisply, as she came in with something in both hands.

Doing his best to control his anger, Hsieh asked: "Did you take oil to the milling section?"

"Yes, just now." Hsiao-mei nodded with a smile.

"Why didn't you ask me?" Hsieh kept a grip on his temper — but only just.

"Well, I didn't like to bother you over such a trifle..."

"What! A trifle, you call it?..." This was the last straw.

Just at this juncture in came the young worker. Sizing up the situation, he hastened to say: "Master Hsieh, just now I didn't have time to explain. You must have got hold of the wrong end of the stick. That oil was collected from the metal filings which I threw away. She went to no end of trouble to retrieve it, then gave it back to me. Four and a half litres, it came to. See, there's the can." He pointed at the small can in the girl's hand. Then showing Hsieh the shovel riddled with holes which he had brought with him, he added: "She made this for me too, so that I can collect the used oil myself. Then she read me a lecture on frugality and told me not to forget our revolutionary tradition, but to treasure every drop of oil as if it were my own blood... I thought you put her up to all that." After this explanation he withdrew.

Taking off his spectacles, Hsieh gazed at Hsiao-mei as if seeing her for the first time. She was standing there sheepishly like a lively



kid which had butted into a wall. It had never occurred to Hsieh that this girl who had thrown away his wire-basket and smashed his abacus, this girl who blinked like a moron and often seemed to be wool-gathering, would behave in exactly the way he would have done himself — if only he'd thought of it! Indeed, she had shown more intelligence and initiative than her master. . . . Torn between satisfaction and remorse, he did not know what to say. He cleared his throat. "H'm. . . ."

"Please don't be angry, master. I shouldn't have done it without asking your permission."

"That's all right." Hsieh caught hold of her hands. "Don't apologize."

Being quick in the uptake, Hsiao-mei knew that she was forgiven. "Master, I've a proposal," she said. "Suppose we write something for the broadcast, praising Big Beard for economizing on oil and publicizing his experience?"

"Very good. Go ahead and do that." Hsieh smiled.

Then Hsiao-mei showed him something else she had in her hand: a newly made wire-basket. She said fondly: "I've made a new basket, master. From tomorrow on, let me help with the scavenging."

"Fine." Hsieh's eyes gleamed.

"And another suggestion, master. Let's get an extra can to collect all the waste oil in our factory. When we have enough, we can send it to the refinery." She spoke very confidently.

"Where did you get that idea?" asked Hsieh in surprise.

Hsiao-mei lowered her eyes and answered sheepishly: "From my dad. He works in Weiming Refinery — in the store-room."

Hsieh immediately fetched the newspaper from the drawer. Pointing at the article he had read, he asked: "Is this by him?"

Hsiao-mei glanced at the title and said: "Yes, that's by my dad."

Hsieh's heart filled with warmth. Patting Hsiao-mei on the shoulder, he said fondly: "You're a fine successor to our cause. With youngsters like you, we don't have to worry about the future."

Illustrated by Chen Yu-hsien

Morning Clouds

Our group leader Yang Mei is a Party member. Aunt Fatty likes to call her little Yang Mei. Actually she is hardly little, being thirty-four and the mother of three children. Slimly built, pretty and charming, she manages to look attractive whatever she wears. Usually reticent, she has a way of expressing herself with her soft smile and the look in her shining eyes.

Our mill produces a great variety of silks and satins. However, in our group only Yang Mei and Aunt Fatty were able to weave all the different patterns of silk. Every time we started on a new weave, Yang Mei would spend time before or after the shift helping the rest of us to learn the new pattern. She was conscientious and painstaking in her work and never complained though we often noticed beads of sweat glistening on her stubborn little nose. She showed concern for everyone in our group and knew our temperaments as well as she did the palm of her own hand.

Once, at one of our group meetings, Chang Ai-chen whom we called Little Devil kept unusually quiet though her lips were curved in an irrepressible smile. We wondered what this meant.

When we asked her, she shook her head. "It's nothing," she insisted.

Smiling, Yang Mei hugged the girl and whispered, "Something wonderful has happened, eh?"

"Yes . . . he . . . he's become an advanced. . . ." Little Devil faltered, flushing to the tips of her ears. Her voice was so low you could hardly hear her, and the final word "worker" was muffled in a burst of laughter. This set all of us laughing too. It seemed her husband had been honoured with the title of "Advanced Worker".

The funny thing about Little Devil was that whenever she was pleased about something she became rather quiet. But when things went wrong she rattled away like a machine-gun. Sometimes she even squabbled with her mates to let off steam. Our group leader Yang Mei was the first to find out this trait of hers. And Little Devil liked best to talk to Yang Mei, telling her everything.

Another admirer of the group leader was Aunt Fatty. She took an immense interest in everything, was very voluble and liked to clap her hands for emphasis when she spoke. One day after a meeting, Yang Mei told us that something must be wrong with Aunt Fatty, because she had not clapped her hands once throughout the day. That was true, but nobody else had noticed it. That morning, she and her husband had had words. When Yang Mei dropped in at their home that evening, Aunt Fatty was still not on speaking terms with her old man. Yang Mei scolded and coaxed the old couple into making it up. At a meeting the following day, Aunt Fatty clapped more often and louder than ever. No wonder she used to say, "I just love little Yang Mei."

It came as a surprise then when Yang Mei asked to be transferred from our group.

She told me the news herself. She even showed me her written request to the workshop Party branch.

How could we bear to have her leave us? But when she told me her reason, I was too moved to urge her to remain. Much to my regret I blurted out something so foolish that my face still burns when I think of it today.

Better let me tell how it happened.

Yang Mei and I lived in the same lane. My house was at one end and hers at the other, so we nearly always went to the mill together. Since I sometimes overslept, more often than not she came to pick me up.

It was still dark early one morning when I heard staccato tapping on our shutters. Knowing it was Yang Mei, I hurried to open the window.

"You're up early today. Had a good sleep?" She stood outside, her face wreathed in smiles.

I nodded. After another glance at my Ming-ming and Mao-mao, still sound asleep, I took up my straw bag and canteen and said goodbye to my mother then tiptoed out of the room. We started off.

It was getting light by this time, though the little lane was still very quiet. A cleaner was sweeping the ground with a large bamboo broom. Occasionally a cart rumbled past, disturbing the early morning tranquillity.

I have great admiration for my group leader. She has three children, the youngest only two, and as her husband works in another city she has all the responsibility at home. Yet she is always so calm, neat and smart.

I asked Yang Mei on the way that day how she managed with the children.

It was her mother who helped her out, she said. At night, granny took care of the two elder ones while she looked after the youngest. To free her daughter to devote herself to the work in the mill, her mother did most of the household chores for her.

We passed two side lanes and came out on the street. As the road broadened out, our spirits rose.

"There's no time like first thing in the morning!" cried Yang Mei.

We had been walking abreast but now she dropped behind. I turned and found she had come to a halt, her pretty face flushed with excitement, her eyes shining.

"Look, sister!" She pointed to the sky. "How beautiful it is."

It was the morning clouds. On the horizon purple, red, pink and golden clouds were massed in a glorious, shimmering, brilliant cluster. The street and the tops of the plane trees flanking it were gilded a lovely red gold.

Yang Mei was no longer her usual calm and serene self, but appeared young and mischievous.

"Those crimson clouds are like a bouquet of roses; the red ones a string of dazzling agate; the pink ones lotus flowers in June; and the yellow ones golden chrysanthemums of autumn. . . . Don't you think so?"

"Yes, rather. You've a good imagination. Quite a poet, aren't you?" I teased.

But her words did add splendour to the morning clouds. Now I understood why she always slowed down when we reached the street early each morning. It was the glorious sunrise shades which attracted her.

"Now tell me, sister, what does that stretch of radiance remind you of?" she asked.

She was in a buoyant mood. Her pale blue tunic too was dyed scarlet by the sunrise, her whole figure harmonizing with the splendour of the morning.

"What does it remind me of? Well. . . ." Since she'd used up all the colourful comparisons I could think of nothing to say.

"It's . . . bright morning clouds, isn't it?"

She chuckled. "I think it's like the sunrise satin our Group Two are working at."

She'd really hit on it! This sunrise satin was our mill's newest product: a beautiful design in attractive colours. None of our other fabrics could match it either in texture or design. It was gorgeous as a peacock's plumes, someone remarked. Others said it took your breath away like a phoenix in flight. Those were fancy metaphors, of course. But now I preferred her comparison of this satin with the bright clouds of early morning.

"Yang Mei." I gripped her hand, laughing as we ran along. "I suppose there are weavers like us in Heaven too."

"Yes, the seven fairy-maids." She chuckled. But soon her smile changed into a slight frown.

"It's lovely all right, sunrise satin, but it's difficult to weave. I feel upset whenever I think of its high rate of rejects. Group Two finds this problem quite a headache."

"Yes, I hear that forty per cent of their output isn't up to par," said I. The members of Group Two were first-rate weavers. Their group leader Wang Chen-ying was just as skilled as our Yang Mei. Yet, they were still turning out a lot of rejects. The problem was so serious that Chu Ta-nien, Party secretary as well as director of our workshop, was tackling it himself. Chu was a determined man with plenty of drive, who knew how to arouse other people's enthusiasm. You'd find him wherever a problem had cropped up. "Come on, there's no difficulty that can't be overcome by man!" was his motto. His appearance increased people's confidence and helped them solve problems much quicker than otherwise. But he had been dealing with this particular problem for nearly a fortnight, and still. . . .

"It's difficult to weave," Yang Mei repeated. "D'you remember what the Party secretary said? 'The best silk is used for sunrise satin and the quality requirements are high, but we've produced so much that's below standard. Forty bales out of every hundred bales are rejects. Can we let it go at that?' That's just what I feel. It hurts to see so much good silk turned into rejects."

"I saw Little Lotus crying over the poor quality of her work. It's really a hard nut to crack." I sighed.

"The Party committee and the workshop Party branch call on us to show an interest in the production of the sunrise satin. They want us to give advice and help solve the problem," said Yang Mei.

"But we've never tackled this variety before. And, the requirements are so high," I responded helplessly.

"They still lack experience, but practice makes perfect."

I nodded. "They say the leadership is taking measures and getting skilled workers to help them out."

"Sister, I'll tell you something." She caught my hand. "I'm asking to be transferred to Group Two."

This gave me such a start that I stopped short. But Yang Mei hadn't lost her usual composure. Her sparkling eyes, her stubborn little nose all showed that she was very much in earnest. Noticing the sceptical look on my face, she explained, "I've been pondering over this for several days. I'm a Party member and shouldn't look on unconcerned when my mates run into difficulties. See, I've already written a request for a transfer. But don't spread the news before it's been approved!"

She showed me her request to the Party branch.

I was very moved. She was a true Communist, one who goes where difficulties abound. She was asking to tackle not only something difficult but work of the most arduous kind. Who was I to hold her back?

Suddenly, something else occurred to me.

Ours was an advanced group. Ninety-nine per cent of our products were up to standard and we always overfulfilled our quota. So we got bonuses and prizes all the time. Now Group Two were getting no bonus at all because their output of good quality sunrise satin was too low. Worse still, Group Two was considered backward. It wasn't fair to Yang Mei. As I brooded over all this, some devil got into me and I blurted out, "You'll lose your bonuses."

"How can you think of that?" She smiled gently. "We're working for the revolution, sister, not for money."

Though she was smiling, I felt her rebuke keenly. My face burned as if it was on fire. Fortunately the sun had risen and its rosy glow covered my blushes. Besides, we had arrived at our mill.

I said nothing about Yang Mei's decision. But the Party branch agreed to her request sooner than I had expected. Party Secretary Chu came specially to our after-shift meeting to make the announcement. Yang Mei was to be transferred to Group Two the very next day because skilled weavers were badly needed there.

I was at least somewhat prepared. But the others were simply stunned. Little Devil's eyes popped; Chu Ah-feng, usually so talka-

tive and vivacious, listened without a word. Aunt Fatty opened her mouth to speak, but not a word could she get out. What was there to say? Everybody knew Group Two's predicament. The meeting was a silent one, though nobody was quiet inwardly.

With a smile, Yang Mei broke the silence, "Why, I'm not going to leave this mill. We'll still be in the same workshop, seeing each other every day. Don't look like that, all of you."

"Now Yang Mei's leaving," said the Party secretary, "you must take over her work. I believe you will do the job even better."

"Yes, the Party secretary's said it. I propose we put more energy into our work and keep up our high standard after Comrade Yang Mei leaves us," said I. We had been on such familiar terms that for months I hadn't referred to her as "comrade". I must have sounded extremely solemn.

Clapping her hands, Aunt Fatty chimed in, "Right. We must do even better and surpass 'ninety-nine'." She meant our record of ninety-nine per cent good quality satin.

"Another thing," Little Devil Chang Ai-chen said, "we must all pull together and work as a team."

"But you're the one always squabbling with people!" Chu Ah-feng pointed out.

"I promise not to quarrel with any of you again." Little Devil looked dead earnest.

Everybody laughed at this. The Party secretary too couldn't help laughing.

After that our meeting became as lively as usual. I stole a glance at the production charts on the wall. One of them was our group's. The red arrows under each name indicating the quantity and quality of her output were all quite long. The longest one was Yang Mei's. The other chart was Group Two's. The arrows on it were as short as rabbits' tails. Even their group leader Wang Chen-ying's arrow indicated that only seventy per cent of her products were up to standard, and that was a much lower figure than any of ours. The sunrise satin was really a hard nut to crack. I was afraid Yang Mei's record would come down too.

Sure enough, three days later, Yang Mei's arrow dropped. For three days she had turned out sub-standard stuff and failed to fulfil her quota. I was worried.

Since she went to Group Two we were working in different shifts. When I went to work, Yang Mei had finished her shift. While she was at work we were still at home. As we had no chance to be together, I watched the production chart closely. Five days passed, things did not improve. On the contrary, Yang Mei's red arrow dropped further. If only we could lend her a hand!

Twice when her shift was long since over and the others in her team were gone I noticed her bent over her loom, knotting the broken ends of silk threads finer than human hair. But she was not a bit flustered though sweat glistened on her stubborn little nose. Another time I met her in the canteen. Her pretty face looked thinner, her eyes seemed deep-set.

"We're all fretting about you," said I. "How are things?"

With a gentle smile she countered, "What's the use of fretting? Is there any difficulty in the world that can't be overcome!" Her shining eyes were full of confidence and determination.

I had got into the habit of looking at Group Two's chart every day before we started work. I found out later that many of our group did the same thing, especially Aunt Fatty and Little Devil. When Yang Mei's red arrow rose they would tell everybody the good news. When it came down, both of them compressed their lips. Gradually our concern extended from Yang Mei to the whole group.

"Good! Only one of the arrows dropped today!"

"There was no sub-standard satin yesterday."

"Tough luck. Three rejects today."

"Good news. Five of their arrows have gone up."

These were the remarks we passed round the production chart. Before long I could even guess the situation from the expression on Aunt Fatty and Little Devil's faces. If Aunt Fatty did not clap her hands all day, it was not because something had gone wrong at home but because of further rejects in Group Two. If Little Devil was merry and constantly trying to suppress a smile, it was not due to good

news in her family but because the red arrows of Group Two had risen. The sunrise satin drew our hearts like a magnet.

Our interest in the work of Group Two grew apace. During the past week, their red arrows had mushroomed with each passing day, Yang Mei's rising higher than the others. Wang Chen-ying's arrow came next. Not one of the arrows dropped down again. The chart showed that the percentage of good quality sunrise satin had jumped to eighty-nine, then ninety-three, ninety-five, ninety-six and ninety-eight. Twice it reached ninety-nine.

Little Devil Chang was all smiles. Aunt Fatty clapped her hands and exclaimed joyfully, "We must get a move on or they'll soon surpass us."

Everybody was in high spirits and raring to go.

At an after-shift meeting of our group which Party Secretary Chu Ta-nien attended, he announced that starting from next month we'd be weaving sunrise satin too.

"Are you scared?" he teased.

"Not a bit!" we replied in chorus. Stimulated by the news, everyone was ready and eager to try. If we had been told this twenty days earlier, I for one would have been aghast at the idea, I wouldn't know about the others. Yet none of us was frightened now though we all knew it was a difficult task. We would probably have a lot of trouble and our rate of up-to-standard products would be low for a while. However, we were confident. For hadn't Yang Mei and the comrades of Group Two come through all this already?

Yang Mei's sweet smile flashed into my mind and encouraged me to face the coming difficulties.

One day I was on the early morning shift. Day was just breaking when again there was a tap on our shutters. I knew it was Yang Mei. I quickly opened the window. As usual she stood outside, smiling.

"Aren't you on the mid-day shift?" I asked in surprise. "Why are you going so early?"

"We're summing up our experience in weaving sunrise satin this morning, so I'm going earlier," she answered. Then she added,



"We haven't been to work together for some time. Let's go together now." I smiled with pleasure.

The little lane was utterly still though it was getting light. We crossed the two side lanes quickly and came out on the street.

At the far end of the street morning clouds were glowing in the east. Fresh and brilliant, the rainbow hues were magnificent. To my mind, they were not really coloured clouds but lengths of beautiful sunrise satin flung across the sky. Cascading a myriad leagues, they fluttered softly in the breeze at sunrise.

Yang Mei walked ahead of me now. Seeing that I had slowed down, she turned and asked, "Do you like early morning too?"

"Yes."

Hand in hand we ran along like children.

"You'll be weaving sunrise satin too next month, won't you?" she asked in a low voice. "The leadership has agreed that I come back to our group."

"Really?" Overjoyed, I hugged her tight.

"Look at you, acting like a child," said she embarrassed.

"Did the leadership ask you to come back?"

"No, I suggested it."

I gazed at her, not knowing what to say. She was in a purple tunic and her face glowed in the morning light, her stubborn little nose seemed more determined than ever. . . .

"Why do you look at me like that?" she asked, smiling.

"I'm looking at the beautiful sunrise!"

Illustrated by Chen Yen-ning

New Year's Eve

Late at night the snow was falling thick and fast, obliterating everything under the sky, but the lights shining through the windows of many houses gleamed like stars on the nearby lake. As the wind ruffled the surface of the lake, the lights twinkled merrily, so that this new socialist village sunk in silence was none-the-less vibrant with life on New Year's Eve.

The brightest of all these twinkling stars was the light from the window of a newly-built farm house. Inside, on the bed by the wall, Snow Plum was sleeping by her new-born baby.

A good fire burning in the stove had brought the aluminium kettle to the boil. Its sputtering woke Snow Plum from her sweet dreams. Gently moving aside the baby, she sat up and looked at the clock. It was after ten. Rubbing her eyes she looked round the room and noted with pleasure that all was spick and span: tea-cups and thermos stood in an orderly row by a big packet of brown sugar on the desk, while on the dining-table by the wall were some noodles and a plate of eggs.

"Did Chih-chung come back when I was asleep?" she wondered. Her husband had left with his gun at dusk and told her he would be on sentry duty all night. In that case, who could have been here? Thinking her husband might be in the inside room, she gently called his name.

There was no response from the inside room, but footsteps sounded in the room outside. The door creaked open and Sister Chang stepped in, beaming, a blue cloth kerchief on her head. She had a plate of piping-hot doughnuts in one hand, a bowl of small meat dumplings in the other, and a bottle of cooking oil dangling from her little finger.

"Awake? Why not sleep a little longer?" Putting the things on the desk, she came to the bedside to tidy Snow Plum's bedding and stroked the baby's cheek. Then, having filled the thermos from the kettle she put some brown sugar in a cup, half filled it with water and passed it to Snow Plum. "Have a drink first, then try my dumplings, while I make some egg soup for you."

Snow Plum protested that she was not hungry, but Sister Chang brushed this aside.

"This is your first baby so you don't understand. A nursing mother can't eat too much. Come on, try some of my dumplings. Let's celebrate New Year's Eve together." She picked up a dumpling with her chopsticks, blew on it to cool it, then put it to Snow Plum's lips.

Before Snow Plum could get in a word of thanks her neighbour popped the dumpling into her mouth, and after it another, then



another. After eating several dumplings she managed to ask, "Is your daughter in bed? I heard she wasn't well."

"That's all right. Her granny's with her."

"Who brought those?" Snow Plum pointed at the noodles and eggs.

"Wei-hua's mother from just across the road brought the noodles. She was leaving when I arrived. And the eggs. . . ." She tapped her head reflectively. "They were probably brought by Aunt Chang from the west end." She got up suddenly and went to the stove. Having moved away the cradle beside it, she started to cook. In no time, as if by magic the whole room was filled with the appetizing smell of steaming egg soup.

As Snow Plum took the bowl of soup she said gratefully: "It's New Year's Eve, yet I'm putting you to so much trouble. . . ."

"That's no way to talk." Sister Chang sat on the edge of the bed and caressed the baby's cheek. "Doesn't our old Party secretary keep reminding us to care for each other? Your Chih-chung's set a good example by doing sentry duty on New Year's Eve. The old

Party secretary told him to stay at home to look after you; but he said it's during festivals that the militia must be most vigilant, and off he went. Isn't what he is doing for all of us?" She stoked up the fire and said, "Drink the soup while it's hot." Then she went out with a broom.

Snow Plum fed her baby and then lay there resting, listening to the sound of

Sister Chang sweeping snow in the courtyard. What a good soul she is! She thought. Soon she fell asleep.

When she woke again, she could still hear the sound of sweeping outside. She called out, "Are you still there, Sister Chang?"

"She's just gone. Do you want her for something?" answered a different but familiar voice.

"Ah, it's you, Aunt Hsing? You really shouldn't come out in the snow like that. . . ." With an effort Snow Plum sat up.

Aunt Hsing hurried in, wiping her wet hands on her apron. "Don't you get up," she exclaimed. "You mustn't catch cold. I'll see to things for you."

She picked up the baby, changed its napkin, and kissed it fondly. "Look at him. The image of his father!" she cried. After giving Snow Plum some more sugared water to drink, she started washing clothes in the wooden tub.

Watching the grey-haired woman doing these chores for her as if she were her own mother, Snow Plum did not know what to say. "Auntie, is the old secretary all alone at home?" she asked.

"Not he! He can never stay idle at home for a moment. He's gone to do sentry duty with the militia."

Snow Plum had a mental picture of the old Party secretary, his old cap, worn padded coat, and his bearded wrinkled face beaming with smiles as he worked away, never stopping to rest, day and night. She recalled a remark of her husband's: "Uncle Hsing keeps us all in his heart, all the militiamen and poor and lower-middle peasants of our brigade." She also remembered an incident: one evening when all the militiamen were away repairing the dyke, a peasant's child had suddenly fallen ill. The old Party secretary took the child that same night to the commune hospital bringing him back the following day after a commune meeting.

As Snow Plum was pondering these things, Aunt Hsing finished washing the clothes and napkins and hung them up to dry. Then she came and sat on the edge of the bed to sew some buttons on one of Chih-chung's jackets. At this moment they heard footsteps outside.





In came Hsiao-chin, who was training to be a doctor. Her whole body was white with snow; her long plaits were wet and her cheeks crimson with cold, but her sparkling eyes were gay. Snow Plum scolded: "Why don't you wear a rain-coat in this snow?"

"It's only a few steps. Don't you worry about me." The girl took two apples from her pocket and put them on the table. After setting down her first-aid kit she stamped to shake off the snow, then whipped out a notebook and started firing questions at Snow Plum. Was she feeling comfortable? Did she sleep well? How was her appetite? Having written down all the answers in her notebook, she started fondling the baby. Presently she offered it a teaspoon of sugared water. The baby lapped this up.

"Look, auntie. He likes it, the pet!" Hsiao-chin clapped and laughed.

"Mind you don't choke the child," warned Aunt Hsing who had come up to watch the fun.

Snow Plum smiled at their happy faces. The room was filled with laughter. . . .

After playing with the baby for a while, Hsiao-chin tidied the room again, made up the stove then took over Aunt Hsing's job of sewing. As she pulled the cradle out from under the table to use as a seat, Aunt Hsing exclaimed in surprise.

Snow Plum and Hsiao-chin stared at her. Her eyes still on the old battered cradle, Aunt Hsing muttered: "So . . . you're using this again."

"Yes, auntie," answered Snow Plum. "A couple of days before baby was born, Uncle Hsing told Chih-chung to bring it over."

"Twenty-five years!" Aunt Hsing mused. Sitting down on the bed next to Snow Plum and stroking her hair, she said softly: "That was New Year's Eve too, and it was snowing hard. Barely a week after Chih-chung was born, his father died in prison — hounded to death by the landlord because he couldn't pay his debt. Chih-chung's mother was half starved, and at his news she fell ill. Within a month she was dead. Then your Uncle Hsing and I took Chih-chung home in this cradle and managed to bring him up till Liberation. . . ."

As Snow Plum listened, holding her breath, a tear dropped on the baby's cheek.

"Child, you mustn't mind me telling you this unhappy story on New Year's Eve. Your uncle was right to let you use the same cradle. We mustn't forget those bitter days of the past. We must always remember Chairman Mao's great kindness. We must safeguard our motherland and our good life today. . . ."

Clasping her new-born son in her arms, Snow Plum looked at the shabby old cradle. She seemed to see snow falling thick and fast and her beloved baby lying in the snow, wailing helplessly. . . . She woke from her reverie to hear Hsiao-chin whispering with a touch of impatience to Aunt Hsing, "You must go home and rest. . . . I'll look after her."

"Hush. Don't wake her, lass," responded Aunt Hsing softly. "This is the job given me by the Party branch."

"But caring for our neighbours is the duty of us Youth Leaguers too."

Their argument flooded Snow Plum's heart with warmth. All the neighbours who had dropped in this New Year's Eve, the well-

tended stove, the steaming soup, the sweet sugared water, the apples, eggs and noodles . . . all these brought home to her the people's love for their militiamen and their families. She was about to sit up to speak when the door swung open and in strode her husband Chih-chung, covered with snow from head to foot. In his surprise at seeing all the people and things in the room, he knocked over a stool with the butt of his gun. He drank from the cup and was surprised again to find the water so sweet. Aunt Hsing laughing pushed him towards the bed. "You clumsy boy. Get over there."

Snow Plum looked from her husband to her baby. She reached out to stroke the gleaming barrel of the gun. For the first time she realized that this was not a single gun wielded by one individual. Under the direction of the Party, the seven hundred million people of China, following Chairman Mao's instruction to arm the whole people, had formed a wall of iron to defend their great motherland. She looked up and asked her husband: "Why did you come back?"

"The Party secretary made me."

"All right. Now that you've had a look, go back to your post."

Her husband, grinning, picked up the gun and put on his raincoat again. Casting a fond look at Snow Plum snug in bed with their son beside her, he turned and dashed out into the wind and snow. . . .

Illustrated by Sun Tzu-hsi

The Red Flag Canal (traditional Chinese painting)
by Pai Hsueh-shih ►



Mao-ching Joins the Army

The events in this story took place thirty years ago, in 1942. The Yenshan Mountain ranges and peaks stood as they do today in endless serried ranks. The Chao River too flowed just as it does now, its swirling water on the rampage day and night. But at that time, mountain and plain were two different worlds. The foothills served as the revolutionary base area for the Eighth Route Army during the war of resistance against Japan. Red flags fluttered everywhere among active, happy people. But the plain was occupied by the enemy and the people there lived a most miserable life. Our story is about Yu Family Village situated beside Chao River at the foot of the Yenshan Mountains. This village was on the border of the enemy-held plain, about ten miles from the revolutionary base and even less from the guerrilla area.

The flames of resistance against the Japanese invaders burned fiercely in the Yenshan Mountains and the enemy, hard pressed, grew ever more vicious. In early spring of that year, the Japanese and Chinese puppet soldiers conscripted people from about a hundred

villages to dig trenches at the foot of the Yenshan Mountains as a line of defence against Eighth Route Army attacks. Over thirty people from Yu Family Village were among the labour conscripts. So great was their indignation and hatred that they deliberately held up the work. A rifle slung over his shoulder and club in hand, a puppet soldier walked along the trenches cursing and beating the conscript workers as he pleased. Behind his back they called this brute the "Evil Star".

No matter how savagely he beat and abused the villagers, the work progressed very slowly and Evil Star had a hard time. The Japanese officers cursed him and boxed his ears. If only he could speed up the work he would escape the curses and might even get an award from his Japanese boss. But the villagers thwarted him. The more Evil Star beat them, the slacker they became. One of them made up a rhyme to a popular tune:

We spin out every meal,
And take time off to shit;
Soon as the sun slopes westward
We down our tools and quit.

This "song" flew all over the work site until finally Evil Star heard it. One afternoon, swinging his club, he called the workers together, demanding to know who had made up this song. No one spoke. In a towering rage he dragged an old man out from the crowd and threatened him with his club.

Immediately someone stepped forward to seize the club. "I made up the song!" he shouted. Evil Star saw to his amazement that it was a boy in his early teens. All eyes were on the lad. Short but sturdy and ruddy-faced, with thick eyebrows and large eyes, he stood firm as a rock on his bare feet defiantly clenching his fist.

A whisper passed round the workers: "It's Mao-ching."

The puppet soldier brandished his club at the boy, then suddenly seized him by an ear and snarled: "So you started that damn song, eh?"

In a flash seven villagers stepped up beside the boy, each clamouring, "I made it up!" "No, I started it!" Evil Star's head started swimming.

Then Ho Lao-chuan, a man of over forty and the head of the workers from Yu Family Village, stepped out from the crowd and walked up to Evil Star. "We all had a hand in making that song," he said. "If you take that boy to the Japanese officer we'll all go with him. But why take it so seriously? The main thing is to get the trenches dug."

Shouts came from the crowd. "Let's all go! Let's go together. Stop work!"

The puppet soldier had intended to punish one as an example to the others, so as to speed up the work. He had not reckoned on the people's indignation. Forced to climb down, he said to Ho Lao-chuan, "All right. I'll let the boy off this time. Get back to work now. Get moving! I'll shoot those who dawdle." So, cursing them, he walked off.

To know more about Mao-ching and what kind of boy he was, we must look back over the dozen years or so of his life.

2

Mao-ching's family had not always lived in Yu Family Village. They had settled there fifty years ago after fleeing from famine in their own district. When Mao-ching was born, his mother did not possess even a piece of cloth to wrap him in and when the baby was only a few months old she died. His eleven-year-old sister took care of him as best she could. Young Mao-ching's life was a most miserable one. He ran bare-foot till he was seven years old, even in bitter winter weather when there was snow on the ground. His sister cried when she saw her little brother's frost-bitten feet but he never complained. When he was about seven, he began to cut firewood in the mountains with his father. A pair of old discarded shoes his father picked up one day and gave him, he disliked and refused to wear. He left them in his basket, preferring to tramp around bare-footed.

Two years later Mao-ching began to herd sheep for a landlord and stayed on the job for five years. He learned how to round up the sheep by throwing stones at them. People from neighbouring

villages admired his skill. If he wanted to stop the sheep from scattering or scare away wild animals, he could hit them from quite a distance wherever he wished. Later on his fine marksmanship landed him in trouble.

In the winter of 1941 Mao-ching tended sheep for a landlord named "Smiling Tiger" who kept a large, vicious dog trained to bite beggars. Smiling Tiger valued it as though it were a pearl.

One winter night two young boys stopped at Smiling Tiger's gate to beg for some food. The dog, let loose, rushed out and knocked down one of them. Mao-ching, returning from his day's work, saw the brute snapping at the beggar boy's leg. Running up he drove the dog away with his whip and helping the boy to stand up found the flesh of his left calf was torn and bloody. Mao-ching's heart was afire with anger. He picked up a stone and hurled it at the dog which was still standing by the gate growling at them. Yelping and whining the beast ran into the courtyard. When the landlord hurried out and saw his dog's eye had been injured, he boiled over with rage and had Mao-ching tied up and beaten till two clubs were broken. Biting his lips to stifle his moans, Mao-ching fainted and then his father had to carry him home. As compensation for the dog's injury the landlord withheld the boy's wages for one whole year. Mao-ching lay on the *kang* fuming: "Wait! I'll get my revenge."

Some changes took place in his family when his brother and sister married. His new sister-in-law, who cared for him at home, came from the foothills and had seen Eighth Route armymen in her native village. Every day she told him stories about the Eighth Route armymen, how they fought against the Japanese invaders; how the people's militia captured traitors; how even the children's corps kept guard and delivered messages and how women made shoes for the soldiers. Mao-ching was fascinated by these revolutionary tales.

One day, he asked his sister-in-law: "Have you made any shoes for the Eighth Route Army?"

"Why, of course," she replied proudly.

"Will you make me a pair of shoes? I want to join the army," he said seriously. She laughed cheerfully saying nothing more.



Later, his sister-in-law did make a pair of shoes and some socks for him. They were black cloth shoes with white soles. When he tried them on, the boy was delighted and asked: "Do I look like a soldier now?"

The young woman burst out laughing but said kindly, "Don't be silly. A pair of shoes doesn't make a soldier." Mao-ching saw the joke and burst out laughing too. Looking around, he found a piece of wood which he whittled into the shape of a small pistol. Then

he wove a wide straw belt to wear around his waist and stuck the pistol in it. He paraded in front of his sister-in-law, who clapped her hands joking, "Now you really look like a soldier! But you're too small. Hurry up and grow taller." This pleased the boy. Taking off his "uniform" he tied his belt around it. "What are you up to?" she asked. "I'm saving these to wear when I join the army," he said naively. "But they'll be too small for you then," she told him, still smiling. The boy grinned, but said nothing. He hid his little bundle in an old broken box which he guarded carefully, as if afraid his treasures might fly away. Soon after the lunar New Year, spring arrived. As it became warmer, Mao-ching recovered from his beating and was sent with the other conscripts to dig trenches.

3

The clash that day between Evil Star and the boy was the result of the resentment which had smouldered in Mao-ching's mind for a long time. When the puppet soldier walked off, the boy went back to the trench, still burning with anger. It was not long before Evil Star returned and the conflict between them flared up again.

When the workers of Yu Family Village saw Evil Star walk off defeated, they praised Mao-ching's bold stand and became much bolder themselves. Instead of going back to work on the trench they sat chatting about the situation all over the country. Suddenly Ho Lao-chuan coughed, a signal that the puppet soldier was coming back again. The villagers returned to the trenches and began digging in their usual half-hearted way. Swaggering to the work site, Evil Star peered here and there, yelling, "Get a move on, you slackers. Do you want a beating?" Now and then he struck out with his club or kicked a man. When Mao-ching saw this, he threw down his spade and scrambled out of the trench.

"Where're you going?" shouted the soldier.

"To relieve myself," the boy answered politely.

"I'll whip you if you waste time," Evil Star threatened.

Ignoring him, Mao-ching left without turning his head.

"I'll see what you're really up to," yelled Evil Star, and set off in pursuit.

The boy scrambled down a deep ditch, its sides covered with pebbles and weeds, while the puppet soldier watched him from the top. As Mao-ching got half-way down, a rabbit popped out from the weeds only a dozen steps away. Quickly picking up a stone the boy threw it and hit the rabbit, which began rolling to the bottom of the ditch. Mao-ching slid down after it and picked it up by its ears.

Evil Star, who had seen the whole thing from above, promptly clambered down himself and tried to snatch the rabbit. "So you came here to catch a rabbit!" he swore.

Mao-ching, ready for a quarrel, hung onto the rabbit refusing to give it up. At that Evil Star knocked the boy down and dealt him a few vicious blows with his club. Then, grabbing the rabbit, he began climbing up out of the ditch. Mao-ching was too angry to feel any pain right then. He picked up a sharp stone and hurled it at Evil Star's head. The soldier staggered, then fell to the ground. Mao-ching's first thought was: "Have I killed him?" As he stood there wondering what to do, Ho Lao-chuan appeared at the top of the ditch. Pointing to Evil Star, the boy cried: "Uncle, look!"

Ho had noticed Mao-ching leave the trench followed by Evil Star. He saw the soldier go down into the ditch. So he hurried there too with his spade and was just in time to hear their argument. But when he looked down he was shocked to see the boy hurl a stone at the puppet soldier, and before he could shout a warning the man fell. Going down, Ho turned the body over, saying to the boy in a low voice: "He's only fainted, he's not dead."

"What can I do?" asked the distraught boy.

"If he's left alive he'll kill you! Better finish him off," Ho whispered. So, while the boy held onto the puppet's body, Ho throttled Evil Star and choked him to death. This done, Ho picked up his spade and told the boy to take the rifle. Together they dragged the dead body to the deepest part of the ditch, where Ho dug a shallow grave and told Mao-ching to take off the soldier's uniform.

"Why?" asked the boy.

"It'll come in useful," Ho replied. Hurriedly they buried the body, scattering stones, earth and weeds over it.

The sun was setting. Ho left the boy in the ditch while he went back to the work site to have a look round. On his return he sat down beside Mao-ching and asked quietly: "Well, what are you going to do now?"

"Join the Eighth Route Army!"

Ho shook his head. "A monk can run away, but his temple can't. If the enemy find out what you've done, your family and the whole village will suffer for it."

The boy hung his head, not knowing what to say. After a pause, he picked up the rifle and asked, "Can you use this, uncle? Teach me how to shoot. I want to fight the enemy."

Again Ho shook his head, took the rifle and put it down.

"Then what's your idea, uncle?" demanded the boy. Ho whispered in his ear. Mao-ching nodded agreement. "That's fine. The old man who looks after the vegetable patch will lend us a hand. But what about the village head? If he. . ."

"Don't worry about him," cut in Ho reassuringly.

It was already dusk. Ho took the rifle, climbed out of the ditch and started off, Mao-ching following with the soldier's uniform. They walked silently across a piece of wasteland till they reached the west side of the village where there was a large rock. No one was about. After Ho had smashed the rifle on the rock and the boy had flung the clothes beside it, they crept away, Mao-ching making a detour before he returned home but Ho going directly to the vegetable patch belonging to the village head.

At midnight, the head of Yu Family Village together with the old gardener went to report to the Japanese officer. They described in detail how a puppet soldier had come to the vegetable patch and snatched some of the old man's clothes. The Japanese officer accepted their story, assuming that the puppet soldier had stolen the clothes in order to desert. He immediately sent men out to search for him. An hour later, they returned and handed in Evil Star's uniform and broken rifle.

In this way the truth was never known.

Mao-ching was kept digging trenches for three months. He hated the Japanese invaders to the very marrow of his bones. And Ho Lao-chuan secretly told him many stories of the Chinese people's resistance to the Japanese and their struggles to save the country, so that the lad longed to get in touch with the Communist Party and join the Eighth Route Army.

The trenches were completed by the middle of the fifth lunar month. After that Mao-ching helped his father with farm work in the daytime, while in the evenings he chatted with his sister-in-law or visited Ho Lao-chuan. He asked Ho one day: "Have you ever seen any Eighth Route army men?"

Ho smiled but shook his head.

"Can you help me to join them?" the boy insisted.

Again, the older man smiled and shook his head.

"I've set my heart on joining the Eighth Route Army," Mao-ching burst out. "I want to go to the front, to have a gun, to fight the enemy!" In his excitement his voice became louder and louder.

Ho promptly waved his hand to silence him. "Don't be impatient, boy," he chided and went on to urge him in vague terms to bide his time. But Mao-ching didn't take the hint. At home, when he insisted that his sister-in-law should help him get in touch with the Eighth Route army men in her parents' village, she whispered mysteriously: "It's said that Eighth Routers come to our Yu Family Village sometimes, but always at night."

Mao-ching didn't know whether to believe this or not, but at least it gave him fresh hope. Every night, he plucked up courage to scout round the village, not going home till the small hours. After several fruitless searches he began to lose heart.

One night when he came home late after another unsuccessful search, Mao-ching found his sister-in-law stitching shoe-soles by lamplight.

"Who're you making those for?" he asked.

"Guess," she said.

"For my elder brother?"

"No." She moved closer to whisper, "The Eighth Route Army is coming!"

Wide-eyed he retorted sceptically: "How do you know?"

"These are for the Eighth Route army men," the young woman said, holding up the shoe-sole she was stitching. "They'll have to come and get them, won't they?"

"When will the shoes be handed in?" Mao-ching asked.

"The day after tomorrow."

"Who'll collect them?" he insisted, wanting more details.

His sister-in-law turned her head to indicate Mao-ching's father, asleep on the *kang*. Mao-ching was so delighted that it was hours before he fell asleep.

The day when the shoes were due to be handed in, Mao-ching was up very early. After breakfast, he hung around till he saw his father tuck the pair of newly-made shoes in his belt. When his father left the house Mao-ching tagged after him. When the old man picked up a hoe, Mao-ching followed suit.

"I'm going to hoe the millet field," said his father. "You go and cut some firewood."

"I'd like to learn how to hoe millet too," Mao-ching answered. "I can cut firewood later." So saying, he set off ahead, his hoe on his shoulder.

His father, after working a while in the fields, left his hoe in Mao-ching's care and headed back to the village alone. "He must be going to take the shoes somewhere," Mao-ching thought. Having hidden the hoes under some millet-stalks and keeping well behind, he tailed his father from the east end of the village to the west until he saw him enter the village head's vegetable patch. Crouching at the edge of a *kaoliang* field the boy kept a careful watch.

The old gardener was picking cucumbers. Mao-ching's father gave him the shoes, said a few words, then turned to leave. At this, the boy took to his heels. The Eighth Route army men must come out here, Mao-ching realized as he ran back, that's why I couldn't find them in the village! It dawned on him also that the village head and the old gardener must both belong to the Eighth Route Army, perhaps to the Communist Party that Uncle Ho had

told him about. And what about Uncle Ho? Was he a Communist too? But he said he'd never seen the Eighth Route Army. The more the boy puzzled his brains the more bewildered he grew. Finally he gave up worrying, deciding to go to the vegetable patch that evening to see the Eighth Route army men for himself.

Sunset came at last. When the moon rose, Mao-ching opened his small box and took out the precious bundle of things he had stored there. He threw away the straw belt as it was now useless, but put on the new socks and shoes and tucked the wooden pistol in his old belt. Thus equipped, he headed straight for the vegetable patch.

As soon as he reached the fence, Mao-ching noticed a light inside the old gardener's hut. Could the Eighth Route army men be there already? He crept through the cucumber stakes and over a patch of egg-plant seedlings to the window, where he crouched down and listened. There was nothing to be heard except a low murmur. Standing on tiptoe he licked a hole in the window paper to look through. But the old gardener had covered the window with a hempen sack. Just then, someone said, "Pass it on to Old Ho."

"Who is Old Ho?" Mao-ching wondered. "An Eighth Route army man for sure." He decided then to wait for this Old Ho. The door creaked open and out came the village head. Mao-ching ducked out of sight until the man had disappeared, then stealthily he circled the patch till he was sure there was no one else there. In the darkness he found his way to the big walnut tree outside the low fence and up this he swarmed as nimbly as a monkey.

The sky was clearer than usual that night. Gradually the distant mountains, the nearby trees, fields, vegetable plots and houses were all bathed in silver moonlight. It seemed to Mao-ching that there had never been such a fine night. He was looking around quite happily when he caught sight of a black monstrosity on a hill to the north, a Japanese gun-tower. His heartbeat quickened as he muttered, "Wait till I join the Eighth Route Army. . . . Damn you!"

The door of the small hut creaked again and the old gardener stepped out. Mao-ching watched with bated breath but, after looking up at the sky and gazing at the moonlit mountain peaks, the old man went inside again. Mao-ching peered through the branches — there

was no one in sight. He listened — the night was still. After a while, the moon sank beyond the mountains and a blanket of darkness covered the countryside. Mao-ching remained alert, his eyes wide open. Then a faint sound in the distance broke the silence. He listened carefully. It sounded like a horse. His heart nearly leapt out of his mouth as in the starlight a dark shadow approached. Gradually the boy saw the outline of a man, carrying a scythe and leading a donkey. As the newcomer led the animal straight into the vegetable patch, Mao-ching saw with amazement that the man was no other than Uncle Ho Lao-chuan!

The door creaked again and Ho quickly slipped into the hut. A moment later he reappeared with the old gardener, carrying a pair of loaded panniers which they tied on the donkey. The gardener also handed Ho Lao-chuan a small object which he put inside his jacket, after which he set off again with the animal. "It's very clear now," Mao-ching thought to himself. "'Old Ho' must be my Uncle Ho, and he's also one of the Eighth Route armymen!" He slithered down the tree and chased after Old Ho.

Ho Lao-chuan had not gone far when he heard footsteps. He turned round in alarm and saw Mao-ching right behind him.

"What're you doing here?" demanded Ho.

"Following you, uncle, to join the Eighth Route Army."

Ho pointed at the cucumbers in the panniers, saying, "I'm only going to sell these in the mountains."

"Then why did you bring shoes too?" the boy asked with a broad grin, as he pointed to the lower part of the panniers. "Take me with you, please."

Seeing that Mao-ching already knew their secret, Ho Lao-chuan thought it better to tell him the truth. "Yes, I'm taking shoes to the army," he admitted after a pause. "I'll talk to the district leadership about you. If they agree, I'll take you there next time."

"I'd rather go now," Mao-ching urged.

"No, that's impossible. I'm on business tonight. It's too dangerous to take you along right now. You must go home at once, lad."

Sensing Ho's anxiety and realizing that what he said was reasonable,

Mao-ching stopped badgering him, only begging once more, "Don't forget to put in a good word for me, uncle."

"You can be sure I will." So saying, Ho set off with the donkey again.

Mao-ching had only gone a couple of steps when an idea flashed into his mind, "Suppose the district leaders refuse? How can Uncle Ho take me there then? . . . No! I must go now!" Fully determined, he turned and began following Ho again, keeping some distance behind him.

The path they were taking was seldom used, being a steep narrow track with many twists and turns. Ho Lao-chuan drove the donkey hurriedly up hill and down without once stopping to rest. Mao-ching kept up though at some distance, for cutting firewood and herding sheep had familiarized him with paths of this kind. Pausing a moment to look around he saw they had left the enemy gun-tower far behind. He was full of admiration for Uncle Ho. A moment later, he heard Ho shout and a stone clattered on a rock. The boy rushed forward in alarm to where the pathway dipped down into a dark ravine, but there was no sign of Ho. Then came another shout and the spatter of pebbles on rock. The boy dashed on till halfway downhill he spotted Ho and the donkey still descending. Suddenly Ho whirled round, waving his scythe, and hurled a stone behind him. Mao-ching, peering into the darkness, saw two wolves stealthily trailing the donkey. Very cautiously the boy picked up some stones, slipped them into his pocket and ran after the wolves, which had sprung in front of the donkey, blocking the path. The donkey, panicking, slid to a standstill, digging in its four hooves and crouching on its haunches. Ho dashed forward to protect it, using his scythe as a flail, but the wolves dodged this way and that, reluctant to give up their prey. At this point, with a shout, Mao-ching let fly a stone at one of the wild beasts. The wolf attempted to dodge but he pelted it with one stone after another, not a single stone missing its mark! Finally the badly bruised wolf made off, limping. When the other wolf turned to follow, a stone caught it on the rump and it dashed off, whining.

Mao-ching was about to give chase but Ho stopped him, saying, "That'll do. It's gone now." Between them they calmed the donkey



and got it on its legs again. When the panniers were readjusted and they were walking along together, Ho said, "I told you to go back, didn't I? Why did you follow me?"

"I guessed you'd meet with wolves," Mao-ching joked. "So I came along to be your bodyguard!"

"You're a smart imp to tail me like this!" said Ho, laughing in spite of himself. "You've certainly proved a good escort and I'll recommend you to the district leadership." He chuckled to himself as they went on their way.

Ho Lao-chuan told the boy that this ravine was known as Wolf Valley because travellers were often attacked there. This was why he had taken the scythe with him. "At the sight of a wolf a donkey's as timid as a hare. It won't move a step," Ho continued. "A horse is quite different. It doesn't mind wolves, not even a whole pack of them, because it can out-run them."

This information failed to interest Mao-ching, who cut in, "How far are we now from the Eighth Route Army?"

"Not very far. Liu Family Gully is right ahead of us, then comes Chestnut Ravine and Jujube Slope. They are both Eighth Route Army base areas."

"Which are we going to?" the boy wanted to know.

"Chestnut Ravine," Ho answered.

"How long will it take us?"

"We've about four miles to go yet. We should be there by daybreak."

Mao-ching was overjoyed. He broke off a small branch and flicked the donkey with it.

When the sky lightened beyond the mountain peaks, Mao-ching followed Ho Lao-chuan into a small village compound in Chestnut Ravine. Two soldiers in grey army uniform were sweeping the courtyard. They ran over to greet Ho and helped him to unload the panniers. Right away a stalwart middle-aged soldier, also in grey army uniform, came out of a house. He grasped Ho's hands, saying, "You must be tired out, Old Ho. Come in and have a rest."

"Detachment commander, you and your comrades have endured many more hardships than we," responded Ho, pulling Mao-ching forward.

"Who's this boy?" the commander asked.

"I'll tell you all about him later, in the house," was Ho's answer.

They went together into a room, where the detachment commander invited his visitors to sit on the *kang* and offered each of them a bowl of hot water. Mao-ching sitting there tongue-tied felt the warmth pulsing through his body. Ho produced a little paper parcel from the inner pocket of his jacket and gave it to the detachment commander, who cut it open carefully with a pair of scissors. Mao-ching saw there was a small envelope inside. When the commander had fished out a letter and glanced at it briefly, he said to Ho, "You've fulfilled your task excellently."

He read the letter again carefully. "You're Liu Mao-ching, aren't you?" he asked the boy.

Mao-ching nodded, wondering how this stranger knew his name. The detachment commander folded the letter and went over to the boy. "You're young but bold enough to defy the Japanese and kill a puppet soldier." He patted the boy on the back. "You're really like one of our little Eighth Route Army soldiers!" Then he turned to Ho. "The letter says that you're waiting for a decision from the district. If so, why did you bring the boy here today?"

"He just couldn't wait any longer," Ho answered, explaining how the boy had tracked him and driven the wolves away. Impressed by this account, the commander looked the boy over from head to foot and commented, "Why, he's a real young hero! To follow the Party in making revolution requires iron determination. That's the spirit we need to defeat the Japanese invaders." He paused a moment, then promised Mao-ching, "We'll find a small army uniform for you later. Our detachment needs a messenger like you."

Mao-ching sprang to his feet in excitement, exclaiming, "Detachment commander!..." Tears of joy welled up in his eyes, then coursed down his cheeks.

Illustrated by Huang Chia-yu

Boating in the Rain (traditional Chinese painting)
by Li Ko-jan ▶



A Teacher's Diary

September 10

Several days have passed since I said goodbye to my native province, interlaced by waterways, and came to this primary school for miners' children. In the school compound neat rows of young poplars stand in the sunshine like sentries. The slim trunks, a shimmering silver grey, and the thick foliage rustling in the breeze are a picture of vigorous growth.

This morning when the bell for class sounded, Comrade Kuan of the school's Revolutionary Committee escorted me to the classroom of the Fourth Grade. By way of introduction he announced: "Children, this is Teacher Chin. She'll be in charge of your form. If you have any problems, just go to her for advice. . . ."

After saying this Comrade Kuan left us. Immediately the youngsters began whispering among themselves, looking at me with varied expressions on their faces.

Most probably because Comrade Kuan had told them before that I came from Hunan, one of the class ventured to ask: "Teacher, have you been to Shaoshan?" This touched off a volley of questions

from the rest, questions such as "Is the mountain at Shaoshan very high?" "What's grown now in the paddy fields where Chairman Mao worked when he was a boy?" "How far is Shaoshan from here?" "How many days would it take to get there on foot?" and so on.

My heart warmed to those innocent faces, rosy as azalea blooms, turned expectantly towards me. And the questions with which they bombarded me intrigued me. Little had I realized previously the depth of the children's interest in and love for Chairman Mao's native village Shaoshan. I decided to describe in full all I had heard and seen on my trip there. Otherwise they would never stop pestering me.

Among my listeners the most attentive was a dark-skinned boy in the last row with hair spiky as a hedgehog, who cupped his chin in his hands as he gazed with glistening eyes at the picture of Chairman Mao on the opposite wall. From time to time he jotted something down in his note-book. His expression showed clearly how closely his young heart was drawn to Shaoshan, to Peking and to Chairman Mao.

September 11

This afternoon our class was given the job of stone-breaking at a nearby construction site. We went as a team, each carrying a hammer and a piece of rubber to wrap around the handle. We found several big concrete blocks scattered over the site on which to break up the stones. The children darted off to sit around them and immediately set to work. Before leaving school I had insisted on the principle of "safety first": They must watch out for chips that might fly into their eyes and take care not to hurt each other while working. I had advised them also not to tackle more than they could manage and to leave the larger stones alone. So there was good order from the outset. A great clangour soon filled the air, as each child secretly tried to outdo the rest.

Before long, however, I saw that dark-faced spiky-haired boy suddenly stand up and walk over to a girl. "Say, it's no good breaking that, it's not a proper stone," he said. "Throw it away."



"Why should I?" retorted the girl.

"Why? Because concrete made of this would soon crack up. It's not strong enough to build with."

"Who says so? I don't believe you."

"Well, if you won't throw it away, I shall!" No sooner said than done; the boy grabbed the stone.

"Hands off!" yelled the girl, wanting to assert herself. "Teacher said we could choose the easy ones to break up. You're only trying to be smart."

She was nearly in tears. I went over quickly to intervene.

The boy turned to me, blinked and handed me the controversial piece. I looked it over carefully and found it so badly eroded that when I tapped it, it disintegrated, crumbling to dust in my fingers. It was certainly too soft for mixing concrete. Holding it up for the rest to see, I shouted, "Children, if you've any stones like this, pick them out and throw them away."

The children readily responded, hunting through their piles of stone carefully. When they found pieces of sedimentary rock, they flung them away.

I admired the boy for his watchfulness and sense of responsibility but, when I looked around to commend him, he had already quietly walked off.

"What's the name of that boy?" I asked the girl. Pouting, she kept silent for a moment, then blurted out: "Liang Chung!"

The incident over, work continued. The children hammered away even harder and paid great attention to the choice of stone. I felt drawn to that boy Liang Chung and glanced at him every now and then while I worked. Then I saw him heading towards a piece of rock as big as a wash basin. Stopping before it and spitting in his right palm three times, he picked up a heavier hammer lying nearby, swung it high and rained several hard blows on the rock. Crack! It split into many small pieces.

"Hey, here are some stones just the right size. Come and get them!" Liang Chung stood up and yelled to his team mates, his forehead glistening and sweat streaming down his cheeks. The children ran over, laughing, to carry the smaller stones to their own

seats while Liang Chung stood aside wiping his face. Presently his eyes brightened. "Hey, wait a minute," he cried. "I'll tell you which stones around here are good ones. Look, see this bluish-grey one with red veins. This is granite. It's hard yet brittle enough to chip — just the thing for making concrete. Let's stick to this kind. If some stones are too large, use this bigger hammer to break them into smaller pieces first." Saying this, he raised his hammer again to demonstrate on a slab of rock at his feet.

The children quickly gathered round Liang Chung to watch, accepting him as their instructor in stone-breaking.

"Liang Chung, who taught you all this?" asked the girl who had quarrelled with him. That tiff forgotten now, she was looking at him with a smile.

"My dad, of course."

"What does your dad do?"

"He's a pitman. Stones are his enemies he says!" Liang Chung beamed with pride.

Gazing in silence at that collier's son, I sensed his sterling qualities.

September 20

A fine morning, one of gentle breezes and few clouds! The sturdy poplars were bathed in the early sunshine, dew-drops still glittering on their leaves like pearls.

In the near distance smoke was rising from the kitchens of the New Workers' Settlement. I was reciting *Serve the People* in the school garden when I glimpsed the back of a lad walking swiftly through one compound, carrying pails of water on a shoulder-pole.

It looked like Liang Chung.

Unwittingly I called his name. The boy stopped short, half turned to glance in my direction, yet the next second went on straight into a house as if he had not heard me.

This reminded me that a few days previously our school had received a letter of thanks from a retired coal-miner. The old man had written to say that recently a boy of about eleven had been taking him water every morning. When asked his name, he only said he was a Little Red Soldier. . . . Although the writer had tried several

times to stop the boy from doing this, he always returned with water early the following morning . . . finally there was a suggestion that the school authorities commend the boy. . . .

I was asked to read this letter in class but nobody admitted doing such a praiseworthy deed or seeing anybody else doing it. Who could the boy be? I had been wondering about this for several days. . . .

“Good morning, teacher!” Someone called out, interrupting my train of thought. I swung round and there was Liang Chung.

I looked directly at him and asked him seriously, “Liang Chung, please tell me the truth: Are you the one who has been taking water to the old coal-miner?”

“I . . . I . . .” He blinked as if in embarrassment and finally confessed that he was.

“Then why didn’t you say so before?”

“My dad says. . . .” Liang Chung hung his head and added sheepishly, “I’m only beginning to do good deeds, teacher. To be a true son of the working class I still have a long way to go.”

“Is your father at home?”

“No. But tomorrow is Sunday, maybe he’ll come home then. Will you come to our house, teacher? Please do.”

September 27

I had a busy morning. After lunch I went to call on Liang Chung’s father.

With the help of a young neighbour I found the house without difficulty. It was a mere hut set up ten years before when the coal mines were first opened up.

The door was ajar. I gently pushed it open and called “Liang Chung!” Nobody answered. I looked around the room. It was very neat, but simply and sparsely furnished. On one wall there was a picture of Chairman Mao, below which hung several photographs in a frame. Among them was one of a collier in his work clothes and safety helmet with a white towel and an electric drill slung over his shoulder. In features and expression Liang Chung was the very spit of this man. But where was the boy’s father now?

“Liang Chung!” I repeated in a louder voice.

“Coming. . . . I’m here!” a familiar voice called from behind me. I turned sharply and saw Liang Chung standing up behind a big heap of coal ashes, busily brushing the dust from his jacket.

“I came to see your father.”

“He’s gone back to the pit already.”

“Ah, but isn’t it his day off?”

“Yes. But he’s so concerned about the drilling, he doesn’t like to stay home longer than necessary. He waited for you the whole morning but, since you didn’t turn up, after lunch he thought he might as well go back to the pit.”

As I was there I wanted to have a chat with one of Liang Chung’s parents. So I asked, “Is your mother in?”

“No, I’m sorry. She’s on duty today.”

Smiling, I remarked, “Then there isn’t anybody looking after you.”

“I can stand on my own feet. I don’t need anyone to look after me,” Liang Chung answered, drawing himself up to his full height.

“What were you doing behind that ash heap?” I questioned, noticing his dusty face.

“Looking for cinders. You see those two baskets over there? They’re already full,” he told me cheerfully, pointing towards the heap.

“Are you running out of coal? Why doesn’t your father buy a cartload from the colliery?”

“No, we have enough. The cinders are for the boiler room. When dad came home this morning, he was sorry to see so many cinders left in the heap. So we started to pick them out and I was told to take them to the boiler room this afternoon.”

His answer set me thinking.

I looked at the neighbouring New Workers’ Settlement. It was really a splendid sight, all those neat rows of decent housing. What a contrast to the low, shabby hut before my eyes! I couldn’t help remarking, “Your father’s busy in the mine the whole year round. He ought to have a better house to live in.”

This appeared to annoy Liang Chung. “What’s wrong with our house?” he asked bluntly. “It doesn’t leak, it isn’t damp or cold.

It has glass windows to let in the light. Dad says that before Liberation we miners could never dream of a good hut like this. The year before last the management did allot us a new house, but dad gave it up to a friend who has a large family."

As I listened to the boy, the splendid image of the pitman whom I had not yet had a chance to meet flashed into my mind's eye. A sense of shame flooded my heart. I knew that it was from ordinary miners like Liang Chung's father that I should learn. Not only that, I had so much to learn even from their children. For deep in their young hearts new, noble thoughts had already taken root. Realizing this, I said to the boy, "Liang Chung, come on. Let's take the cinders to the boiler room."

Liang Chung appeared pleased when I offered to help. He immediately showed me a small-wheeled cart of his own making. After loading up the two baskets of cinders, I tied them on tightly with a rope and handed the free end to the boy, saying, "I'll push the cart, you pull."

"No. You pull and I'll push," he said firmly, grabbing the handles from me.

Knowing his determined character, I didn't try to argue with him, but slung the rope over my shoulder and pulled steadily to lighten his burden.

Our cart wheels squeaked all the way along the main thoroughfare. Passing the school, I looked again at the rows of poplars in the compound. Somehow they appeared taller and sturdier than before, every one standing straight under the azure sky, their leaves glistening in the warm sunshine.

Liang Chung was pushing more quickly from behind. I had to speed up. . . .

Illustrated by Chen Yi-fei



Getting Ready for a Lesson (oil-painting) by Ma Lan ►

Yuan Hwei

The Demobbed Soldier

Kit packed and
Send-off held,
The old soldier, demobbed,
Is due to leave tomorrow.

A hubbub is heard
Outside company headquarters
As in crowd the Awa people:
Team leader, store-keeper, accountant,
Grandad from East Village,
Granny from West Hamlet. . . .

“Don’t let him go! Keep him here!
Our Awa mountains need him.”
Eager appeals
Bombard the officer.

“We’ll build a house for him,
Find him a wife.
Now we poor folk have stood up,
Let him settle down here to help us.”

Who is the man so dear to the Awa folk
They can’t bear to part with him?
The officer mentally reviews his men:
Each one comes up to scratch.

His clerk tips him a wink
And the officer grins.
“Of course, I get it,
He’s the man all right.”

Who helped grandad build his hut?
Who mended granny’s fence?
Who gave the accountant a hand
And repaired the store-keeper’s tools?

In the work team
He took on the hardest tasks
Till all called him
An “extra team leader”.

High up terraced fields,
Down in winding dales,
Everywhere the Awa folk
Have him in their hearts.

Last year when he went to study
The local people stopped him
And questioned him on the road,
Afraid he was leaving the army.

Our border region needs this veteran,
The streams and mountains cry.
How can he set aside
The love we bear him?

From the village they fetch back
The fifth squad leader,
Barefoot, his legs caked with mud.
All eyes are fixed on him,
Awaiting his answer.

He clasps grandad and granny by the arm,
And his words bring tears to their eyes:
“Long ago my mind was made up,
I’m staying on here:
Just where is for you to decide.”

Spring has come to the border,
On every side trees are budding,

As the local folk
Leave army headquarters at night,
Their happy laughter
Ringing through the valley.



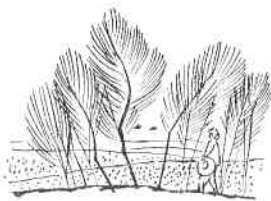
Wang Kuei-hua

Rice Seedlings

Her heart is in the seedling bed,
The seedling bed is in her heart;
This lass and her seedlings
Are inseparable.

In the silent night
She murmurs in her sleep:
"A cold spell's coming,
I must add manure
To keep the seedlings warm."
Stars twinkle above
As she wakes from her dream;
The south wind blows
As she checks the seedling bed:

Water and manure just right!
Ah! Spring warmth, spring sunshine,
Joy of spring —
A heart red as flame
Adds fresh green
To the seedling bed.



Yang Ho-lou

Prospectors' Songs

Picnicking in the Mountains

A whole day's climb
Up this mountain;
When they reach the top
The moon hangs high in the sky.

On a slab of rock
The feast is spread:
Canteens of spring water
Sweeter than any wine,
With berries and dry rations,
While monkeys and squirrels
Watch with envious eyes.

To find new mines
They brave wind and dew,
Moon and stars all their company.
The lads ask: "Shall we pitch camp here?"
The girls answer: "No — at the top!"
As their songs waken rugged mountains,
The moon splits its sides laughing
And the stars wink for glee.



The Mountains Are Singing

Rugged ranges,
Huge waves surging to the sky,
Make a Great Wall vast and mighty
Guarding our southern frontier.

High, high above the sea
Our red surveying flags float in the wind;
Beneath our feet circle eagles,
White clouds infiltrate our sleeves;
As we trample a myriad mountains
Wind carries our songs far and wide.

The bugle sounds the call:
Open more mines!
And underground treasures rush to register.
With these ores we pour
The heat and fire of youth
Into the crucible of revolution.

Thousands of mighty mountains
Rise in our hearts,
And we shall carve these mountains
Into a richer splendour.

Illustrated by Ho Kung-wei

Li Fang-ling

An Old Couple

Soon after the wheat harvest came a good soaking rain, just in time for the planting of the summer crops. The peasants, talking and laughing, worked with a will. However, just at this point they ran into a problem. In the light of other communes' experience of scientific farming, their team had decided to extend the cropping area of sweet potato this year. But they hadn't enough sweet-potato sprouts for this. The team committee met that evening to discuss the problem. And Uncle Chang, although over sixty, came with a lantern to take part in the meeting.

Uncle Chang had formerly been a deputy Party secretary of the commune. He had settled in his native village after retirement the year before last; but he did not consider himself too old to work and insisted on helping in the pig-farm. Whenever the team committee held a meeting he liked to sit in at it and make comments and suggestions, and this had gained him the nickname the "old adviser". Nine out of ten of his proposals were adopted. For instance, setting up a spare-time school for cultural and political studies, building a dam on the beach to make new paddy fields, starting a poultry farm

on a barren hillside ... had all been done on his advice. He was so full of ideas, so concerned for the collective, that the villagers wanted to elect him as their team leader. But Uncle Chang wouldn't agree. "We must train our young folk to carry the revolution forward," he argued. "Young Ma on the Youth League branch committee is quite up to the job. I can be his assistant." So Young Ma was finally elected team leader, with Uncle Chang as his "old adviser".

Uncle Chang found Young Ma in the team office knitting his brows. Apparently the problem was not yet solved.

"Well, how many more sprouts do you need?" asked Uncle Chang, putting his lantern on the table and taking a seat on a bench.

The other committee members turned towards him expectantly.

"We have no sprouts at all for that extra fifty *mu*," replied Ma.

"Then what's your idea?" urged Uncle Chang.

"We've been thinking it over. If we handle our hotbeds carefully, we may get more sprouts from the roots. Failing that, we shall have to buy some at the market."

Uncle Chang, shaking his head, said cheerfully: "If we wait for new sprouts we may miss the boat. And we can't count on buying sprouts at the market either. My idea is to make the rounds of our neighbouring teams to find out which of them have sprouts to spare. If we fix it up with them, that's much safer." Uncle Chang then explained that his son-in-law had come to see him that morning from Double Mount Village and said that their team's sweet-potato planting was finished. This was what had put the idea into his mind.

This proposal caused quite a stir.

"Trust our 'old adviser' to think of a way out," exclaimed Team Leader Ma with a smile.

When the committee discussed who to send to the neighbouring villages, Uncle Chang volunteered for the job.

"You're too old to go trekking around. Besides, who would feed the pigs?" objected Ma.

"Don't worry about that," replied Uncle Chang. He trimmed the wick of his lantern and left the office.

Ma followed him out, shouting: "Then take some money from the accountant, uncle!"

"He's not at home tonight. I have some money." The old man's voice came floating back through the darkness where only the flickering lantern could be seen.

It was after ten when Uncle Chang got home. Putting his lantern down, he saw two upturned bowls on the table. Under them he found two steamed buns and a salted egg — the snack his wife had left him. He really felt hungry now. As he started on a bun he noticed that his wife was out. "She doesn't just run our home," he murmured to himself. "She's really a 'general manager' for the whole village. I wonder whose affairs she's minding now."

"General manager" was the villagers' name for Aunt Chang. She and her husband had two children, a son working in Peking and a married daughter who lived in Double Mount Village; but the old couple managed quite well on their own. And whenever Aunt Chang heard that someone in the village had trouble she would go to help out. There were less than one hundred households in the village: she had all their concerns at heart. She took eggs to lying-in mothers, helped to paper rooms ready to receive a bride, and even broke up children's squabbles in the street and reconciled the two sides.

After supper that day, Aunt Chang had learned that Second Pillar next door was ill. Without stopping to wash the dishes, she went for a doctor and helped look after the patient till after midnight. When she came home she found her old man asleep with all his clothes on. "Ai! He doesn't know how to take care of himself," she murmured with concern. Having covered him with a quilt she went to bed too.

Uncle Chang woke up at cock-crow. "Hey! Get up," he called, waking his wife. "I'm going out on business today. Will you feed the pigs for me?"

Aunt Chang opened her eyes. It was still dark outside. "What business?" she asked sleepily. "Why get up so early?"

"I must make an early start. I'm going to several villages to buy sweet-potato sprouts for the team..."

"That's good," she cut in. "Iron Lock's family is short of sprouts. You must get some for them too."

This request came as no surprise to Uncle Chang because she had mentioned the matter several times. "The collective has to come first," he replied. "Wait till our team's planting is done, then I'll take care of his needs."

Aunt Chang sensed an unspoken criticism here. "Chairman Mao teaches us to pay close attention to the well-being of the masses," she retorted. "If people have difficulties, we should help. If you can't buy sprouts for them, let them have some of ours."

"Stop gabbing, woman. I must go now. You too should go and see to the pigs." So saying, he draped his coat over his shoulders and left.

It was late in the afternoon when Uncle Chang returned. He went straight to the team office to report on his trip.

Double Mount Village had completed its sweet-potato planting, but the sprouts left over were so small that it would be another five days before they could be transplanted. Having learned that Single Mount Village had some spare sprouts which could be transplanted in two days, he hurried there and clinched the deal by paying them one hundred yuan.

"Where did you get so much money, uncle?" Ma asked.

"Our son sent it for us to make a trip to Peking," was the cheerful answer. "But I'm too busy to think of going just now. So I put the money by."

"I'll get the accountant to return it to you," said the team leader. "Now you need a good rest after running about all day."

Uncle Chang, however, did not go home. As he had the pigs on his mind, he went straight to the pig-farm. His wife was nowhere to be seen, but a piglet had got out and was running round the sty. Driving it inside, he growled: "Where's that old woman gone?"

"Here I am!" Aunt Chang stood up from behind the pigsty, a bunch of herbs in her hand.

"What are you doing there? Why aren't you looking after the pigs?" he scolded.

"Look!" Aunt Chang beamed, holding up the herbs. "The pigs like to eat this, and it makes them put on weight... Have

you bought the sprouts? Are there enough for Iron Lock's family too?"

Uncle Chang began to lose patience. "Didn't I tell you the collective interest comes before individual interests?" he demanded. "Wait till our team has finished its planting."

Aunt Chang simply fixed pleading eyes on her old mate. "Can't we let them have some of our own sprouts first?" she asked.

"Our own sprouts? They're reserved for the team too."

The way he spoke and the expression on his face told Aunt Chang that further argument was useless. She bit back the retort on the tip of her tongue and left.

Before long, however, she was back again, smiling, as if the friction between them had gone with the wind. She walked up to her husband who was preparing pig-feed. "I've something to ask you, my good man," she said.

"What is it? Come straight to the point," Uncle Chang replied without raising his eyes from his work.

"Second Sister Wang's house is in a bad way. When the rainy season starts, it's bound to leak. But they've no money to repair it. Shall we let them have the hundred yuan our boy sent us?" Having said this she studied his face intently; but the old man, ignoring her, went on working in silence. Taking this as a sign that he begrudged the money, she prodded him, "Well, do you agree or not? Speak up!"

Uncle Chang took out his pipe, slowly filled the bowl and lit the tobacco, puffing reflectively before rejoining:

"Your concern for others is good, but I've used the money..."

Flushing with vexation, Aunt Chang cut him short. "What? You've used it? How?" she fired back. "No, it's clear you grudge spending the money..."

Just at this moment in came Team Leader Ma. He was barely over the threshold when Aunt Chang appealed to him:

"You've come just at the right time, team leader. I can't make this old man of mine see reason. You must give him a good dressing-down."



Young Ma, baffled by this, could only laugh. "A loving old couple like you, who never have words, what's upset you today?" he asked. Then, guessing something of the truth from the calm expression of his "old adviser", he said jokingly to Aunt Chang, "Well, aunt, let me be the judge today. As 'plaintiff', state your case first. If your accusation's well-founded, I'll give uncle a good dressing-down."

Pleased to have won the first round, Aunt Chang poured out her grievances, presenting the case as she saw it from start to finish.

She concluded: "My old man's so unreasonable, he's not fit to have the say in this house, team leader. From now on if you have any business, come to me."

"Very well," replied Ma, laughing up his sleeve. "But when you become the head of the house, are you sure you can solve the Wangs' problem?"

"That I can," answered Aunt Chang confidently. "I'll ask the team for a loan of one hundred yuan to help tide them over, and square up with the team after the autumn harvest."

No longer able to contain himself, Uncle Chang stood up, his eyes on Ma, and said, "Her way of managing things would be worse than useless."

This upset Aunt Chang, for nobody else had ever spoken of her this way before. Glaring at her husband, she retorted, "How would you manage, then?"

Uncle Chang, still avoiding his wife's eyes, put forward a suggestion to Ma: "It seems to me the team could send a few members to help Second Sister Wang repair her house, using some of the wheat stalks we have in stock. After the harvest she can return the stalks and pay back some work-points too. That would work out much cheaper, don't you think?"

"Good, good!" Ma immediately agreed. As to Aunt Chang, she was at a loss for words. But judging by her smile she approved the proposal. Seeing this, Ma raised his voice to ask, "Don't you agree too, aunt?"

This was a hard question to answer. After thinking for a moment, she replied, "It's a good idea all right, but he only thought of it so as not to have to put his hand in his pocket." As she said this, she could not help smiling.

Now that the problem was solved, Ma took from his pocket a wad of notes and stepped towards Aunt Chang, saying: "Here's your hundred yuan. Uncle Chang advanced it to buy sweet-potato sprouts for our team. I've just drawn the sum from our accountant to reimburse you." With this, he thrust the money into her hand. Aunt Chang, holding the notes, was faced by a dilemma: She had no reason to refuse, nor could she accept without looking very foolish.

"Why didn't you explain, old man?" she scolded. "Do you think I don't care for the collective?"

The team leader, on his way to the gate, turned back. "How about it?" he asked Aunt Chang. "Who's going to run your house now?"

Aunt Chang laughed. "That's enough of your impudence, lad!" she cried, chasing after him. "Wait till I get my hands on you..."

Two days later, a cartload of sweet-potato sprouts arrived from Single Mount Village. The whole team turned out happily to carry them to the fields and transplant them. Uncle Chang stood quietly at one end of the fields to watch the delivery and figure out whether one cartload was enough for the whole fifty *mu*. When all the sprouts had been carried there, he sought out his wife and told her, "It seems the sprouts are barely enough. I'm going to help the others with the planting, to make sure that good care's taken of the sprouts. Will you feed the pigs for me for another day?" This said, he hurried off.

The planting of the cartload of sprouts was soon finished. Although the team members heeded Uncle Chang's warning not to waste a single sprout, they had nothing left to plant the last half *mu*.

"It doesn't matter," declared Team Leader Ma. "We can leave this half *mu* unplanted."

But Uncle Chang did not agree. He insisted on completing the plan. And he proposed: "I haven't planted my own sweet-potato plot yet, so I'll bring my sprouts down here. That'll give us three-fifths of what we need. If the rest of you can find a few spare sprouts too, it should be easy to make up the other two-fifths."

This idea met with general approval. So Uncle Chang went home with his two baskets.

Aunt Chang was busy in the pig-farm when she heard the villagers come back from the fields, laughing and talking. She knew that the planting was over, but Iron Lock's problem still weighed on her mind. She longed to find her husband to ask if he had a solution, but she couldn't leave her post until he came back. Quite a long time passed, however, before Uncle Chang hurried back, all over mud,

trouser-legs rolled up to the knees. Aunt Chang lost no time in accosting him: "The team's planting is done now, isn't it?"

"Umph." Uncle Chang nodded, then set to work preparing pig-feed.

"Then how about letting Iron Lock's family have some of the spare sprouts?" she pressed.

"I've told you, woman, the collective must come first. Just wait."

Irritated by her husband's offhand manner, Aunt Chang thought: "You promised to help our neighbours after the team's fields had been taken care of; but now you just tell me to wait. If you're not worried, I *am*!" Tossing her head she went home, determined to take their own sprouts to Iron Lock's family.

When she reached home she found to her amazement that their sweet-potato hotbed was completely stripped. Not a single sprout was left! Where could they have gone? Knitting her brows, she guessed that her husband must have transplanted them in their private plot. She was turning away to get hold of the old man and have it out with him, when she bumped into Iron Lock's mother.

The neighbour exclaimed: "Your old man is really too..."

"I know. I'm just going to find him to settle accounts with him!" spluttered Aunt Chang, angry with her husband for making her lose face.

"To settle accounts with him?" echoed the other woman, with a puzzled look at Aunt Chang. "I was just going to say how good your old man is!"

The fact was that after the call went out to donate sprouts to plant the last half *mu*, Uncle Chang and the other villagers had turned in enough for a whole *mu*. So before hurrying back to the pig-farm, Uncle Chang had told the others to take all the surplus to Iron Lock's family.

When Aunt Chang was told the whole story she stood stock-still, dumbfounded, not knowing whether to feel happy or ashamed. She didn't even notice when her neighbour left.

The sun was setting, reddening the whole sky, and Aunt Chang had long since finished preparing supper when her husband came

back from the pig-farm. Beaming all over her face, she put two fried eggs before him. "There you are," she said. "I've cooked you something you fancy." The eyes of the old pair met and they both smiled.

At dusk Team Leader Ma called. He sat himself on the *kang* and talked over with them the affairs of the team. Finally he said, "Uncle, you haven't planted your own sweet-potato plot yet. I'm afraid it'll soon be too late. What are you going to do?"

"Oh, there's no hurry," Aunt Chang put in.

"No hurry? A couple more days and it will be too late." Uncle Chang tapped his pipe against the table. "But aren't you going to see your daughter at Double Mount Village tomorrow, wife? The sprouts they have left should be big enough now to transplant. If you bring some back, that'll solve our problem, won't it?"

Hearing this, Aunt Chang remarked with a chuckle to Ma: "See, my old man always finds a way out, doesn't he?"

"Yes. He's full of good ideas. Yet you won't let him run your house," teased Ma. This set all three of them laughing.

The silvery moon was up now, shedding light on the village and shining into their cottage....

Illustrated by Yang Wen-ju

Between Two Collectives

We had better start this story with what happened in Spring Wind Inn.

One evening when people were just beginning to turn in, they heard loud voices raised in a heated argument.

"You shouldn't talk like that. I'm here representing all our team members," said one voice.

"That makes no difference. I'm speaking for our team too," retorted the other.

The attendant knew that Room 12 was shared by two men from different brigades. Why were they quarrelling like this? He knocked on the door and opening it found the two men standing in the middle of the room arguing hotly. Both were red in the face.

The man in black said, "Old Shih, whatever we do we must seek the truth from facts. You can't refuse to take this money."

The other in brown parried, "Old Ting, what's right is right, what's wrong is wrong. You simply must accept this money."

The attendant saw that they both had a wad of bills in their hands. But he still could not make head or tail of the argument. At this

point other travellers, hearing the racket, gathered around the open door. Though nobody knew what was wrong, they advised the two men to sit down and discuss the matter quietly.

At this, Old Ting and Old Shih chuckled as they sat down on the beds. "This is a good opportunity, Old Shih," said Ting. "Let's tell them what's happened and ask them to arbitrate."

"A good idea," Shih agreed.

The one in black was Ting Teh-shih, store-keeper of Team Two in Dawn Brigade about twenty miles east of Spring Wind Inn. He was known as the old store-keeper because, although only forty-eight years old, he had been in charge of the stores for about seventeen years. In his village he was liked by all, for he was very amiable and it was rare indeed that he raised his voice. But if anybody tried to harm the collective he would fight back tooth and nail. Members of his team had expressed their feelings about him in a little verse.

For seventeen years our store-keeper,
Old Ting is truly great;
He's easy-going mostly but,
When principle's at stake,
No force on earth can move the man —
He'll neither bend nor break.

That was what people thought of him. But he himself simply said, "In taking the socialist road, it's necessary to seek the truth from facts."

Now let us come back to the man in brown whose name was Shih Teh-kuei. He was a carter in Team Three in Builders Brigade about twenty miles west of Spring Wind Inn. Strong and healthy at fifty-one, he was more than a match for younger men in farm work. He had been a carter for thirty years, since before Liberation. Usually a man of few words, to prove a point he could hold forth at length. He was thoroughly dependable and honest. For instance, the previous year he had gone with other carters in his team to take part in their commune's water-conservancy project. They fulfilled their task much faster than any other teams and it appeared as though they would be awarded the red banner. But at the meeting held to sum up the first stage of the project, Shih stood up to say, "It seems to me that the red banner should go to Team One. First of all for

the good quality of their work. We didn't tamp the lower section of our earth-work as well as they did. Another thing: while carrying earth they skirted the fields to avoid trampling on the growing crops, but we weren't so careful."

So, Team One was awarded the red banner. Shih's deputy team leader and several youngsters in the group complained that Shih had been too honest. He shouldn't be so eager to reveal the weaknesses and faults of his own team, they said. But Shih argued: "That's just it. We know ourselves better than anyone else does. If we don't reveal our faults, who can?"

By studying together, the deputy team leader and the others raised their political understanding and came to see eye to eye with Shih. Then they wrote a rhyme about him on the blackboard news:

Old Shih is true as true can be,
As honest as the day is he;
To us he's true and there's no doubt
The Party policy he carries out.

That was the general consensus of opinion. As for him, he used to say, "We can't make revolution by halves — what's right is right, what's wrong is wrong."

Now that we've introduced our two characters, let's get back to their argument.

Old Shih's team had had some trouble the previous year. About three hundred *mu* of millet near the river was flooded. As a result they were short of millet straw to give their draught animals as fodder. Although the commune office helped them out with a liberal supply for the winter, they were still short because of the increase in their livestock. Before spring sowing started, they decided to buy some fodder from other brigades. That was why Shih and his mates went with their carts to Ting's team.

Ting was cleaning the stable with the stockman when a tinkling of harness bells caught his attention. Looking up, he saw that three carts had stopped outside. The first cartier jumped down and went towards the team's office. Ting, who knew that there was no one there, called out to him.

This man, who was Old Shih, promptly made for the stable. The other cartiers followed him in. Old Ting received them warmly, offering them tobacco from his own pouch.

"What's your name?" asked Old Ting.

"Shih. And yours?"

"Ting. Where are you from?"

"The Builders Brigade."

"And what can I do for you?" asked Ting.

"Our millet fields were flooded last year. We've not enough fodder for our animals. We've come to see if we can buy some from you."

"I was told," Ting broke in, "that in spite of the flood your grain harvest was bigger than the year before."

"Yes, a little bigger. But we still don't have enough fodder."

Both of them down-to-earth peasants, they had much to chat about. It was quite a while before Ting remembered that he must say whether he could sell them some straw or not. Though his team leader and the other cadres were away attending a meeting, Ting, as store-keeper, knew that his team had straw enough and to spare. Here was a brother team short of fodder so of course he would sell some to them. His mind made up, he led Shih and the other cartiers to the threshing-yard and took their carts right to the straw stacks. He then fed their horses before fetching young men from his team to weigh the straw and load the carts.

Old Shih and the other cartiers wanted to help but Ting insisted that they go inside and rest. Moved by Ting's warm reception, the cartiers went back to the stable where they noticed that part still needed cleaning. They took up where Ting had left off. By the time Ting had finished weighing and loading, the stable was thoroughly cleaned out.

The cartiers then ate the midday meal they had brought along, paid for the straw, took their receipt and went on their way.

The matter should have ended there but it did not.

Ting's team leader and the other cadres came back from their meeting in the afternoon. When Ting told them about the transaction, the team leader assured him that he had done the right thing.

The young accountant, however, found something wrong with the receipt.

"Uncle Ting, you shouldn't have done this," he protested.

The team leader and Old Ting were taken aback.

"Listen, young man, we should consider the interest of the whole commune," Ting asserted. "If we have enough straw and to spare, why shouldn't we sell some to a brother team?"

"Of course we should help them out, but not by selling our straw at a higher price than usual," the young man answered sharply.

"What? I charged them too high a price?" Old Ting snatched up the receipt book and checked the figures again. Two point eight cents a catty — what was wrong with that?

The team leader took the receipt book and looked it over. "The usual rate is one point eight cents per catty. We've taken an extra cent per catty."

Old Ting was dumbfounded.

The fact was that Old Ting had neither bought nor sold straw for a good many years, therefore he was not familiar with the current price. He had asked Shih, the buyer, who set the price at two point eight. Actually Old Shih had not bought any straw for years either and he only vaguely remembered that the last time he bought some it was priced at two point eight cents a catty.

"It means that we've accepted an extra hundred yuan in this sale of ten thousand catties of straw," said the young accountant, rubbing it in.

But the straw was already sold, the money paid. What was to be done?

"Take the money back to them," said Ting after a little thought.

The team leader agreed and the young accountant was satisfied. The task was then entrusted to Ting. Before he left, the team leader told him to ask whether the Builders Brigade still wanted straw. If they did, they could come and get more.

Since Old Ting was sorry about the mix up, he started out first thing the next morning to set matters right.

When Old Shih returned home he told members of his team how helpful Team Two in Dawn Brigade had been, how willingly they

had sold their millet straw and even helped to load the carts. The others all appreciated this. They said they must improve their water-conservancy work and win an all-round bumper harvest that coming season. After the three carts were unloaded, the store-keeper weighed the straw. But there was a hitch. They had about a thousand catties more than they had paid for.

"Well, there's nothing we can do about it," said one member. "We can hardly harness our horses again and take all the straw back, can we?"

"But this won't do at all," Old Shih protested. "The extra straw belongs to the other team. In my opinion, we'd better send the extra money back to them. Don't we always advocate paying the correct price for what we buy?"

All agreed with this. Old Shih was given the job of returning the extra money to the other team. Before he left, his team leader told him to ask whether Dawn Brigade's Team Two was short of rice seed for he had heard that they intended to plant rice that spring.

The next day Old Shih set out too.

The distance between the two teams was about forty-five miles and anyone travelling on foot had to break his journey and put up overnight at Spring Wind Inn. That is how it happened that the two met there.

Old Ting arrived first. As he sat on the bed sipping hot water, he went over in his mind what he would say when he arrived at Builders Brigade. He was afraid the other team would refuse his money. At this juncture, Old Shih stepped into the room. The attendant had told him to take the extra bed in Ting's room as they were both leaving in the morning.

"Hey, how come you're here?" both asked simultaneously.

"I'm on my way to see you," they both answered together again.

Ting made the new arrival sit down. Puffing away at their pipes, each explained why he was there. But neither would accept money from the other. Soon they were arguing so heatedly that people thought they were quarrelling.

When Ting and Shih had finished explaining, the others understood at last what had happened. They all praised the good work-

ing style of the two teams. Someone suggested that the attendant should act as spokesman for all those present and settle the argument.

As the hubbub died down, the attendant announced, "It seems to me that Old Ting and Old Shih should both accept the money the other one has brought. You're both working on behalf of your team, a collective, so you should stick to principles." Turning to the others he asked, "Don't you agree?"

Everyone applauded. The attendant then asked Ting and Shih, "What's your opinion?"

"All right," Ting replied. "Now I see it clearly. Conducting transactions between two collectives, we must adhere strictly to principles. I'll accept the money in payment for the extra straw."

Old Shih said, "I see it too now. If I refused to take the money I should be encouraging others to charge a higher price than the usual one."

On hearing this all burst out laughing.

And so the story of this sale of straw between two teams swept across the district like the spring wind, a story that intrigued its listeners and brought a smile to every face.

After a Performance (traditional Chinese painting)
by Liu Chang-chao and Chen Chen-ming ►

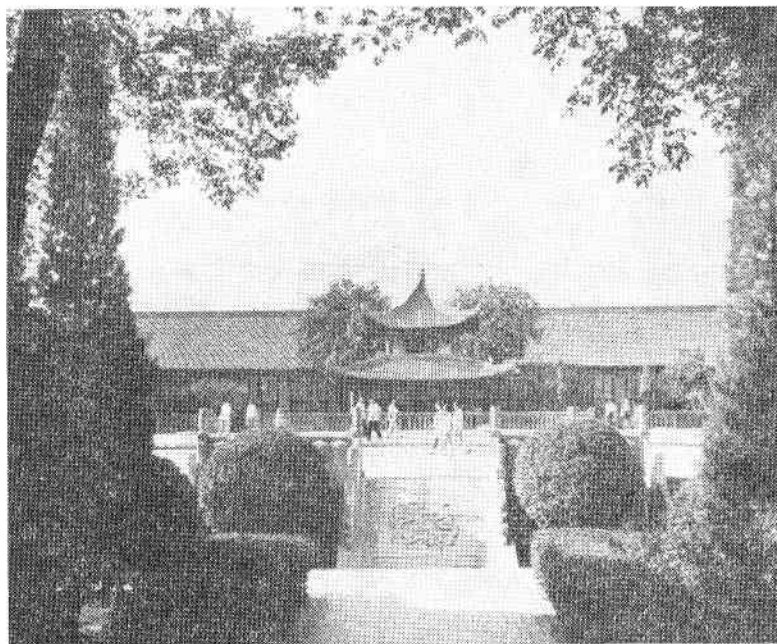


Shan Wen

The Forest of Stone Inscriptions

Sian in Shensi Province, one of the chief cities of northwest China, was an important centre of early Chinese civilization. From the eleventh century B.C. to the tenth century A.D. five feudal dynasties had their capitals in this area; hence the city abounds in cultural relics. The Shensi Provincial Museum built after Liberation in Sian is one of the largest museums in China today. And the Forest of Stone Inscriptions introduced here forms an important part of this museum.

The Forest of Stone Inscriptions was assembled in 1090 to preserve the Stone Canons inscribed in 837 during the Kaicheng period of the Tang Dynasty. These stone canons include the twelve chief Confucian classics inscribed on both sides of 114 tablets and totalling more than 650,000 characters. This collection was repaired and extended in later periods. After the founding of the Chinese People's Republic in 1949, the Chinese Communist Party and the People's Government not only renovated the tablets already preserved there, but also collected many famous stone inscriptions of different dynas-



The Forest of Stone Inscriptions Museum

ties which had been scattered in various districts of Shensi, greatly enriching the original collection. This part of the provincial museum today occupies six exhibition halls, six galleries and one pavilion, in which more than 1,700 stone inscriptions are displayed. This Forest of Stone Inscriptions of Sian is thus a treasure-house of ancient Chinese records inscribed on stone as well as of fine examples of calligraphy.

Chinese calligraphy has a long history. Originating thousands of years ago, it has developed through the ages into a splendid and highly distinctive art. For instance, the painted pottery excavated in 1954 at Panpo Village in the east suburb of Sian has simple designs which resemble written characters and may be an early form of calligraphy, and these date back to six thousand years ago. Later the written language went through various stages of development: the Shang-dynasty bone-inscriptions, the bronze inscriptions or majus-

cule script (*ta chuan*), the miniscule script (*hsiao chuan*), the clerical script (*li shu*), the rustic script (*tsao shu*), the uncial script (*kai shu*) and the cursive script (*hsing shu*). The general trend in this process of evolution was the simplification of the ideographs so that writing became an easier and quicker business. The cultural and economic developments through the ages gave rise to changes in calligraphy and to distinctive features and styles which also owed something to the special aptitudes and talents of individual calligraphists. So Chinese writing, apart from its practical purpose, is also an art.

In 1899 many ancient cultural relics were first excavated in Anyang, a county in the province of Honan which was the site of the late Shang capital more than three thousand years ago. Since then, more than a hundred thousand inscriptions on animal bones and tortoise shells have been found. The characters on these are already well developed. Clearly the scribes who cut such fine lines on bone without

Stone Tablets in the Museum





Sung copy of a tablet on Yi Mountain inscribed in the Chin Dynasty

iron tools must have been painstaking and highly skilled craftsmen. These ancient inscriptions have preserved for us records of the life and beliefs of those early times, supplying rich material for the study of ancient Chinese history and culture.

Apart from these bone inscriptions, we have other Shang-dynasty inscriptions on bronze vessels. The number of bronze inscriptions increased in the Chou Dynasty (1066-256 B.C.) and the script used is known as the bronze inscription or majuscule (*ta chuan*) script. Since bronze vessels are bigger than animal

bones they could carry longer inscriptions, many of which provide us with valuable records of our early history and culture.

The first emperor of the Chin Dynasty (221-206 B.C.) united all China and different scripts throughout the country were unified too. This period saw the appearance of the regular and relatively simple miniscule script (*hsiao chuan*) and the easy script for official documents known as the clerical script (*li shu*). By this time iron implements were in general use and inscriptions could be made on stone—a tradition kept up for many centuries. The wide use of stone tablets to preserve written records further developed the art of calligraphy and helped to preserve ancient writing through the ages.

In the course of China's long history stone inscriptions became a form of art embracing a great variety of individual styles and distinctive national features. The Forest of Stone Inscriptions in Sian is the most important collection of these ancient inscriptions,

although countless examples may also be found in other parts of the country.

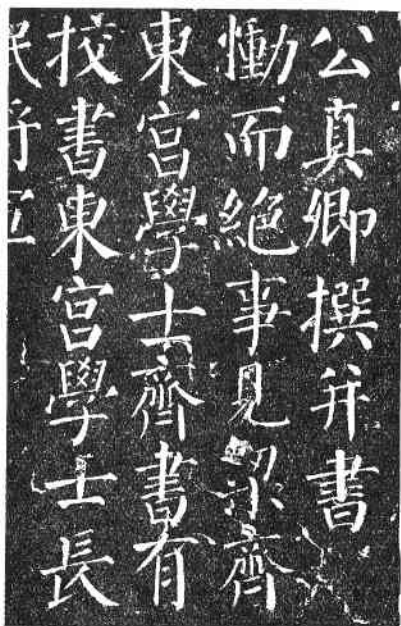
The earliest calligraphy in this museum is a Sung copy of a tablet on Yi Mountain inscribed in the miniscule script in the Chin Dynasty. The earliest tablet is the "Record of Tsao Chuan" inscribed in 185 A.D. in the standard clerical script, the clear elegant calligraphy resembling rows of swiftly flying cranes. We also have some mutilated stone classics inscribed in the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-220 A.D.). These stylish inscriptions in clerical script marked a great step forward in the evolution of Chinese writing, laying the foundation for later Chinese calligraphy and affording some of the finest examples of this art.

The social development of the Han Dynasty posed new requirements and gave rise to the rustic, uncial and cursive scripts. The rustic script was for rapid careless writing, the uncial script was severely regular, and the cursive script was a cross between these two informal and formal styles. These types of script are still in use today.

The Wei Dynasty (220-265), the Ts'in Dynasty (265-420) and the Northern and Southern Dynasties (420-589) form an important transitional period in the history of Chinese calligraphy. Apart from monumental tablets, there were many grave-stone inscriptions

"Record of Tsao Chuan" — Han Dynasty





“Record of Yen Chin-li” by
Yen Chen-ching

commemorating the dead; and the writing on the best of these, some of which are displayed in this museum, has the thrust and impressiveness of sharp swords or sheer precipices. Few of these tomb inscriptions record the calligrapher's name. However, we know of one celebrated calligrapher of this period, Wang Hsi-chih (303-379), who when young learned from a famous calligraphist Lady Wei, then studied the writings of old masters and practised calligraphy diligently for more than twenty years until finally he himself became a great master. His cursive

script with its apparently effortless elegance, so different from the earlier simpler style, can be considered a landmark in Chinese calligraphy.

The Tang Dynasty was a splendid period in Chinese feudal society, when the art of calligraphy also flourished and there were many famous calligraphists belonging to different schools with distinctive features. The Tang-dynasty inscriptions in this museum display an amazing variety of scripts. The uncial and rustic scripts of this period had evolved gradually to maturity since the Wei and Tsin Dynasties and reached a high degree of excellence. The display of Tang calligraphy in Sian is a veritable treasure-house stocked with gems which dazzle the eye. Here we can touch on only a few of the greatest Tang calligraphers.

Ouyang Hsun (557-641) in his early years studied the calligraphy of Wang Hsi-chih. His powerful spirited writing, conjuring up a

picture of jagged rocks and perilous cliffs, had a widespread influence on later generations. The stone tablet “Record of Huangfu Tan” in this collection is representative of his work.

Another famous Tang calligrapher Chu Sui-liang (596-659) was well versed in literature and trusted by the emperor Tai-tsung. His writing has been praised as combining the strength and vigour of wrought iron with the distinction of silver. An excellent example of it in this museum is the “Preface to the Teachings of Buddha Inscribed in Tunchou.”

Other virtuosos were Yen Chen-ching (709-785) and Liu Kung-chuan (778-865). Yen, a high official who was killed in a revolt at the age of seventy-seven, was known as a man of upright character. Born into a poor family, he used to practise writing with mud on the wall until he became a master of this art. His impressive regular brushwork suggests the sweep and majesty of a great river, and in his influence on later calligraphers he probably ranks second only to Wang Hsi-chih. The tablet “Record of Yen Chin-li” excavated in 1922 in Sian is an example of his calligraphy and the characters are remarkably clear, for this is one of the best preserved inscriptions in this museum. Liu Kung-chuan was a talented musician and man of letters whose sophisticated calligraphy with its concise clear-cut strokes was much admired by his contemporaries. His “Record of Hsuanpi Pagoda” has been used as a model down to the present time.

This museum also contains brilliant examples of rustic

“Record of Hsuanpi Pagoda” by
Liu Kung-chuan





"On Belly Ache" by Chang Hsu

script by such Tang calligraphers as Chang Hsu and Monk Huai-su. Chang Hsu is said to have dashed off much of his best writing when tipsy, and to have been inspired by a sword dance performed by the celebrated Madame Kungsun. The vigour of his rustic script has been compared to gnarled vines or leaping dragons. This museum has his famous work "On Belly Ache." Monk Huai-su (725-785) was a monk with a liberal outlook who filled his monastery with plantains and called the place "Green Heaven", and in these quiet surroundings he practised calligraphy on

plantain leaves. He adopted and further developed Chang Hsu's style of rustic script. "The Lu Kung Inscription" and "The Tsang Chen Inscription" afford impressive examples of his writing, which conveyed the speed of a whirlwind, the turbulence of a storm.

Li Yang-ping, also of the Tang Dynasty, was thought to have written the best miniscule script since Li Ssu of the Chin Dynasty. The tablet "A Record of Three Graves" is a good specimen of his writing. The Tang clerical script is more stately and regular, less spirited and elegant, than that of Han. The most prized examples of Tang clerical script are the tablets "Record of Monk Ta-chih" by Shih Wei-cheh and "Book of Filial Piety" by Emperor Hsuan-tsung, both of which exerted a considerable influence on later calligraphers.

The museum also contains many masterpieces of post-Tang calligraphy such as that by Emperor Hui-tsung (1082-1135), the Sung

emperor who was an eminent artist and who evolved his own "lean gold style" of writing characterized by its fine and flexible strokes. A good example of this is the tablet inscribed with his writing in the Takuan period (1107-1110). Other outstanding calligraphists of later periods include Chao Meng-fu (1254-1322) of the Yuan Dynasty and Tung Chi-chang (1555-1636) of the Ming Dynasty, whose work can also be found in this museum.

Many masterpieces of Chinese calligraphy by famous artists through the ages have been preserved in the stone tablets collected in this museum. These inscriptions reproduce the original brushwork and reveal the stone-carvers' skill. This was not only a means of preserving ancient calligraphy through long periods of history, but also of handing down authentic records which are of value in the study of our social history and past relationships with foreign lands. Chinese calligraphy was developed through tireless practice during thousands of years. Now that the cultural level of the Chinese people has been raised on a broad basis and there is much weeding through the old to bring forth the new, the art of calligraphy has gained a fresh lease of life. We can look forward to its further development in future.

Home of Folk-Songs

Known as a folk-song district, Locheng, a mountainous region in Kueichih County, Anhwei Province, is very beautiful even in winter when plum trees bloom amidst green pines and the scenery is vibrant with life.

One evening at dusk we arrived at the headquarters of the Chuhu Production Brigade. The Party secretary there gave us a warm welcome. He introduced us to their young tractor driver Chang Jung-pin, who gladly sang for us a song he had recently composed about the efforts of the poor and lower-middle peasants to prepare for spring sowing:

Our songs and snowflakes blend together,
As we gather and pile manure.
We commune members are immune to cold,
For our hearts are warm when learning from Tachai.*

Chang went away to middle school but after graduating he returned to his native village in the mountains. Using art and literature to

*Tachai is a well-known advanced agricultural production brigade in Shansi Province, China. In 1964 Chairman Mao issued the call: "In agriculture learn from Tachai."

serve the people he began conscientiously promoting amateur cultural activities among the brigade members, writing and telling stories as well as composing and singing folk-songs. Full of political enthusiasm Chang composed folk-songs about revolutionary people and events as they emerge from class struggle, the struggle for production and scientific experiments. His songs inspired the peasants to win higher yields. During the busy spring season, by day he drove his tractor, ploughing and sowing under a bright sky. By night, under an oil lamp, he wrote songs in praise of labour.

The following day we met the brigade's older singer, Chiang Wang-szu, who had just returned from the hills. Although already sixty, the old man was very vigorous and told us all about his early life. His family had been landless and poor; when only ten years old he had to work for a landlord as a cowherd. The poor lad, with a love for singing, used to sing songs of resistance and struggle to keep up his spirits.

I swing my whip and the landlord shivers in fear,
My mortal enemy the landlord is.
Composing my songs at night, by day I sing,
With my ballads the red, red sun I hail.

In 1949 the red flag of liberation was raised in the region and, when the red sun shed its warmth over the hills and vales, a new life began for Chiang and his family. What a far cry the new life was from the old! Chiang sang with even more enthusiasm and his voice improved too. In 1972, at the county's Folk-Song Festival to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the publication of Chairman Mao's *Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art*, Chiang sang of his deep proletarian love for Chairman Mao.

The Party like a red sun warms our hearts,
We sing ballads filled with happiness.
Spring has come to our whole land
And red flags will fly everywhere over our earth.

We went next to the Hsuchiao Brigade. On the way we crossed merrily gurgling streams and heard singing floating among the trees on the hills.

Hazy peach blooms along the ridge
Part like a curtain when the east wind blows.
The songs we sing are of the new spring;
Our stage, the commune's hills and waters.

At the site of a water conservancy project, people sang incessantly as they worked. There we met Shih La-mei, leader of the women's team and a member of the brigade's Party committee. She was in her early forties, as good a worker as a singer. In 1970 a formidable flood damaged more than 1,000 *mu* of the brigade's cultivated land. In the face of this calamity, she and the other members of the Party committee firmly vowed, "We will recover the crops lost in the flood." In the forefront of the battle against the flood, she sang songs of her own composing.

Commune members don't fear the pouring rain;
We'll fight against this natural calamity,
For the Party is backing us.
We'll drain off the flood waters to the east sea,
We'll grow a rich crop of rice in spite of all.

Her song stimulated the commune members' confidence in their ability to overcome the flood damage. The brigade gathered good crops that year.

At a work site we heard another folk-song:

We're moving stones to build a dam,
Breaking the ice with our battle drums.
Our region we are planning anew;
Today the brigade is digging a canal.

The women's team leader told us all about their plan to dig a new mile-long canal to drain off mountain torrents, while filling up the old channel which intersected their fields. The water of the new canal would irrigate more paddy fields. The brigade members worked with a will, determined to complete this difficult project during the winter.

"Add one more spadeful, one spadeful more," urged Liu Cheng-jung. Already her baskets were piled high with earth but, being the leader of the Iron Girls' Team, Liu was eager to carry more.

She shouldered her carrying-pole with two baskets full of earth at both ends and walked on full of vim, the chorus of a song trailing behind her:

Commune members love to sing,
We spend our life in song.
We carry loads but never tire,
We smile at wasteland turned to green.

The previous autumn the brigade leader had said to Liu, "When you're in the fields, give a lead to others in singing some ballads, young Liu. Singing keeps everyone's spirits up." During a break at rice planting, Liu started singing a new song she had composed. Soon others joined in.

In water paddies silvery white,
We are busy planting rice.
Our feet trample down fatigue,
Our hands embroider Tachai flowers.
Chairman Mao showed us Tachai's road,
Everywhere songs of a bumper crop;
What we're planting is a magic herb
Whose fragrance will fill the hills.
Our backs are drenched with sweat,
Our eyebrows white with morning frost.
Yet braving heaven and earth we'll draw
A new picture of our region.

Every word expressed their determination as their stirring songs floated in the air. Young people, men and women alike, worked with the strength of tigers. They were all good singers too. Best of all, though, was Chiang Hsiu-chen, whose voice held a special appeal.

Red flags of Tachai flutter everywhere,
How fine to cut the mountain, dig canals,
The Foolish Old Man moved mountains, we move water,
Commanding the flood to irrigate our fields.

Chiang Hsiu-chen was the daughter of a poor peasant family. Twice she had the good fortune to see Chairman Mao. On July 23, 1960 during her first visit to Peking, together with others she

was received by Chairman Mao who had a photo taken with them. Premier Chou encouraged Hsiu-chen to serve the people better by improving her singing. As a poverty-stricken girl in the old society, she was treated more like a draught animal than a human being. Now, how bright the red sun and glorious the red flags! Back home from Peking, from the side of Chairman Mao, with greater devotion Hsiu-chen plunged into the study of Chairman Mao's thought on literature and art. Enthusiastically she composed many folk-songs to honour Chairman Mao and praise his proletarian revolutionary line.

In the account book of our hearts and minds
We know what Chairman Mao has brought.
Since we learned to farm the Tachai way
Our granary has overflowed.

Hsiu-chen continued to carry big loads, each heavier than the previous one, and she walked still faster. She sang more loudly too.

Now we manage affairs of state,
Working in the fields we build up our commune.
If heaven falls we'll prop it up,
If the earth sinks, we'll raise it.
We who were poor will follow the Party
For ten thousand generations.

Such songs were like the call of battle drums, stirring the heart of every commune member to welcome another beautiful spring.

A Li Village (oil-painting)
by Lin Teh-chuan ▶

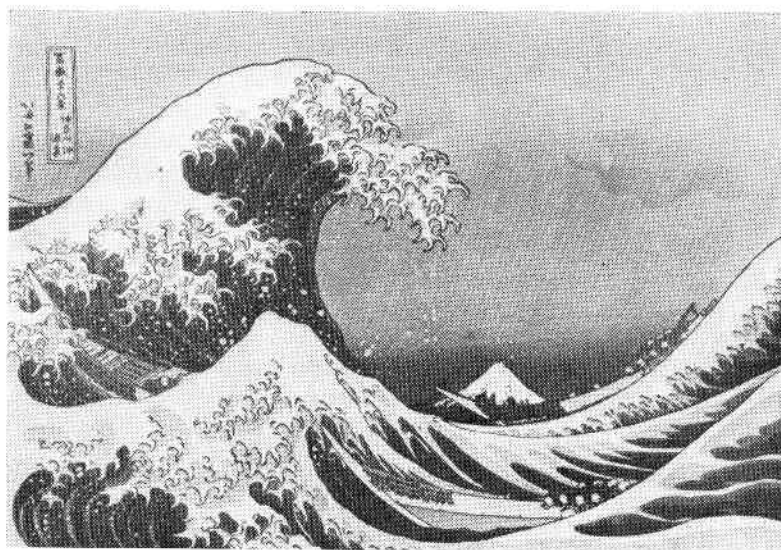


Lin Lin

Thoughts After Seeing the Hokusai Painting Exhibition

Hokusai Katsushika (1760-1849), a well-known Japanese painter of the Ukiyo-e School, lived towards the end of the feudal Tokugawa Shogunate period and his works reflect the artistic tradition and life in Japan of his time. An exhibition of his paintings and famous prints held in March 1973 in Peking has helped to develop the friendship and cultural exchange between our two countries. We can see from Hokusai's work that he made a contribution in his own day towards a better understanding of Chinese culture in Japan. Many of his paintings were based on classical Chinese themes; he depicted the Tang-dynasty poets Li Po and Po Chu-yi whose poetry was well known to the Japanese, and made illustrations for the popular Chinese novels *Pilgrimage to the West*, *Tales of the Three Kingdoms* and *Heroes of the Marshes*. Thus his work holds a special appeal for the Chinese people.

Lu Hsun in a letter to his Japanese friend Yamamoto in 1934 made this comment on Hokusai's work: "Regarding Japanese genre painters, when I was young my favourite was Hokusai. Now I like Hiro-



In the Waves of Kanagawa

shige best, and Utamaro's human figures next. . . . But in my view the ordinary people of China would probably appreciate Hokusai most." Lu Hsun of course had good reason to believe that Hokusai's genre paintings would suit the Chinese people's taste, and I think one of the most important factors is that Hokusai's work reflected the spirit of the Japanese toiling masses.

Ten years ago I received a woodcut print from a Japanese friend. It shows men crouching on low wooden boats braving towering waves behind which rises Mount Fuji, and I have treasured it to this day because to me this picture reflects the indomitable spirit of the Japanese people. This print, "In the Waves of Kanagawa", is one of the popular series *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji*. It opens up a new vista not achieved by other Japanese artists before Hokusai. The effective contrast between background and foreground, between objects at rest and in motion, creates an effect of high tension. This stirring and thought-provoking picture moved me to write the following lines:

In the distance looms Mount Fuji
 Behind fearful billows engulfing the azure sky;
 Such beauty is best seen
 From a storm-tossed boat.

Japan is a country with a long history and ancient civilization, with an industrious and courageous people. We firmly believe that the great Japanese people will overcome all difficulties and win through every storm to attain their goal. China and Japan are close neighbours with friendly relations dating back for two thousand years, so we should assist each other in our struggles and win victory together.

From this exhibition of Hokusai's original paintings and prints we can see his wide range of subject-matter and the breadth of his vision. He painted and sketched flowers, birds, insects and fish as well as landscapes and human figures, and excelled equally in minute attention to detail and in a more casual style with free lines. His numerous works show the development of his art and his unusual talents. Though his style has certain affinities with Chinese and Western painting, his work remains distinctively and unmistakably Japanese. Hokusai loved above all to depict the beauty of his native mountains

Gathering Pearl-Oysters During Ebb-Tide



and streams and all types of characters in Japanese society. Many of his paintings and prints portray waterfalls and bridges, but his favourite theme was Mount Fuji, a symbol of Japan, many aspects of which he depicted as well as the life of the people living there. This shows his passionate love for his motherland.

Hokusai Katsushika was the adopted child of a mirror-maker. During his youth he worked as an apprentice in a bookshop which lent out books, and his job was to run errands. Because he came from a poor artisan family, he was able to break away from the conventions of the privileged artists of the feudal ruling class, and to portray different types of labouring people. After he became successful he still refused to be employed by the ruling class, preferring to live frugally as a poor artist. His sketches of toilers are strikingly true to life, revealing his close ties with the masses. And indeed he set himself the aim of achieving a popular style.

Hokusai lived to the great age of ninety. Even when old, he looked for new ideas and steadily improved his technique. He felt the need to race against time to create something new. Before he died he said: "Even if I live to be a hundred, I shall go on making innovations in my style. It would be good to live another five or ten years. This is how a true artist should live." He believed that close contact with nature and society would deepen an artist's understanding and enable him to reflect the objective world faithfully in his art. It is said that he liked to move from place to place and that he moved house more than ninety times altogether, no doubt because he wanted to be close to the people, to keep having new experiences and new impressions from which to draw fresh inspiration.

His motto was: "I regret last year, I am ashamed of yesterday." This modest self-critical attitude and constant endeavour to create something new is worthy of our study.

The London Philharmonic Orchestra in China

In the spring of 1973, the London Philharmonic Orchestra paid a visit to China to convey the British people's friendship for the Chinese people and give performances in Peking, Shanghai and Kwangchow. Their programmes of English music representative of their fine national culture, as well as works by classical continental composers, made a deep impression on Chinese audiences and helped to establish a closer friendship and cultural exchange between the Chinese and the British people.

These British musicians' performances were marked by great virtuosity and a scrupulous attention to detail. Their conductor John Pritchard, with his profound feeling for music and originality of a high order, conducted with conciseness and verve. Under his direction the themes of each composition were clearly projected and brilliantly developed.

The different sections of the orchestra were well co-ordinated. When performing classical works by Beethoven, Brahms and Dvorak,



they avoided meretricious showiness to give a serious, meticulous rendering of the music. The performance of Dvorak's Symphony No. 8 in G was outstanding in this respect.

This orchestra's able handling of variations in volume, and particularly of the finer notes, left us with an unforgettable impression. The violin soloist Ida Haendel has played Brahms' Concerto for Violin and Orchestra in D for more than thirty years and her technique is thoroughly mature. She displayed superb passion and strength, as well as simplicity and charm in her treatment of serene lyrical passages. The orchestral accompaniment was never obtrusive but provided an appropriate background for the solo instrument, setting off the musical images and the skill of the soloist to the best advantage. The rendering of Haydn's Trumpet Concerto in E Flat was equally successful, the accompaniment bringing out distinctly the trumpet soloist Gordon Webb's virtuosity.

The different instruments in the orchestra, whether wood-wind or brass, were all played with distinction, the strings being particularly splendid. In the English composer Elgar's Overture, Cockaigne

("In London Town"), the distinctive features of all the instruments were brought into full play with close co-ordination and vivid contrasts. Here the English artists expressed their deep affection for the capital of their country. The music is deliberately pictorial, presenting a series of colourful London scenes which convey to the audience something of the atmosphere of the city with its Cockney liveliness and optimism.

The orchestra also performed Vaughan Williams' Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis. Taking as his base an old English melody which has great strength and simplicity, the composer produced a richly-woven tapestry of sound. His skilful use of the strings outlines and develops the Tallis theme, giving the music a sense of great spaciousness, with counterpoints to enrich the texture. The whole work vividly depicts an essentially English country scene.

The London Philharmonic Orchestra musicians further showed their friendship for the Chinese people by rehearsing and performing the tune "Joyous Women Guerrillas" from the modern Chinese revolutionary ballet *Red Detachment of Women*. They also attended a rehearsal of the Central Philharmonic Society in Peking and exchanged ideas with Chinese musicians. Their visit has undoubtedly helped to strengthen the mutual understanding between our two peoples and to promote the musical art of China and Britain.

The Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra Comes to Peking

Recently music lovers in Peking were happy to welcome musicians from the shores of the Danube — The Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra. The performances which they gave in the middle of April were attended by more than twenty thousand people who were delighted by the precision, expressiveness and consummate skill of the Austrian musicians.

The Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra was established 131 years ago, but this is the first time a Peking audience has been privileged to hear it perform symphonic works of the Vienna School and of other German and Austrian composers. The musicians' profound understanding of their national classical music and their faithful, spirited interpretation of works by different composers made an unforgettable impression on us. The orchestra as a whole has superb richness of tone and polish, with perfect co-ordination between the brass, wood-wind and string instruments. Indeed, on the basis of rigorous training in small ensembles, the whole orchestra has achieved

a high level of co-ordination and harmony. The Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra has always held to the special Viennese style of making music and is widely acclaimed as one of the best orchestras in the whole world.

The permanent conductor of this orchestra Claudio Abbado, who conducts with great verve, incisively and unaffectedly, conducted the first two concerts. Having made a detailed study of each work, he gave faithful and stirring expression to the special features of the different musicians: the smooth elegance of Mozart, the passion of Beethoven, the romantic charm of Schubert, and the profundity of Brahms.

The Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra also gave a joint performance with Chinese musicians of the Chinese piano concerto *The Yellow River*. Our two peoples live far apart and have different languages, national styles and cultural traditions; so it was no easy task for the Austrian artists to perform this concerto during their first visit to China, when they had never before performed Chinese music. How-



ever, out of deep friendship for the Chinese people, these Austrian musicians devoted themselves whole-heartedly to rehearsing this work, making a careful study of the characteristics of Chinese revolutionary music, its style and distinctive rhythmic patterns, and striving to understand the musical images and ideas in the concerto. Claudio Abbado directed the rehearsals with tireless energy and modestly exchanged views with the Chinese pianist Yin Cheng-chung, studying various points repeatedly and not letting slip a single detail; thus within a very short period the orchestra succeeded in grasping the basic rhythms and variations in strength of this composition. During their performance the Chinese and Austrian musicians co-operated excellently; Claudio Abbado conducted with genuine fervour, while the Chinese pianist's impassioned solo harmonized perfectly with the orchestra's rich and varied accompaniment. After the melody "The East Is Red" performed towards the end by piano and orchestra, and after the splendid strains of "The Internationale" sonorously played by the brass instruments, the whole audience burst into a stormy ovation. The success of this performance of *The Yellow River* vividly embodies the true friendship between our two peoples. It will remain an unforgettable experience for the musicians of both countries.

The other conductor of the orchestra Willi Boskovsky showed great skill in conducting the music of Johann and Josef Strauss. Rich experience and acute powers of observation enabled him to bring out to the full the melodiousness and harmony of the music. He played the violin himself when conducting, just as Johann Strauss himself did when performing in Vienna, and this won enthusiastic applause from the audience.

We Chinese music workers are grateful for the superb performances which these Austrian musicians gave us in Peking. We shall continue to develop musical exchange with all friendly countries and nations, to promote further friendly contacts and mutual understanding among musicians throughout the world. The first visit to China of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra has made a significant contribution to strengthening the friendship between the peoples of China and Austria.

Chronicle

Selected Poems of Eugène Pottier Published in China

Selected Poems of Eugène Pottier in Chinese translation has been published here by the People's Literature Publishing House in commemoration of the 102nd anniversary of the Paris Commune.

The poems are preceded by the article "Eugène Pottier" written in 1913 by Lenin, revolutionary teacher of the proletariat.

Pottier was born into a poor Paris worker's family on October 4, 1816. He took part in the workers' movement from his early years. In the days of the great Paris Commune, he was elected a member of the Commune. With militant songs Pottier spread the revolutionary ideas and spirit of the Paris Commune to awaken the consciousness of the people. Lenin praised Pottier as "one of the greatest propagandists by song."

Twenty of Pottier's poems are included in this selection. Among them are "L'Internationale", "La Commune a passé par là", "Le monument des fédérés", "L'insurgé", "Le mur voilé" and "The Workingmen of America to the Workingmen of France". These fine poems vividly reflect the arduous and heroic revolutionary struggle of the working class in the days of the Paris Commune.

An Exhibition of Chinese Porcelain in Shanghai

Recently the Shanghai Museum organized an exhibition of Chinese porcelain, showing the development and achievements of our ce-

ramic art and industry. The invention of pottery is an important landmark at the beginning of the neolithic culture. Many pieces of ancient pottery excavated show that about six thousand years ago in the matriarchal society of the Yellow River valley, the lower Yangtse valley and the southeast coastal regions of China pottery was already extensively produced and used.

This exhibition also displayed examples of green glazed pottery excavated in different parts of China since the founding of the People's Republic in 1949, as well as early specimens of porcelain dating from more than three thousand years ago in the Shang and Early Chou Dynasties. The porcelain of the North Sung Dynasty (960-1127) was famous throughout the world, especially that produced in Chingtehchen in Kiangsi. The Ming (1368-1644) and Ching (1644-1911) Dynasties saw further development in this traditional art. The blue and white porcelain ware of the Hsuanteh period in the Ming Dynasty was made with a tincture of cobalt oxide on the base, which when fired produced a vivid, sparkling blue very popular in China and abroad.

After Liberation fresh advances were made in the manufacturing technique of Chinese porcelain. Many well-known traditional wares have been revived, and new wares have been invented. A new variety in this exhibition known as "scintillating porcelain" is splendidly distinctive. Today's porcelain has a finer texture than that of the past, and many new works of art combining a national form with socialist content have proved popular favourites.

New Scientific and Educational Documentary Films

Some new documentary films have been made to popularize recent achievements in science and technology in China. The wide range of subjects includes *New Techniques in Metal Pressing*, *New Techniques in Embroidery*, *Synthetic Wool*, *Taming the Desert*, *Introducing a Good Strain of Paddy* and *Removing Coaldust from Chimney Smoke*.

The coloured documentary *Taming the Desert* uses cartoons to show how the people of an Inner Mongolian commune have brought sandy wastes under control and used advanced methods to establish

forest belts and a cattle farm. Another coloured documentary *Introducing a Good Strain of Paddy* shows how to utilize water to grow paddy in a scientific way. *Removing Coaldust from Chimney Smoke* presents effective measures to combat pollution adopted by different industries. These documentaries also highlight the revolutionary spirit of China's workers and peasants, their self-reliance and grit as they work hard day and night to make new machines or brave extremes of heat and cold to tame the desert. These films also give us an idea of the dynamic progress being made on the industrial and agricultural production fronts.

Exhibition of Paintings and Woodcuts in Kwangtung Province

Recently an exhibition of paintings in the traditional style, woodcuts and serial pictures was held in Kwangtung Province. The 382 new works exhibited show the notable results achieved by professional and amateur artists in their endeavour to depict the life of workers, peasants and soldiers and the spirit of the people.

Take for instance the traditional-style painting *Morning at the Vegetable Plot* by a peasant artist Tung Ying-liu. Because of the mechanization of agriculture, this vegetable garden is lush and green despite severe drought — one of the new phenomena of the socialist countryside. The simply executed painting, which impresses us by its freshness, shows a woman commune member using a hose. The woodcut by Liang Chiang-tung *Studying a Foreign Language* depicts some dock workers in a night school who are learning a foreign language with rapt attention, and reflects the widening friendly contacts between Chinese workers and other peoples of the world. Another woodcut *The Seething Building Site* by a factory worker Chu Yi-min shows an old worker rolling up his apron and gazing eagerly ahead as he delivers food to the building site. His love for his job and his whole-hearted devotion to socialist construction are clearly apparent, while his image blends into one harmonious whole with the busy background scene. Another woodcut *Tending Rice Shoots* by Wang Wei-pao depicts a young peasant girl attentively inspecting rice shoots, giving a simple and spirited portrayal of her single-minded devo-

tion to the commune. Yeh Chih-hung's wood-block print in Chinese ink *Sending Operatic Shows to the Island* presents some young stage artists going to perform on an offshore island. They have just landed on the island and the local fishing-folk are coming to carry their luggage for them, showing the deep friendship which exists between our artists and the people. Yeh Chih-hung has made use of the special features of wood-block prints to depict the glimmering waves, the morning mist and the sandy beach ribbed by the tide. These exhibits indicate that fine work is being done by the artists, young and old, of Kwangtung Province.



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