



The Making of a Peasant Doctor

Yang Hsiao

THIS is a short novel describing the growth of a "barefoot doctor" in China's countryside. Such rural medical workers, who farm as well as prevent and cure disease (in south China, where they originated, they work barefoot in the paddy-fields), are a product of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution and, from the very first, have been welcomed wholeheartedly by the masses of China's peasants.

The young "barefoot doctor," Hung-yu, educated by Mao Tsetung Thought, is keen on improving his skill, determined to serve his fellow villagers heart and mind, and brave in fighting the class enemy. The story gives warm praise to the great victory of Chairman Mao's revolutionary line in medicine.

The events of the story stand out vividly, presenting a true-to-life picture of China's countryside today.

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Erratum

The last line on p. 1
should appear as the
first line on p. 3.

CHAPTER I

The Old Stonemason Falls Ill

SPRING. The Five-Dragon Mountains have taken on a new appearance. High above in the clear blue sky wild geese are on the wing, heading northward and honking noisily as they fly in formation. In the broad valley below the ice has melted into streams that glitter like silver as they flow. Tender green shoots have burgeoned from crevices in the earth on the mountain slopes, while clusters of tiny buds are showing on the peach, apricot, pear and crab-apple trees. Everywhere, as far as the eye can see, red flags flutter in the breeze. The commune members are at work in the terraced fields. They are ploughing, levelling the land, or applying fertilizer, their picks and spades flying, ploughshares gleaming in the sunshine, whips cracking over the draught animals' ears. From the distance comes the sound of blasting. It is from a water conservancy work site where the mountains are being tunnelled through to make way for an irrigation canal.

On the sunny side of the slope five giant characters formed of bright pebbles attract special attention even from miles away. They say: "In agriculture, learn from Tachai."

Indeed, the people's communes throughout the country are two big bags of dynamite bought at the commune co-op for

learning from Tachai.* Here, as elsewhere, the countryside seethes with activity as men and women, old and young, grasp revolution and promote production. An invigorating revolutionary atmosphere prevails.

Our story takes place exactly in such a time as this.

It was late in the afternoon and the winding mountain road was bathed by the setting sun. A rubber-tyred donkey cart was going along the road towards the village. The carters were two young boys. One, in his mid-teens, wore a cotton jacket buttoned in the front and an old padded cap of the same cloth. He was ruddy-faced, with large black eyes and heavy eyebrows. A smile played round the corners of his mouth. He was always smiling, in fact, because many things made him happy. A glance was enough to give one the impression of intelligence and alertness. The other boy was twelve or thirteen, rosy and sturdy, with a round face, bright eyes and full lips. He must have walked a long distance, for to cool off he had taken off his old blue cloth padded cap, and he now held it in his hand. As he walked, he kept kicking playfully at the pebbles that came under his feet.

Both boys were members of Date Tree Slope Brigade of Redstone Valley People's Commune. The older boy's name was Hung-yu, and the younger was called Little Shun.

Swinging his whip, Hung-yu was urging the donkey on, while the animal was switching its tail and doing its best. The cart creaked and rattled over the rough road.

On the cart were loaded several spades, picks, chisels and

* A production brigade in Shansi Province. Self-reliant and hard-working, the former poor and lower-middle peasants there turned rocky hills into fertile land and have ensured bumper harvests every year. The "Tachai spirit" is spreading throughout China's countryside.

use at the water conservancy construction site. The digging of the irrigation canal had been going on for some time, more than half of the channel that would skirt the mountain mid-way having been finished during the winter. With the commune members working day and night with such enthusiasm it was estimated that the whole project would be completed before another autumn. Once the sluice gate in the main channel north of the village was opened and the water from Redstone Ridge Reservoir flowed down the winding channel into the terraced fields of Date Tree Slope's eastern hill, what fertile land it would make those terraced fields!

Hung-yu and Little Shun were also doing their share towards the building of this irrigation canal. From the very beginning Hung-yu had been working like a little apprentice under "Grandpa Stonemason," as they called him. Throughout the winter Hung-yu had worked from early morning till evening, cutting quite a number of stone slabs with a small hammer and a chisel. The commune members were pleased and, thinking of him as a good successor to Grandpa Stonemason, fondly called him the "junior master stonemason." Hung-yu took these as words of encouragement, and worked even harder than before. He was glad to be Grandpa Stonemason's apprentice, but how could he be called "junior master stonemason"? Certainly, only such a person as Grandpa Stonemason deserved the title "master." Grandpa was over sixty and suffered from chronic bronchitis, yet he did his work like a healthy young man. His deft hands could cut a rock into any shape and chisel the most intricate designs into it. The old stonemason was the "engineer-in-chief" and the "commander-in-chief" of the irrigation project, without whom the work would not have been done so quickly or so well. As for Little Shun, he was too young to qualify as an

apprentice and, also, he had to go to school. So it was only on Sundays and after school on weekdays that he could join Hung-yu, bringing with him some of the Little Red Guards of whom he was the squad leader. The little boys would carry rock in baskets or do whatever jobs they could. They went about their work with such enthusiasm and delight that the commune members agreed that the Little Red Guards definitely did their share in building the irrigation canal.

It was Sunday. The Party branch secretary asked Hung-yu to go to the commune co-op to transport a few things needed at the construction site. As Little Shun did not have to go to school, he went with Hung-yu, his very good friend, with the donkey cart. In their load would be explosives, no child's play to transport! Though the Party branch secretary had entrusted the job to Hung-yu, Little Shun's father, who was the brigade leader, was a bit upset about it. Could the boys get the load safely back? But events proved his worry unwarranted, for the boys were very conscientious and had determined to do the job well so as to put the brigade leader's mind at ease.

Besides picking up the things from the co-op, the boys had to call at the commune clinic to collect a prescription for the old stonemason, who had overworked and fallen ill. The Party secretary and the brigade leader had wanted to send him to the county hospital or at least the commune clinic, but the old man refused to go. "This is a rush job. How can I leave it?" he had said. And so Hung-yu was on no account to forget about the medicine. Now that both jobs were done, the boys felt very happy and there was no end to their chatter as they drove the cart home to deliver the things.

"Brother Hung-yu," said Little Shun, craning his neck to peer at the distant mountains, "do you think those two big bags of dynamite are enough to bring down that peak which



looks like a cock's comb?"

"No doubt about it," replied Hung-yu, swinging his whip. Those two bags of dynamite will blow that Cock's Comb Peak sky high!"

"Well," rejoined Little Shun, his eyes flashing, "if they do, we'll use the rock to build our stone bridge. Do you think it'll be enough?"

"More than enough," replied Hung-yu cracking his whip so that the donkey went faster.

"Brother Hung-yu," Little Shun continued as he ran a few steps to catch up with the cart, "do you think we can finish the canal ahead of time?"

"No doubt about it. At least two months ahead." Another crack of the whip seemed to indicate Hung-yu's confidence that the project would be finished sooner than planned. What with the personal direction of Grandpa Stonemason and the drive of the commune members, it would indeed be surprising if the project was not finished much sooner.

But Little Shun had another question: "Brother Hung-yu, do you think if our terraced fields on the eastern hill get enough water, we'll get a thousand *jin* to the *mu**?"

"No doubt about it," answered Hung-yu with the same assured phrase. "With plenty of fertilizer, enough water and good management, why, we'll get more than a thousand *jin*."

"Wonderful!" exclaimed Little Shun. "Then our brigade will have piles and piles of grain!"

The two boys talked on and on, the donkey pulling the cart along behind, till soon they came to the edge of the village.

"Hey, Hung-yu! Little Shun! Where are you going with that donkey cart?" came a voice hailing them from a distance.

The boys looked up and saw beneath an old elm tree by

* One *jin* = 0.5 kg. or 1.1 lbs.; one *mu* = 1/15 hectare or 1/6 acre.

the roadside a man known as Lame Sun, the third son of Big-Head Sun, a landlord and local tyrant who had been executed during the land reform for his many crimes against the people. Before liberation Big-Head Sun owned some eight hectares of land and exploited the labour of dozens of farm hands. He was also the proprietor of the traditional medicine shop in Redstone Valley Town fifteen *li** from Date Tree Slope Village, a position Lame Sun had taken over. This man was about fifty years old, lanky, humpbacked, waxen-faced, with pale eyes and wisps of moustache sticking out. While his two elder brothers were designated as landlords, Lame Sun had not been, since he was mainly concerned with the business side of the pharmacy, although he too had committed crimes against the people.

While Lame Sun was managing the medicine shop, he learned a bit about medicine and could, after a fashion, write prescriptions, apply needles and also give some advice to the sick. Date Tree Slope being an outlying place with scarcely a doctor around, people often consulted him. Now Lame Sun was by no means a doctor, but rather a quack who was only interested in the fees and gifts he got from his patients. In fact, a lot of his doctoring was witchcraft, pure and simple. When he was caught by Hung-yu and a few others during the past winter using sorcery on a patient, he was severely reprimanded at a mass meeting. After that the neighbouring villages all knew what kind of a "doctor" he was and very few people went to him for treatment.

Hung-yu and Little Shun heartily disliked Lame Sun and found him terribly annoying. Now, when he called out to them, they pretended not to hear, and went on their way.

Lame Sun yelled again, and again the boys paid no at-

* One *li* = 1/2 km. or 1/3 mile.

ention, Hung-yu cracking his whip to urge the donkey on while Little Shun kicked at the pebbles in his way as if they were so many Lame Suns.

"Hung-yu! Little Shun! Wait a minute. Give me a hand!"

The cart had already reached the man, who put out his hand to stop it. The boys could no longer pretend, so Hung-yu reined in and the cart drew to a stop.

"What do you want?" demanded Hung-yu, very irritated.

"It's . . . it's this," stuttered the man forcing a smile which bared his ugly teeth. "Help me carry this home." He pointed at a large bundle of firewood under the elm tree.

Only then did Hung-yu and Little Shun notice the bundle. They also noticed the chopper stuck in the man's belt. Lame Sun had been cutting branches from the trees on the hills.

Hung-yu and Little Shun would have been only too glad to help any other commune member to load the bundle onto the cart and deliver it to his door. But it was a different matter with Lame Sun.

"Nothing doing!" blurted out Little Shun without waiting for Hung-yu to answer.

But Lame Sun was brazen enough to try to wheedle the boys into taking his firewood home. "Why not? Help me out, won't you?" he pleaded.

"We mean what we say," Hung-yu replied. "It's too big a load for the little donkey."

"Ridiculous!" chided Lame Sun, grinning villainously. "Your load can't be more than two hundred *jin*. My bundle won't make it more than three hundred. Why, that donkey of yours is good for at least five hundred *jin*!"

Hung-yu eyed Sun meaningfully. "My cart is for the use of the collective, not to carry firewood for you. For the collective it'll stand a thousand *jin* if need be, but for you it

won't take an extra ounce!"

"That's right. Even if the cart can stand the extra load it won't do it for you," Little Shun emphasized.

Before Lame Sun could reply to that, Hung-yu suddenly demanded, "Why aren't you working at the construction site?"

"Oh, you still don't know?" said Sun rolling his pale, yellowish eyes. "The work's stopped."

"What? Stopped?" the boys said in surprise.

"That's it." A fleeting expression of satisfaction came over the man's face. Then quickly he put on a pretence of extreme concern for the welfare of the collective. "Yes, work stopped at noon today. We're all very worried."

"Why did the work stop?" asked Hung-yu.

"The old stonemason is sick, very sick. Isn't it too bad!" And Lame Sun sighed.

"Grandpa Stonemason is sick?" repeated Hung-yu and Little Shun in alarm.

"That's it. And just at a critical time in our construction work too. It's a shame!" Lame Sun knew very well how attached Hung-yu and Little Shun were to the old stonemason. He knew also how concerned they were for the irrigation project. So he thought that by expressing deep solicitude for the stonemason he might make the two boys change their minds about taking the firewood home for him.

But he miscalculated, for the boys saw through his scheme. Hung-yu cracked his whip and, giving Sun a sharp look, said, "Grandpa Stonemason will soon be well and our construction work will start up again. No one should take it easy because of other people's misfortunes!"

Lame Sun knew the remark was meant for him. But, brzening it out, he kept on pretending. "Right you are," he said. "How I hope the old stonemason gets well soon! Then we can go on building the canal right away. The brigade

leader asked me to go to see him, and I really wanted to do my best to cure him. But can you imagine? He was so stubborn as to refuse to let me see him. . . ."

"Of course he wouldn't let you see him," put in Little Shun.

"But where can you find another doctor around here? There's only me," said Lame Sun, looking very pleased at the idea.

"We can go farther away to get one," came back Hung-yu with an angry look. "Anyway, we don't need a witch doctor like you!"

"Now, Hung-yu, don't keep rubbing it in," said Lame Sun, for the first time looking genuinely ill at ease. "I know that was wrong. But since that big meeting when you severely criticized me I've mended my ways. Isn't that so?"

"Brother Hung-yu, let's get going and not waste our time talking to him," said Little Shun impatiently.

"Right!" answered Hung-yu. And, cracking his whip again, he started the cart and they were on their way, leaving the charlatan who kept begging for help behind. For, if Grandpa Stonemason was very sick, how could they afford to waste their breath on a person like Lame Sun!

Another crack of the whip and the boys with the donkey cart were soon out of sight. Lame Sun sat down on a rock and, taking a cigarette and lighter from his pocket, started to smoke. "Hm!" said he to himself, "you kids needn't be so cock-sure. The old stonemason's really sick and sooner or later you'll have to ask me to see him. Just you wait!" Lame Sun gave a mocking laugh as he drew hard at his cigarette.

A crow alighted on a withered twig and cawed. Lame Sun gazed at the bird, seeming to have found a sympathizer. Thrilled at the thought, he took another long draw at his cigarette, puffed out the smoke and gave a heehaw.

CHAPTER 2

At the County Hospital

HUNG-YU and Little Shun hurried home with the cart. At the edge of the village they met Chun-hung, the brigade's accountant and secretary of the Communist Youth League branch. "What made you so late getting back?" she asked.

"The man in charge of the co-op stores was out and we couldn't get the dynamite. We waited for hours," explained Hung-yu. "But is Grandpa Stonemason sick again? Very sick?"

"I'm afraid so. Have you got his medicine?"

"Yes, here," said Little Shun.

"Good. Give it to me, quick! We've been waiting for it. Our brigade leader asked Lame Sun to see Grandpa Stonemason, but grandpa refused to be seen by that quack."

Hung-yu handed the medicine to Chun-hung, who said, "Our Party branch secretary is out and our brigade leader is very worried about grandpa. He's asked me to take money from the accounting office to send him to the county hospital." With that Chun-hung took the medicine and left.

Hung-yu and Little Shun went with the cart to the brigade storeroom where they unloaded it. Two commune members were twisting hemp cord on a hand-wheel and discussing Grandpa Stonemason's illness.

"A few days ago," one of them said, "when he wasn't feel-

ing well, our Party secretary and the brigade leader wanted him to see a doctor. But the old man wouldn't listen."

"Of course not," the other rejoined. "His whole mind is on the irrigation project."

"That's just it."

"It was already very late when they knocked off yesterday, but after everybody else had turned in he went back to the construction site and worked on the night shift too. No wonder he's sick again."

"There's no stopping him. . . ."

After Hung-yu and Little Shun had finished unloading and had taken the donkey to the stall to be fed, they went straight to see the old stonemason without even going home first.

They had only to enter the courtyard to hear grandpa coughing and wheezing. Hurrying into his room they found him wrapped in one quilt and propped up against a pile of others. Racked with a bad cough, he was suffering from an attack of bronchitis that made breathing very hard.

Many people were there tending him. Chun-hung held a bowl of water for him to drink, but after taking a few mouthfuls a fit of coughing brought it all up again.

The brigade leader, Uncle Huai, was pacing the floor, extremely worried.

"Has he taken the medicine?" asked Hung-yu of Chun-hung as soon as he was inside the room.

"Yes, he took it, but he couldn't keep it down."

When the old stonemason saw Hung-yu and Little Shun, he was pleased and tried to speak. "The dynamite . . ." he managed to say before being seized again by a fit of coughing.

Hung-yu knew what was worrying Grandpa Stonemason, so he said, "We've brought back the dynamite, as much as we asked for. We've put it in the storeroom."

The old stonemason nodded.

Dusk fell, and someone lighted the kerosene lamp. Grandpa's face looked pale in the lamplight, the muscles drawn, the veins in his neck and temples distended.

The brigade leader suddenly stopped pacing the floor, swung his arm and said, "This won't do! We must send him to the hospital."

"Right! Let's take him in immediately!" the others joined in.

But Grandpa Stonemason still shook his head. Between fits of coughing he managed to say, "No . . . no . . . It's an old trouble. . . . No need of going to hospital. . . . It costs too much. . . ."

"You needn't worry about that, old uncle," said the brigade leader. "We have our welfare fund now."

"But . . . our brigade . . . is not very well off yet. Better use the welfare money where it is most needed. I'll be all right . . . in a few days," gasped out the old stonemason.

"Not at all," replied Uncle Huai. "It's true our brigade isn't rich, but we can't skimp when it comes to medical care for our poor and lower-middle peasants."

"Our brigade leader is right," agreed the other commune members present.

"Chun-hung, you and the others stay here. We'll go and get a stretcher to carry him," said the brigade leader, then left the room with a few young men.

Soon they were back. The stretcher they had was one leaf of a wooden gate with a strong cord tied at each end for a pole to be run through for carrying the patient. When a cotton mattress had been spread on and grandpa laid on that with his quilt tucked round, Uncle Huai said, "Let's go." They were about to go out the door with it when Hung-yu made his way to the head of the stretcher and said to one of the young men carrying it, "Brother Yu-chu, let me."

"You can't carry it. Get out of the way!" ordered Uncle Huai without waiting for the young man to answer for himself.

"Why can't I carry it? I'm plenty strong," insisted Hung-yu.

"You're not big enough. You couldn't hold it steady."

Hung-yu looked at the young men carrying the stretcher and, sure enough, all of them were at least a head taller than he. "Anyway, I'll go along," he said.

The brigade leader disagreed. "We've got enough carriers already," he said.

"Maybe I can help."

"You stay here," said the brigade leader, and with that they shouldered the stretcher and left the room.

Hung-yu and Little Shun followed behind, still hoping for a chance to go with them, as they were worried about grandpa. Little Shun didn't say anything after seeing how Hung-yu's request was turned down flat. But Hung-yu was thinking hard to find an excuse for going. Suddenly he thought of one when they got out into the courtyard. "Uncle Huai," said Hung-yu, "it'll be pretty dark on the way. I'll go and get a hurricane lamp to light your way."

That did it. "All right," agreed Uncle Huai and, with the brigade leader having given his consent, Hung-yu was satisfied. Little Shun, however, could find no excuse though he thought very hard, and had to be content to remain behind.

Hung-yu ran to the stable and got the hurricane lantern, lighted it, and rushed out to overtake the stretcher-bearers. When he caught up with them, they were already at the edge of the village. He ran on ahead of them so as to lead and light the way.

It was early spring, but the night air was still very chilly. There was no moon; only stars twinkled in the sky. The

trees swayed and rustled in the wind. The hurricane lamp did not give out much light, so that the rugged mountain path was difficult to follow. Still the brigade leader and the other stretcher-bearers hurried along, the brigade leader now and then cautioning, "Steady! Steady there!"

It was some twenty *li* to the county town—a good two hours' trek to the hospital over such rough ground in the dark.

As Hung-yu walked ahead of the stretcher lighting the way, he could hear the old stonemason coughing incessantly. From time to time he would turn to look at the sick man being borne along on the stretcher. How it hurt him to see the old man suffering so from an illness which he heard had resulted from bad treatment in the old society at the hands of the local despot, Big-Head Sun. . . .

That was more than thirty years ago. Grandpa Stonemason had already become well known throughout the neighbouring villages as a skilled stone carver. Whatever stone came under his chisel, it ended up in lifelike figures, whether of fish, birds, or flowers. One had no trouble imagining them swimming, flying, or spreading perfume. One winter Big-Head Sun decided to erect a stone arch of "mercy and benevolence" and ordered grandpa to do the work. At that time Grandpa Stonemason was Big-Head Sun's long-term hired hand, and he could not refuse. So, day and night for three months he chipped and chiselled away under the watchful eyes of Big-Head Sun's stooges. When all was finished except for the characters at the top of the arch, grandpa fell seriously ill. Still Big-Head Sun would not let him rest, because he wanted the arch to be completed before a certain "lucky day." So, sick as he was, grandpa had to go on chipping and chiselling. He was to cut four big characters: "great mercy" and "great benevolence," but in his anger he deliberately

chiselled an extra stroke at the right upper corner of each of the "great" characters, changing them into "dog." The additions were cut out very shallow and might have escaped notice at a cursory glance. But the cunning Big-Head Sun was on the look-out for such things and when he saw "dog's mercy" and "dog's benevolence" on the arch, he flew into a rage and had grandpa beaten to within an inch of his life. Then that local tyrant Sun ordered the sick man to carve the whole top of the arch again. Unable to stand such persecution any longer, Grandpa Stonemason thought of revenge. That very night he went to Big-Head Sun's house and waited at the front door till the local despot appeared, then he struck him over the head with his hammer. Grandpa's blow was so mighty that it sent Big-Head Sun sprawling dazed onto the ground. . . . Grandpa fled into the mountains, running until he fell exhausted on a rock. . . .

Not long afterwards grandpa was found by Communist guerrillas, who revived him. Later, he joined the guerrillas and became their cook. But his cough remained to trouble him throughout the years. . . .

Hung-yu's heart ached to hear Grandpa Stonemason cough and gasp. Could he stand the long hard trip? How good it would be if the hospital were only in Date Tree Slope! Of course it couldn't be as big as the county hospital, or a hospital at all. But Date Tree Slope should at least have a clinic or a health centre where the sick could be treated without having to be carried over difficult mountain paths to the county hospital. Hung-yu was thinking all this to himself.

When they finally reached the county town, it was already late at night and the streets were deserted. The only light came from the street lamps shining high above on the electric poles.

After crossing a bridge and the intersection with the main

street, they arrived at the hospital gate, which they found bolted. At their call an old man came out to open the gate and accompany the patient and his bearers to the emergency room. But the door was closed and there was no light in the room. The old man did not know whether there was anyone inside.

"Dr. Sang's on duty tonight," he said, "but there have been no emergencies and he may have gone to sleep. You had better wake him up."

Uncle Huai, the brigade leader, then knocked at the door, calling, "Doctor! Doctor! There's an emergency patient."

It was some time before a light came on in the room and another several minutes before a doctor finally opened the door.

He looked about thirty, tall and unshaven. He had put on his heavy, black-rimmed glasses and was in a doctor's white coat. He looked somewhat annoyed as he came out of the room. "What's wrong?" he asked. "What's all the fuss about?"

"Our patient's coughing and wheezing very badly," explained Uncle Huai. "Please examine him right away, doctor."

"Bring him in then." And the doctor went back into the room.

Uncle Huai squatted down so that Hung-yu and the others could help Grandpa Stonemason onto his back. Then he carried him into the emergency room and placed him on the examination table.

The old stonemason had been coughing continuously.

The doctor walked over to the table, looked at the patient and said as though giving a command, "Open up his jacket."

Hung-yu and the others quickly undid the buttons. And only then did the doctor take the stethoscope down from the wall and listen to the patient's chest. Then he said, "This is common in old people—chronic bronchitis, pulmonary

emphysema. Nothing to get excited about."

"But doctor," retorted Uncle Huai, "he's very sick. Don't you think he ought to stay in the hospital for treatment?"

"No need of that," said the doctor finally. "There's no cure for his sickness even if he's hospitalized. I'll give you some medicine for him and you can take him back home."

The old stonemason's already pale face turned paper-white at the attitude of this doctor, and his breathing became even more laboured. Throwing up his hands, he managed to say, "Let's go back. . . . I don't want any medical treatment!"

"How can we go back?" asked Uncle Huai, wondering what they were to do. "We've come quite a distance . . . and we have no doctor in our production brigade." He turned to the doctor and continued, "The patient is an old poor peasant of our brigade. And, doctor, we've carried him a long way from our village. Please let him stay in the hospital. . . ."

The doctor cut in, "Didn't I tell you that there's no cure for his illness even in the hospital? If you sent him to Tientsin, or Peking—anywhere—they couldn't do anything for him, to say nothing of here at this one-horse county hospital."

Hung-yu's dissatisfaction with the doctor's attitude mounted. If not for some remaining hope that Grandpa Stonemason would be admitted to the hospital, he would have given the doctor a piece of his mind long before this.

The old stonemason had another fit of coughing and, though he tried to say something, was unable to make himself understood.

Uncle Huai patiently asked the doctor again and again to admit the patient, and the doctor again and again refused. "I told you there's no need of it!" he said coldly, and turned to leave.

Hung-yu could stand it no longer. He stepped forward, looked the doctor in the eye and stated, "At first you said it's

nothing. Then you said there's no cure. Now, tell me, is he in danger or not?"

The doctor was surprised by this sudden barrage of pointed questions and paused a moment before answering. "That . . . well, I really can't say."

"Is this the way you treat the poor and lower-middle peasants?" shouted Hung-yu, his face flaming with indignation.

Looking on Hung-yu as a mere child who dared to challenge the dignity of a professional person, Dr. Sang flew into a rage and answered shortly, "It is."

"So! We poor and lower-middle peasants needn't depend on you for medical treatment!" retorted Hung-yu. And with that he stormed out of the room.

"Where are you going, Hung-yu?" shouted Uncle Huai after him.

Hung-yu did not answer and was soon lost to view.

Dr. Sang was puffing with anger, while Grandpa Stonemason coughed harder and was unable to get out a word. One of the young men began to pat him gently on the back to ease his spasms.

Uncle Huai, fearing the fat was in the fire, began in his mind to blame Hung-yu for being so blunt. Why had he let the boy come anyway? "Doctor," said he in a conciliatory tone, "don't take it so to heart. After all he's just a boy." Uncle Huai paused for a moment and then requested again, "Please admit the patient."

The doctor was sitting in his chair in stony silence. Uncle Huai, extremely upset, was rubbing his hands together nervously.

The nurse on duty had seen what had happened and was also unhappy about the doctor's behaviour. "Dr. Sang," she intervened, "it's a serious case. You'd better do something right away."

"What can we do, in this puny hospital in a mountain gully!" he snapped.

Suddenly the door opened and in came Hung-yu, followed by a middle-aged man. The doctor turned to see who it was and immediately stood up. "Ah, Chairman Li!" said he, addressing the man.

Hung-yu had gone straight to find the chairman of the hospital revolutionary committee, Dr. Li. In his forties, Dr. Li was of medium build, with a rather long face, dark bushy eyebrows and deep-set eyes that had a twinkle in them. He was still buttoning his white coat as he entered the room. Hung-yu had got him out of bed.

The old stonemason was more uncomfortable than ever after the strenuous trip to the hospital and experiencing the arrogant attitude of Dr. Sang.

Dr. Li examined the patient immediately, listening carefully to his chest and back with the stethoscope. "It's an acute attack of bronchitis," said Dr. Li, ordering emergency treatment. He at once wrote out a prescription and handed it to the nurse with the instruction: "Give him the first injection immediately."

Dr. Sang edged up, very awkwardly, to the hospital revolutionary committee chairman, where Hung-yu gave him a stern look, thinking to give him a good ticking-off. But, preoccupied with what was being done for grandpa, he kept silent.

The nurse next started a glucose infusion for the patient, and after about an hour grandpa began to feel better.

Dr. Li never left the sick old man, nor did Uncle Huai and Hung-yu. Day was dawning. The patient had fallen asleep. Dr. Li made another check-up, then smiled. "He's out of danger," he announced, to everyone's relief.

"Dr. Li," said Uncle Huai very much moved, "how can I

ever thank you!"

Hung-yu, happy and smiling, joined in, "Thank you, Dr. Li. I'm sorry we kept you up the whole night."

"Why should you thank me?" Dr. Li replied smiling. "This is what we're here for. But I'm afraid we haven't done very well. You should criticize us." The revolutionary committee chairman paused and then added, "He has a chronic illness and it would be difficult to cure it completely. But if your village doctors will give him attention as soon as he has symptoms of recurrence, it won't develop into such a serious condition."

"We have one doctor in our village, but grandpa won't let the man see him," said Uncle Huai.

"Why not?"

"Hum! That quack!" put in Hung-yu. "He's not one of us. He doesn't cure the sick but only tries to swindle money out of them. He goes so far as to practise witchcraft!"

"That kind of person won't do to look after the health of the poor and lower-middle peasants," commented Dr. Li. "Chairman Mao says: **'In medical and health work, put the stress on the rural areas.'** What we ought to do is establish a health service network in the villages and train doctors from among the poor and lower-middle peasants. We're going to start a training class for 'barefoot doctors'* for our county very soon."

Hung-yu had read a lot in the papers about barefoot doctors, and when he heard there would be a training class, he was excited and exclaimed, "Really?" Then, very seriously, he asked, "Dr. Li, do you think I can be a barefoot doctor?"

* A "barefoot doctor" is a peasant who has had basic medical training and gives treatment without leaving productive work. The name originated in south China where peasants work barefoot in the paddy-fields.

"Why not?" replied Dr. Li, smiling at this boy who was so full of enthusiasm.

"Then I'll be sure to come when you start the training class. I'll learn to be a barefoot doctor!" Hung-yu was fairly jumping for joy.

"Good!" said the committee chairman. Then, standing up, he added, "The patient will stay in the hospital for a few days — at most a week. One of you should stay here with him. The rest can go back. It's spring sowing time and you must be very busy, especially since we're all learning from Tachai."

"That's right," said Uncle Huai.

"I've another patient who needs attention," said Dr. Li, and left the room. It was decided that Yu-chu should stay to look after grandpa and get in touch with the brigade if need be. But again, when everyone else was getting ready to start back, Hung-yu was nowhere to be found. They waited, and only after some time did he come dashing back with a piece of paper in his hand.

"Where on earth have you been?" asked the brigade leader, Uncle Huai. "We've been looking high and low for you."

"I went to the nursing office, got a piece of paper, borrowed a brush and ink and wrote a big-character poster."

Hung-yu unfolded the sheet of paper in his hand. On it he had written two verses:

1

Dr. Li is socialist-minded,
And serves the people wholeheartedly.
With deep proletarian feeling
He treats his patients like his own folk.
He's a good doctor of the people,
Deeply attached to the poor and lower-middle peasants.

2

Dr. Sang, he's a problem,
His head's full of bourgeois ideas.
Without a trace of proletarian feeling,

He cares not a pin about his patients' pains.
If you keep on acting like this, Dr. Sang,
You're sure to end up in the soup!

*Chang Hung-yu, poor-peasant member
of Date Tree Slope Production Brigade*

Everybody laughed heartily.

"Well written!" shouted Yu-chu. "You've taken the words right out of our mouths. Come on, let's post it up." And so Hung-yu and Yu-chu went out together and pasted the big-character poster outside the hospital gate.

CHAPTER 3

Who's to Be the Barefoot Doctor?

WITH Grandpa Stonemason sick in the hospital and the Party branch secretary away for a meeting at commune headquarters, the only responsible person left in the production brigade was Uncle Huai.

Uncle Huai was a steady, conscientious person with strength enough to shoulder any heavy task. While others reaped four furrows of wheat, Uncle Huai reaped eight; if others carried one bag of grain at a time, he carried two. He could wield an eighteen-pound hammer two hundred and fifty times without stopping. When he ploughed the fields his furrows were as straight as the lines on a carpenter's drawing, and when hoeing he left no weed but never touched the crops. His winnowing of wheat resulted in grain, husk and chaff each settling in its own separate pile regardless of the direction of the wind! The brigade recognized Uncle Huai as second only to the Party branch secretary and the old stonemason in production skill. Uncle Huai was good at farm management, too. In this busy spring sowing time, with so much work to be done in the fields—manuring, ploughing, sowing, irrigating the winter wheat—this production brigade leader coordinated the work perfectly, to the great satisfaction of the commune members.

And so now, as soon as Uncle Huai was back from the

hospital, he consulted with the Party secretary by phone concerning the work to be done. This was soon assigned and got under way.

On the construction site the work of tunnelling for the irrigation canal had come to the stage when a stone bridge had to be put up over a mountain gully. It required the building of arches, work which no one in the brigade could do except Grandpa Stonemason. But grandpa was laid up in the hospital. What were they to do? In order not to hold up the work, Uncle Huai thought of a way. He asked the other stonemasons to cut the stone according to specifications which Grandpa Stonemason had already made so that the arches could be built as soon as grandpa was well.

Once again Hung-yu found work to do on the construction site. He took up his small hammer and got busy chiselling. He was used to sitting next to grandpa and learning the work from him, and he missed the old stonemason now. What was he doing in the hospital? Perhaps the nurse was giving him an injection, or Dr. Li was writing out another prescription for him. And when Hung-yu pictured these scenes in his mind, he was filled with joy and pride. Surely, with such a fine doctor tending him, Grandpa Stonemason would soon recover and be back to work with them. At this thought Hung-yu wielded his hammer still more energetically.

But could Grandpa Stonemason be completely cured? Hung-yu remembered what Dr. Li had said about grandpa's illness being chronic and stubborn, that if they had doctors in their village who would look after the patient as soon as his symptoms reappeared, it wouldn't develop into such a serious condition. How true this was! Date Tree Slope should have doctors of its own. Then, not only the old stonemason, but the other poor and lower-middle peasants as well could have prompt medical care. As it was, they had the alternative of

Lame Sun's cures or none at all, unless they travelled some fifteen or twenty *li* to the commune clinic or county hospital. This meant much time away from their work in the fields. At the previous spring corn-planting time, a dry season when each seedling required watering by hand, many able-bodied commune members were laid up with the flu. No matter how hard the others worked, with the Party branch secretary and brigade leader out front, the entire acreage could not be sown on time. The result was that before some twenty *mu* of corn was ripe, there was frost, and the grains never grew to full size. The commune members placed the blame for this on the flu. "If we'd had a doctor in our brigade," Hung-yu said to himself, "the influenza epidemic would have been nipped in the bud."

Hung-yu thought too of Dr. Li's quoting Chairman Mao: "**In medical and health work, put the stress on the rural areas.**" He thought also of his good news that they were setting up a health service network in the villages and would train barefoot doctors for the county from the ranks of the poor and lower-middle peasants! Hung-yu had already made up his mind to study and become a barefoot doctor.

What motivated Hung-yu was not personal considerations but the necessity of having doctors who would serve the poor and lower-middle peasants. He could not forget Lame Sun's taunting words about his being the only doctor around, and the arrogant way he said it, as if the peasants couldn't do without him! Hung-yu said to himself, "To hell with his wishful calculations! We poor and lower-middle peasants are out to transform heaven and earth. Why can't we be doctors and cure our own illnesses?"

The thought of these future prospects filled the boy with enthusiasm and, as he chiselled away, sparks flew from beneath his hammer.

The ringing of a bicycle bell suddenly took Hung-yu's attention to a young man riding on the hilly path to the construction site. It was Young Wang, the commune's courier and Hung-yu's good friend. "Hey, where are you going, Young Wang?" asked Hung-yu.

Young Wang stopped his bicycle and got off at once. "Hi, Hung-yu," he said. "Still chiselling rock? You're pretty good at it by now, aren't you?" As he walked his bicycle up to Hung-yu, he said, "I've brought your production brigade a notice."

"What about?" Hung-yu inquired.

"Our county's going to open a training class for barefoot doctors. Your brigade is asked to send someone to study there."

Hung-yu was overjoyed. "Where's the notice? Let me see it."

"I've already given it to your brigade leader."

"Where is he?"

"In his office. When I left there he was discussing the spring sowing by phone with commune headquarters," said Young Wang.

"I must go and see him," Hung-yu said, sticking his hammer and chisel into his belt.

"What for?" asked Young Wang curiously.

"Because I want to be a barefoot doctor!" replied Hung-yu, who dashed away and was soon out of sight.

Uncle Huai had the notice in his hand and was thinking over who should be sent. It wouldn't be a bad idea at all, he thought, for their brigade to have its own barefoot doctor. Those who fell ill wouldn't have to be sent so far away to the commune clinic or county hospital. It would save a lot of needed labour for the field work. But could a barefoot

doctor handle the more serious cases? The notice said the training course would be for only two months. What could one learn in two months! Treating the sick was no child's play; it often meant the life or death of the patient. The choice of whom to send must be very carefully considered. Who would it be? Uncle Huai thought and thought but could not settle on anyone. And whoever was going would have to be at the county hospital the very next morning! He phoned again to the Party branch secretary, who, however, was out. There was nothing for Uncle Huai to do but wait for him to return.

But Uncle Huai had no sooner put down the receiver than Hung-yu dashed in breathless and perspiring. "Uncle Huai, let me go to study," he said while swiping his sweaty forehead with the back of his hand.

The brigade leader was puzzled. "Go where, to study what?" he asked with a broad smile.

"To the county town, to study medicine — be a barefoot doctor, of course," said Hung-yu bluntly.

"You . . . ?" began the surprised brigade leader. Then he stopped and just looked at the boy. It was apparent that Hung-yu had not been among those he was considering sending to the training class.

Hung-yu saw this and was beginning to feel worried. "Didn't I tell the hospital revolutionary committee chairman last night that I wanted to study to be a barefoot doctor when the training class started?" reminded Hung-yu. "Now the notice has come, hasn't it?"

"How do you know it's come?" the brigade leader asked in reply.

"I know all right. Young Wang told me. He said he'd given the notice to you."

"You're certainly well informed," said the brigade leader with a smile.

"Now, Uncle Huai," persisted Hung-yu, "you're the brigade leader and I want you to let me go. Will you?"

The brigade leader had a very high opinion of Hung-yu, who was keen, resourceful and hard-working, devoted to the collective and always willing to take on any difficult job. But after all, Hung-yu was scarcely more than a child, a mere fledgling. Could he shoulder the responsible tasks of a barefoot doctor? He was not sure.

Hung-yu grew anxious when the brigade leader said nothing, and stated his request again. "Uncle Huai, hurry up and tell me whether I can go or not!"

"No, then."

"Why not?"

"You haven't the qualifications."

"What qualifications haven't I got?"

"You're too young."

"What do you mean by 'too young'?" Hung-yu straightened up and declared, "I'll be sixteen in another month and a half."

"But the notice says the trainee should be around eighteen." As if to settle the question the brigade leader showed Hung-yu the notice where the preferable age was stated.

Hung-yu looked at the notice and then suddenly giggled. As if he had hit on an original idea, he said, "Just say I'm eighteen then."

"You, eighteen?" The brigade leader laughed. "You don't look it. And besides, we should be honest."

"Then . . . ?" Hung-yu was at a loss for a moment, but he refused to give up. On second thought, he ventured, "I am qualified."

"How's that?"



"Don't they say *around* eighteen?"

"Yes."

"I'm *around* eighteen."

"So, all of a sudden you're going to be eighteen, is that it?"

"Well, 'around eighteen' could mean nineteen, twenty, or it could also mean seventeen or sixteen. There must be some leeway in everything."

"You've certainly got it all figured out. But I'm afraid your 'leeway' won't work in this instance. They won't have you," said the brigade leader.

"Dr. Li said they will."

"Better leave this till the Party secretary comes back, then we'll discuss it again. I have a few things to attend to, and you can go back to your work, too. All right?"

Feeling quite sure the Party secretary would support him in this matter, Hung-yu agreed and returned to his stone chiselling at the construction site.

Soon the Party branch secretary, Uncle Ching-tang, came back. He was over fifty, tall and broad-shouldered, with a square-set face and thick brows shading eyes that shone. He had a wide-top basket over his shoulder and carried a long-handled fork, as it had become his habit to scoop up any manure he saw on the road and empty his basketful onto any nearby field. People asked why he didn't take it home and put it on his own brigade's fields, and he would reply, "Don't the fields of any brigade belong to the state?" This was what the Party secretary was like, for he thought first of the collective and the country, and never of himself. He had sustained seven wounds during the war years and still had two pieces of shrapnel in his shoulder, which often ached in bad weather. Yet he never excused himself from hard work but

remained cheerful and conscientious. One got the impression that even if the sky fell, the Party secretary would be able to hold it up with one hand!

Uncle Huai had locked his office and turned to go to the construction site when he saw the Party secretary coming into the courtyard with his dung basket. "So you're back!" he greeted him, happy and relieved. For, with him away at commune headquarters, the old stonemason in hospital, and the spring sowing at its height, he felt his load rather heavy. "The meeting's just over," said the Party secretary with a smile. "How are things here? Grandpa Stonemason's in the county hospital? I hope he's better." The Party secretary deposited his basket and fork in the courtyard and the two went into the room.

The brigade leader reported to the secretary about the work that was going on — the spring sowing and the stone-cutting at the construction site. "Good," commented the secretary. "That's exactly what we discussed at the meeting — bringing about an upsurge in learning from Tachai in agriculture. So we must step up the work on our irrigation canal."

"But Grandpa Stonemason's ill . . ." the brigade leader put in.

"Yes, there are problems, but I believe we can solve them," said the secretary with his usual optimism. "There are others in our brigade who can do stone work now."

"But how about the arches? I'm afraid no one can do that except the old stonemason."

"Well, let's wait for a few days and see if grandpa is better. If he's not back, we'll have to think of some other way. The canal must be finished as soon as possible." After a pause the Party secretary continued, "We mustn't tire the old stonemason out again. When he starts wheezing we must see to it that he gets treatment at once. If only our bri-

gade had its own doctor who'd tend to the sick right here!"

Then the brigade leader told the secretary about the notice which had come from the commune. "By the way, we got a notification today."

"What about?"

"Commune leadership says the county is starting a training class for barefoot doctors and our brigade is to send a person to attend. Who do you think it should be?"

The brigade leader showed the notice to the secretary, who said, "I heard something about this while I was at commune headquarters. It's a good thing. In future we'll have our own medical worker to care for the poor and lower-middle peasants. But we must choose the right person. Who shall we send?" The secretary referred the question back to the brigade leader.

"I haven't thought of anyone. Who do you say?"

"I have someone in mind."

"Who?"

"Hung-yu."

"What? Hung-yu?" The brigade leader got a start.

"What do you think?"

The brigade leader laughed. "So you two are of the same mind!"

"What do you mean?"

"Hung-yu came here a little while ago. He tried to talk me into sending him to the training class," explained the brigade leader.

"If he really wants the training, so much the better." The Party secretary was pleased. "I think he's the right one. What do you say?"

"I don't think he's fitted for the work." The brigade leader shook his head to emphasize his view.

"Why not?"

"He's not up to it."

"Hung-yu comes from a poor-peasant family, a fine class origin. He's eager to study and is hard-working. He has the common good at heart. . . ."

"I know all that," the brigade leader interrupted. "But how old is he? He's just a child! Doctoring is different from other kinds of work. If you sow and the seeds don't sprout, you can turn the earth over and sow again. If a blacksmith turns out a poor tool, the iron can be heated again. But with a doctor, why, it's different. A person's life is involved. You can't put such a heavy responsibility on the shoulders of a boy."

"But we mustn't underestimate our young people," put in the Party secretary. "They may still be small, but they think big. If you keep a colt forever at the manger, it'll never grow into a sturdy steed. An eagle that has never tried its wings will never fly into the sky. We must train our young people, test them, so that they learn to bear heavy responsibilities. It won't do always to keep them under our wings, like a hen with her chicks."

The brigade leader kept shaking his head, though he said nothing for some time. Then finally he declared, "It says plainly in the notice that the applicant must be around eighteen. Hung-yu isn't sixteen yet."

"I discussed this question with the county comrades when I phoned them about the training class. I was told that if the applicant meets the other requirements, the age limit is flexible."

The brigade leader had nothing further to say. But he was not at all convinced. As he could think of no other reason for not sending Hung-yu to the medical training course, he conceded, "Well, let him try."

"We must not just 'let him try,'" said the Party secre-

tary, "but we must give him our hearty support and help him to become a good barefoot doctor. We'll have a meeting later and see what the other cadres have to say."

The two men left the office for the construction site, the Party secretary taking a detour to see the stockman and give him the things he had brought from the commune co-op, while the brigade leader started out for the construction site alone. At the edge of the village he ran into Lame Sun.

"Hello, brigade leader!" he called out, grinning so that his ugly teeth showed. "I was just going to see you."

"What for?"

The brigade leader had no love for this man, but since he had not been classified as a landlord, he ought to be treated as an ordinary commune member.

"Uh . . . uh. . . . I hear there's going to be a training class for barefoot doctors. Is that so?"

"Perhaps it is," replied the brigade leader, obviously not willing to discuss the matter.

"I wonder if I could be the barefoot doctor of our brigade."

"You?"

"I know, brigade leader, I've been altogether too backward ideologically. I've committed serious mistakes and done things underhandedly. But since that mass meeting where Hung-yu criticized and educated me, I've come to realize how wrong I was. Now I've made up my mind to turn over a new leaf. Please believe me. Can't you see how I've been earnestly remoulding myself in the past two or three years? Now that we're going to train a barefoot doctor, I think it's a good chance for me to redeem my past sins. You know very well, brigade leader, that I may not be worth my salt when it comes to work, but when it comes to treating the sick, I do know a little more than greenhorns. So, if you let me go to the

training class and brush up on the new things in the medical field, I'll be able to raise my level. Honest, if I can be a barefoot doctor, I'll serve the commune members and the poor and lower-middle peasants with my whole heart. Believe me, brigade leader, I give you my word for it. . . ." And Lame Sun babbled on and on.

At first the brigade leader paid him no attention. But as this quack doctor continued to criticize himself and say how repentant he was, and especially when he bragged about his technique, the brigade leader was a bit taken in. He thought to himself: Lame Sun did in fact know something about medicine, and while his past misdeeds were serious, he had been on good behaviour since that mass meeting. If we took him in hand we could make use of his smattering of medical know-how. . . . "How do you know that there's to be a training class for barefoot doctors?" the brigade leader asked.

"Uh . . . uh," stuttered Lame Sun, "I heard Young Wang telling Hung-yu about it at the construction site." Then staring at Uncle Huai, he went on, "How about it, brigade leader? Can I go?"

"I'll think it over. Meanwhile you can go back to your work at the construction site."

Lame Sun was in ecstasy. The brigade leader's promise to think it over meant to him the thing was as good as done. If he, Sun, became Date Tree Slope's barefoot doctor, he would have the medical work of the village under his official control. He would have power in his hands! He would have prestige! He could get out of manual labour and be in a position to extort money from his patients. Most important was that as a barefoot doctor his political standing would be raised. And when it came to struggles with the poor and lower-middle peasants, why, . . . Then suddenly he thought

of something that interrupted his train of wishful thinking: The Party branch secretary would have his say in the matter. "Yes, yes, I'll go back to my work," he answered, hurriedly adding, "brigade leader, you'll put in a good word for me, won't you? My technique. . . ."

"That's enough. I know about your technique. Go back to work." The brigade leader waved him away and continued on to the work site.

Lame Sun kept muttering, "Yes, yes" as he, too, turned and went away.

Soon the brigade leader was aware of the Party secretary behind him, catching up, and he stopped to wait for him.

"What did Lame Sun want?" asked the Party secretary as he came up.

"He came to ask to be a barefoot doctor."

"So, it appears that quite a few people are interested in this matter. Even Lame Sun wants to be a barefoot doctor, eh?"

The brigade leader was still thinking about Sun's "technique" and replied, "When it comes to treating patients, he really does know something."

"That may be true to some degree. But his technique is not for serving the poor and lower-middle peasants."

"Just now he made a self-criticism and promised to redeem his past sins and turn over a new leaf. He said he was willing to serve the poor and lower-middle peasants."

The Party secretary smiled at this. "Before a fox gobbles up a chicken, it usually gets into the good graces of its prey. Do you believe what Lame Sun says?"

"Not entirely. But I think if we keep him in his place, we may make use of his technique."

"If you make him the barefoot doctor of our brigade, he'll

have authority in his field. Do you think you can keep him in his place then?"

"I've thought of another way," said the brigade leader, on a new tack. "Instead of sending Hung-yu to the training class, we let Sun teach him. That way not only will Hung-yu learn medicine, but he can also keep an eye on Sun and make him behave."

Again the Party secretary smiled. "That's just what Lame Sun wants. Don't forget what kind of person he is. Why should he suddenly become interested in being trained as a barefoot doctor? Why should he be so eager now to serve the poor and lower-middle peasants? Would he be interested if it were not to his advantage?"

The brigade leader thought for a moment. "What advantage would he get?" he asked. "At most he could get out of doing so much manual labour."

"That's not the point." The Party secretary became very serious. "What Lame Sun has in mind is a chance to get the upper hand in our medical field. To evade manual labour is secondary. His main aim is to prevent us from having medical workers from our own ranks, the ranks of the poor and lower-middle peasants. Training barefoot doctors is one way of implementing Chairman Mao's revolutionary line in the field of public health. It's the barefoot doctors who carry out this line in the rural areas and whose work conveys to the poor and lower-middle peasants Chairman Mao's concern for them. So, we must select the most reliable person from our own ranks to be the barefoot doctor."

The brigade leader lowered his head and seemed lost in thought.

"Do you really think," the Party secretary went on, "that such a person as Lame Sun would answer the poor and lower-middle peasants' needs? How could we place the im-

portant work of a barefoot doctor in the hands of this man? Don't be fooled by his outward appearance and pleadings. In the past two years he has behaved a little better. But look out. Only the other day Grandma Wang was telling me she heard Sun in the courtyard muttering to himself and sighing: 'How long, oh how long will I have to wait for that day to come?' Now, do you see what he means by 'that day'? He means the day when he holds the reins of power in his hands!"

"So Lame Sun has ambitions!" exclaimed the brigade leader as though just awakened by the Party secretary's words.

"Yes, he has," the latter confirmed. "And we must always be conscious of class struggle."

That afternoon the brigade cadres met and decided to send Hung-yu to the county training class. Towards evening the Party secretary notified Hung-yu, who was overjoyed at the news.

CHAPTER 4

The Story of a Ginseng Root

THE day's work was over and Hung-yu rushed home. There was his grandmother in the outer room, working the bellows to cook the evening meal. He went straight to her and said in high spirits, "Grandma, I've got good news for you!"

"What is it now?" His grandmother stopped plying the bellows, turned round and looked at him.

"Our brigade is sending me to study!"

"Where to?"

"The county town."

"What are you going to study?"

"Guess, grandma," said Hung-yu, purposely keeping his grandmother in suspense.

Hung-yu's high spirits infected his grandmother. "I have no idea," she said smiling. Then, after a while she ventured, "I know. You're going to learn to drive the tractor."

What gave grandma this idea was that the brigade had decided to buy a tractor they could use on hilly ground, and they were going to train two young people to drive it.

"Wrong!" Hung-yu shook his head.

"Then it must be . . . you're going to learn to run the pumps."

The brigade had recently drilled two wells and was going to install two pumps.

"Wrong again," answered Hung-yu.

"Then you'd better tell me. What is it you're going to study?"

"I'm going to be a barefoot doctor!" Hung-yu divulged excitedly.

"Barefoot doctor? What's that?" Hung-yu's grandmother had never heard of a barefoot doctor before.

"A barefoot doctor treats sick people."

"Oh. But isn't that a doctor? Why 'barefoot' doctor?"

Hung-yu laughed. "Well, this kind of doctors take off their shoes in the south and work barefoot in the paddy-fields together with the other commune members."

"Aya! Doctors going barefoot!" Grandma was surprised.

"Of course they have shoes to wear," Hung-yu continued.

"But barefoot doctors tend the sick and also work in the fields just like any other poor and lower-middle peasant."

"So that's it," said grandma, nodding and feeling pleased.

"But, is it definitely decided that you're going?"

"It's for sure."

"How long will you be gone?"

"Two months."

"When do you leave?"

"Tomorrow morning."

"So soon?"

"Yes."

"Taking any luggage with you?"

"Yes."

"Then I must hurry and sort out your clothes and things."

Grandma was very fond of Hung-yu, who had lived with her since he was a child. His parents both worked in the provincial capital. Grandma might have gone to stay with them, but she preferred living in the village. She was over sixty, her hair had turned grey and her face was wrinkled,

but she was still physically strong and always busy working wholeheartedly for the brigade. The previous spring, when the brigade put up pigsties, grandma volunteered to tend the pigs. Both the Party secretary and the brigade leader thought the job was too heavy for her and tried to talk her out of it. But grandma insisted, nor would she even have anyone to help her, as the two suggested. She said, "Everybody is learning from Tachai, and we must save as much labour power as possible. Why should two persons be assigned to the work when one can do it just as well?" And grandma did a very good job of raising pigs, as their long shiny bristles proved. And that sow with her litter!

Hung-yu had gone to live with his grandmother when he was three, and it was there that he first went to the village primary school and then to the commune middle school. He had gone straight into agricultural production work after graduation from middle school the previous summer. As he had grown up in the village, he knew the commune members well and had spent much time with them. In learning to do farm work he had such fine masters as the old stonemason, Uncle Ching-tang who was the Party secretary, and Uncle Huai, the brigade leader. He was eager to learn, and could soon do all kinds of farm work well. Liked and highly thought of, he was a boy people put up their thumbs for.

"This child is a worthy successor of us poor and lower-middle peasants!"

"A fine seedling to succeed us in our revolutionary work!"

Needless to say, grandma felt very happy when she heard such comments on Hung-yu. Seeing her grandchild grow up like a young tree filled her heart with joy!

His being sent to the county training class for barefoot doctors meant the brigade was taking up the task of rearing the boy. Could anything be finer than this? Grandma was

doubly pleased at the thought, and her wrinkled face broke into a smile.

Going back to her bellows, grandma asked Hung-yu a lot more questions about barefoot doctors, while he squatted near the stove and told her what he had read in the papers about this new type of doctor.

The meal was ready. Hung-yu placed a small table on the *kang** and the two began to eat.

"Hung-yu," said grandma, "you must study well at the training class. To be a doctor, to learn to treat patients, why, child, that takes skill. You mustn't be careless or rough."

"No, I won't," said Hung-yu, nodding in agreement.

"The brigade has placed this heavy responsibility on your shoulders," grandmother went on. "It means they have full confidence in you. You must prove trustworthy. You must stand up for the poor and lower-middle peasants."

"Yes, grandma." And Hung-yu nodded again.

"Once you've become a barefoot doctor, you must not put on airs. Chairman Mao teaches us to serve the people unreservedly. You must be especially good in serving the poor and lower-middle peasants."

"Yes, grandma." Hung-yu nodded once more. He had the greatest love and respect for his grandmother and took every word she said to heart.

When supper was over, grandma began helping Hung-yu to pack up his things. From a red lacquer trunk she took out Hung-yu's clothes — a white shirt, a pair of black trousers. Then suddenly she stopped, turned round and said, "Hung-yu, you've grown up, and are going to be a barefoot doctor. It's time I gave you this." As she spoke she took a small red

* A brick platform bed with a heating device.

wooden box out of the corner of the trunk and handed it to him.

Hung-yu took the box in both hands and held it for a long time. He knew what was in it and could never forget the story his grandmother had told him. . . . That was seven or eight years ago, when Hung-yu saw the box for the first time. He was studying in primary school then, and one day when he returned from school, he found grandma sorting out things in the red lacquer trunk. He saw tucked in one corner of the trunk the little red box. "What's in it, granny?" Hung-yu had asked.

Granny's face had become very serious as she looked at the boy. She thought for a moment, then took the little red box from the trunk, held it in her hands and said with feeling, "Hung-yu, grandma's going to tell you the story of what's in this box. I think you're old enough to understand." She opened the box and took from it a small object wrapped in red cloth. She unwrapped that, revealing something creamy in colour, about the breadth of a little finger and over two inches long. It looked like a dry, withered twig.

"What is it, grandma?" Hung-yu quickly asked.

"It's a medicinal herb — ginseng."

"Why do you keep it in the trunk, granny?"

"So as never to forget our family story of blood and tears." Grandma's voice became very solemn. "It was over this bit of ginseng that the local despot Big-Head Sun killed your grandfather."

Hung-yu had often heard grandma say that granddad had died at the hands of the local despot Big-Head Sun, but he'd never heard about the ginseng. Today as he looked at this medicinal root, his eyes shone with the hatred in his heart.

"Grandma," he said impatiently, "how was that? Tell me the story!"



And this is what grandma told Hung-yu about the ginseng:

“Our family used to live in Shantung Province, where your grandfather worked for a landlord. One day when the landlord was bullying a farm labourer, he argued on the side of the labourer. The landlord kicked your grandfather, who got angry and slapped the landlord’s face twice. Your grandfather would have been arrested if not for another farm labourer who told him of the landlord’s plan. As it was, your grandfather escaped with me and our fifteen-year-old son — your dad. We begged our way to the Northeast, on the other side of the Great Wall, and stayed with relatives who lived at the foot of the Changpai Mountains. They earned their living by gathering medicinal herbs. Poor as they were, they took us in and even put up a thatched hut for us.

“Your grandfather and father learned the different medicinal herbs, and the three of us, too, lived on whatever we could get from selling them.

“So many medicinal herbs of all kinds grew in the Changpai Mountains in the Northeast! But the merchants fleeced us poor people even more, and no matter how many we gathered, we got scarcely enough for us to keep body and soul together.

“Three years went by like that, and your dad was now eighteen. One day your grandfather said to him, ‘Son, the herbs we’ve been gathering are the cheaper kinds; they don’t bring in any money. Let’s go deeper into the forest and see if we can find ginseng. If we’re fortunate enough to find a big root, we’ll at least be able to eat our fill for once.’ Your father thought it was a good idea and they decided to set out the next day. In fact, they had gone out once in a year or two before, with one of the relatives, but they never found a ginseng root of any size. So they set out again, taking

their tattered quilts, a small pick and a little food.

"It was no easy job. In the daytime they climbed the high peaks and went down through gullies. Many nights they stayed out in the open, or at best spent in shelters made of dry branches or twigs by other ginseng collectors. Food either ran short, or else spoiled, leaving them with only wild berries to eat. The deep forest was full of wolves, bears and all kinds of wild animals. A lot of people who went into the forest never came out again!"

Hung-yu became very excited at hearing this. "Did grandpa and dad ever meet any of those wild animals?"

"Well, not close, and that was fortunate for them."

"But did they ever find any big ginseng roots?"

"Not for a long time," replied grandma. "They scoured the mountains for two or three months without finding even small ginseng plants, to say nothing of big ones. Your father was beginning to give up hope and wanted to come back, but your grandfather said no, though he had almost given up hope himself. Finally they decided to stick it out a little longer.

"So they went on searching and searching until one day in a birch and pine wood they came upon a huge ginseng plant about half the height of a man, with a straight and sturdy stem, shining green leaves and bright red berries. For a moment neither could speak for joy. They took out a strip of red cloth, wound it round the stalk of ginseng, then very carefully proceeded to dig it out.

"Out came the big plant! It was some two feet long from top to bottom, the thickest part about the size of a man's wrist. It would weigh at least one *jin*!"

"Your grandfather picked it up and pressed it to his heart. 'Ah,' he uttered, 'you've been growing for a hundred years at least, and now you can bring in five hundred silver dollars!'

"The next day they returned from the mountains and told

me how they had found the ginseng. I was as overjoyed as they were. But just when we were so happy, something happened."

"What was that, grandma?" Hung-yu asked anxiously.

"That very night a relative came to our hut and said that the rascal Chin the Fourth knew about our big ginseng.

"What if he does?" said your grandfather.

"But the rascal has said right out that he's going to have it from you — for nothing."

"Just let him try!" said your grandfather, furious.

"Chin the Fourth threatened he'll give you a taste of his might if you don't offer the ginseng to him,' the relative went on to explain.

"Your grandfather got angry too, stamped his foot and said, 'I'll fight it out with him!'

"If he dares to take that ginseng away from me, he'll get a taste of my fist, too,' said your dad.

"But that relative advised them to lie low for a while, saying, 'Chin the Fourth is a powerful landlord and the head of a gang of bandits besides. Do you think you can fight him bare-handed? In the end you'll only be the loser.'

"But where can I hide? There's no place in this world for the poor!"

"Didn't you say you have kinfolk in Hopei Province? Why don't you go there? Sell the ginseng and buy a few *mu* of land. . . .' advised this relative.

"There was nothing left to do but take his advice and leave the Changpai Mountains. So the three of us trekked back to this side of the Great Wall, our same tattered quilts rolled up on our backs, carrying the ginseng with us.

"After a month of walking we finally arrived in Date Tree Slope. But the kinfolk we were looking for had died, and their only son had been pressganged into doing forced labour

for the Japanese.”

“So what did you do then?” Hung-yu asked anxiously.

“We moved into our kinfolk’s deserted hut. At that time Grandpa Stonemason and Uncle Ching-tang were both farm labourers for Big-Head Sun. When they learned that we were new in this place and had no way of earning a living, they recommended your grandfather and dad as farm hands for Big-Head Sun too.”

“What about the huge piece of ginseng, grandma?” Hung-yu asked.

“We kept it for a while, then later we took it to Big-Head Sun’s traditional Chinese medicine shop in Redstone Valley Town. The junior manager of the shop was Big-Head’s son, Lame Sun, who was eighteen years old then. Big-Head Sun was in the shop when we arrived, playing chess with his steward and fanning himself. But you should have seen the greedy look that came on his face when he saw the fine, big ginseng in your grandfather’s hand! He stopped fanning; he stopped playing chess. He came over, grabbed the ginseng from your grandfather’s hand and scrutinized the whole length of it, turning it back and forth, his eyes gleaming with covetousness. ‘Ah, Old Chang,’ said Big-Head Sun with a cunning grin. ‘Who’d ever have thought you’d bring back such a treasure from the Northeast!’

“At this point Lame Sun emerged from an inner room. ‘So you’ve come here to sell your ginseng, Old Chang?’ he joined in, rolling his eyes and staring at the precious herb. ‘Our old manager fancies it. What’s your price?’

“‘How much will you pay for it?’ asked your grandfather.

“‘We won’t be stingy about it,’ answered the younger Sun.

“‘Well, state your price,’ persisted your grandfather.

“This time the elder Sun spoke up. ‘I’ll give you a little more than it’s worth.’ And he indicated the figure ‘8’ with

his fingers. ‘Eight silver dollars in cash!’

“‘Why, for eight silver dollars I won’t even let you look at it!’ Your grandfather was hopping mad.

“‘I’m telling you, Old Chang,’ the old rascal thundered, ‘you’d better wake up to where you are. How much do you want then?’

“‘This ginseng is not an ordinary specimen,’ your grandfather said straight out. ‘I won’t sell it for less than five hundred silver dollars.’

“The old rascal flared up again and yelled at your grandfather, ‘You’re pipe-dreaming! I’m doing you a favour to offer you eight dollars for it. If you have any sense at all, you’ll leave the ginseng here.’

“Your grandfather was so mad he grabbed the precious ginseng out of the old scoundrel’s hand and exclaimed, ‘I’d rather throw it into the cesspool than sell it to you so dirt cheap!’ And with that he turned and strode off.

“The old despot was struck dumb with anger while Lame Sun, pretending to mediate, shouted after your grandfather, ‘Come back, Old Chang. I’ll give you ten dollars for it. How’s that?’

“But your grandfather didn’t even bother to glance back.

“At this, Big-Head Sun muttered to himself, ‘Hum! You pauper, so you dare to rebel, do you? Well, you just wait and see!’ Big-Head went straight to the Redstone Valley Town government office.

“As your grandfather was coming home with his ginseng held tight in his arms, he heard hoof-beats behind him and turned to look. There, on horseback, were two of that rascal’s running dogs coming after him. They shouted at him to stop, but your grandfather just went on. Soon they overtook him.

“‘What do you want?’ demanded your grandfather.

“You should know. You and that son of yours both joined the Communist anti-Japanese army in the Northeast and came here when it got too hot for you there. Don’t think you can hide that from us. Go and make a clean breast of it to Town Head Sun!”

“Your grandfather saw through this blackmail right away. It was because of that ginseng!

“The two thugs jumped off their horses and began tying your grandfather up. He fought back, tore off the ropes and hit one of them square on the jaw. The thugs, their anger up, shouted, ‘So you dare to resist arrest? In that case we’ll let you have it.’ A shot rang out and your grandfather fell to the ground. . . .

“Those two running dogs snatched the ginseng and galloped back to present it to Big-Head Sun and collect their blood-stained reward.

“We got the news and your father was so mad he dashed out with his carrying-pole, headed straight for Big-Head Sun’s. But as soon as he entered the courtyard, Sun’s lackeys grabbed him and hung him from a beam in the stable. They said he had connections with the Communists and the Eighth Route Army, and they flogged him, but your father fought back. They beat him until he was unconscious.

“I heard about it and I rushed over too. Those rascals shoved me out the gate and rained blows on me till I fainted. It was Grandpa Stonemason who finally carried me home.

“Night came. Big-Head Sun and his henchmen went to their living quarters at the back of the courtyard, posting one man with a gun to guard the door. Your father was still tied to that beam, unconscious.”

“Then what happened?” asked Hung-yu, his eyes shining with tears.

“The next thing your father knew, he was being carried

very fast over an uneven path on someone’s back.”

“Who was carrying my dad, grandma?” Hung-yu asked, wiping away his tears.

“Guess!” replied grandma. “Why, it was Uncle Ching-tang, our Party branch secretary!”

“How could that be?”

“Well, when your father came to, he asked Uncle Ching-tang how he had got him out of the stable. Seeing that your father had regained consciousness, Uncle Ching-tang put him down and said, ‘When I heard they were going to kill you tomorrow, I went to the stable and carried you out.’

“But how about the guard at the door?” asked your father.

“During the night he fell asleep and I went in ever so quietly, took his rifle and hit him over the head with it. Look, isn’t this the rifle here?”

“Sure enough, there was the rifle slung over Uncle Ching-tang’s shoulder!

“But what will become of you now, after rescuing me?” your dad wanted to know.

“That scoundrel Sun is a beast in human form! I decided long ago not to work for him.”

“But where can we poor people find a place to lay our heads?”

“Didn’t they say you were connected with the Communists and the Eighth Route Army? Let’s find them then, and join them! We’ll take this along.’ And Uncle Ching-tang pointed to his newly acquired gun.

“Your father was ever so happy and said, ‘Good! But where can we find the Eighth Route Army?’

“I’ll see to that.”

“Only then did your father know that Uncle Ching-tang had in fact connections with the Eighth Route Army.”

Hung-yu was relieved and excited. “Did they find the

Eighth Route Army?"

"Yes, they did," answered grandma.

"And then?" Hung-yu was consumed with curiosity.

"They joined the Eighth Route Army and fought the Japanese invaders. Both became combat heroes. After victory over Japan Uncle Ching-tang was demobilized because he had been wounded many times during the war, but your father stayed in the army."

"What about Big-Head Sun?" asked Hung-yu.

"That despot and traitor was brought to public trial during the land reform and all his crimes were exposed. He was shot."

"And the ginseng?"

"We found it hidden in his house. But it was nearly all gone, only the tail of the root was left, and this is it here."

Hung-yu's grandmother had finally told him their story, and it stirred in him an undying hatred for the class enemy. Today, as his grandmother handed him the red wooden box and he held it in his hands, he was too filled with emotion to speak.

"Now that I've given you this tail of a ginseng root, you should remember its story always. That way you'll never forget the bitter past. You'll learn to love the new society and hate the old. You'll know how to act towards the class enemy, and how to act towards the poor and lower-middle peasants — ourselves. Above all, you'll know how and why you must learn well to become a barefoot doctor."

Hung-yu nodded.

The flame of the little oil lamp on the table flickered. The spring breeze rustled the leaves of the locust tree outside. Suddenly someone in the courtyard shouted, "Hung-yu."

"That's Uncle Ching-tang." Hung-yu recognized his voice at once.

"Come in, Ching-tang," called grandma. "Hung-yu's leaving tomorrow, and I'm getting his things together for him."

"I've come to tell Hung-yu that I'm going to the county town with him tomorrow. I won't be able to call in this evening."

Hung-yu hurried out to see Uncle Ching-tang but he had already left.

That night as Hung-yu lay in bed so many things crowded into his mind that it was cockcrow before he fell asleep.

CHAPTER 5

“Enemies Travel a Narrow Road”

HUNG-YU wasn't the only one who lay awake that night. Lame Sun was tossing and turning, sleepless. Hung-yu was too happy and excited to sleep. But it was worry and fear that kept Lame Sun awake.

The news that the brigade had decided to send Hung-yu to the training class spread quickly among the commune members. The poor and lower-middle peasants were especially happy. One of them said, “Now we'll have our own doctor in this out-of-the-way mountain village!”

“Won't it be wonderful!” chimed in another. “Then we won't have to worry about getting medicine and medical attention when we're sick.”

“Hung-yu is a good boy, conscientious and hard-working. We can trust him,” put in another.

“His outlook is especially good. He thinks and feels the same as any of us poor and lower-middle peasants.”

“And I hear we don't have to pay for treatment by barefoot doctors.”

“Of course not. They belong to us.”

“But did you hear that Lame Sun went to our brigade leader and asked to be the one sent to the barefoot doctor training class?”

“That's out of the question. He's not one of us.”

Lame Sun, eavesdropping from a dark corner, heard everything.

He had been thinking of going to see the brigade leader again to press his request, but he now gave up the idea. Since the brigade had decided to send Hung-yu, it would be useless, and he would only be making a laughing-stock of himself.

At the end of the day Lame Sun went home feeling very dejected. He had no appetite for supper, and just sat on the edge of his *kang*, drawing hard on his pipe.

It was hard enough for him to take being passed up for the training class, but it was much harder for him to swallow Hung-yu's being chosen. “That young whippersnapper! How I hate his guts!” swore Lame Sun, clenching his teeth.

In fact this quack doctor thoroughly hated all the poor and lower-middle peasants of Date Tree Slope. He had kept records from the time of the land reform, when the Sun family estate had been divided up, of every inch of land or item of other property that had been shared out to each of them. He never forgot how his father, Big-Head Sun, had been declared guilty at that public trial and shot like the dog that he was. Since then the poor and lower-middle peasants had always regarded him with distrust, and they were a thorn in his side. Lame Sun especially hated Hung-yu's family — all three living generations of them. It was Hung-yu's father who had gone to Big-Head Sun's hiding place in the mountains and brought him back to justice at the public trial. And Hung-yu's grandmother. She had been the first to speak up at the meeting to expose Big-Head and condemn him for his many crimes, and she had slapped his face soundly in the heat of her anger. As for Hung-yu, he had called a mass meeting in Stone Valley Village no more than two years before to criticize him for practising witchcraft.

One day in November 1965 Hung-yu had gone to see his aunt in Stone Valley Village and stayed the night there. That evening while he and his aunt were sitting talking, his cousin, Little Rock, came running in saying he had something to tell Hung-yu.

"What is it?" Hung-yu asked anxiously.

"Lame Sun has come to our village."

"What's he doing here?"

"He's treating Granny Tsun who lives in the east end of the village."

Hung-yu knew that Lame Sun did go around to the villages prescribing traditional Chinese medicine, giving advice or applying needles. After all, he was practically the only doctor anywhere in these mountain villages. Sun, however, often took advantage of this situation to get out of doing farm work, and even took money or gifts from his patients. He had recently been found practising witchcraft. The brigade cadres had warned him many times concerning these wrongdoings and told him to behave himself. He flatly denied having practised witchcraft and swore up and down that if he was ever caught at it he would willingly accept punishment. Hung-yu had not believed this. Now, as he thought of these past events, he said to his cousin, "Tell your commune members they'd better keep an eye on him. He's liable to do anything."

"So he is," said Little Rock clapping his hands. "Tonight at the stroke of twelve he's going to 'cast a spell' over Granny Tsun. He says he's going to cure her!"

"Really?" asked Hung-yu, alerted like a hunter on the scent of a fox. "Who told you?"

Seeing the impression his news made on Hung-yu, Little Rock grew even more excited and waved his fist as he answered, "It's true, absolutely true. My good friend Little

Pao-chang told me. You can go and see for yourself if you don't believe it. Pao-chang said Lame Sun's at their house this very minute eating the griddle cakes and fried eggs his granny made for him especially!"

"Aya!" exclaimed Hung-yu's aunt, "how can Granny Tsun still be so superstitious!"

"I know," said Little Rock. "Let's ask our brigade leader to get two militiamen to arrest Lame Sun and make him tell us whether practising witchcraft is a crime or not."

"Good!" exclaimed Hung-yu, jumping down from the *kang*. "Let's go." But suddenly he halted. "No," he told his cousin on second thought, "we can't go now."

"Why not?" wondered Little Rock.

"Lame Sun hasn't done it yet. How can we make him admit a crime he hasn't committed?" And they both had to laugh at themselves.

"What shall we do then?" Little Rock asked.

"Relax. When the time comes, we'll handle him." And Hung-yu told them his plan.

"You're a smart one, Hung-yu," said his aunt with a smile.

Little Rock also thought his cousin had a bright idea. "Good," he said clapping his hands again in his excitement. "We'll do just as you say. Lame Sun won't get away with it!"

Near the east end of the village was a square courtyard with rooms on three sides and an old pear tree in one corner. This was where Granny Tsun lived.

Granny Tsun was a middle peasant. Her daughter had married and gone to live in a neighbouring village. Her son was working outside. Both had asked her to live with them, but she preferred staying where she had been most of her life and become accustomed to. So her son sent his little boy,

Pao-chang, to stay with her and go to school in Stone Valley Village. Every month Pao-chang's father sent them living expenses, so Granny Tsun was comfortably settled. Lame Sun knew this.

Then Granny Tsun fell ill with a bad arm. Sun got word of this and thought his chance had come to swindle money out of the old woman. He went to see her on the quiet and told her in honeyed words that he could surely cure her bad arm.

Granny Tsun was taken in by his apparent solicitude, being very moved by a doctor's going out of his way to see her. "What have I got, doctor?" she asked Lame Sun trustingly.

The quack felt the old woman's pulse, frowned, then glanced over her in general. "Why, it's a serious case!" he pronounced with an air of gravity.

Granny Tsun was alarmed. "How's that?" she asked.

"The symptoms show it's not a common illness," said Lame Sun, pretending to be anxious too.

"But tell me what it is I've got." Granny Tsun was getting more and more frightened.

"You're possessed by evil spirits!" Lame Sun finally announced.

Granny Tsun used to believe in spirits but had largely got over her superstition. Still, this quack doctor's "diagnosis" shook her and made her very apprehensive. "What's the cure for that?" she hastened to ask.

Lame Sun kept a long, ominous silence before saying, "There's no regular treatment for your sickness. No needling or medicine will help," he finally said. "The only thing. . . ." And he paused again.

"What will help, then?" asked Granny Tsun, in the depths of anxiety now.

"In fact I have a cure," the quack whispered into her ear. "But I'll have to take risks to do it."

"So long as you can cure me," Granny Tsun assured him, "I'll see that you're well rewarded."

Lame Sun chuckled inwardly. "But nobody must know," he added with an air of mystery. "I'll have to do it secretly."

"Very well. You can bank on that. What is the cure?"

"I'll invoke the supernatural spirits to exorcize the demon that has possessed you. It's the only cure." What this quack really meant was that this was the only way he could extort money from this old middle peasant woman.

Granny Tsun was anxious for her arm to be cured and consented at once to Sun's proposal. "All right, cure me then," she said as though resigning herself to her fate.

Such was the conversation Granny Tsun's little grandson overheard and reported to his friend, Little Rock, who told it to his cousin Hung-yu.

It was midnight, and the village was all quiet. The crescent moon had set, leaving only the stars to illuminate the sky. The night breeze lightly rustled the leaves of the pear tree in the courtyard.

It was the time of night when wolves venture from their dens to prowl the mountains; warehouse rats come out of their holes; owls hiding in trees begin flapping their wings. . . .

At just this time of night Lame Sun, like those others, began his activities that could not bear the light of day. He was going to invoke goblins to cure Granny Tsun!

Little Pao-chang lay snoring on the *kang*. Lame Sun latched the door of Granny Tsun's room and they covered the window with a thick quilt. Then, quickly, Sun took an incense burner out of the bag he was carrying and placed it on the table. Next, lighting three sticks of incense, he bowed low before the

table and chanted an incantation. After some time he began to yawn and snort, muttering that he was now god incarnate. Then he danced about, tinkling a little bell in his hand. His chant was a lusty shriek:

I'm the Yellow-Eyebrowed Fairy,
With only a few pennies in hand,
Give me twenty silver dollars,
And thirty more in bills,
I'll guarantee to cure your illness,
Exorcize the demon that's got into you. . . .

"Oh, Yellow-Eyebrowed Fairy," interrupted Granny Tsun, "I've got money, but none in silver."

To this, Lame Sun intoned on:

If you haven't silver dollars,
I'll take yuan notes instead.
For every silver dollar,
Pay me one yuan thirty fen. . . .

Suddenly someone was shouting at the window: "You, Lame Sun . . . what a brazen rat!"

The shout struck Sun like a thunderbolt. He shrank back and looked for all the world like he was made out of putty, if a putty figure could be shaking all over. . . .

Little Pao-chang, who was supposed to be fast asleep on the *kang*, sprang up and dashed out to open the main door to the house, admitting Hung-yu, Little Rock and two militiamen with guns.

This was Hung-yu's plan. As a matter of fact, he and the others had been outside the window for some time awaiting developments. They swung themselves over into the courtyard on the branches of the pear tree near the wall. Pao-chang had not been asleep at all but only pretending, waiting for Hung-yu and the others to come.

When Hung-yu came into the room, Lame Sun crumpled to the floor with his bell, like so much wet mud.

"What are you doing here?" demanded Hung-yu, his eyes piercing Lame Sun like two arrows.

"I . . . I . . ." stuttered the charlatan. "Woe betide me . . . woe betide me. . . ."

"Lame Sun, where is your 'Yellow-Eyebrowed Fairy'? Can't it save you now?"

The quack was trembling from head to foot and didn't dare to say another word.

"Tell me, you fake," one of the militiamen interjected, "is there or is there not such a thing as your 'Yellow-Eyebrowed Fairy'?"

"No . . . well, no. . . ."

"Then tell us," asked the other militiaman, "aren't you cheating people?"

"Yes. Yes."

"Then, what should your punishment be? What would be your prescription?" demanded Hung-yu.

"That . . . that. . . ."

"Granny Tsun, You've been duped by this charlatan! How can there be any 'Yellow-Eyebrowed Fairy'? If there was one, wouldn't it have saved him? But look at him — as soon as we arrive he cringes and whimpers."

"Now I see," said Granny Tsun with a sigh. "I was really silly."

"You ought to get real medical treatment for your arm, not let this charlatan practise witchcraft on you. That only delays getting proper treatment and prolongs your pain."

Granny Tsun understood.

"Come with us, Lame Sun," commanded Hung-yu, echoed loudly by the two militiamen.

"Where are you going to take me?" faltered the fake.

"To a good place for you!" Hung-yu silenced him.

Hung-yu and the two militiamen had already made their

plan for teaching Lame Sun a lesson. They led him to the watchman's hut at the threshing ground where a militiaman unlocked the door for him to go in. "You can spend the night here," said Hung-yu, "and invoke your 'Yellow-Eyebrowed Fairy' to cure your lameness. If you haven't cured yourself by tomorrow morning, we'll have to deal with your case accordingly."

There was nothing Lame Sun could do but go into the dark little room and pass the night there.

"Call on your fairy to cure your limp!" shouted Pao-chang.

"Now is the time for your fairy to demonstrate its supernatural power!" joined in Little Rock.

"Tell us, Lame Sun," said one of the militiamen, "can your fairy straighten your leg in one night?"

"My fairy . . ." said Lame Sun, his teeth chattering uncontrollably, "why, how can it cure that?"

"You claim you can cure others' ills. Then why not your own?"

"I was just fooling!"

"Hold your tongue!" commanded Hung-yu. "Stay here tonight and behave yourself!" A militiaman locked the door.

"That fellow likes to practise his black art in the dark, so a little more of the dark won't hurt him," said Hung-yu. Then, on the way back home, he said to the militiamen, "Tomorrow when Lame Sun confesses and gives a clear account of his wrongdoings, one of you can preside over the meeting."

But the militiamen disagreed. "You'd better preside, Hung-yu, since he's from your village."

"All right, then. I will."

"What if that fellow runs away?" cautioned Little Rock, looking back once more at the hut.

"He won't run away. And he can't, anyway."

The next day the Stone Valley Village fair was being held, with stalls set up on both sides of the main street and all kinds of products on display. Members of production teams in the area had come with their leeks, onions, red and white turnips, round and long-type cabbage, carrots, peppers, some coming to sell their garden produce to the co-op or buy such items from the fair. Crowds of people milled about, greeting and talking to the relatives and friends they met there and creating a holiday atmosphere throughout the village.

It was to the crossroads at the centre of the fair that Hung-yu brought Lame Sun. He had improvised a megaphone and, climbing onto a bench, announced through it, "Attention, comrades! Lame Sun is now going to tell all of you how he tried to extort money from people by practising witchcraft."

The announcement electrified the crowd, the people pressing forward to see and hear.

Hung-yu then stepped down and ordered Lame Sun, "Get up on that bench and make a clean breast of your wrongdoings!"

Pale and shaking with fright, the charlatan did as he was told. Then, tinkling the little bell as he did when impersonating the "Yellow-Eyebrowed Fairy," he began to recite the doggerel Hung-yu had composed for him:

My name is Lame Sun,
I'm full of evil thoughts!
Scheming how to swindle people,
I pretend to be a god or a ghost.
I have the heart of a devil,
And I lust for money and things.
I'm most afraid of labour,
But fond of fine food.
With my bagful of tricks
I squeeze in every corner looking for a chance.
I say I'm the "Yellow-Eyebrowed Fairy,"
But it's all a hoax.
If I really had magic power,

Why can't I cure my own lame leg?

The crowd broke into loud laughter, and some did not hesitate to curse him roundly:

"That fellow's no good!"

"It's time he was punished!"

"Now that he's been caught in the act no one will believe him any more!"

Lame Sun could never forget this incident, and it gave him the jitters every time he thought of it.

From that time on very few people went to him for medical advice, infamous as he had become. But Lame Sun still had hope, thinking that with the county hospital or even the commune clinic so far away, some would still seek him out. Besides, as time went by, he figured, people would forget the incident at the Stone Valley Village fair, and with doctors so scarce he would in time become popular again.

But the starting of the training class for barefoot doctors was a very different thing, aggravated by Hung-yu's being chosen to attend. Lame Sun's day of dominating the medical field of Date Tree Slope would soon be over! What a dreadful, frightful prospect for him!

That night he tossed and turned on his bed, his heart gnawed by bitter hatred for Hung-yu. To think that they should have settled on him of all people! he thought. This is "enemies travelling a narrow road," as the saying goes.

The Send-Off

IT was barely light when grandma rose from her bed. She knew that Hung-yu had been too excited to sleep, and hesitated to wake him so early. So she quietly went to the kitchen to make breakfast.

Today Hung-yu was going to the county town to study. Granny must give him a good meal. She had brought up her grandson well. Though she loved the boy with all her heart, she never spoiled him. He was required to do his share of the household work and to realize that the good village life today had not come easily. He must never forget the past bitter days of his father and grandfather. Today granny was going to give him a warm send-off.

She took a piece of cured meat from an earthen jar under the table and chopped it up fine to make meat dumplings for him.

When Hung-yu woke up and heard the sounds of cooking from the kitchen, he quickly got up, dressed, folded his coverlet and went to the kitchen, where he found granny kneading the dough, the stuffing having all been mixed. "Oh, dumplings!" exclaimed Hung-yu happily.

Granny nodded. "Yes. I'm sending you off with a meal of meat-filled dumplings!"

"You needn't have, granny. Dumplings are too much trouble. Anything will do."

"No trouble at all. They're almost ready to eat," said granny with a smile.

Grandma was well on in years, but her movements were still quick and her hands nimble. Whatever she did, she did neatly.

So now that she was making dumplings for his send-off breakfast, he had no more to say, but went and picked up the carrying-pole and two empty wooden buckets in one corner of the room and went out.

Grandma called after him, "Isn't there enough water in the vat? You just filled it yesterday afternoon."

"But this is for Granny Wang," Hung-yu answered.

Granny Wang was a "five guarantees"* family member who lived alone in the west end of the main street not far from Hung-yu's house. For the past two years Hung-yu had been gathering or chopping firewood and carrying water for her.

The sun was not yet up. The dazzling glow of the morning sky gilded the patches of white cloud above, while bathing the trees, roofs and streets in crimson. Sparrows were chirping among the tree branches. Wisps of white smoke came in puffs from the chimneys, soon to disappear into the air.

Early risers were already at the village well, working hard at the pulley which gave a creaking sound. The chains attached to the carrying-poles clanged noisily against the iron buckets when hooked on. . . . The water-carriers seemed all to be in joyful mood. They were anxious to get the day's water supply in store so as to have the daylight hours for

* The "five guarantees" mean guaranteed food, clothing, medical care, housing and burial expenses for the aged or infirm who have no family to depend on, these needs being provided by the people's commune.

labour in the fields. All were working for the collective, learning from Tachai. None wanted to spend more time than necessary on chores.

When Hung-yu arrived with his buckets, the people began talking with him.

"You're going to the county town today. Is that so?"

"Aha, Hung-yu, so you're going to be a barefoot doctor!"

"It's really inconvenient not having a doctor of our own. Having to go so far away to see a doctor when we get sick takes a lot of time away from production."

"That's right. Study well, Hung-yu. It's for us poor and lower-middle peasants!"

At these remarks of the commune members Hung-yu nodded, knowing that they were sincere and weighty words of advice. They gave him strength.

With the two buckets of water at the ends of the carrying-pole, which was slung over his shoulder, Hung-yu arrived at Grandma Wang's. She was feeding her chickens in the yard, and the noisy flock—black, white and mottled—were all crowding around her in expectation of the sorghum in her hand.

"I hear you're going to be a barefoot doctor," greeted Grandma Wang when she saw Hung-yu coming with the load of water, and went at once to open her kitchen door for him.

"I'm going to learn to be one," said Hung-yu.

"You leave today?" asked Grandma Wang.

"Yes, in about an hour," replied Hung-yu as he emptied the two buckets into the vat.

"I was very happy when I heard about it last night and wanted to go and say a few parting words to you. But it was getting dark and I was afraid of falling down and causing trouble for the brigade. My legs aren't what they were. I'd planned to go to see you as soon as I'd fed the chickens."

"You needn't make the trip, Grandma Wang. You can tell me anything you have to say to me now," said Hung-yu, looking into the old woman's face and smiling.

"There's really not much. I just wanted to tell you to study well when you get there."

Hung-yu nodded. "I'll remember," he said.

"Study conscientiously and become a really good barefoot doctor."

"I will." Hung-yu nodded again.

"I hear Lame Sun wants to be a barefoot doctor, too."

"He went to ask the brigade leader but his request was turned down."

"That was right," rejoined Grandma Wang. "How could we let him be our barefoot doctor? He's not one of us. He hates us."

Hung-yu agreed.

"Lame Sun is angry because you're going to be our barefoot doctor. He flew into a rage last night, swearing and breaking bowls. My legs may be weak but there's nothing the matter with my hearing. I heard very clearly what was going on in the next courtyard where he lives."

Hung-yu instinctively looked in that direction. This very minute there was the sound of Lame Sun coughing on the other side of the wall, as if he was choking on a bone.

Grandma Wang again encouraged Hung-yu to study well and stand up for the poor and lower-middle peasants. She then pointed at the wall separating her yard from Sun's and said, "Show that charlatan that we can get along without him!"

Hung-yu agreed with that too.

"One more thing," continued Grandma Wang. "When you come back to us from the training class as a full-fledged barefoot doctor, you must cure my consumption so I can join the

others in production. You must understand how restless I am staying around home when everyone else in the brigade is busy learning from Tachai."

"I certainly will, grandma," answered Hung-yu, smiling and feeling more confident and firm in setting out after hearing the encouraging words she gave him. "Anything else you want to say to me?" he added.

"No." The old woman smiled fondly at this prospective young peasant doctor.

"I'll get you some more water, then," Hung-yu offered.

"Oh, no," interrupted the old woman. "You'd better go home and get your things ready."

"My things are all packed," said Hung-yu and went out with the buckets.

Hung-yu made two more trips for water, filling the vat to the brim. As he was leaving, he met Sister Chun-hung coming into the courtyard with two buckets of water on a carrying-pole over her shoulder.

"What, Hung-yu!" Sister Chun-hung exclaimed. "You've brought the water already?"

"Yes, and grandma's vat is full. So you'd better take your load back!"

"But Hung-yu!" Sister Chun-hung flung at him, pretending to be angry, "didn't you say that after you left I was to look after Grandma Wang? You said I should see that she had firewood and water, that I should take care of her, didn't you? And yet you. . . ."

"But I haven't gone yet! As our People's Liberation Army men say: One should do his work conscientiously till the minute he comes off duty."

"How well you talk! But the fact is I've carried the water here, and it's a long way to take it home."

Grandma Wang looked at the young people and smiled

good-naturedly.

"If it's too far to carry the water home, then don't," Hung-yu suggested.

"What? You mean to throw it away?"

"Of course not. Water that cedrela sapling with it. It needs watering anyway."

"You are smart, aren't you?" Sister Chun-hung couldn't help laughing and liking Hung-yu for his solution to the problem.

So they watered the sapling outside grandma's window.

"You young people are really helpful," exclaimed Grandma Wang appreciatively. "Even my little tree gets attention."

As a matter of fact, it was Hung-yu who had planted the sapling. The spring before, he had taken two seedlings from his aunt's in Stone Valley Village and transplanted one here for Grandma Wang and the other in his own courtyard. Since that he had often come to water and care for it so that from a two-foot seedling it had shot up higher than Grandma Wang's rooftop. Its trunk was sturdy and there were many young shoots on its branches.

On his way home Hung-yu ran into Little Shun.

"Brother Hung-yu," cried he, "I was just going to see you."

"What did you want?"

"Nothing much." Little Shun was a bit shy.

"But there must be something," persisted Hung-yu.

"I want to give you something. It's this." Little Shun took a red-covered notebook from his jacket pocket and handed it to Hung-yu with both hands. "Take this," he said.

Hung-yu did not take the notebook, for he knew how much Little Shun treasured it. He remembered how happy Little Shun had been one day coming back from his grandmother's house with this little notebook a cousin had given him. He



especially liked the coloured picture of Lei Feng* in it. He had put the notebook away in a box where he kept all his precious things: pen knives, small pictures, glass marbles, shuttle-cocks, fishnets. . . . Little Shun showed these treasures to only his best friends. Now he was offering Hung-yu his red-covered notebook, the most precious of all his treasures!

Hung-yu felt he could not accept it. "Keep it for yourself, Little Shun," he said. "I have one."

Little Shun became very serious. "I know you have. But I want to give it to you just the same." He pushed the notebook into Hung-yu's hands.

This offering and refusing was repeated until Little Shun begged with tears in his eyes and Hung-yu finally accepted the gift. He knew very well that Little Shun would be hurt if he didn't. He would buy one at the county store and send it back to Little Shun.

Little Shun cheered up and said, "Brother Hung-yu, study well. And when you come back teach me so I can be a barefoot doctor too!"

Hung-yu was very much moved. "Certainly, I'll do that," he assured the little boy.

"Don't forget to go and see Grandpa Stonemason when you get to the county town."

"I'll be sure to see him first thing."

After Little Shun turned and was going away happily, Hung-yu stood watching him until he disappeared around a corner. Then, taking a deep breath, Hung-yu walked homeward, the two empty buckets dangling from the ends of his carrying-pole.

*A soldier in a transport unit of the People's Liberation Army. Loyal to the revolution and the people, he died in the performance of his duties. His name is known to every household in China.

The dumplings were done, and he and granny sat down to a hearty meal as soon as he reached home.

They had scarcely finished when the Party secretary, Uncle Ching-tang, arrived pushing a one-wheeled barrow. "Are you ready, Hung-yu?" he called out, his loud voice carrying clearly into the house.

"Everything's ready," shouted back Hung-yu, rushing out.

"Come on in, Ching-tang," grandma called to the Party secretary, who asked Hung-yu to load his things onto the barrow at once.

"It's time to go. I have to be back right away, you know." The Party secretary helped Hung-yu carry his luggage out and started loading it on the wheelbarrow.

"Why bring this wheelbarrow, Uncle Ching-tang? I can carry my things on my back."

"But I'll need the wheelbarrow coming back, because I've asked the county nursery for several dozen apple saplings," explained the Party secretary.

Grandma saw the two off at the gate.

"Let me push the wheelbarrow, uncle," said Hung-yu. But the Party secretary would not hear of it. "We're the ones giving you the warm send-off today. I'll push it." His smile was genial. Hung-yu asked again but to no avail.

"Don't argue any more. When it comes to pushing a wheelbarrow I'm better than you," said the Party secretary with finality. So they started off, one pushing the barrow, the other following close behind.

Grandma watched them from the gate until they reached the edge of the village and were out of sight.

By this time the sun had risen and the rosy morning clouds had dispersed. The rays of the early sun shining on the Five-Dragon Mountains bathed their peaks in gold, while the dense fog on the slopes was now thinning, and silvery ripples on

the winding streams glistened in the valley below. On the sunny side of the slopes tender shoots in bud carpeted the earth with green velvet. Swallows flew high above in the blue of the sky, heralding the arrival of spring.

The mountain slopes had been terraced into fields—the result of learning from Tachai. Looking at these fields, one could not help being impressed with the time and energy, trial and toil that had gone into turning the barren mountains of yesterday into the lush fields of today. What tremendous labour it represented! The Party secretary, Uncle Ching-tang, had led the commune members from mountain to mountain for days and nights at a stretch, planning and working, his eyes heavy and red from lack of sleep. The brigade leader had drilled dynamite holes in the rock with a big hammer while suspended by a rope pegged half-way up the mountain. Grandpa Stonemason, in spite of his bronchitis, chiselled stone blocks or made earth embankments day in and day out without rest. . . . Hung-yu was just a little boy then, unable to chisel stone yet, but still he did what he could. Together with the other boys he moved earth and stones or carried water for the grown-ups to drink.

Now that the terraced fields had been completed, they rose tier upon tier, neat and beautiful. But the irrigation canal had not yet reached this part of the mountain and these terraced fields needed water badly.

As Hung-yu and the Party secretary trekked along the tortuous hilly path, they saw the commune members already at work in the fields. Some were driving donkey carts piled high with baskets of manure; some were levelling the ground with picks; some were ploughing; some harrowing, while others were sowing. They laughed and sang as they worked.

Cuckoos sang in the far distance. The mountains boomed with blasting for the irrigation canal.

Spring — time for intense work!

Hung-yu was tremendously moved to see the activity all around him. "Look, uncle," he cried joyfully. "How hard the commune members are working! How seriously they learn from Tachai! I'm sure we'll have another bumper harvest this year."

"I think so too," replied Uncle Ching-tang, who was equally pleased at the scene. "Chairman Mao has pointed out for us the road to happiness. So long as we follow this road, we'll find our life improves."

"No doubt about it. No doubt about it," said Hung-yu, repeating a pet phrase of his that showed clearly his accustomed optimism. "You remember, uncle, how we built the big reservoir at Redstone Ridge year before last? How the whole commune worked all that year? We started digging the canal through the mountain only last winter, and it's already half done. When this irrigation canal is finished, the terraced fields will get water, and we'll even grow rice on the mountain slopes! We can have a fish pond too. It'll make this mountain region a place of fish and rice, like in south China!"

"Not only fish and rice, but plenty of fruit," joined in Uncle Ching-tang. "We'll put orchards on the slopes — apple, pear, peach, walnut, persimmon, date. . . ."

"And hazel nuts, chestnuts, plums, crab-apples, hill haws, and grapes!" added Hung-yu. "In the spring the air will be filled with the perfume of the blossoms, and in the autumn the fruit will pile up mountain-high!"

"How eloquent you are!" commented Uncle Ching-tang.

"You started it all yourself!" And they both laughed heartily.

"The electric power station at the Redstone Ridge Reservoir our commune is working on will be finished this autumn.

Then you'll see electric cables reaching out in all directions; electric lights will shine everywhere. You'll hear the sound of mill rollers grinding and husking grain by electricity. Electric motors will send water up to the mountain ridges! How beautiful it will be!" It seemed to Hung-yu that all of these things were already accomplished.

"Yes, it'll be splendid," joined in the Party secretary, "but it depends on us to bring it about. Our happy life will be won only by our persistence and sweat."

"It will be won — no doubt about it," said Hung-yu confidently.

"We've gone a piece in learning from Tachai in the past few years," the Party secretary went on. "But," he emphasized, "compared with the more advanced communes we still lag far behind, and certainly can't talk of being up to Tachai. We must work still harder in many fields. For example, in medical and health work. Imagine not having a single doctor in our whole brigade! There's the county hospital and commune clinic, and if we look back on pre-liberation days, why, it's quite different from before. But the hospital and clinic are too far away to be convenient for our brigade members who sometimes need only minor treatment. Production is also affected. During the Great Leap Forward in 1958 we established a health centre, but it didn't survive Liu Shao-chi's counter-revolutionary revisionist ill wind. This situation still gives Lamé Sun ground for manoeuvre, and it must be changed. Think it over, Hung-yu, and you'll realize the importance and weight of the task placed on you as a barefoot doctor."

Uncle Ching-tang's words gave Hung-yu food for thought. He recalled what the poor and lower-middle peasants had said to him at the well that early morning, what Granny Wang and Little Shun had said. . . . How their words still rang

in his ears! After a few moments of deep thought, Hung-yu said clearly and emphatically, "Uncle Ching-tang, I'll do my best to study hard and be a good peasant doctor."

The Party secretary was pleased at the seriousness with which Hung-yu expressed his determination.

Talking as they walked, they reached the county town at about ten o'clock that morning and went directly to the county revolutionary committee hostel, where the training class was to be held. Leaving their wheelbarrow in the courtyard, they went in to inquire where the registration office was located.

An elderly man was leaning against the desk sliding the beads of an abacus. Asked about the registration, he turned and shouted to someone in the inner room, "I say, Old Li, here's another trainee for you."

Hung-yu immediately recognized the man who appeared as the chairman of the hospital revolutionary committee — the same bushy eyebrows on a rather long face, about forty years of age. He hurriedly stepped forward and greeted him, "So it's you, Dr. Li!"

Dr. Li also remembered Hung-yu, and replied with a smile, "I know, you are Chang Hung-yu from Date Tree Slope. Right? So you've really come to learn to be a barefoot doctor!"

Hung-yu nodded, then introduced the Party secretary to the hospital revolutionary committee chairman.

"Dr. Li, are you in charge of the barefoot doctor training class?" the Party secretary asked.

When Dr. Li said he was, the Party branch secretary continued, "We need medical workers in our villages badly! Our poor and lower-middle peasants place the greatest hope on this training class. We hope you'll bring up barefoot doctors who will serve the poor and lower-middle peasants with their

whole heart."

"I already know this young man," replied Dr. Li with a smile. "He's still young, but he's promising."

"I'd heard you thought so. He put up a big-character poster in your hospital, didn't he?"

"A well-written one, too. Only a little one-sided," commented Dr. Li, still smiling.

"How?" Hung-yu put in, puzzled.

"We welcome criticism of our work from anyone. But to commend me personally in that poster just wasn't appropriate."

"But it was all facts," protested Hung-yu.

"That's why I say it was one-sided. You lack a dialectical way of looking at things, my boy."

"How's that?" Hung-yu was surprised.

"I should not have been commended. On the other hand I should have been criticized."

Hung-yu became more confused. "But why?" he asked.

"As a doctor," explained Li, "I have the duty to treat the poor and lower-middle peasants. There's nothing to be commended there. And, as a leading member of the hospital staff, I should be responsible for the behaviour of our doctors, for example, the attitude of Dr. Sang towards the poor and lower-middle peasants. Don't you agree that I'm the one who should be criticized and who should make a self-criticism?"

"Actually we poor and lower-middle peasants have a good impression of our county hospital. Your doctors serve their patients fairly well," put in the Party secretary. "Perhaps Dr. Sang is an isolated case."

"But we shouldn't tolerate such conduct even as isolated cases."

This was the first time Hung-yu had heard of the dialectical way of looking at things, and he still thought he had sufficient reason to praise the chairman of the revolutionary

committee. But not wishing to argue any further, he merely said, "But your Dr. Sang is not very good."

"You're right, and we accept your criticism," Dr. Li acknowledged. "Now we're conducting a campaign to rectify our medical personnel's incorrect style of work. We welcome our poor and lower-middle peasants' criticisms."

"If we have any, we'll tell you, quite frankly too."

"Good. Frankness is what we want. Now, let's go to Room 35 to register."

After registering, Hung-yu took his luggage to his room and then went with the Party secretary to see Grandpa Stonemason.

Arriving at the hospital gate, they saw Hung-yu's big-character poster still there. But the first part, in which Hung-yu praised the chairman of the revolutionary committee, was covered by another poster, which read:

WE WELCOME CRITICISM BY THE POOR AND
LOWER-MIDDLE PEASANTS

Chairman Mao teaches us to **serve the people wholeheartedly**. But there are certain doctors in our hospital who do not take a correct attitude in treating their poor and lower-middle peasant class patients. This is due on the one hand to the doctors themselves not having remoulded their ideology well so as to develop deep proletarian feeling for the working people. But it is also due to the hospital leadership not grasping political and ideological work firmly and making a success of this work, or educating them in Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought. Now the poor and lower-middle peasants have criticized us, and we sincerely accept their criticism. We are conducting a campaign to rectify our style of work, examine our mistakes and make a self-criticism. We hope our poor and lower-middle peasants will give us more criticisms and suggestions so as to help us correct our shortcomings and mistakes. This will enable us to serve the people better.

Revolutionary Committee, County Hospital

"I'm sure this big-character poster was written by Dr. Li on behalf of the revolutionary committee," commented Hung-

yu. "And I'm also sure that it was Dr. Li himself who posted it."

"How do you know?" asked Uncle Ching-tang with a surprised smile.

"No doubt about it," Hung-yu came out with his pet phrase. "You see," he continued, "this poster just covers that part of mine where I praised him. Who else could have done it?"

The Party secretary thought Hung-yu's conclusion very likely.

They arrived at the medical ward to find the old stonemason practically recovered. He was sitting up in bed talking to Yu-chu. "Why, it's you, Ching-tang! And Hung-yu, too!" he cried on seeing them enter the room. "You've come all this way to see me?"

"Hung-yu is here to study in the training class for barefoot doctors," said Uncle Ching-tang, "and I came with him to collect some apple saplings at the county nursery. How do you feel today, uncle? Better?"

"Oh, yes, I'm feeling fine," answered the old stonemason. "Dr. Li of the hospital revolutionary committee certainly takes a responsible attitude towards his patients. He's been attending to me himself ever since I came here. Now I'm well and I've asked the hospital to let me go home."

"You'd better stay a few days longer until you're as good as new," advised Uncle Ching-tang.

"But I'm thinking of the irrigation project. How's it been going on?"

"All right. Everybody's busy chiselling stone blocks for the bridge. When you're back on the job we can start building the arches."

Grandpa Stonemason agreed with that. Then turning to Hung-yu he said, "So you're going to study to be a barefoot doctor?" At Hung-yu's nod the old stonemason added, "Good!

We poor and lower-middle peasants will have doctors of our own and won't have to come all the way to the county hospital when we're sick. You must study hard, Hung-yu." Hung-yu said he would.

"Hung-yu," joined in Yu-chu, "you must be like Dr. Li and not like that Dr. Sang!"

"There's a rectification campaign going on in the hospital," said Grandpa Stonemason. "Dr. Sang has received many criticisms and is being helped to see his mistakes. I've told Dr. Li that it's hard for young people to avoid making mistakes. It's a question of his seeing his error and correcting it. Once he's done that, the matter will be dropped."

"People say that Dr. Sang doesn't want to work in the countryside," explained Yu-chu, "and asked for a transfer. But he didn't get it. He's not satisfied with his work here and feels restless. That's why he acted that way the other night when he was on duty."

A nurse came in to give the old stonemason another injection, the Party secretary and Hung-yu said goodbye to him and turned to leave. "Ching-tang," the patient shouted after them, "tell the comrades at the construction site to keep up the good work, that I'm coming back soon and we'll start putting up those arches right away."

The First Lesson

IT was the day after the opening of the training class for barefoot doctors, and the first class was to be held that morning.

What was the first lesson about? Not traditional Chinese medicine, or Western medicine either. Nor was it about giving injections, or how to feel the pulse. The subject was: The Hope of the Poor and Lower-Middle Peasants.

Who was to conduct the first lesson? It was an old poor peasant who had gone through terrible sufferings in the old society and who, therefore, had the deepest hatred for it.

The classroom was formerly the conference room of the county hostel, medium in size and now furnished with school desks and benches.

Every seat was filled. Besides the students there were also doctors and others of the hospital staff who attended the class as their political study for that day.

Dr. Sang was there, looking rather gloomy with his head down. Having been criticized by his colleagues, he sat in a corner of the room, obviously affected by the criticism. Hung-yu turned to look at him and their eyes met. In an instant Dr. Sang recognized Hung-yu, blushed and hung his head again.

Time to begin the first class. Dr. Li came in with an old man, big and tall but with a thin face from which shone eyes that showed great fortitude. Why, it was Grandpa Stonemason! Hung-yu was so excited that he nearly forgot himself and stood up to call to him. He realized just in time where he was and kept his seat, smiling broadly at the old stonemason.

Grandpa Stonemason nodded to Hung-yu as he passed by on his way to the front of the room with Dr. Li. The chairman of the revolutionary committee introduced the old stonemason to the class and the first lesson began.

Grandpa Stonemason sat down on a wooden chair. He was pale from his recent illness, a bit short of breath and coughing now and then. But he was full of spirit and energy.

"Today is the first class for training barefoot doctors," he began. "The chairman of the hospital revolutionary committee has asked me to talk to you. But what shall I say? Shall I talk about my family history? About the hopes the poor and lower-middle peasants place in you — the future barefoot doctors of our communes?" The old stonemason paused for a moment, then continued, "Where shall I begin? Well, let's begin with the death of my wife and child. It's a long story. . . ."

The old stonemason paused again. Indignation flashed in his eyes as he recalled the sad incidents of the past once more. He thought for a moment, catching the threads of the past events. Then in a low but strong voice he told the following story.

It was over thirty years ago when Grandpa Stonemason was nearly forty but not yet married, for in the old society it was very difficult for a poor man to find a wife. Finally, in 1936, he married a widow whose husband had been a hired farm labourer like himself. They were very happy together though

they barely made a living with both working, he as a mason and she washing and sewing for others. The second year a son was born to them, an adorable baby and the pride of its parents.

The old stonemason's wife was a very capable woman, handy with a needle, and the old despot Big-Head Sun asked her to do some embroidery work for his third daughter, who was getting married. But how could she leave home when she had the baby to nurse? For Big-Head Sun wouldn't have the work done in her home, nor would he let her bring the baby along. She had to go to his house. In the old society what could a poor woman do against the tyranny of a despot? So she tied the baby to the window-sill and went. The work was exacting, heavy, and no time was allowed her to feed the baby. It soon got sick, ran a high fever, went into convulsions, fell into coma and was at death's door. There was only one doctor in the entire area, and he was Big-Head Sun's elder brother, Sun Lao-ying. He owned a Chinese medicine shop which also served as his clinic. All prescriptions had to be filled in his private pharmacy. His out-call fee was preposterous. First, the patient would have to send him an expensive present. Then he would have to hire a two-horse carriage to fetch him. After that the patient's family had to prepare a feast for him, for it was only after he had eaten his fill that he would begin giving treatment. It was impossible for a poor person to see a doctor, much less to have him come to his home. When poor people became ill, they simply stayed in bed and stuck it out, for better or for worse. Only in desperate cases did any poor person venture to see this doctor.

On the front wall of the pharmacy hung a big wooden board with Sun Lao-ying's price list:

General Practitioner Sun treats all diseases and
retrieves his patients from the jaws of death—

Consultation	Two silver dollars
Prescription	Two silver dollars
Acupuncture and moxibustion	Two silver dollars
Out-call	To be fixed

This was no place for curing the sick but a medicine shop where the poor were fleeced and flung into their graves!

If it were the old stonemason or his wife who was ill, no doubt the couple would take one look and turn back. But it was their little son who was afflicted and they must find a way to see the doctor at any cost.

Grandpa Stonemason tried to borrow money from his friends, who, however, were as poor as himself. Finally, after going from one friend to another, he collected a sum of five silver dollars. The next afternoon, when the baby had got worse, he wrapped it in an old quilt and took it to see Sun Lao-ying in Redstone Valley Town.

It was the twelfth lunar month. A cold northwester howled, driving the snow before it. Grandpa Stonemason hugged his baby tight to keep him warm as he plodded over the bad road to the town. When he reached there it was already dark and the medicine shop was shuttered up, though a light still shone inside. Peeping through the cracks, the old stonemason saw Sun Lao-ying, Lame Sun, the steward and a fellow from the town administration office playing *mahjong*. It was only after a long time that the old stonemason finally got the door opened. But neither Sun Lao-ying nor Lame Sun paid him the slightest attention, though they had seen clearly that he was their farmhand. They just went on playing *mahjong*!

Grandpa Stonemason was getting impatient and finally said, "Venerable Dr. Sun, I'm sorry to bother you, but please take a look at my baby. He's bad off."

Sun Lao-ying did not reply, only gave the stonemason an irritated look.

"Can't you see we're occupied?" Lame Sun interposed. "Wait till we finish this round." And the clicking of the tiles went on.

Without interrupting the playing, the steward glanced in grandpa's direction and asked, "Have you brought any money with you?"

The old stonemason's anger was rising, and he would have kicked the *mahjong* table over if not for the fact that he had no alternative to asking that old scoundrel of a doctor to treat his child. So he swallowed his anger and answered, "Yes, I have."

The game went on, none of the players paying any attention to the old man with a sick baby in his arms, though the child was in convulsions.

When the round of *mahjong* was finished, Sun Lao-ying slowly turned round and asked the old stonemason, "Is the baby sick? Come over here and let me look at him."

Grandpa Stonemason rushed over.

"Shall I feel his pulse and make a diagnosis?" asked Sun Lao-ying, rolling his eyes patronizingly.

"Oh, yes. Please see what's wrong with him," pleaded the old stonemason as he loosened the ragged quilt around the baby.

But Sun Lao-ying did not feel the baby's pulse before shaking his head and demanding: "Pay two silver dollars first."

Once again the old stonemason suppressed his anger and handed the steward the silver coins.

It was only after the money had been paid that Sun Lao-ying felt the baby's pulse, and carelessly too, for he kept on talking to the steward about the game they were playing.

Soon he thrust the baby's hand away and said, "That's all."

"What's wrong with my baby?" grandpa asked anxiously.
"He's caught cold," was the indifferent answer.

"Is it serious?"

"Hard to say." Then after a pause: "Shall I write out a prescription?"

"Yes."

"Another two silver dollars," demanded Sun Lao-ying, and the old stonemason handed over the money.

The prescription was duly written and given to the steward who, after some manipulations of the abacus, announced, "Two dollars and eighty-five cents! Pay first, then get your medicine."

Grandpa reached into his jacket pocket, but there was only one dollar left. "I have only one dollar with me. Give me the medicine first. I'll bring you the rest of the money tomorrow."

The steward looked for his cue at Lame Sun, who was sitting beside him. Without a second thought Lame Sun belted, "Nothing doing! The shop gives no credit!"

Grandpa Stonemason begged and begged, but all to no avail. Finally he had to leave with the sick baby and the written-out prescription — but without the medicine!

On reaching home he tried desperately to borrow the money, again canvassing his friends, while the baby's condition steadily worsened.

That very night grandpa went back to the pharmacy to get the medicine. But the place was not only closed, there was no light inside either. Grandpa Stonemason banged at the door, pounding on it until finally the steward got up and said to him through the door cracks, "Stop banging on the door! You'll wake up our junior manager. He suffers from insomnia, and he'll be furious with you if he can't get to sleep again. Come back tomorrow morning."



"But my baby is too sick to wait till tomorrow for the medicine."

"I'm under strict orders from our junior manager not to fill any prescriptions after midnight." And with that he went away.

What else could Grandpa Stonemason do but sit on the doorstep and wait? So he sat there and waited until the next morning when the shop opened and he went in and had the prescription filled. Then he hurried home with it.

But when he reached home, he found his wife holding the baby to her breast and weeping bitterly. It was dead. . . .

They buried their baby on the western slope, the mother sitting beside the grave for a long time, weeping. The north wind howled; the snow fell heavily, but wind and snow or the persuasions of her neighbours could not move the mother. Oh, wind! You can shake the heavens and move the earth; you can uproot giant trees or snap off thick branches. Why can't you sweep the earth clean of this dark old society? Oh, snow! You can cover mountain ranges; you can level ravines and valleys. Why can't you bury all wolves in human form? The poor mother stayed at the graveside exposed to the snow and wind for a whole day and finally fainted, so that grandpa had to carry her home. She never rallied, becoming seriously ill, and after a few days she, too, died, the name of her baby son on her lips. . . .

Nearly everyone in the classroom was weeping by the time Grandpa Stonemason got to this part of his story. Hung-yu looked back with tears in his eyes and happened to catch a glimpse of Dr. Sang. He was dabbing at his eyes with his handkerchief.

The old stonemason was himself moved, and his voice quivered with emotion so that he could hardly go on. He paused for a while before continuing. "Yet, despite their

beastly act the Suns, with the hearts of wolves, two years later wanted to set up an arch of 'mercy and benevolence' outside their house!"

At this point, Grandpa Stonemason told the class how Big-Head Sun had ordered him to carve that stone arch. . . .

There was absolute quiet in the classroom as everyone listened intently to grandpa's telling how he struck Big-Head Sun on the head with his hammer and how he ran away into the mountains and was rescued by the guerrillas, who made him their cook. Only then did his listeners appear to relax.

Grandpa then told about the days of land reform, when Big-Head Sun was brought back from the cave in the mountains where he was hiding, and how he was tried and shot. He told how the despot's land and property were divided among the poor and lower-middle peasants. . . . Thunderous applause rose from the audience.

Grandpa Stonemason gazed for a moment at the class, his eyes seeming to shoot fire into everyone's heart. Then he continued, every word accented with his emotion, "Since liberation we poor and lower-middle peasants have won political power and become masters of our country. We don't have to worry about being fed or clothed. . . . We've gone a long way, too, in medical and health work. We have county hospitals and commune clinics. But the interference and sabotage of Liu Shao-chi's counter-revolutionary revisionist line prevented us from going on to extend medical service to outlying villages, especially in mountainous areas like ours. This has caused a lot of inconvenience and hardship for poor and lower-middle peasants who get sick. In our village, for example, Lame Sun, son of that local despot Big-Head Sun and formerly the junior manager of the Sun's pharmacy, is still fleecing and cheating us poor and lower-middle peasants. Why? Because he's practically the only one there who knows anything

about medicine. One winter when I had a bad stomach-ache, someone fetched Lame Sun to see me. When he was alone with me in the room, he was so brazen as to demand that the big cooking pot that had been shared out to me from his family property during land reform be returned to him before he'd take a look at me. The very idea! I told him to get out quick, that even if I died of my stomach-ache I wouldn't let him touch me, even if he were a wizard capable of curing me instantly. I chased him out!"

Grandpa Stonemason paused before continuing. "Don't you see what this means? Lame Sun is taking advantage of the lack of doctors and medicine to try to reverse the situation. He thinks he's indispensable because we poor and lower-middle peasants have no doctors of our own. Most of us have learned to know him for what he is, but there are a few among us who are still deceived by him. Some two years ago he tried practising witchcraft, was caught in the act and criticized at a mass meeting. He may appear since that to be behaving better, but look out! He's still trying to worm his way up in the medical field."

The old stonemason paused again, looked straight into the eyes of his listeners, then continued in a ringing, clear voice, "It is precisely because of this that we, the poor and lower-middle peasants, place so much hope in this training class and in you, our future barefoot doctors. You all come from the villages and are the sons and daughters of poor and lower-middle peasants. You must study hard so that when you leave the training class you will be able to serve the poor and lower-middle peasants well."

The old stonemason's talk ended. The first class in the barefoot doctors' training course was over. The hospital revolutionary committee chairman, Dr. Li, asked the students to discuss the talk seriously among themselves.

Grandpa Stonemason was accompanied by Dr. Li as he left the room. But all the rest remained in discussion for a long time, deeply stirred.

Hung-yu was especially moved, for he knew most of the people and events in the old stonemason's story. He had even taken part in some of them.

Discussion continued throughout the morning, the class not breaking up until after the bell had rung for lunch.

Hung-yu ran into Yu-chu at the dining-room door. He had been staying at the hospital with Grandpa Stonemason. "Do you know where grandpa's gone to?" he asked anxiously.

"Why, he left with Dr. Li after his talk. Didn't he go back to the hospital?"

"No, he didn't. The others are all back, but no Grandpa Stonemason!"

"Where do you suppose he went? Let's find Dr. Li and ask him."

They met Dr. Li at the hospital gate and Hung-yu asked anxiously, "Dr. Li, where has our Grandpa Stonemason got to?"

"Why, didn't he go back to the hospital?"

"No," replied Yu-chu. "He hasn't shown up yet. I'm looking for him."

"You two came out of the classroom together," Hung-yu reminded Dr. Li.

"Yes, we did. But on the way I met Old Wang from the pharmaceutical company. As he had something to see me about, I asked grandpa to go back to the hospital first. He didn't do that? Where could he be?"

Just then the young nurse who was in charge of the old stonemason came along. "Comrade Yu-chu," she said, "I'm looking for you."

"What for?"

"Your Grandpa Stonemason has decamped!"

"Where's he gone?" Hung-yu and Yu-chu both asked at once.

"On the way back to the hospital Grandpa Stonemason had spotted a mule cart headed for Chin Family Valley. It would pass through Date Tree Slope, so he got a lift and went home. He said it would save the brigade the trouble of sending someone to fetch him. He said I should tell Comrade Yu-chu that he must notify the hospital, and ask Yu-chu to return too."

"But," asked Hung-yu, "has Grandpa Stonemason completely recovered?"

"I told him that Dr. Li wanted him to stay in the hospital a couple of days longer," replied the nurse, "but he said he was all right now, that he must hurry home as he had work to do there. That was all. He just jumped onto the cart and was gone."

"Well," said Dr. Li to Hung-yu and Yu-chu later, "you'd better look after him and not let him get sick again."

"What can you do with a man like grandpa!" exclaimed Hung-yu and Yu-chu together.

CHAPTER 8

“I’ll Take Dr. Norman Bethune* As My Model”

THAT evening after night study when everyone else had gone to bed Hung-yu went quietly out of the hostel to see Dr. Li.

He wanted to borrow a book. The day before, when he was in the hospital revolutionary committee office, he had seen a book on the shelf entitled *The Story of Dr. Bethune*. He had wanted to ask to borrow it then and there, but Dr. Li was busy talking to another doctor, and then he had had to hurry back to class. He certainly wanted to read that book and learn from Dr. Bethune! For wasn't he himself soon going to be a barefoot doctor?

As Hung-yu approached Dr. Li's office, he saw the light

* A member of the Canadian Communist Party and a distinguished surgeon. Imbued with proletarian internationalism and the great communist spirit, Dr. Bethune came to China's Liberated Areas at the head of a medical team composed of Canadians and Americans after the War of Resistance Against Japan broke out in 1937. He made valuable contributions to the cause of the Chinese people's liberation with his superb medical skill and utter devotion to his work. He contracted blood poisoning while operating on wounded soldiers and died in Tanghsien, Hopei, on November 12, 1939. Chairman Mao Tsetung wrote the article "In Memory of Norman Bethune" to commend his lofty internationalist and communist spirit.

was still on and was about to knock at the door when he heard voices inside.

Looking in through the glass in the upper part of the door, he saw sitting opposite Dr. Li no other than Dr. Sang! Dr. Li had a book in his hand.

Hung-yu did not want to interrupt them and turned to leave. He would come again another time. But Dr. Li had seen him looking in and called out, "Hung-yu, do you want to see me? Come on in!"

"It's not important," answered Hung-yu. "I'll come again some other time."

"Come in. We'll be through in a minute." Hung-yu went in and sat down on a low stool against the book shelf and glanced over the titles of the books there while Dr. Li went on talking with Dr. Sang.

The revolutionary committee chairman was saying, "Even after liberation, because of the interference of Liu Shao-chi's counter-revolutionary revisionist line in the field of health work, we still lack medical personnel and medicine in the countryside, especially in mountain villages such as ours. It was precisely in this situation that Chairman Mao called upon us in 1965 to direct our attention mainly to the rural areas in medical and health work. We should think, as medical doctors, as revolutionary health workers, what we should do. How are we to apply Chairman Mao's directive?"

"Think of Dr. Norman Bethune. He was already around fifty when he came to China, making light of travelling thousands of miles to help us in our War of Resistance Against Japan. For the cause of the Chinese people's liberation he gave his life. And you? Because you're a short distance away from home, you're not happy with your work. You say life in these mountains is hard, and the working conditions are bad. You want to go somewhere else. And

because you're not given a transfer, you're peevish and down in the dumps. . . ."

"I've been having sharp mental tussles with myself these past few days," said Dr. Sang. "Comrades have been criticizing me, digging into the root of my trouble. And I know where the trouble is. It's my individualism! That day when I was listening to Grandpa Stonemason tell about his suffering in the old society, I felt really angry with the injustice of it and I began to see my mistakes. The Party and the people have brought me up, sent me to college to get a technical education, and I've become a medical doctor. My not wanting to work in this mountain region is. . . ." And he broke down.

"Well," said Dr. Li, "so long as you recognize your mistake and are willing to correct it, that's good. Take this book along and read it. But, first study conscientiously Chairman Mao's article 'In Memory of Norman Bethune.' It's included in this book."

Hung-yu looked. The book was the very one he had come to borrow! Dr. Li handed it to Dr. Sang, who began thumbing through it.

Hung-yu thought it only right that Dr. Sang should read the book first. He would have it later.

"There's part of Norman Bethune's story which is not in the book, but which I know. I'll tell you both some other time."

Hung-yu was excited at the prospect of Dr. Li's telling them an additional anecdote about Norman Bethune. "Tell us now, Dr. Li. We'd love to hear it." Dr. Li smiled at Hung-yu. "By the way," he said, "what did you come to see me for? You haven't told me yet."

"Oh, nothing really," Hung-yu answered with a smile. "I came to hear the story of Norman Bethune."

"But how did you know about the story?"

"I just did some analysing!" Hung-yu chuckled.

"Well," began Dr. Li, "here's the story."

Hung-yu pulled his stool over and sat near Dr. Li and Dr. Sang, who was a little embarrassed by Hung-yu's presence. "I'm sorry for the way I acted that night," he said, his face flushing.

"Forget about it," answered Hung-yu. "We won't talk about it any more." Hung-yu was glad that Dr. Sang realized his mistake and was willing to change. His behaviour that night should be a closed chapter.

Before Dr. Li began his story, he opened a small trunk and took out a red cardboard box. In the box was a tiny bundle wrapped in a piece of white silk, which he undid. In it was a roll of washed, used gauze.

Dr. Li held the gauze in his hand for some time before saying with emotion, "Dr. Bethune once bandaged the wound of a stretcher-bearer with this."

Both Hung-yu and Dr. Sang fixed their eyes on the gauze, their interest instantly aroused.

"But how did it come into your hands?" asked Hung-yu.

"Listen," said Dr. Li. And he began telling the story of that roll of gauze —

It was spring 1939. After a long and difficult journey Dr. Bethune arrived at the military area in central Hopei Province with his medical team. It was at a time when the Japanese aggressors were frantically carrying out their "mopping-up" against us, and our heroic Eighth Route Army was hitting the enemy hard and never yielding. In the most unfavourable conditions Dr. Bethune worked day and night at the head of his team amid shot and shell on the front lines.

One day during a fierce battle in which a large number of enemy troops fell in our ambush, Dr. Bethune and his medical team were working in a village only about two kilometres

from the front. Dr. Bethune had set up a door panel as an operating table in a dilapidated temple and was giving emergency treatment to wounded soldiers from the front. With the cannon roaring outside and the ground shaking beneath him, he kept on operating under a kerosene pressure lamp, calm and steady, on his improvised operating table. When the comrades saw how tired he was and asked him to rest for a while, he only answered, "Rest? How can I rest at such a time as this? On the contrary, I must make the most of what time we have to save as many wounded class brothers as possible." After two hours of intense work all the emergency patients from the front had been treated and, with the task of ambushing the enemy completed, the command ordered the medical team to move. But just as they were ready to pack up and leave, two peasants carried in a wounded man on a stretcher. He was in fact a stretcher-bearer himself who had been hit in the arm and chest with shrapnel. He was unconscious and bleeding profusely. Dr. Bethune said they must operate at once. When the others reminded him of the seriousness of the situation, and said he must leave the place and take the wounded man along, he flatly refused. "No," he said. "The situation is critical, but the wounded man's condition is more critical. It's a doctor's duty to rescue the dying."

The piece of shrapnel had to be taken out. But the wounded man needed a blood transfusion, and where was the blood to be had at that moment? The patient's blood type had still to be determined, and there was no time to lose. Just then Dr. Bethune said without the slightest hesitation, "Use my blood. My blood type is the universal '0.'" The comrades were deeply moved, but how could they let him give his blood and do the operation too? "Dr. Bethune, you aren't too strong. And you haven't had proper rest for many days and nights," they said.



Dr. Bethune stopped them with a wave of his hand and said, "No more arguing. Do as I tell you." He rolled up his sleeve and told them to draw 300 c.c. of his blood. It was like Dr. Bethune. Once he had made up his mind to do something, he would not take no for an answer. Also, there was no time to be lost. So the wounded man was given the transfusion and then operated upon. . . .

The enemy's reinforcements had arrived, and the sound of firing became louder and nearer. A shell struck the stone tablet in front of the temple where Dr. Bethune was working but did not disturb him at all. The piece of shrapnel was removed from the patient's chest and the wound sutured. A gauze dressing was applied to the wound on his arm. The patient was carried away on the stretcher, Dr. Bethune telling the bearers again and again to be very careful on the way.

The medical equipment and supplies were at last packed and everyone was ready to leave the old temple. Just as the doctor and his medical team left the village by the east road, the enemy entered it by the west. . . .

Dr. Li paused at this point and, looking at Hung-yu and Dr. Sang, asked, "Can you guess who that last man was that Dr. Bethune operated on?"

"Who?" Hung-yu and Dr. Sang both asked.

"It was my father!" said Dr. Li.

"Oh!" the two were indeed surprised.

"Did your father recover?" Hung-yu asked after a pause.

"Yes. Dr. Bethune's surgical technique was excellent and my father's wound healed quickly. Later, when I joined the army he gave me the only remembrance he had of Dr. Bethune, the gauze bandage from his arm. He told me that if it had not been for Dr. Bethune he could never have lived. He said that if a foreigner who came to help us in our War of Resistance Against Japan worked with such utter devotion to

others without any thought of self, how much more devoted I should be in fighting the enemy. He said I should take the roll of gauze with me and remember Dr. Bethune, and if I had the chance I should go to see him. As it happened, I was assigned to do health work in the army, right in that model hospital where Dr. Bethune worked! You can imagine how happy I was. I lay awake the whole night before starting out for my new post! Early next morning I left with some other comrades and arrived at the hospital two days later. . . ."

"Did you see Dr. Bethune when you got there?" Hung-yu was eager to know.

Dr. Li's eyes dimmed, and he answered in a lowered voice, "No. He was no longer there when I reached the hospital."

"What? Not there? Where did he go?" Hung-yu asked, little realizing what the answer was.

Dr. Li did not reply immediately. Then he said, his words measured and weighty, "Not long before we arrived at the hospital Dr. Bethune had contracted blood poisoning while operating on wounded soldiers. . . . For our War of Resistance, for the cause of the Chinese people's liberation, he gave his life. . . ."

Hung-yu wept, and Dr. Sang, too, had tears in his eyes.

"All these years," Dr. Li continued, "I've carried this memento with me, and whenever I've looked at it I've felt as if Dr. Bethune were with me. . . ."

Here the story ended. The roll of gauze was wrapped up again, put into the cardboard box, and the box put back into the trunk. Then turning to look at Hung-yu and Dr. Sang, the revolutionary committee chairman said, "*The Story of Dr. Bethune* contains incidents that are just as moving. But this story touches me personally, and that's why I wanted to tell it to you."

"Why don't you tell it to our whole training class?" requested Hung-yu. "It's very inspiring!"

"I think I will. We'll try to fit it into our schedule. But how does it inspire you?"

"I'll take Dr. Bethune as my model," Hung-yu replied at once.

Dr. Sang did not answer so readily for he seemed to have so much on his mind that he did not know where to begin. He was obviously stirred. Finally, his lips quivering a little, he said, "Dr. Li, let my actions speak for themselves!"

"That's good enough. After all, how are we to say we learn from Dr. Bethune if our actions don't bear it out?"

Dr. Sang rose to go, *The Story of Dr. Bethune* in his hand. "It's getting late. You'd better rest now, Dr. Li." With that he turned towards the door. "By the way, please ask the revolutionary committee to return my request for a transfer."

"I will," Dr. Li assured him. Of Hung-yu, who was about to leave, too, Dr. Li asked, "Did you come here for anything else besides my story?"

Smiling, Hung-yu confessed that he had come to borrow the book Dr. Li had just lent to Dr. Sang. "So I was left with no mission. But, you will loan me that book after Dr. Sang has finished it, won't you?"

"So that's what you came for! I have another copy." Dr. Li opened a box and took out another copy of *The Story of Dr. Bethune* which he handed to Hung-yu.

"How is it you have extra copies?" Hung-yu asked, surprised.

"I like this book, so I bought several copies. I'll give this one to you."

Hung-yu was overjoyed to receive the book and said, "Thank you very much!"

It was late that night when Hung-yu got back to the hostel. The others in the room were asleep and he went to bed right away, putting the book under his pillow. But for a long time he lay awake.

A series of events paraded through his mind, appearing now before his eyes: the story of the big ginseng root; the death of Grandpa Stonemason's wife and child; the story of the gauze. . . . Then he recalled the poor and lower-middle peasants' words of encouragement as he was leaving for the training class; the red-covered notebook Little Shun gave him; the Party secretary's pushing the wheelbarrow to his home and loading his luggage on it. . . . These were some of the scenes that crowded into his mind.

The crescent moon had risen. Its light, shining golden through the windowpane, illumined the whole room. Outside, a soft breeze blew on the young peach tree in the courtyard, as though in whispered conversation. Was the wind telling stories to the peach tree? If so, what were the stories? Of the dark society of the past, and the happy life today?

Hung-yu thought of many things. But all his thoughts could be summarized into one sentence: "I am determined to be a good barefoot doctor and to serve the poor and lower-middle peasants wholeheartedly." But how? Hung-yu wondered. "I'll take Dr. Bethune as my model," he had said to Dr. Li. He reached under the pillow for *The Story of Dr. Bethune*, thinking of reading it, but he dismissed the thought, for turning on the light might disturb his sleeping room-mates.

With the book in his hand, Hung-yu pictured in his mind the image of Dr. Bethune: a tall man with a broad, gleaming forehead and deep-set, bright eyes. . . . Hung-yu felt he must delve into the book that very minute to find the answer to his question of how to be a really good barefoot doctor. . . .

Suddenly he remembered a light outside the conference

room in the east courtyard that was on all night. He would take the book there!

It was very quiet in the east courtyard. He sat on the conference room doorstep and quickly opened the book. The first thing he saw was Chairman Mao's brilliant essay, "In Memory of Norman Bethune." He began reading, completely absorbed and sometimes aloud: "**Comrade Bethune's spirit, his utter devotion to others without any thought of self, was shown in his boundless sense of responsibility in his work and his boundless warm-heartedness towards all comrades and the people. Every Communist must learn from him. . . . We must all learn the spirit of absolute selflessness from him. With this spirit everyone can be very useful to the people. A man's ability may be great or small, but if he has this spirit, he is already noble-minded and pure, a man of moral integrity and above vulgar interests, a man who is of value to the people.**"

The golden crescent of the moon looked like a small boat being wafted along on the deep blue sea of the sky; silvery stars twinkled. Branches of peach blossom in full bloom swayed in the warm spring breeze. . . .

It was in this setting that Hung-yu read *The Story of Dr. Bethune*. It made him very happy, filling his present with purpose and giving him confidence for the future.

CHAPTER 9

The "Stuck" Needle

HUNG-YU applied himself in his training to become a barefoot doctor, fairly devouring all available knowledge and technique in the field of medicine and health work. In two months he had learned to give injections, do bandaging, prescribe medicine for the common diseases. . . .

Then the training course was over, and he returned to the brigade, which supplied him with a medical kit and medicine, using money from the brigade's welfare fund. And so Hung-yu started out as a barefoot doctor, treating the sick of his brigade.

Many consulted him, for he was of the poor and lower-middle peasants and their own doctor. They knew that his medical knowledge was necessarily limited as yet, but they liked him and welcomed him as their doctor.

As for Hung-yu, his spirit of serving the commune members was singlehearted. Day or night, in wind or rain, he would go whenever and wherever he was called. The commune members said, "This barefoot doctor of ours is really just what we want!"

But Hung-yu's head was not at all turned, no matter how highly the poor and lower-middle peasants spoke of him. He realized that he had only basic knowledge for treating com-

mon illnesses, and that there were many more complicated and serious cases that he could not handle. He knew he had a long way to go before he was even a qualified barefoot doctor. Two problems, especially, bothered him, and one of these was Grandpa Stonemason's health.

The old stonemason had left the hospital, but his trouble was by no means over. He resumed work as usual at the construction site despite the wish of the Party secretary and the brigade leader that he should rest a little longer. Grandpa had insisted that he'd left the hospital so as to return to work, so how could he stay away now? Finally, it was agreed that he should go to the construction site on condition that he act as "commander-in-chief" and only direct the work, not do any himself. To make sure, the secretary and brigade leader asked the commune members there to exercise "surveillance" over Grandpa Stonemason and that if he did not abide by the "agreement" he'd be sent back home. This nettled the old man. But what could he do? So, as soon as Hung-yu returned from the training class, he went to the new barefoot doctor with his "complaint." "Look, Hung-yu," said he, "how can I go on like this? My hands itch when I see others working with the chisel. You're a doctor now and must find a way to cure me so I can go back on the job like everybody else. I've got a lot of work in me!"

"Yes, grandpa," said Hung-yu, "I'll do my best to cure you." But it was easier said than done, for Hung-yu had no idea how to go about curing the old stonemason's bronchitis. In fact, he'd had this problem on his mind from the moment he returned from the training class.

Another problem was acupuncture and moxibustion. Hung-yu had heard that barefoot doctors in other places used these methods in addition to giving injections and prescribing medicines, that they were simple, widely applicable, gave quick

results and cost practically nothing. "If I could only master these methods of curing disease! I'd be able to do so much more for the poor and lower-middle peasants! The small needle produces great cures! Who can tell whether the acupuncture needle may not cure Grandpa Stonemason's bronchitis?" said Hung-yu to himself.

Hung-yu had in fact been given a few lessons in acupuncture and moxibustion, but had not had much time for practice. He must learn to locate accurately the different points, grasp the correct method of manipulating the needle and constantly improve his skill before he could apply the needle safely on his patients without causing them much discomfort. So he had been experimenting for several days on himself.

One day after lunch when granny had gone to feed the pigs, Hung-yu took out his acupuncture handbook and, sterilizing his needles, pressed them one by one into points indicated in the handbook. Not very skilful yet in applying the needles, he felt some pain but went on experimenting until he felt the correct sensation.

Just then Chun-hung appeared at the door with a small embroidered acupuncture needle-case she had made for Hung-yu after noticing the one he made out of an old sheepskin purse had been worn out.

When Chun-hung discovered Hung-yu about to apply a needle to his leg, she was startled and called out, "Hung-yu, what are you doing that for?"

"I'm practising needling," answered Hung-yu with a smile. Then, noticing the needle-case in Chun-hung's hand, he exclaimed, "Is that for me? Finished already?"

"Yes, take it. The embroidery isn't very good," she commented as she handed the case to Hung-yu.

How Chun-hung had found the time to embroider the needle-case was more than Hung-yu could figure out, what

with all the work she did in the fields. It was beautiful work, with a bright red star in velvety cut embroidery against a background of blue silk and, also in bright red, the words: **Serve the people.**

"It's beautiful!" said Hung-yu, accepting the gift. "Thank you!"

"Don't thank me. So long as you look after our poor and lower-middle peasants when they get sick, that's thanks enough!"

"No doubt about it. I'll do my best." And Hung-yu looked more closely at the embroidered case.

"By the way, Hung-yu," said Chun-hung, "I've copied your article on the prevention of gastro-intestinal troubles on the wall bulletin. Here's your manuscript. You'll need it this afternoon when you speak to the people at the construction site." She took the paper from her pocket and gave it to Hung-yu.

"You know, Hung-yu," she went on, "your public health education about putting prevention first has shown good results. Our commune members have learned to pay great attention to environmental sanitation. The whole village is getting a thorough cleaning and every family is disinfecting its latrine with lime. Even the children are going after flies and other pests. . . . At this rate, the incidence of disease is going to fall sharply."

"I still haven't done enough. More needs to be done to propagate the importance of sanitation."

"Of course, one shouldn't be satisfied," said Chun-hung approvingly. "But it is a good beginning." Then, looking at the needles sticking in Hung-yu's leg, she asked, "Don't they hurt?"

"No."

"Really?" Chun-hung did not believe him.

"Well, if you want to know the truth, they do hurt a

little," admitted Hung-yu with a smile. "But that's because my technique isn't very good. When I've learned how to do it better it won't hurt at all." He put aside the embroidered case and, taking a long needle, located another point on his leg and thrust the needle in, his face twitching a little.

Chun-hung saw his expression of pain and asked sympathetically but bewildered, "Why do you want to hurt yourself when there's nothing wrong with your leg, Hung-yu? Doesn't that handbook list all the points and tell what they cure? Why should you needle yourself?"

But Hung-yu went on. "I'm experimenting," he said, "and that has to be done on oneself in order to find the best points and improve the treatment. That's what our P.L.A. comrades do. They say: Better ten thousand punctures on yourself than one wrong one on the patient. Chairman Mao teaches us: **If you want to know the taste of a pear, you must change the pear by eating it yourself.** It's like that with acupuncture, too. You have to test the needles on yourself to know which point is best, the proper depth, and what the stimulation feels like. I can only test these on myself."

Chun-hung laughed at his seriousness, at how sure he was of himself. "Well, don't hurt yourself," she said, and left.

In a few minutes there was a loud call from the courtyard: "Hung-yu, how are you getting on with your needling experiment?" Hung-yu recognized Uncle Ching-tang's voice, but when he was about to answer, he found the Party secretary already in the room.

"How did you know what I'm doing, uncle?"

The Party secretary sat down beside Hung-yu on the edge of the *kang* and said with a smile, "I just did some analysing!"

"I know who told you. It was Chun-hung!"

"So it was. She said to tell you not to injure yourself."

"No danger of that. But even if there were, so what?"



Chairman Mao says: **I am for the slogan 'Fear neither hardship nor death.'**"

"You're right," Uncle Ching-tang said in approval. Making revolution requires boldness, and at the same time carefulness. Go on experimenting, but don't take unnecessary risks."

"No, I won't, uncle," Hung-yu replied, and went on twirling the needle.

The Party secretary watched with great interest for a while, then suddenly said, "Hung-yu, suppose you try a needle or two on me."

"But you're not sick, are you, uncle? Why do you want needling?" Hung-yu asked.

"You're not sick either, are you? Why do you want it then?" Uncle Ching-tang put the question back to Hung-yu with a smile.

"I'm experimenting so as to serve the commune members better, to cure their diseases by acupuncture."

"I'd like to experiment, too."

"But you're not a barefoot doctor; you don't need to."

Uncle Ching-tang laughed. "In fact," he said, suddenly becoming serious, "I've been having sharp pains in my left leg for several days. I must have caught cold or something. Come on, give me a needle or two on the painful spots."

"But I can't do it well yet. Better wait till I've had some practice."

"By that time the pain may be gone! If you want to cure me, there's no time like the present. Just experiment on me. If you only try on yourself, when will you ever apply the needles on others? What do you say?"

"Now, uncle, are you asking me to cure you or experiment on you?" Hung-yu asked.

"Cure me, of course," said the Party secretary seriously. Still Hung-yu wondered if he really meant it.

"Come on. Don't be afraid." And the Party secretary planted himself firmly on the *kang*, bent his leg and rolled up his trouser leg.

"All right, uncle. I'll take out the needles on my own leg first. But, as I've said, I'm not very skilful at this. You may feel pain."

"So what? Chairman Mao says: **I am for the slogan 'Fear neither hardship nor death,'**" repeated Uncle Ching-tang, imitating Hung-yu, who had to laugh at his own dead earnestness.

Having removed the needles from his leg, Hung-yu said, "All right, then, here it goes."

"Go ahead."

Hung-yu took an alcohol cotton ball from a bottle and, carefully sponging a point on the secretary's leg with it, said, "Uncle, since you suffer from pain in the joints, I'm going to insert the needle at the arthritis point, here."

"Insert it wherever you think is right. You're the doctor!"

"It may hurt, uncle." Hung-yu drew a long needle from his case, sterilized it and inserted it into the selected point.

"Such a tiny needle! Can't you find a bigger one?"

Hung-yu laughed at the joke, but somehow he felt very nervous and his hand trembled. This was the first time he was applying the needle on anyone but himself.

The Party secretary saw his hand tremble and said in encouragement, "Boldness does it."

Hung-yu nodded and began inserting the needle. His fingers were unsteady and shook in spite of himself. Uncle Ching-tang frowned momentarily, and Hung-yu knew it must have hurt. "Pain?" he asked.

"Oh, no, none at all. Your technique is not bad."

But when Hung-yu wanted to twirl the needle, he found it would not move. Neither could he lift or thrust it, no

matter how he tried. Suddenly it dawned on him that it was entangled in muscle fibres. This was due to faulty manipulation which produced excessive pain, and the pain had excited the skin and muscle fibres around the point. The needle was stuck, and the result was more pain. Hung-yu had read about "stuck needle" in the books, but had never experienced it in his practice. "Uncle, it's entangled in the muscle fibres!" he said.

Hung-yu's facial expression was one of alarm, but the Party secretary remained calm.

"What's that?" he asked.

"Well, it means the needle is stuck there. I can't twirl it or pull it out."

"Don't worry. It'll come out if you pull hard enough," said the Party secretary to reassure the boy.

Hung-yu pulled, but the needle only lodged more stubbornly in Uncle Ching-tang's leg.

Perspiration stood out on the boy's forehead.

"Don't worry," said Uncle Ching-tang, cheerful as ever. "It's nothing serious. It'll come out eventually. And if it doesn't, what can such a tiny needle do to my sturdy leg! Years ago the enemy put two pieces of shrapnel in my shoulder. They've been there ever since, and nothing has happened."

Hung-yu knew that Uncle Ching-tang was saying this to hearten him and was probably a little worried himself.

Just then someone called from the courtyard, "Is Uncle Ching-tang here, Hung-yu?"

It was Uncle Huai.

Before Hung-yu had time to answer, the brigade leader was in the room. When he saw the needle sticking out of the secretary's leg, he said in surprise, "What? You let Hung-yu needle you? Why, he's only just learned acupuncture. Can he do it?"

"Oh, yes, he can do it all right. Not bad at all," replied the Party secretary. "He's keen on it, and he'll learn."

"Well let him take the needle out now. You're wanted on the brigade office phone. It's Secretary Wang of the commune Party committee."

"Wait a minute," said the Party secretary.

"Nothing's wrong with your leg, I'm sure. Are you needing it for fun? You'd better be careful or you may have an accident. Hung-yu, take the needle out. Secretary Wang's waiting on the phone." The brigade leader was adamant.

When Hung-yu told Uncle Huai that the needle wouldn't come out, he was startled. "What? The needle's stuck?"

Hung-yu nodded.

"It doesn't matter. It'll come out," put in the Party secretary optimistically.

"When will it come out?" the brigade leader asked Hung-yu.

"I don't know," was his frank answer.

The brigade leader became worried. "You're just looking for trouble. Why do you apply needles when you know very well you don't know how? Just see what you've done!"

"I asked him to do it," put in Uncle Ching-tang. "Why so much fuss? It won't kill me. The needle will come out sooner or later." Then, wiping the sweat from Hung-yu's forehead, he encouraged him, "Don't worry, Hung-yu, just try again."

Hung-yu tried again but still the needle would not budge.

"Tell Secretary Wang I'm busy now. I'll call back later," said Uncle Ching-tang to the brigade leader.

"I told you the boy is too young. He's not steady enough to do any serious work. Now see what's happened!" And with that the brigade leader stalked out.

Hung-yu tried massaging the muscle around the needle but still could not remove it.

Soon the brigade leader came back, followed by someone

who walked with a limp. It was Lame Sun.

Hung-yu felt annoyed at the sight of this charlatan and demanded sternly, "What are you doing here, Lame Sun?"

"Uh . . . uh," stuttered Lame Sun, fawning. "The brigade leader asked me to come. I . . . I hear the needle got . . . got stuck."

"I asked him to come," put in Uncle Huai. "Let him get the needle out."

Lame Sun walked quickly over towards the Party secretary, who said, "Get back, Lame Sun! We don't need you here!" And the Party secretary gave him a piercing look.

"Just as you say." Sun bowed and started to leave.

"You may as well let him get the needle out," the brigade leader persisted. "It's got to come out. . . ."

At this Lame Sun's hopes were again raised and he started to turn back.

"No! No need of him here!" said the Party secretary with a wave of his hand. Then turning to Sun, he said, "Go back to your work at once! Do you hear?"

Sun limped out, disappointed.

"I was thinking that, after all, Sun knows more about medicine than Hung-yu," the brigade leader said to the Party secretary after the man left. "What difference does it make if we let him draw out the needle? We'd just be making use of him. That's all. It wouldn't make him the barefoot doctor of our brigade."

"It's not just a question of drawing out a needle. We must look deeper than that. If we let him take out a stuck needle, we'll only be inflating his arrogance and lowering the prestige of our own barefoot doctor. You want to make use of him, but he's just waiting to make use of such opportunities!"

These words greatly impressed Hung-yu. Uncle Ching-tang certainly has a broad, thorough view of things, he thought

to himself. A little while ago I was annoyed at seeing Lame Sun, because I don't like him and I was afraid this time he had something on me. I never looked at the question any deeper than from my own personal point of view.

The brigade leader also caught the significance of the Party secretary's words, and explained, "I was awfully worried. So when I met Sun on my way here, I asked him to come. But if we won't let him get the needle out, we'll have to find another way."

"Why worry?" said Uncle Ching-tang with confidence. "It'll come out sooner or later." Then, turning to Hung-yu he said encouragingly, "Isn't that so? I trust you, but do you trust yourself?"

The secretary's words warmed Hung-yu's heart and encouraged him. "Oh yes, I do!" answered Hung-yu without hesitation. "I'll overcome that hurdle, I assure you, uncle!" he added, the "hurdle" in his mind being the stuck needle and Lame Sun's trying to make capital of it.

"That's the spirit. Think hard: What does your handbook say? What did your training class teachers say you should do when the needle got stuck?"

"I know!" Hung-yu's eyes shone and his mind seemed to function, prompted by the secretary's words. "There's another method we haven't tried."

"And what is it?" asked Uncle Ching-tang very interested.

"It's to insert another needle near this one so as to ease the tension of the skin and muscle around the point. Then the needle should come out."

"Good! Let's try, and if it doesn't work, we'll try some other way. If the legendary Foolish Old Man could remove two mountains by unswerving efforts, we ought to be able to pull out this tiny needle. Don't you think so, Hung-yu?"

Hung-yu felt relieved. He resterilized the spot and was

about to take out another needle and insert it when the brigade leader, who had been standing there watching, suddenly called out, "Better not. It'll only cause more trouble if both needles get stuck!"

"Why is it," the Party secretary asked smiling, "you have nothing but words of discouragement? A commander on the battlefield can only direct his men to charge, never to retreat." Then turning to Hung-yu, he continued, "Go ahead. Try."

Hung-yu was no longer worried. His confidence raised by the secretary's words, he inserted the needle deftly into place, his hand steady now.

It worked. When the second needle was in place the first needle, which was stuck, responded to Hung-yu's manipulation.

Massaging the skin and muscle around it, he extracted it easily, then removed the second needle.

The brigade leader gave a sigh of relief and said, "You have no idea how worried I was!"

The Party secretary smiled. "Failure is the mother of success. 'A fall into the pit, a gain in your wit,' as the saying goes. You must conscientiously sum up today's experience to find out what made the needle stick, so that when it happens again you'll know how to cope with it. Chairman Mao has taught us: **It is necessary to sum up experience conscientiously.**"

"Right," agreed Hung-yu.

"We'd better go. Secretary Wang is waiting for your telephone call," said Uncle Huai, reminding the Party secretary.

As Uncle Ching-tang was straightening his clothes ready to leave the room, he said to Hung-yu, "I'm coming again tomorrow noon, Hung-yu, for another needling!"

"Better give me more time to experiment on myself. I'll

try again on you when I can do it better.”

“What? Faint-hearted again? If the needle gets stuck tomorrow, we have a way of getting it out. Anyway, we don’t need Lame Sun.” The secretary laughed. “What about it, Hung-yu? Will you try again tomorrow?”

“All right, then.” And Hung-yu laughed, too.

“That’s the spirit, my boy.”

The secretary and the brigade leader left.

Telling the time from the shadow of the sun on the window-sill, Hung-yu figured he still had time to try the needles on himself before going back to work.

Two Prescriptions

EAST of the village lay a large tract of flat land that was reclaimed from a gully, and here the commune members planted cucumbers, gourds and various kinds of melons. They called it their melon field. This year, as every year before, the blossoms and the growth of the vines promised a good harvest.

Next to the melon field was another piece of land, half a *mu* in size and divided into tiny plots, on which were grown all sorts of medicinal herbs. This was Hung-yu’s medicinal herb garden, and there is a story behind it.

Hung-yu had learned at the training class that barefoot doctors often used traditional Chinese medicine as cures in addition to acupuncture and moxibustion, and that nearly every barefoot doctor had his own pharmacy of traditional Chinese herbs. The herbs were either gathered from the hill-sides or else grown in a small garden.

Such a pharmacy was very handy. Prescriptions could be filled there for sick commune members, and they cost next to nothing. Hung-yu had suggested to the Party secretary having such a pharmacy, and he had readily approved.

“It’s a good idea,” said he. “We have a lot of different kinds of medicinal herbs growing on the hills around, and when

it's time to pick them, the commune members will help." He thought for a moment and then added, "And we'll have a medicinal herb garden, too."

But where can the garden be? thought the Party secretary. It takes good, well-watered land to grow medicinal herbs, and all such land has gone into vegetables, melons and other crops. It wouldn't be very good taking land that's already under cultivation.

"I've got it!" he suddenly said aloud. "We'll reclaim another piece of land near the melon field."

The Party secretary told the brigade leader of Hung-yu's request together with his own plan. The brigade leader thought it a good idea. It was not that he placed much trust in barefoot doctors, but growing medicinal herbs was another thing. The brigade would have its own pharmacy to supply the commune members, who would otherwise have to go long distances to the commune clinic or county hospital and take a lot of time out from the field work. What was more, herb medicine grown by themselves cost very little.

The land reclamation plan for the medicinal herb garden was told to Chun-hung, the Communist Youth League secretary, who discussed it with the League members. They voiced their hearty support and volunteered to reclaim the piece of land.

The work was soon under way, led by the Party branch secretary. Youth League members and other commune members all came out to help reclaim the land. Little Shun came, too, with his school-mates. Even Grandpa Stonemason had to be persuaded not to join in, because of his health.

It was no easy job taking stones from a dried-up river-bed, moving them to the river bank and then making a two-foot embankment of them. It was no light work either digging baskets of earth from a valley hundreds of metres away and

carrying them to the plot, piling the earth on it layer after layer. But no one slacked, working after the day's labour in the fields was over, sometimes under the stars or moon, and within half a month the plot was ready.

But what about seed? Hung-yu was quite sure this problem was as good as solved, too, for one of the other trainees in the class, Little Chang, had a grandfather at Blackstone Pass Brigade of Pine Ridge Commune who had grown medicinal herbs for years and had plenty of seed to spare. Little Chang had promised to give him whatever he had.

Blackstone Pass Brigade was more than fifty *li* from Date Tree Slope, but the distance meant nothing to Hung-yu. This young barefoot doctor set out for Blackstone Pass one day at sun-up, arriving around noon. Sure enough, Little Chang and his grandfather welcomed Hung-yu and gave him packets of seed from all the herbs they grew themselves. They asked Hung-yu to stay overnight since he had walked all that distance, but Hung-yu was eager to get the seeds in the ground and, thanking them for their hospitality, started back. It was after midnight when he reached home, tired and foot-sore, but in high spirits.

The seeds were planted in the medicinal garden in small square beds that had been neatly furrowed by Chun-hung and Little Shun. And when they sprouted, the tender green leaves blown by the breeze or glistening under the sun made a beautiful sight indeed.

One day during noon-time break Hung-yu and Little Shun were watering the young medicinal plants, Little Shun having become a sort of apprentice to Hung-yu, who was willing to teach while Little Shun was keen to learn. They would study together in spare moments, Little Shun taking notes in the beautiful red plastic-covered notebook Hung-yu had sent him from the county town.

Hung-yu was cranking the winch to bring up water from the well and Little Shun was spading when a girl came running down the slope towards them. The two looked up. It was Little Lien.

Little Lien was fifteen, daughter of Sun Fu-kuei, a well-to-do middle peasant who was somewhat selfish and liked to make small gains for himself. Hung-yu and Little Shun had as little as possible to do with him, but not Little Lien. She was different from her father. Though still young, she was interested in the common good and warm-hearted towards others. She had supported Hung-yu's being sent to the training class and had helped in reclaiming the land for the medicinal herb garden.

Little Lien went up to Hung-yu. "So you're here watering the garden," she called, brushing aside a lock of hair that had fallen over her eye. "I've been looking for you!"

"What for?" asked Hung-yu, pouring the water he had drawn from the well onto the ditch connected with the plot.

"I've got something to ask you."

"What is it?"

"My mother's sick, very bad. Can you go and see her, now?"

"Yes, of course," replied Hung-yu. "Let's go at once."

Hung-yu always stopped whatever he was doing when he was called to see a patient, and now he hurried to pick up his medicine kit and left with the girl.

Hung-yu found Little Lien's mother lying listless in bed, her face flushed with fever. He felt her forehead. It was hot to his touch. "It looks like your mother's suffering from a very bad cold," he told Little Lien.

"What will you do for her? Give an injection? Or some medicine?"

"Let's try medicine. I've a prescription here for such colds.

Many patients have found it effective."

"Good!" Little Lien was pleased. "Quick! Give me the prescription and I'll have it filled."

Hung-yu took his "prescriptions" notebook, pen and pad from his medicine kit and started writing.

"You won't have to go far to have prescriptions filled in future," said Hung-yu, "when we have our own pharmacy. It won't cost much either. We'll have herbs picked from the hillsides right around here."

"You're right," Little Lien readily agreed. "By the way, is it true that after the autumn harvest we're going to set up a co-operative medical care system?* That would be a big improvement!"

Just then Sun Fu-kuei came in. He was middle-aged, short and stout, with a bald head and bird-like eyes. When he saw Hung-yu there with his medicine kit, he knew immediately that the boy had come on an out-call for his wife, and he was displeased. "Did you bring Hung-yu here, Little Lien?" he asked reproachfully.

"Yes," was her straightforward answer.

"Can he cure her?"

Hung-yu had never liked Sun Fu-kuei, so he paid no attention when the man came into the room but went on writing his prescription. Fu-kuei's remark to his daughter, however, inflamed him. But then he reminded himself how backward Fu-kuei was and felt it not worth his while taking offence at

* A medical service system introduced in China's rural areas during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. On the principle of voluntariness and mutual-aid, commune members each pay a small annual fee (about one yuan), this money being augmented by other commune funds to make up a co-operative medical fund. Commune members then pay a few fen for registration and receive treatment and medicines free. This new system has brought Chinese peasants easier access to medical care and helped to improve their health conditions.

remarks from a person who refused to accept the new ideas. Also, he was quite sure that Little Lien would reason things out with her father. So he said nothing.

Little Lien in fact took her father to task for what he had said. "Who says Hung-yu can't cure mother? Since he studied at the training class, everybody's been going to him when they're sick."

"Let them go to him if they like. As for me. . . ." Fu-kuei paused and cast a sidelong glance at Hung-yu, who had finished writing out the prescription and turned to hear what else Fu-kuei had to say.

"If we don't send for Hung-yu, who should we send for?" was Little Lien's quick retort.

"Why, Lame Sun, of course! I've been to see him, and he'll be right over. Treating a sick person, my girl, is no child's play."

This was too much for Hung-yu. He sprang to his feet and made a dash for Fu-kuei. "So you've asked Lame Sun, have you?"

"What if I have?" Fu-kuei rolled his beady eyes as if proud of what he'd done.

"Do you know what sort of a fellow Lame Sun is?" argued Hung-yu.

"I know he has made mistakes, and he still has many shortcomings. But we should give him a chance to correct his mistakes and make good. Besides, he really does know something about medicine."

"Does he know more than Hung-yu?" Little Lien put in.

"At least he doesn't stick needles in other people and then can't get them out again!"

Hung-yu was furious. Lame Sun was the only person besides the Party secretary and the brigade leader who knew about the "stuck needle" incident. Lame Sun must have

told Fu-kuei, for the two were often together, and the charlatan now and then entertained Fu-kuei with wine and food, and gave him presents, so that he took Lame Sun as a bosom friend. Today he had even been his mouthpiece! Birds of a feather, Hung-yu thought, and tore up the prescription, angrily throwing the pieces on the floor. Then he slung his medicine kit over his shoulder and left.

"Hung-yu, come back!" Little Lien called after him. But Hung-yu would not, and at the gate saw Lame Sun limping towards the house.

"I say Hung-yu, why are you leaving?" asked Lame Sun gleefully. "Come back, let's hold a joint consultation on how to treat Little Lien's mother." Lame Sun guessed from the expression on Hung-yu's face that he had likely been driven out by Fu-kuei.

Hung-yu did not answer but continued on his way till, at the big locust tree near the main street, he met Uncle Ching-tang with his usual dung basket over his shoulder and long-handled fork in his hand.

"Say, Hung-yu, have you been to see Little Lien's mother?" asked the Party secretary from a little distance.

Hung-yu did not answer at once, but walked straight up to Uncle Ching-tang, who saw that something was wrong. "What's the matter?" he asked at once with a smile.

Hung-yu held back the tears that filled his eyes. But he was still unable to speak.

"What is the matter, anyway?" the Party secretary asked again. And only then did Hung-yu tell him what had happened.

"Hum," said the Party secretary after a moment's thought. "It looks like we're in for a bout with him. Lame Sun is not taking his defeat lying down."

"And Sun Fu-kuei is in with Lame Sun," said Hung-yu

sharply.

The Party secretary smiled at Hung-yu's behaviour.

"But, my little barefoot doctor," said he, "how can you consider Fu-kuei and Lame Sun the same and make both your target of attack? You're wrong there."

"No, I'm not. They're exactly the same!"

The Party secretary became serious. "No, they're not. It's Lame Sun that's at the bottom of this, not Fu-kuei."

"But Fu-kuei's no better," Hung-yu insisted. "If he hadn't asked Lame Sun, would Sun have gone to his house? And why should he drive me out even before the quack arrived?"

"The performing puppet is Fu-kuei; but the one holding the strings is Lame Sun. Haven't you seen how Lame Sun poisons Fu-kuei's mind? Now he's told him about the needling incident so that Fu-kuei no longer trusts you. Of course he's not going to let you treat his wife. He trusts Lame Sun, and ordered you out of his house."

"So that's it," muttered Hung-yu. The Party secretary's words seemed to make him see the light.

"That's why I say it's a round in the struggle. We have to fight on this. But the one who's attacking you is Lame Sun, not Fu-kuei."

Hung-yu agreed with the Party secretary on this point.

"Now, Hung-yu," said the Party secretary, "whatever happens, keep cool. How could you get so excited as to tear up the prescription?"

"If Fu-kuei's not going to let his wife take the medicine I prescribed, what's the use of keeping the prescription?"

"I think you should treat her."

"Why should I?" Hung-yu was still angry, and he fairly yelled, "Let Lame Sun do it!"

"You mustn't do things out of spite. Who treats Little Lien's mother is a question of who prevails in this medical

field. This position must not be forfeited," said the Party secretary.

"It's not important. Let him have this tiny position. My field is much larger," Hung-yu insisted.

"No!" replied the Party secretary patiently. "We should never let any field that belongs to the proletariat be occupied by Lame Sun, not an inch of it!"

Hung-yu had nothing more to say. He realized that the Party secretary was correct. But to convince Fu-kuei was no easy job. "But uncle," he said on second thought, "Fu-kuei believes in Lame Sun and doesn't trust me. How am I going to treat his wife?"

"Talk to him. Bring him round so that he sees things in a new light."

"You talk to him for me, will you, uncle?" Hung-yu was thinking that Uncle Ching-tang who enjoyed high prestige among the villagers might be able to dissuade Fu-kuei from letting Lame Sun treat his wife.

"I can't just now. I'll be at a meeting at commune headquarters till tomorrow afternoon. Look up Chun-hung and ask her to help you."

"All right, then." Hung-yu decided to withdraw his fire from Fu-kuei. Perhaps Fu-kuei did not after all bear any ill towards him but was being used by Lame Sun against barefoot doctors. He would go back and see Little Lien's mother. But first he would look up Chun-hung.

He was on his way when Little Lien appeared in the distance.

"Hung-yu!" she shouted.

Hung-yu stopped, walked towards her and asked, "What is it, Little Lien?"

"I was coming to tell you not to be angry," Little Lien explained. "My father is just like that, so backward. It really

makes people mad!"

Apparently Little Lien had come to apologize for her father's behaviour. Hung-yu must explain. "As a matter of fact it's Lame Sun who's nettling your father and getting him to say all those things."

"That's what I think too."

"Is Lame Sun at your home now?" Hung-yu asked.

"Yes. He says my mother will be completely cured after taking just one dose of his medicine. He also says that you. . . . Well, never mind that. I can't stand him — such arrogance! Father asked me to boil some water for him but I didn't do it. I came out to find you. I was afraid you might be offended."

"I'm not any more," Hung-yu replied, grinning.

"You shouldn't be. It's not worth your while being offended by him."

"I've just seen the Party secretary," Hung-yu continued. "He insists that I treat your mother's illness."

"And he's right. You're the barefoot doctor of our brigade and if you don't look after our sick commune members, who's going to? It's only our family that calls in that quack of a doctor." Little Lien looked as though she was about to cry.

"Our Party secretary suggests that we ask Chun-hung to talk to your father and help him see things correctly."

"It won't do any good, I'm afraid," Little Lien rejoined. "He's stubborn. Even Chun-hung won't be able to move a cell in that blockhead of his!"

"Then what shall we do? Let Lame Sun go on treating your mother?"

"I know what we can do," said Little Lien after a moment's thought.

"What?" Hung-yu anxiously asked.

"I'll take both your prescriptions, but I'll have only yours

filled. When mother gets well after taking your medicine, we'll see what father has to say."

When Hung-yu smiled, she asked him, "What do you say?"

"Good! But we'd better talk this over with Chun-hung."

So they went and laid their plan before Chun-hung, the Communist Youth League branch secretary, who agreed.

"But," Chun-hung said on second thought, "our Party secretary may not approve of it."

"Why?" asked Hung-yu.

"Because Uncle Ching-tang said we should talk to Fu-kuei and help him to see things correctly."

"It's no use," put in Little Lien. "He won't listen to anyone."

"We're just being 'flexible,' that's all," Hung-yu explained.

"But are you sure your prescription will cure his wife?" asked Chun-hung.

"No doubt about it, Chun-hung," said Hung-yu confidently.

"All right, then that's what we'll do."

Little Lien went to the commune clinic with the two prescriptions. Chun-hung had said it would be a good idea to let the doctors there see what Lame Sun had prescribed. In it were many kinds of expensive drugs which, however, were not indicated in the illness Little Lien's mother was suffering from. One dose would cost five yuan and seventy-three fen! Hung-yu's prescription, which was more effective, cost only fifteen fen! Lame Sun had counted on making a name for himself by curing the patient with a single dose of expensive medicine.

That evening Little Lien's mother took the medicine. The next morning her fever had gone down.

Fu-kuei, who thought his wife had taken Lame Sun's prescription, was so pleased with himself that he could not help

laughing. "Huh! After all, Lame Sun is an old hand. One dose of his medicine and the fever's gone!"

"But, as a matter of fact, I don't think he's any better than Hung-yu. Maybe not even as good," said Little Lien, drawing her father into a debate.

"Hung-yu can't be as good. He studied medicine for only a few weeks; he couldn't possibly cure your mother with one dose of medicine."

"Why not? I've seen him do it."

"Don't argue with me. If I say he can't, he can't. What makes you think he can?" The father was as stubborn as the daughter was adamant.

"I can prove it!"

"How?"

It was Little Lien's time to smile. "I'll tell you the truth. The medicine mother took was prescribed by Hung-yu, not Lame Sun!"

Fu-kuei did not believe this. "You, you're just telling tales," he insisted.

"You can ask the comrades in the commune clinic. I didn't even bother to have that expensive prescription of Lame Sun's filled!"

Fu-kuei flew into a rage when he learned how his wife had been cured. "Why not?" he demanded.

"Because it would cost five yuan and seventy-three fen and the comrades said it wouldn't cure her anyway," was the flat answer.

Fu-kuei got a start. "Oh!" was all he could say.

Then Little Lien told her father the cost of Hung-yu's prescription — fifteen fen.

"So cheap?"

"Not only cheap, but it has brought mother's fever down, hasn't it?"

Fu-kuei could think of nothing to say right away. Then, half to himself, he muttered, "I never thought that boy could do it." Perhaps he was made even happier by the fact that he had been saved more than five yuan!

"Think how you acted, father, turning him out after I'd asked him to come!" Little Lien reproved. "What kind of behaviour was that?"

Fu-kuei felt quite uncomfortable. Finally he said, very awkwardly, "Well, when you see him next time, say that I . . . Well, from now on, if anyone in our family gets sick, we'll consult Hung-yu."

CHAPTER I I

Fu-kuei Goes to the County Town on an Errand

EVER since the incident of the stuck needle, Hung-yu had been practising very conscientiously on himself. Soon he knew the location of the different points and improved his skill in acupuncture. Meanwhile, Uncle Ching-tang showed his confidence in Hung-yu by going to him often for acupuncture treatment of his leg. And when the news got round that Hung-yu had cured Little Lien's mother with his herbal prescription, more and more people came to consult him.

Grandpa Stonemason was one of those most anxious to have his health restored. "Hung-yu," he had been saying to the barefoot doctor, "you must find a way to get me back on my feet."

Grandpa Stonemason had been back from the hospital for three months. He had not had any more attacks, but he didn't feel too well, either. He went to the construction site every day but was not allowed to do any physical work. He went just to direct what was going on. This was the strict order of the Party secretary and the brigade leader. For an active hard worker like the old stonemason, the restriction was too much.

Hung-yu was no less anxious than grandpa. He could see

what a burden grandpa's bronchitis put on him, and yet how badly he was needed on the irrigation project. How much better and faster the work would go if the old stonemason were there on the job!

Hung-yu had been giving the old man acupuncture treatments, but they did not bring about the desired result. Should I give him some medicine to take as well? Hung-yu wondered.

After searching through all his medical booklets and manuals for a prescription that might help the old stonemason, he finally found one.

That evening he went to see Grandpa Stonemason. A kerosene lamp was lit in the little house. The brigade leader was there talking to the stonemason about problems in building the irrigation canal.

When Hung-yu showed Grandpa Stonemason the prescription, the old man was overjoyed. "Well," he exclaimed, "next time when someone goes to the commune headquarters or the county town, he can get the medicine for me. When I'm well, I'll put all my strength into the work on the site! I look forward to that day!"

But the brigade leader did not warm up to the idea. "Where did you find that prescription, Hung-yu?" he asked.

"From a prescription book."

"Will it cure Grandpa Stonemason?"

"According to the book it should."

"Are you sure? No side effects?" the brigade leader asked.

"No, I don't think so," Hung-yu answered. "It's a common medicine."

"I see." The brigade leader was pleased at the good results Hung-yu had been getting lately in his treatment of sick commune members. Now that Hung-yu had found a cure for the old stonemason's illness, he was again very glad, for he, too, was anxious about the old man's health. But some-

how he still had occasional doubts. Hung-yu was after all still a boy, and he thought boys were often not up to doing grown-ups' jobs. He didn't like the way Hung-yu handled the case of Little Lien's mother, considering it childish, though the boy did cure her.

Just then Chun-hung came with a telephone message from the county co-op for the brigade leader. "They say the two thousand *jin* of cement has arrived. They want us to send a cart for it," Chun-hung said.

"Good. We'll send one."

"Well," the old stonemason put in, "when Yu-chu goes to the county town tomorrow with the cart, ask him to fill my prescription for me, will you?"

The brigade leader nodded. Then, with the prescription Hung-yu made out for the old stonemason, he left to arrange for the cart to fetch the cement. But Yu-chu had gone to see his grandmother in Bright Cloud Valley Village, who was sick. He wouldn't be back that night.

Who should go then? The brigade leader thought of Fu-kuei, who was a fair carter. It would not be a bad idea to ask him to go and pick up the cement. The brigade leader walked on, soon arriving at the gate of Fu-kuei's house. The gate was not latched, so he pushed it open and walked in. Fu-kuei was squatting in the yard, busy chopping feed for a sow and its litter by the light of the moon.

For four years Fu-kuei had been raising his own pigs. He was especially fond of a sow which farrowed twice a year, only recently giving him a litter of thirteen! No wonder Fu-kuei spent so much time and energy on his pig-raising!

Fu-kuei did not see the brigade leader coming into the courtyard as he was too intent on what he was doing. It was only after he heard his name called that he looked up.

"Oh, so it's you, brigade leader! Anything you want here?" he said pleasantly, continuing his chopping.

"Can you take the cart to the county co-op tomorrow to fetch two thousand *jin* of cement for the brigade?" asked the brigade leader.

Fu-kuei did not answer right away but pondered the question for a moment and then, still chopping the feed, asked, "How about Yu-chu?"

It was Fu-kuei's habit to consider carefully any question put to him or any task assigned him, whether it would be to his advantage or not. If not, he would find an excuse to get out of it. Now, he calculated, there must be some reason why the brigade leader was not asking the carter Yu-chu to drive the cart to town. And he began casting about in his mind for what that reason might be. He must find out!

"Yu-chu's gone to see his sick grandmother," explained the brigade leader.

"I see," said Fu-kuei. "Anything else to be done in town besides picking up the cement?"

"Nothing. But we need the cement right away. You'd better start first thing in the morning and come right back. You should return by early afternoon."

Fu-kuei was pleased, for he saw in little over half a day's work the work-points for a whole day. Not bad! And on top of that, he had a small errand of his own in mind. This is "taking both public and private interests into account," he thought to himself, and replied with a broad smile: "All right, I'll go tomorrow. I was thinking of asking for the day off to go to town anyway."

"What do you want to go to town for?" asked the brigade leader.

"My piglets are a month old — time to sell them. And tomorrow's the county fair. I can take them on the cart with

me.”

“It’s just like you,” said the brigade leader, somewhat irritated. “Whenever you’re sent on an errand, you always have some business of your own to attend to. . . .”

“But, my brigade leader,” Fu-kuei interrupted, “private matters have to be attended to, too. If I took the day off to sell my piglets, that would be taking time away from labour in the fields.” All the time he was thinking about what a bonanza this was, doing his private business without having work-points deducted!

The brigade leader knew very well what was in Fu-kuei’s mind, but he did not want to be bothered with this and finally agreed. “Take your piglets along then, but be sure you pick up the cement first. It may be out of stock if you get there late.”

“I’ll be sure,” Fu-kuei promised. Then, having finished his chopping, he invited the brigade leader into the house. “Won’t you go in for a cup of tea?”

But the brigade leader saw no light in the house and declined, thinking that Little Lien and her mother must have gone to bed. Fu-kuei, however, explained that his wife and daughter had gone out to the mill.

“Is your wife entirely well now?” the brigade leader asked.

“Oh, yes! And who would have thought that a young barefoot doctor could cure her almost overnight! One fifteen-fen prescription and her fever’s gone!” Fu-kuei specially emphasized the “fifteen-fen,” exulting over the amount of money he had saved.

Mention of the barefoot doctor reminded the brigade leader of Hung-yu’s prescription for Grandpa Stonemason that he was to ask Fu-kuei to fill in town. “By the way, there is something else I want you to do in town tomorrow.”

“What is it?” Fu-kuei quickly inquired, afraid the brigade

leader might use up more of his time.

“Hung-yu has made out a prescription for Grandpa Stonemason, and I want you to get the medicine for him.”

“All right. Give me the prescription. I’ll see to it,” said Fu-kuei, relieved that the additional errand would not inconvenience him much. So the brigade leader took the prescription from his pocket and handed it to Fu-kuei.

While this conversation was going on between the brigade leader and Fu-kuei, someone was eavesdropping from the next courtyard on the east, and that eavesdropper was Lamé Sun.

Lamé Sun had as his neighbour on the east Grandma Wang, who was dependent on the commune, while west of him lived Fu-kuei. A medium-high mud wall separated the two courtyards. As Lamé Sun was always scheming and plotting, he was all ears to hear what others were saying and would hide in a corner of the wall and listen whenever he heard voices from a neighbour’s courtyard. If what they said had any bearing on him, he would be able to know beforehand how to cope with the situation. If it did not immediately concern him, he would listen anyway to the very end just in case he might pick up something of use to him. Eavesdropping had become almost intuitive with him, as a wolf pricks up its ears, on the alert against the hunter.

When the brigade leader came to see Fu-kuei, Lamé Sun was doing his *taichi* shadow-boxing exercise in his yard. Now this is a fine exercise, but Lamé Sun had learned it when he was the junior manager of his father’s medicine shop as a sort of pastime. It was a training to keep his body fit; it was also a way of clinging to his past way of life, hoping that one day. . . .

He stopped in the midst of his shadow-boxing when he heard the brigade leader talking to his neighbour, and strained

his ears to hear.

The first part of the conversation about fetching cement and selling piglets at the fair did not interest him. But then the conversation turned to his sore spot: Hung-yu, the barefoot doctor!

His neighbour's satisfaction with Hung-yu's ability to cure his wife with a fifteen-fen prescription irked him no end. If it was anybody else, he would not have been so shaken, for he was accustomed to hearing the poor and lower-middle peasants praise the barefoot doctor. But it was more than he could bear coming from Fu-kuei who had once ordered Hung-yu out of his house and invited him in! If Fu-kuei had changed, others would change even more readily. If things went on like that, where would he end up?

As these painful thoughts flashed through Lame Sun's mind, he heard the brigade leader ask Fu-kuei to fill the prescription for the old stonemason, and this information planted an idea in his scheming head. . . .

The brigade leader had left and Fu-kuei, putting away the pig feed, had gone inside. All was quiet in the courtyard.

Lame Sun remained in the corner of his yard, but he did no more exercises. His yellow eyes gleamed in the moonlight like those of a beast of prey about to spring. Suddenly he let out a malicious laugh. He had made his plot. . . .

Fu-kuei set out early the next day and arrived in the county town in mid-morning.

First he went to the county co-op, paid for the cement and loaded it on the cart. Next he went to the county pharmacy to have the old stonemason's prescription filled, and now he was going to the market area at the fair to sell his piglets.

At a crossroad before he would turn into the fair, how-

ever, he heard someone hailing him, "Hello, there! Where are you driving the cart to, Brother Fu-kuei?"

He turned and saw it was Lame Sun. Now, Sun Fu-kuei and Lame Sun, sharing the surname "Sun," were assumed many generations before to have belonged to the same family. Before liberation, when Lame Sun's family was rich and influential, Fu-kuei would fawn on Lame Sun, though the latter never so much as looked at him. Now that Lame Sun's family property and land had been divided up among the poor and lower-middle peasants, he tried making it up with Fu-kuei and, whenever he saw him, would address him as "Brother Fu-kuei."

Lame Sun was calling from outside a small wine shop that stood at the southern corner of the crossroad. His pale face was a little flushed, obviously from drink.

Fu-kuei jerked on the reins and the cart stopped. "I came to pick up cement for the brigade," he answered, the reins in his hand.

Pretending to know nothing of Fu-kuei's trip to town, Lame Sun complained, "Why, if I'd known you were coming to town, I'd have let you give me a lift. As it was, I walked all the way here!"

"I didn't know you were coming to town either, or I'd certainly have given you a lift. What did you come for?"

"I came to buy a mat for my *kang*, and at the same time to see my son. He's studying in the middle school here, you know. I brought something for him." Then, after a moment's pause, he added, "But you've got the cement, haven't you? Why are you turning this way. Aren't you going straight home?"

"Oh, I brought my litter of piglets along to sell at the fair. After that I'm going home. I'll take you along."

"Good," replied Lame Sun, grinning unctuously. "But,

Brother Fu-kuei, why not come in and have a little drink — it'll be on me."

Now, Fu-kuei may not have been a drunkard, but he certainly had a weakness for drink and the only reason that he did not indulge was that he did not want to spend his money. Knowing this, Lame Sun would now and then ask him to his home for a drink or two, for which Fu-kuei felt very much indebted to him. The charlatan had already ordered the wine in the shop and then come out to wait for Fu-kuei at the crossroad, knowing that he would have to pass there on his way to the fair.

Fu-kuei was more than glad to accept the invitation for a drink. But he said, "I'd like to, but how can I impose on your hospitality?"

"Why say that? Aren't we neighbours? Doesn't the saying go that near neighbours are dearer than distant relatives? Besides, we're cousins, aren't we? Why bicker over what's yours and what's mine!" And he dragged Fu-kuei by the arm into the wine shop.

As a matter of fact, Fu-kuei was quite willing to go in without any arm-twisting, and Lame Sun knew this also. The inviting and declining were pure formalities, and both knew it.

With Lame Sun so eager, and Fu-kuei repeating, "All right, all right. I'll come, I'll come." The cart was parked and Fu-kuei went into the wine shop.

There were very few people in the shop since the commune members were busy in the fields, learning conscientiously from Tachai. They came to the county town only on business, and when that was done, they would go back, not loiter around. Who had time to sit in the wine shop?

Lame Sun was waiting for Fu-kuei at a small table in the corner. Their wine cups were filled to the brim and there

were dishes of tasty food on the table. The two started drinking as soon as Fu-kuei came in.

"Brother Fu-kuei, you don't come to town often, much less get to this wine shop. So better drink up!" And they each downed their first cup.

"You know, I'm not a drinker," said Fu-kuei. "Even a little goes to my head. Isn't my face red?" But he emptied a second cup just the same.

"Come on, have another, Brother Fu-kuei," insisted Lame Sun. "Remember, it's on me!" So Fu-kuei's cup was filled again and drained again.

This went on till Lame Sun thought it was time to say what he had in mind. "Brother Fu-kuei," he asked gingerly, "have you any other errand besides picking up the cement for the brigade?"

"Why, no," Fu-kuei said after another swallow of the liquor.

"What a cinch! A whole day's work-points just for that! And at the same time you can sell your own piglets at the fair."

This remark nettled Sun Fu-kuei, who would not like people to think that he was taking advantage of his trip to the county town. So he quickly added, "Oh, I'm not only picking up the cement, I've got something else to do too."

"What else have you got to do?" asked Lame Sun, pretending not to know.

"I've got to get a prescription filled for the old stonemason."

"Have you done it?"

"Yes."

"Well, put the medicine in a safe place. Don't lose it." What Lame Sun was driving at was where he had put the medicine.

"Oh, no, it won't get lost. I put it in the tool box underneath the cart."

Lame Sun said no more and wished now that his guest

would leave at once, for he had got the information he wanted.

But Fu-kuei, after so many cups of strong liquor, wanted to go on talking. "Why, this prescription was written by Hung-yu. Did you know that?"

No answer came from Lame Sun. But Fu-kuei went on anyway, "You'd never have thought that this boy could know anything about doctoring, but he cured my wife with a fifteen-fen prescription!"

Fu-kuei saw the expression on Lame Sun's face change and realized that he had hit a sore spot. Then, to mend the situation, he hastened to add, "Maybe it was just a coincidence. Of course he couldn't hold a candle to you!"

Still Lame Sun was looking very displeased.

Fu-kuei was not a heavy drinker. His thirst was satisfied and he thought it best to leave. Besides, he was feeling a bit ill at ease, for he had obviously offended his host with his praise for Hung-yu. "It's getting late. I must hurry to the fair to sell my piglets. You go ahead and drink some more." And Fu-kuei turned to leave.

"You'd better not take the cart. It's crowded at the fair, not easy driving," advised Lame Sun.

"But the cart. . ."

"Leave it here. I'll watch it for you. When you come back, we'll go home together."

"All right then," said Fu-kuei agreeably.

Fu-kuei took from the cart his basket of piglets, slung it over his shoulder and headed for the fair.

He had not gone far when Lame Sun went to the cart, took the package of medicine from the tool box, opened the package and emptied into it a tiny bag of powder from his pocket. He then wrapped and tied the package neatly and replaced it in the tool box. That done, he returned to the wine shop to

wait there for Fu-kuei.

He was soon back, in high spirits because he had sold his litter of piglets at a good price. He found Lame Sun waiting for him.

"Let's go now. I'll give you a lift. You won't have to walk all the way back home."

"I've decided not to go back just yet, Brother Fu-kuei. I'm going to Jade Hill Village to see a cousin. You go ahead. Never mind me." Lame Sun did not want to be seen going back to Date Tree Slope with Fu-kuei!

"Then you'll have to walk — all the twenty *li* home!"

"It doesn't matter. You'd better hurry up and go home."

"But where is your mat? Didn't you say you came to buy a mat for your *kang*? I'll carry it home for you on my cart."

"I couldn't find the kind I want. Next time."

With nothing more to say, Fu-kuei left the wine shop to get his cart and head back to Date Tree Slope.

A moment later, Lame Sun ran after the cart, overtook Fu-kuei and whispered to him, "Don't say anything about the two of us drinking together in town. With everyone busy learning from Tachai, what would the commune members say if they knew that we'd been drinking and didn't go back when we finished our errands in town? We'd be in for a good criticizing!"

"I see." Fu-kuei nodded.

"Remember, don't breathe a word to anyone," warned Lame Sun again.

As he stood watching the cart go down the road, he laughed cynically to himself.

CHAPTER 12

We Trust Our Barefoot Doctor

ONE early morning Hung-yu was at Grandma Wang's, repairing her chicken coop door for her. The evening before, when he went with water for her, he saw her blocking up the chicken coop. She told him the door was broken, and Hung-yu had promised to repair it for her the next morning.

Hung-yu had been carrying water and chopping firewood for Grandma Wang after returning from the training class, for Chun-hung was busy with her work as Youth League branch secretary and brigade accountant. Besides, she lived much farther away from Grandma Wang's home than Hung-yu, so she agreed to return the duty to him.

It was nearly summer. The cedrela tree outside the window had grown, its dense green foliage slowly opening.

Hung-yu was pounding nails into the chicken coop door while Grandma Wang fed the chicks.

"Hung-yu," she said, "I hear you prescribed medicine for Grandpa Stonemason."

"Yes, I did."

"Has he taken it?"

"Yes."

"When?"

"Last evening."

"That's good. I hope it helps him."

"I hope so, too."

The sun had risen, its morning rays radiating crimson over the eastern hills. Grandpa Stonemason must be up by now. I'd better go and see how he is, Hung-yu thought.

When Fu-kuei returned from town the previous late afternoon, he gave the medicine direct to Hung-yu, not particularly because Hung-yu had prescribed it, but rather because they lived near to each other.

Hung-yu took it to the old stonemason at once, intending to brew it so that Grandpa Stonemason could take it before he went to bed. But Hung-yu was called to see a patient at Blackstone Pass some three *li* away and so asked Chun-hung to brew the medicine and also arrange for someone to stay overnight to look after the old man. Hung-yu knew he could trust the girl who was meticulous and conscientious in whatever she did.

When Hung-yu returned that evening, he went to see grandpa but found his door bolted and no lights in the room. Not wanting to disturb the old stonemason, he decided to see him in the morning.

But when he went to repair the chicken coop door, he thought it was too early. Only when he was leaving Grandma Wang's place for the old stonemason's did a boy in his latter teens, Chin Shuan, run up to him with the news.

"Hung-yu!" he shouted. "Go to see Grandpa Stonemason! Quick!"

"Why, what's happened?" asked the alarmed Hung-yu.

"Go right away! He's suffering from stomach-ache and has been up half the night with the runs!"

Hung-yu was stunned. "I'll go and see him. Come with me." This was all Hung-yu could say for the moment.

"Chun-hung asked me to stay the night with Grandpa Stonemason last night," Chin Shuan explained as the two

hurried to the old man's home. "He took the medicine and soon fell asleep. But in the middle of the night I found him tossing and turning and asked him what was the matter. He said he was sick to his stomach and had awful pains. He was up the rest of the night."

"Why didn't you come and tell me?"

"Grandpa wouldn't let me. He said you'd be tired after your trip to Blackstone Pass. He didn't think his trouble was very serious."

Hung-yu was almost in tears over the old stonemason's thoughtfulness in not calling him — just like grandpa, too, to think of others and make light of his own suffering.

Hung-yu ran home to get his medicine kit, then hurried with Chin Shuan to see the sick man.

News of the old stonemason's plight soon spread. Chin Shuan told Chun-hung, who rushed to tell the brigade leader. Both wondered what had happened. Then the brigade leader remembered the prescription Hung-yu had written for the old stonemason.

"Did Grandpa Stonemason take the medicine Fu-kuei brought from town yesterday?" he asked Chun-hung. "When did he take it?"

"He took it last evening."

"That must be it!" the brigade leader muttered to himself. "Come on, let's go and see." And he and Chun-hung rushed out, followed by Little Shun.

"Imagine this happening just as he was recovering from that last attack of bronchitis!" The brigade leader was in fact worried. Regretful too, perhaps, that he had let Hung-yu become their barefoot doctor.

Chun-hung sensed what was troubling the brigade leader, though it appeared to her, too, that the sudden attack of grandpa's stomach trouble might have been caused by the

medicine the old man took the night before. Still she knew that Hung-yu was very careful and responsible in prescribing medicine. He had cured quite a few patients without a single accident. He had gone to a lot of trouble searching through all his medical books and manuals before finally finding that prescription for Grandpa Stonemason. Besides, according to a booklet, it had been tried on many patients and nothing like this had happened before. What could it be then? Chun-hung wondered. . . .

"I've said before," the brigade leader went on, "young people are not up to it. We shouldn't have let Hung-yu take that course. He's still a kid. His wings aren't strong yet, so to speak, and he's trying to fly. . . ."

"But, Uncle Huai," reminded Chun-hung, "Hung-yu has seen many patients since he became a barefoot doctor, and he hasn't lost one."

"How many can a doctor afford to lose?"

Nothing more was said as they walked along, now and again joined by a few other commune members who had heard the news, and soon they came to the old stonemason's house. The sick man was lying on the *kang*, his cheekbones protruding and his eyes sunken into a face that had paled overnight.

"I think we'd better send you back to the county hospital," said the brigade leader to Grandpa Stonemason.

"Oh, no," replied he in a determined, if feeble, voice.

"Why not?"

"I've sent Chin Shuan for Hung-yu. He'll look after me."

"Hung-yu will look after you? Better not! After his prescription caused you all this trouble? . . ."

"Stop talking like that, Huai!" interrupted the sick man sternly. "Don't say that of Hung-yu!"

The brigade leader was taken aback. The seriousness of Grandpa Stonemason's tone fairly stunned him, and all he could say was, "What?"

"It's not sure that the trouble was due to the medicine."

"Can you say for sure it's not?"

"There may be other causes."

"What, for instance?"

"The case is not so simple as it looks. I've thought it over and over. Hung-yu treated many patients without a single accident, why should this particular dose of medicine act like this?"

"How could it act like this in all cases!"

"Now, Huai," continued the old stonemason, "even if we assume the stomach trouble was caused by the medicine, that still doesn't mean Hung-yu isn't a good barefoot doctor. Having barefoot doctors is itself a new thing, and new things often meet setbacks. In their process of development they are bound to have shortcomings of one sort or another. Even if Hung-yu has made a mistake, we should help him go on and learn, not discourage him. My dear Huai, there may be ill-wishers hiding in dark corners trying to make a laughing-stock of our barefoot doctor. We must not play into their hands."

These bare words of the sick man opened the eyes of all the commune members around, and they nodded in agreement.

Uncle Huai was reminded of what the Party secretary had said about the incident of the stuck needle. He considered the words well spoken and theoretically correct. Still he replied to the old stonemason, "But we have to solve practical problems. We support him and want him to succeed. But, after all, he is very young. You can't trust a boy to treat such a serious illness."

"It's precisely because he is young that we must support and trust him. His responsibility as a barefoot doctor is not a light one. He must continue looking after me. He'll be here any time now. You mustn't say anything to discourage him."

"Well, it's up to you." The brigade leader gave in, but he was not convinced. "Still we must send you to the county hospital," he added.

"No!"

"Then we'll phone the commune clinic and ask them to send a doctor here."

"No!"

"But look at you, weak and pale. That diarrhea has drained you!"

"Never mind. Hung-yu will take care of it."

"I'll say it again: he's too young. You trust him too much. . . ."

"Exactly. I trust him. And all of us poor and lower-middle peasants should trust him!"

Just then Hung-yu walked in with Chin Shuan.

"How do you feel, Grandpa Stonemason? Uncomfortable with that diarrhea?" Hung-yu asked with extreme concern.

"Yes, and still sick to my stomach."

Hung-yu thought for some time. "Strange! There's nothing in the prescription I wrote for you that should cause such an upset."

"You'd better first give me something to stop the runs," said the old stonemason. "We'll look for the cause later."

"All right. I'll give you some medicine to take, and after that we'll try acupuncture. How's that?"

"Good," answered the sick man. "I have no objection."

Hung-yu took a small bottle of medicine from his kit, ready

to administer it. And only now did the brigade leader speak up.

"Hung-yu, you'd better be careful. Don't let that happen again. . . ."

The old stonemason stopped him at that point. "Huai! . . ."

Hung-yu knew that Uncle Huai did not trust him very much, so he hastened to explain, "This is a harmless medicine that stops diarrhea." And the brigade leader said no more about it.

Hung-yu gave the medicine to Grandpa Stonemason. Then he applied two needles, one on the leg and the other on the abdomen.

"You and the rest had better go home, Huai. Have your breakfast and go to work. Don't let this keep you from the work on the construction site. Hung-yu will stay with me. That's enough."

Realizing that it was hopeless trying to persuade the old stonemason to go to the hospital, the brigade leader left with the others, except for Chun-hung whom he asked to stay behind so as to tell him if anything went wrong.

Before noon, the Party branch secretary arrived at the construction site unexpectedly, for he had been attending a meeting at the commune headquarters which would not be over until a few days later.

"We're to visit Brightstone Valley Brigade today, so I stopped by to bring you the fuses you need." As he explained, he handed the bundle of fuses to the brigade leader.

"Have you been to the village?" the brigade leader asked.

"No, I came here straight."

"Then you don't know that Grandpa Stonemason's sick again?"

"Again? How did it happen?" the Party secretary was somewhat alarmed. "His old trouble again?"

"No. It's diarrhea this time."

"Is it serious?"

"Serious enough."

"What's the cause?" the Party secretary wondered.

"The less said the better!" exclaimed the brigade leader, still blaming the medicine Hung-yu gave the old stonemason. "Hung-yu wrote a prescription, Fu-kuei had it filled in town yesterday, Grandpa Stonemason took it that evening and was very sick in the night."

"How is he now?"

"Weak. I wanted to send him to the hospital but he wouldn't hear of it. He insists on having Hung-yu go on treating him. Now the boy has given him some more medicine and a needling treatment. I still think we ought to send him to the hospital. What do you say?"

"Let me go and see him first," the Party secretary answered after a moment's thought.

"All right, I'll go with you." And the two left the construction site.

On their way to the village they discussed the old stonemason's health condition, the brigade leader still insisting that the sick man should go to the hospital. "He'll listen to you," said he to the Party secretary. "To tell you the truth, I'm not at all sure Hung-yu can handle the case."

But the Party secretary was thinking of Hung-yu's consistently good work as a barefoot doctor. Why should that particular dose of medicine affect Grandpa Stonemason like that? Fu-kuei had had the prescription filled. That Fu-kuei. . . . Still, it might be Hung-yu's fault. And if so, what ought to be done about it? Let him go on treating Grandpa Stonemason, or stop his taking care of the old man? . . . The old stonemason was right in trusting Hung-yu. Even if the boy made a mistake, we should still trust him and not let

him lose heart. His elders' trust and encouragement would give him strength and confidence, and this would help him make further progress. . . .

"I think," said he finally to the brigade leader, "Hung-yu will be able to handle the case. If Grandpa Stonemason doesn't want to go to the hospital, let him stay at home. Hung-yu can look after him."

Seeing that the brigade leader was not convinced and showed signs of worry, he reminded him of an event which happened some twenty years before. "Huai," he asked, "do you remember the time when you were looking after the wounded guerrilla squad leader Old Wang?"

The brigade leader wondered why the Party secretary should bring that up. "Why, of course. How could I ever forget?" he replied.

"How old were you then?"

"Fourteen," the brigade leader calculated.

The Party secretary nodded, then said with a smile, "Two years younger than Hung-yu. Right?"

It was true, for the event occurred in 1940, during China's War of Resistance Against Japan. It was as fresh in the brigade leader's mind as if it had happened yesterday. He was the leader of the Children's Corps and his mother was chairman of the village Women's Association.

One summer evening Huai was at home sharpening his red-tasselled spear. At the time the invaders were carrying out mad "mopping-up" campaigns in this mountainous region and it had gone around that the guerrillas co-ordinating with the Eighth Route Army would temporarily evacuate the place. It was Huai's idea to sharpen the spear and then oil it and conceal it for future use.

As young Huai was working on his spear, he heard three signal knocks at the front door. His mother went to answer

it and he heard her whisper a few words to someone there, then saw her lead a man into the house.

The man was Brother Ching-tang, their present Party branch secretary. Brother Ching-tang had run away from the local despot Big-Head Sun the year before, had joined the Eighth Route Army guerrillas and was now the leader of a guerrilla detachment.

"Brother Ching-tang, is it true that the guerrillas will evacuate?" asked Huai.

"Yes, it's true."

This seemed a dim prospect to the boy, and he said no more.

"We're leaving here, because it means we'll be able to hit better and harder at the enemy. We'll be back. But while we're away, as leader of the Children's Corps, you must keep up the fight against the enemy."

Huai nodded.

"After we've gone," Brother Ching-tang continued, "the enemy will be even more savage, and Big-Head Sun will trample on us even more with the invaders behind him. Does that frighten you, Huai?"

"Why should it?" was the boy's answer.

"Are you sure?"

"Of course!"

"Good!" Brother Ching-tang said with a smile. "Then I'm going to entrust you with a very important task."

"What is it?" Huai was pleased and excited.

"Come with me and you'll know. Come!"

"Go with your Brother Ching-tang, child," mother interposed, obviously in the know about it.

The man and the boy took a path up a hill to the east. The moon shining on the Five-Dragon Mountains made them look especially imposing.

Brother Ching-tang told Huai about the task he was

assigning him. The situation was like this:

A guerrilla mess squad leader, Old Wang, had been wounded during an encounter with the enemy in this mountain region and was hidden in a cave there. An underground Party member, a shepherd, who lived in a village nearby looked after him, bringing him food and medicine on his trips to the mountains with his flock. But unfortunately the old shepherd was captured by the enemy, and killed. Another person had to be found to look after the wounded guerrilla, and that person should be Huai, the leader of the Children's Corps. The boy could go up the mountain as a woodcutter and take food and other necessities to Old Wang. Huai was just a boy and it was not likely the enemy would pay much attention to him.

Huai was overjoyed when he heard what the task was.

Soon they arrived at the cave and found the mess squad leader propped against a bunch of dry straw. Some others were there talking to him, and Huai recognized one of them, a strapping big fellow with a moustache, as the political instructor, Li.

"Have you discussed this with him?" Li asked Brother Ching-tang, at the same time smiling at Huai, whom he knew very well.

"Yes, I have," replied Brother Ching-tang.

"It's an important task, and not an easy one," explained Li, turning to young Huai and patting him on the shoulder. "Do you think you can do it?"

"Oh, yes! And I promise you I'll do it as well as I can," was Huai's ready reply.

"Are you sure you can?"

"Yes!"

"Absolutely?"

"Yes!"

"Any problems?"

"No!"

"Good!" Political Instructor Li smiled with satisfaction.

But there was a doubter, too. "But he's just a child, Instructor Li. Do you think you can entrust him with this task? What if there's an accident?"

The question was like pouring cold water on him, Huai thought, and he watched for the political instructor's reaction. Would he change his mind?

After a moment's thought Li said as he looked straight into Huai's eyes, "I know, the boy's task is not a small one. But I believe he can do it. Shall we let the matter rest there?"

Huai saw in the political instructor's eyes the confidence he had in him. This confidence heartened him and gave him strength. And as it turned out, the boy, Huai, fulfilled his task with credit.

Two months later, the guerrilla squad leader's wound had healed and he was able to leave his hiding place. It was Brother Ching-tang who came for him. . . .

Recalling this event of his youth opened the brigade leader's eyes. How right the old stonemason was! To the Party branch secretary he said, "It's true, the job of a barefoot doctor is not easy, but I've come to believe that Hung-yu can do it. Let Hung-yu go on treating Grandpa Stonemason. We needn't send him to the hospital."

Pleased, the secretary smiled and said, "Hung-yu is young and it is unavoidable that he makes mistakes. When he makes one, we shouldn't lose confidence in him, but should help him learn whatever lesson he can from the mistake. Let's both support him, how about it?"

To this the brigade leader answered with an emphatic "Yes!"

The two then went to see Grandpa Stonemason and found him sleeping peacefully, with Hung-yu and Chun-hung watch-

ing over him.

"How is he? Better?" asked the Party secretary in a low voice.

"Yes. He felt better almost immediately after taking the medicine and having acupuncture. The diarrhea's stopped, too."

The brigade leader patted Hung-yu on the shoulder and said to him, "Go ahead with your treatment for Grandpa Stonemason, Hung-yu. I believe you can cure him."

Hung-yu was a little puzzled to hear this from the brigade leader, but he said nothing.

"Really, I think so, Hung-yu. From now on I believe in you."

The Nub of the Problem

NOW that Grandpa Stonemason was better and work on the irrigation project was in full swing, Hung-yu went back to the construction site, leaving Chun-hung to look in on the convalescent.

But, while chiselling rock at the construction site, Hung-yu couldn't get his mind off grandpa's sudden acute gastrointestinal attack. The medicine he gave him could not have been the cause. He had checked every ingredient carefully while copying down the prescription, looking up the properties and curative effects of each one in his manual of traditional Chinese medicine. The prescription was not at fault. Was the pharmacist who filled the prescription careless then? But the comrades at the pharmacy were known for their conscientious work. If the dregs of the herbs had been saved, he could have examined them, but they had been thrown in the yard and picked over by the chickens. What was wrong?

That evening Hung-yu went to stay the night with Grandpa Stonemason and was reading his traditional Chinese medicine manual by lamplight when the subject of the prescription came up again.

"The upset was caused by the medicine, that much is quite certain," said the old man.

"It looks like it," agreed Hung-yu. But, according to the manual, it has been used on quite a few patients with no untoward effects. Why this time . . . ?"

"That question is not so simple as it may appear. It may not be the prescription at all."

"Then what could it be, grandpa?" asked Hung-yu anxiously.

"I can't be sure, of course. But I have some idea."

"What, then? What do you think it is, grandpa?"

"Who took the prescription to the pharmacy?"

"Sun Fu-kuei."

Grandpa Stonemason nodded, but did not comment.

"Do you mean to say that Fu-kuei . . . ?" asked Hung-yu, his line of thought shifting to a new tack.

Grandpa Stonemason shook his head. "Fu-kuei's not necessarily responsible, but he's self-centred, individualistic and doesn't mind accepting little favours. Still, to say he's entirely against us poor and lower-middle peasants is not true. He's been telling everybody how you cured his wife, especially how he saved several yuan on your prescription. He's vulnerable, that's all."

Who could have tampered with the prescription then? Hung-yu was nonplussed.

"I've been thinking to myself," continued Grandpa Stonemason, "that Lame Sun may have a finger in this."

"Lame Sun?" Hung-yu's eyes opened wide.

"I thought of the possibility this morning, but there were quite a few callers here and I didn't want Lame Sun to know, so I didn't say anything. I've been thinking over the events of the day when the prescription was filled, and the more I think about it, the more I feel that Lame Sun is involved."

"How is that?" questioned Hung-yu.

"Yesterday when Fu-kuei was sent with the cart to pick

up cement from the county co-op, Lame Sun also asked leave to go to the county town. He said he wanted to buy a mat, and also see his son who's studying in the middle school there. . . ."

"You mean Fu-kuei and Lame Sun plotted together to tamper with the medicine?" Hung-yu asked.

"Just how it was done is hard to say yet. Fu-kuei is selfish, as I've said before, but he's also timid. Even if Lame Sun dragged him into a plot, he might not dare. . . . Still, there's something in this: One goes to town to fetch cement; the other goes to the same place to buy a mat. Put the two together and you get a faulty medicine prescription! Chairman Mao teaches us: **Never forget class struggle.** It is from this standpoint that we should examine things!"

"You're right, grandpa," said Hung-yu, beginning to understand.

"If it is Lame Sun who did it, as I think it is," continued the old stonemason, "it would be for two reasons. The first is to undermine the confidence the commune members have in you; the other is to undermine my health so I can't work on the irrigation project."

The old stonemason had summed up the situation concisely for Hung-yu. "Grandpa Stonemason certainly has a strong sense of class struggle," Hung-yu said to himself. He too knew that Fu-kuei and Lame Sun had gone to town on the same day, the latter asking leave. But somehow he never associated the two, never gave any political significance to the two errands that coincided to further Lame Sun's design!

"You're sure the prescription's reliable, and that you copied it correctly from the traditional Chinese medicine manual?" the old stonemason queried once again.

"Yes, I'm sure."

"Could the pharmacy have made a mistake in filling the

prescription? I don't think so, do you?"

"Neither do I."

"It looks suspiciously like the work of Lame Sun."

"I wouldn't put it past him, grandpa."

"But our hunches are not enough. While grasping class struggle we must prove our case."

Hung-yu agreed, and the two sat for a while, each searching his mind for relevant facts.

Finally the old stonemason said, "I have an idea, Hung-yu. Suppose we have the same prescription filled again tomorrow at the same place. I'll take it and see what happens."

Hung-yu hesitated for a moment. "What if something does happen?"

"At least we'll test the prescription."

"Could you stand another attack like that?"

"You'd only give me some more medicine to stop it, and another needling treatment!" the old stonemason replied jocularly.

"That wouldn't do. It would be too much for you."

"We mustn't let ourselves 'be scared by the sight of a rope after a snake has bitten us,' as the saying goes. What we want to do is to satisfy ourselves that the prescription isn't poison, but cures what it's supposed to. Also, isn't it fine that it's cured my bronchitis and I'm back at work on the construction site?"

"All right, then," Hung-yu said finally. "I'll have the same prescription filled again tomorrow."

And so it was agreed, and the next day the old stonemason went to the construction site as usual, and as usual against the advice of the brigade leader and the commune members, he stayed the whole day. After supper he waited for Hung-yu to come with the medicine. But, as the boy did not show up, he went to his home to find him.

Arriving in the courtyard, he saw a light in the house and called out, "Has Hung-yu come back?"

Recognizing Grandpa Stonemason's voice, Hung-yu's grandmother said at once, "Come in, Grandpa Stonemason. Hung-yu's back."

The old stonemason went into the house and found granny sitting on the *kang*, her spectacles on her nose, sewing by lamplight. But he did not see Hung-yu.

"Where is he?" he asked, sitting down on the edge of the *kang*.

"He's gone to deliver the two batteries Chun-hung asked him to buy in town."

"And the medicine, did he get it?"

"Yes. And it's already brewed. There it is, on the top of the cupboard."

It was still warm — just right to take. The old stonemason was about to drink it when granny called out. "Don't! Hung-yu says it's not for you."

"Oh, then whose is it?"

"It's for Hung-yu."

"What? Why is he taking medicine?"

"It's your prescription, but Hung-yu says he's going to try it on himself, and that you're too weak for chances to be taken."

Grandpa Stonemason was moved by the young barefoot doctor's thoughtfulness. What more could be expected of him? Still, without a second thought, grandpa took up the bowl and drained it.

"Look at you! See what you've done!" exclaimed granny. "What if you're sick again?"

"I won't be. I'm sure nothing's wrong with the medicine. I trust our barefoot doctor."

"Granny!" called Hung-yu from outside. "Is the medicine

ready?" Then, seeing the old stonemason when he entered the room, he said, "Oh, grandpa! So you're here."

Grandpa Stonemason smiled, but granny was disturbed. "That medicine — Grandpa Stonemason drank it all!"

"You . . . took it?"

"Why, yes. It was prescribed for me; of course I took it." And grandpa laughed heartily, leaving Hung-yu with nothing more to say.

CHAPTER I 4

Treasured Prescriptions

GRANDPA Stonemason was improving under Hung-yu's care, though perhaps not as rapidly as expected. Whether the treatment was not effective enough, or the old man was overdoing on the construction work, it was not quite certain. But Hung-yu was deeply concerned about Grandpa Stonemason's health, and so were the Party secretary, the brigade leader and the commune members.

"Hung-yu, our barefoot doctor, can't you think of a way to cure the old stonemason's bronchitis?" the commune members would ask. And Hung-yu began to feel that if he did not, it would be a great disappointment to the poor and lower-middle peasants, who placed such trust in him.

One day when he was in town for medicine, he met Little Chang, the Blackstone Pass Brigade barefoot doctor at Pine Ridge Commune. Hung-yu and Chang had become friends while at the training class, and so Hung-yu mentioned Grandpa Stonemason's condition, saying he was worried.

"I hear there's an old doctor of traditional Chinese medicine who has a large collection of secret prescriptions handed down in his family. One, I hear, is effective in curing bronchitis in older people."

"Where is this old doctor?" asked Hung-yu, at once

interested.

"Oh, he's far away from here!"

"How far?"

"About two hundred *li*, two counties away."

"What's the name of the place?"

"Well, he's on a commune, but I can't remember the name. I think it's 'Red' something."

"Do you know the name of the doctor, then?"

"Oh, yes. Chang Tsan-chung."

"Who told you about him?"

"A person I met on the road."

"Well, then, the doctor's name will be enough."

"You intend to find him and get the prescription?" asked Chang.

"Not only that, but I want to learn more about traditional Chinese medicine from him."

As soon as Hung-yu returned to Date Tree Slope, he told the Party secretary what he had in mind, and the secretary fully agreed. And so very early next morning Hung-yu set out to find the doctor.

A satchel over his shoulder containing food for the journey, Hung-yu walked quickly along the mountain path, over hills and valleys, in the direction of the commune indicated by his fellow trainee. Everywhere he saw the busy activity of commune members learning from Tachai: blasting mountains, cutting irrigation canals, digging reservoirs, terracing hill-slopes. . . .

These scenes of socialist labour spurred him on in his search for the old doctor, and he walked faster.

He stayed that night in the home of a poor peasant family, who showed him their warm hospitality, and continued his journey the next morning.

Around noon he came to a big river which he learned was

the Golden Dragon River. On the other side of the river was the county he was looking for.

There was a ferry across the river, with many people waiting at the wharf, who, he was told, had just come back from a fair in one of the villages on this side of the river.

Soon a wooden ferry boat of medium size pulled up to the wharf, and the passengers from across the river disembarked. Then Hung-yu got onto the boat together with the others.

The ferry was very crowded and Hung-yu stood at one side. Next to him was an old man, white-haired and wrinkled, with a long beard but the bright eyes of a young man. A long narrow bag was slung over his shoulder.

The passengers on the ferry boat seemed to know this old man very well and were greeting him warmly. This gave Hung-yu the impression that the old man was well thought of by the people.

"Everybody stand steady!" the man poling the boat at the stern called out. "We're pulling away!"

Soon the boat was in mid-stream, where the waves pounded the sides of the wooden boat and it began to toss, aggravated by a sudden wind. The steersman shouted, "Everybody stand still!"

The passengers were silent, and the only sound was the pounding of the waves against the ferry boat.

Another breaker beat against the boat, rocking it and unbalancing the old man. Something rolled from his long narrow bag and fell into the river with a splash!

The old man uttered a cry in distress.

"What's the matter?" asked several passengers at once.

"My little tin box. . . . It's fallen into the river! All gone! Everything gone!" the old man exclaimed, gazing at the spot in the water where his tin box had disappeared.

The passengers were all concerned, and someone asked,

“What was in the tin box, old uncle?”

“Years of work . . . all in that little box! I’ve always carried it with me.” The old man was obviously very upset, and the others became excited too.

“What shall we do?” said a passenger.

“What a pity!”

Hung-yu was curious to know what treasure was in the box, but found no chance to ask. The concern of the passengers was infectious, and Hung-yu felt worried for the elderly stranger, too.

Just then a middle-aged man was seen taking off his jacket to plunge after the box, but the steersman stopped him. “Don’t dive, Chun-lin. You’re not a good under-water swimmer.”

“No, I wouldn’t let you risk your life for my sake,” the old man chimed in.

“We’ll get a People’s Liberation Army man from our village to dive for it when we get to the other bank,” suggested a teen-age boy.

“Right!” everyone agreed.

“But by that time the box will be far away downstream,” the middle-aged man said, and insisted on diving for it.

The old man was moved but stopped him. “I can’t let anything happen to you!”

Meanwhile, Hung-yu had slipped off his jacket and, unnoticed, jumped into the river to the surprise and anxiety of the other passengers.

Hung-yu reassured them, and calmly waving his hand to them he called out, “It’s all right. I can manage.”

Hung-yu was in fact an excellent swimmer, having learned while he was still in middle school, and he battled admirably against the strong waves. The passengers were all vocal in their praises of Hung-yu for the way he took the unruly waters in his stride.



The old man fixed his eyes on Hung-yu and followed his every movement, very impressed. "Be careful, my boy!" he called out in concern.

As soon as the ferry boat touched shore, the teen-age boy hurried off to find the P.L.A. man. But all the others remained, anxious about Hung-yu's safety.

It was early summer, but the weather was not yet warm, while the water was still like ice, especially deeper down. But Hung-yu could think of nothing but retrieving the little tin box.

He came up several times for breath, and each time the people on the bank would ask, "Have you spotted it yet?"

Half an hour went by, and the little tin box was not yet found. The wind had risen and the waves were high. Hung-yu was still diving after the old man's box.

Many gave up hope. Was the little box lost? Some advised Hung-yu to come up. And the old man, even though he was so anxious to have his treasured box back, joined in the chorus, "Come up, my boy! . . ."

Hung-yu was cold and beginning to tire, but he would not give up. From the worried expressions of the old man and the other passengers he knew that the little box must contain something very important. He must get it back, however great the difficulty. That was just like Hung-yu — once his mind was made up he would not stop short of achieving his goal.

Suddenly his hand knocked against something, and he grabbed it. Why, wasn't it the little tin box? Hung-yu held it tightly to his chest and came up. "I've found it! It's here!" he called to the people on the shore.

"At last!" the people answered back, relieved that the box had been found.

The old man became so excited at seeing his box again

that the bystanders thought he was going to jump into the water to thank Hung-yu.

Hung-yu was swimming ashore now, the little tin box in one hand above the water. The ferry man rowed out at once to bring him to shore.

Hung-yu was shivering with cold but had a triumphant smile on his face. The people immediately surrounded him, and the old man embraced him, too moved to say anything for some time. Finally he managed to say, "How can I ever thank you, my boy!"

"No need, old uncle. I saw how anxious the people were about the box, so I dived to find it." And with that Hung-yu handed the box to him.

The box was about half a foot square and painted in cream colour. On the lid in bright red were the words: **Serve the people.**

"Open it. See if your treasures are in good condition," the people said as they handed Hung-yu his jacket.

"Did they get wet?" someone asked.

"We've certainly got the boy to thank," another put in.

The old man opened the box. In it were nothing but folded up sheets of paper. The old man took them out one by one with great care.

"Did water get in?" someone asked again.

"It didn't hurt them," answered the old man. "I water-proofed them with wax."

Hung-yu noticed on the sheets of paper were fine and closely-written characters, and asked, "What are these papers, old uncle?"

"Treasures of mine," the old man answered with a smile. Then suddenly changing the subject, he asked Hung-yu, "Where do you come from, my boy?"

"Date Tree Slope Brigade, Redstone Valley Commune."

"And where is that?"

"West of here, the third county."

"So far away? Where are you going?"

"To a commune whose name also begins with 'Red.'"

"Red what?"

"I don't know yet."

The people around laughed, feeling amused. "We have quite a few communes named 'Red' in these parts. There are Red Ray, Red Glow, Red Sun, Red Rock, Red Cloud Peak. . . . Now, which of these is the possible one?"

"I really can't say."

"What are you going there for then?"

"To find a certain old doctor of traditional Chinese medicine."

"What's his name? Maybe I know him. I know most of the doctors around here," added the old man.

"His name is Chang Tsan-chung."

"So! . . ." exclaimed the old man, then said no more.

The people laughed and remarked, "What a coincidence!"

"What do you mean?" Hung-yu was puzzled for a moment.

"I'm the man you're looking for!" explained the old man, smiling.

"You?" Hung-yu could hardly believe his ears.

The old man, too, found it hard to believe that someone had come all that distance looking for him, and he asked, "What do you want of me?"

"I want to learn traditional medicine from you, and also get a certain prescription. I'm a barefoot doctor." Then Hung-yu told the old doctor about Grandpa Stonemason's trouble.

The old doctor was very pleased to meet this conscientious young barefoot doctor. "Come home with me," he said, "and we'll discuss the case. I'll show you my collection of prescriptions. You can copy down any of them you want and take

them back."

Hung-yu, overjoyed, kept on saying, "Thank you, old uncle. Thank you very, very much."

"Don't thank me. I'm the one who should thank you!"

"Old uncle," Hung-yu asked again, "do you keep all your prescriptions at home?"

The old man chuckled. Then, showing Hung-yu the folded sheets of waxed paper, he said, "These are my prescriptions. They're all here!"

The conversation was interrupted by the return of the teenage boy, hurrying back with two People's Liberation Army men. . . .

Gathering Medicinal Herbs

HUNG-YU stayed with the old herb doctor for three days, learning from his experience of many years of treating the sick, and also his knowledge of traditional Chinese medicine — the use of different herbs in curing particular diseases. The old doctor taught without reservation, and Hung-yu hung on every word. He also copied all the prescriptions the old man had.

The earnestness with which Hung-yu learned from the old herb doctor won his heart, and he considered the boy as his under-study. . . .

After returning to Date Tree Slope Hung-yu decided to make pellets of the medicinal herbs prescribed by the old doctor for Grandpa Stonemason to take. But one ingredient was lacking — *wang tian jin* — which was not stocked at any pharmacy.

According to the old doctor, this herb was found on the shady side high up in the mountains, and the higher the altitude at which it grew the better its quality. Hung-yu thought there must be plenty of it near Date Tree Slope. The doctor had no more of the herb, only a sample, which he showed the boy. He said Hung-yu should gather some himself when he got home.

Hung-yu reported to the Party branch secretary about his trip and how he found the prescription for Grandpa Stonemason. He also told about the herb he should gather from the mountain, and the secretary thought this a good idea.

When Little Shun heard about Hung-yu's projected trip up the mountain, he wanted to go too. So, it was decided that the two of them should go the next day. They started out the next morning at dawn, Hung-yu and Little Shun, each with a basket, a lunch-box and a sickle, in search of the herb.

The sun had not yet risen by the time they had climbed the hillslope, and the Five-Dragon Mountains looked especially beautiful in the morning mist of early summer. The bluish fog, moving slowly, simulated the rise and fall of ocean water, the mountain peaks were like islands in the sea. Neither Hung-yu nor Little Shun had ever seen an ocean, but they could imagine it was like this. The dark distant mountains, the deep green of those nearer, and the jade hue of the nearby hills were an exciting picture for the boys, as was the spring water emerging from half-way up the mountain and flowing down into the valley like a hanging white belt!

A few patches of opaque cloud dotted the deep blue sky. Then splashes of crimson were thrown across the eastern horizon, slowly edging the clouds golden, wider and wider, until the entire eastern sky was red.

The rays of the newly risen sun changed the colour of the mountains and of everything on them. Even the distant mountains were green now, and the bluish fog became white. Bright wild flowers became brilliant, the leaves, the dew on the grass, and even the rocks now sparkled in the sun. . . .

Hung-yu and Little Shun climbed from one hill to another, their destination being Swallow Ridge on the highest peak. How near every summit seemed from a distance, but how they retreated farther and farther away when the boys climbed

towards them! It was almost noon, and yet Swallow Ridge was still a distant goal.

The slopes were steep and overgrown with thorns and brambles, each step up taking an effort. They climbed and climbed, Hung-yu blazing the trail up front with Little Shun close at his heels. Suddenly, Little Shun directed Hung-yu's attention to a mountain eagle hovering overhead. "Brother Hung-yu," he said, "how I wish I could sprout wings like that eagle's and fly up to Swallow Ridge!"

"Our wings are stronger than that eagle's," said Hung-yu smiling, "and we can fly much, much higher than it. Don't you think so?" Little Shun agreed.

"Are you tired, Little Shun?" asked Hung-yu, noticing him panting.

"Oh, no . . . no!" was the reply. But Hung-yu could see signs of fatigue on Little Shun's face and suggested they rest a while.

"But I'm not tired," Little Shun insisted, though in fact he was. He was putting on a brave front because he didn't want to slow down the search.

"Well, if you're not tired, I am," Hung-yu insisted. "And hungry, too!" So the two sat down on a rock and began to eat the lunch they had brought with them.

Not far from them was a spring that shot water into the air. "Come on," said Little Shun, "let's have a drink of spring water!"

The water was clear and refreshing. As Hung-yu drank, he was reminded of a story the old stonemason had told him.

Years ago there was a spring near Swallow Ridge whose water was sweet and also curative. Sick poor people around would drink at this spring, and they would get well. Now this upset the local despot, Big-Head Sun, who was also the local apothecary. For who, then, would buy medicine from his

store? So he made up the tale that not only the water in his well and the spring water of Swallow Ridge came from the same source, but also the spring water flowed from his well. Now, according to geomancy, water flowing away from his well meant the flowing away of luck, so he had the spring blocked up.

Now Hung-yu wondered if this could be that spring! Was its water medicinal? Some day, he said to himself, he must test it and find out. And so it was. Ever since Hung-yu had become a barefoot doctor, he had always had the health of the poor and lower-middle peasants at heart. He missed nothing that would benefit them.

Hung-yu and Little Shun resumed their climb to Swallow Ridge and were on a stretch of flat land half-way up a mountain. The wild vegetation grew more profuse, and there were fruit trees too, while the vines climbing and encircling them were luxuriant with large leaves and long stalks. Blossoming wild flowers — peony, azalea, chrysanthemum — presented a riot of colour.

Hung-yu and Little Shun had both grown up in this mountainous area and were familiar with its plants, though they had never paid much attention to them before. Now, they looked at them with special interest, especially Hung-yu, who placed medicinal value on them.

Caught on thorny brambles and pricked by dry grass, the two boys scrambled on, every bush and flower appearing to them as a medicinal herb, until the entire mountain became a pharmacy to Hung-yu!

He recalled the story of the ginseng root which his grandmother had told him, about his grandfather and father searching for medicinal herbs in the Changpai Mountains decades ago. Now, here he was gathering medicinal herbs in the Five-Dragon Mountains. How the times had changed! The so-

cial conditions were entirely different, and so was the aim of gathering medicinal herbs!

Hung-yu and Little Shun finally reached the foot of the main Swallow Ridge peak. But just then the weather suddenly changed, with dark clouds gathering and flashes of lightning forking through the sky, followed by loud thunder, till clouds covered the whole mountain.

Not far from them an old shepherd was urging his flock into a cave for shelter. He saw the two boys and shouted to them: "Where are you going, my lads? Come! There's going to be a storm!"

"What shall we do, Brother Hung-yu?" asked Little Shun who, though a brave child, had never before been caught in a storm on the mountain.

"You go into the cave with the shepherd, Little Shun," said Hung-yu.

"What about you?"

"I'll go on up the mountain. It's getting late, I can't wait till the rain stops. When I've found the herb, I'll come down and get you. Stay right there in the cave and wait for me. Will you?"

"I'm not scared," said Little Shun, throwing out his chest. "I'll go with you!"

At this expression of the boy's bravery, Hung-yu agreed. "All right. Come along then."

The old shepherd shouted again, but Hung-yu only thanked him and explained that they were on an urgent errand.

And so, in wind and rain, the two boys made their way towards Swallow Ridge peak. The blinding rain and the slippery rocks now made the going still harder.

"What a heavy rain!" Little Shun remarked.

"It's a good rain!" Hung-yu answered. "The fields need it, and it will fill our reservoir. It's only half full."

"But why can't it wait for us to get back?" said Little Shun, though, of course, he knew better.

"The weather won't listen to us. But some day, after we've learned more, it will have to."

"I'll be glad when that time comes."

"Before we can make nature bend to our will — which can be done only gradually — we should build reservoirs and dig canals as the first step, so that our fields will not lack water in times of drought. But right now, our irrigation project is still half-finished so we ought to welcome this rain, even though we're going to get a soaking."

"Well, let it rain all it wants to, then!" And they both laughed.

Soon they came to a precipice some ten feet high with scarcely a toe-hold on it and slippery too, especially in the rain. Hung-yu spotted a rattan stem, made a jump for it and grabbed it. He scrambled up the rock, hanging on to it, but Little Shun couldn't reach it. So Hung-yu threw another long stem to him and started pulling him up by it. But when Little Shun was half-way up, Hung-yu lost his footing and both tumbled back down, unhurt except for a few bruises on Hung-yu's arms.

Hung-yu started up the cliff again, telling Little Shun to wait below. "I'll find another way to get you up."

"How's that?" Little Shun wanted to know.

This time Hung-yu cut two pieces of rattan stem and tied one end of one of them to the trunk of a pine tree and the other around his waist. Then he threw one end of the other piece down to Little Shun and pulled him up by it. And on they went.

The rain had slackened and the sky began to brighten, though it was still dull down below and rain continued to fall.



Hung-yu stopped before a cluster of brambles when he saw there a plant with a red stem, green leaves, and small lavender flowers at the top. "We've found it! This is *wang tian jin!*" the boy cried with joy.

Little Shun was about to pick it when Hung-yu said to wait. "Why?" asked Little Shun, puzzled.

"The old doctor says the best ones are on the peak."

"But suppose there aren't any up there."

"Then we'll pick these on our way down."

Finally the two boys reached the peak where they found cluster after cluster of the medicinal herb, more luxuriant and fine than the one on the way. . . :

Their baskets bulging, the boys started back down. It was nearly sunset, and a rosy glow lit up the two boys' faces, making them as radiant as they felt in their hearts.

CHAPTER I 6

The Investigation

THE herb medicine pellets prepared from the prescription the old doctor gave Hung-yu helped Grandpa Stonemason very much. Now the old stonemason had been going regularly to work at the construction site with his chisel, like the others.

The commune members were glad to have him back, and raised their thumbs for Hung-yu's cure.

"Our barefoot doctor may be just a boy, but he does big people's work," was one comment.

"Now that Grandpa Stonemason's back, we'll get on with the work much more quickly," was another.

The construction site was a hive of activity, with red banners fluttering, hammers pounding, the sound of blasting reverberating. When the commune members saw the project going on so well they became more energetic, pushing the work forward at an even more rapid rate. Working with happiness, they found their labour brought them increased joy. . . .

During rest time commune members would go to Hung-yu for treatment of any discomfort they had. Hung-yu set up his "clinic" under a persimmon tree, and there he would write out prescriptions, give injections, or administer acupuncture treatment according to need.

"Now that we have our own barefoot doctor," the poor and lower-middle peasants said, "we can receive treatment right on the job. It's really convenient! It's the victory of Chairman Mao's revolutionary line in medicine that we have to thank for it."

The Communist Youth League branch secretary, Chun-hung, wrote a verse for ballad singing:

Our barefoot doctor is really fine,
Seeing patients and applying needles without registration!
A small medicine kit on his shoulder,
He brings healing to fields and construction site!
Serving the people with heart and mind,
He remembers Chairman Mao's instructions well.
He fears not hardship or fatigue,
Nor obstacles standing mountain-high!
Of one heart with us poor and lower-middle peasants,
Our barefoot doctor answers our needs!

But, in one corner of the same construction site lurked another kind of person, one who did not share the joy of the others. This person went about grinding his teeth and was in a cold, nervous sweat. This other kind of person was Lame Sun. He squatted at one side of the site, his head down, the hammer in his hand rising and falling without force. He looked depressed, as if the joyful scene around him was a hail-storm battering him, the hammer blows of the energetic commune members striking on his bare heart.

Lame Sun had been jittery the past few days. The plan that he had thought a hundred per cent sure had failed, and he had neither undermined Hung-yu's reputation as a barefoot doctor nor the old stonemason's health. The old stonemason had not questioned Hung-yu's ability for one moment but had let him go on treating him. Worse still, Hung-yu had tested the same prescription on the old man. . . . Lame Sun had lifted a stone, so to speak, only to drop it on his own toes — Hung-yu's reputation was better than ever. Sus-

picion fell on the first dose of medicine. Lame Sun knew that the Party branch secretary and the old stonemason would not let the matter drop, but would certainly investigate. Once the truth was out, he would be finished. How could he help being nervous, worried and scared?

Lame Sun felt his world crumbling around his ears, and in fact this was what was happening. The Party branch secretary, brigade leader, Grandpa Stonemason and Hung-yu had been investigating quietly, not to "beat the grass and frighten the snake away," as the saying goes.

One afternoon as the Party secretary was leaving the county co-op to return home, he passed the wine shop near the crossroad. Suddenly it occurred to him that Lame Sun and Fu-kuei might have stopped there that day when they were in town, as both liked a drink and Lame Sun had the habit of treating Fu-kuei to a few cups when he wanted to use him. With this possibility in mind, the Party secretary walked into the shop.

For some time the shop assistants could not recall whether there had been two such people in the shop that day. Then, after the Party secretary described in detail what the two looked like, a young woman who was on duty at the time remembered them. A lame man had come in first, drunk a few cups, then went out and spoke to a man driving a cart. The carter, a stout, middle-aged man, then left his cart at the side of the road and came into the shop. The two had sat down at a table and begun to drink and talk. The young woman did not know what they talked about, nor had she noticed when they left.

The young woman's account was not spectacular, but it furnished a very important clue to what the Party branch secretary wanted to find out. There was no doubt about the

two having been drinking there that day. And this fact supported the old stonemason's claim that the medicine Fu-kuei brought back had likely been tampered with by Lame Sun. But, what had he put into it? Whatever it was, it might have been purchased at the county pharmacy. Well, the Party secretary would check and find out. . . .

It was getting dark. Work at the construction site was over for the day and Hung-yu went home. Granny already had supper ready so he ate at once and hurried out again.

"Where are you going, Hung-yu?" granny asked.

"To water my medicinal herb garden. Little Shun's going too." And putting a spade over his shoulder, Hung-yu went out.

At the fork with the main road he met a man from Azure Cloud Village who asked him to go and see a child with a high fever. Hung-yu turned back at once to get his medicine kit. Then, replacing his spade in the courtyard, he went with the man.

Little Shun was waiting for Hung-yu to call for him and when he did not appear, Little Shun went to Hung-yu's home where granny told him where Hung-yu had gone.

Little Shun returned home and found his father, the brigade leader, back from work. "Aren't you going to water the herb garden tonight with Hung-yu?" he asked. "When I passed by, I noticed the plants drooping."

"Hung-yu had wanted to, but he has had too many irons in the fire, working at the construction site and seeing his patients. We did plan to water the garden tonight, but Hung-yu's gone to Azure Cloud Village to see a patient. I don't know when he'll be back, and I can't carry all that water by myself."

"I'll go with you. I've got nothing special to do tonight.

"We'll give the plants a good soaking!"

Little Shun had noticed that his father had changed his attitude towards Hung-yu and that he would join in the other commune members' praise of the barefoot doctor. Now it seemed quite natural to Little Shun that his father offered to go with him to water the herb garden. So, with spade, winch, cord and dipper, father and son started out.

It was a moonlit evening, one of those that is almost as light as day. The brigade leader turned the winch and Little Shun dipped the water into the furrows. The plants were doing fine, some in bud, some had put out long tendrils.

After some time they heard someone calling them from the slope: "So you're here, Uncle Huai! And you, too, Little Shun!" It was Hung-yu.

"Why, you're back so soon? I thought it would take you longer," said Little Shun.

"A simple cold. Nothing serious. I've given him an injection and some medicine to take. I heard the winch. That's why I came." Hung-yu then turned to the brigade leader and said, "Uncle Huai, I really thank you!"

"What for?"

"For watering the plants."

"It's nothing to thank me for. I never supported you enough before and I ought to make a self-criticism!" All three had to laugh at this.

"You go on home, Hung-yu. You must be tired. The two of us will finish the job," suggested the brigade leader.

"Definitely not! I ought to do this work," said Hung-yu, joining in.

There was another voice from the slope: "You certainly are a fast walker, Hung-yu! I tried to catch up with you, but I couldn't." Hung-yu looked up and saw it was the Party secretary.

"How is it you were trying to catch up with me?" Hung-yu asked. "I thought you went to the county town."

"Yes. But I came now from Azure Cloud Village."

"What did you go there for?" asked the brigade leader.

"First, let me tell you something," said the Party secretary.

"What is it?" asked all three anxiously, for the Party secretary suddenly looked very serious.

"This time Lame Sun has shown his true colours!" the Party secretary began.

"You've got information?" the brigade leader interrupted.

"A very important clue."

"What is it?" Hung-yu and Little Shun chorused.

The Party secretary first told what he had learned at the wine shop. "And then," he continued, "I went to the county pharmacy, thinking the contaminating substance might have been bought there. The shop assistants recalled a man lame in one leg coming to buy something that morning. But they did not know what he bought; the person who had sold him the drug was on home leave."

"And where is that?"

"Azure Cloud Village."

"So that's why you went there!"

"Right."

"Did you find that shop assistant?"

"Yes."

"And what did he say?"

"He said a cripple had bought a package of the powerful cathartic croton oil bean powder that morning."

"Let's go after that cripple and Sun Fu-kuei right now and make them confess," Little Shun interrupted, shooting up a fist.

"Hold on. He can't get away," the Party secretary said with a smile. "We must first talk with Fu-kuei and find

out if he's in the plot. There are two possibilities — one that Lame Sun egged him on and he collaborated; the other is that Lame Sun used him without his being aware of it. Fu-kuei is a timid sort, but he doesn't bear us poor and lower-middle peasants such ill will as to play such a dirty trick. I think we should use Fu-kuei as a stepping-stone to get at the root of the matter. I'll go to see him and get his story, then report the whole matter to the commune Party committee at tomorrow's meeting." The brigade leader agreed with this proposal.

Fu-kuei's front gate was slightly open when the Party secretary arrived, so he gave it a shove and entered the courtyard.

Fu-kuei was sitting weaving a rattan basket by moonlight and he looked up when he heard the creak of the gate. "Oh, so it's you, Party secretary," he said. "Anything you want with me?"

"Yes."

"What is it?"

"Let's go into the house."

Fu-kuei stood up, put aside his work and went inside with the secretary. There he lighted the kerosene lamp on the table and asked the secretary to sit down, while he took a seat on the edge of the *kang*.

"I hear your wife went to visit her sister. Has she come back yet?" the Party secretary opened the conversation.

"No, not yet," was the simple answer.

"And your daughter?"

"She's at evening school."

The Party secretary then turned to the purpose of his visit. "Fu-kuei, I've come to talk with you about something," began the secretary, looking Fu-kuei straight in the eye.

Fu-kuei was surprised at the secretary's sudden serious ex-

pression and weighty words. So he asked, a bit awkwardly, "What is it?"

"About you and Lame Sun," came the point-blank reply.

Fu-kuei appeared somewhat nervous. "Me? Lame Sun? What have I to do with him?"

The Party secretary said right out, "Didn't Lame Sun treat you to some drinks the day you took the cart to the county co-op for cement?"

"Yes. A few cups. He insisted — almost dragged me into the wine shop," Fu-kuei admitted, realizing it was no use trying to cover up since the Party secretary obviously already knew.

"Then tell me why the medicine you brought back for Grandpa Stonemason gave him such an upset? Could it have been tampered with?"

Fu-kuei broke out in a cold sweat. He had in fact been a little worried after hearing that the old stonemason had suffered an attack of diarrhea after taking the medicine he had picked up for him while the same prescription filled at the same pharmacy by Hung-yu gave no such bad effects. Was there something wrong with the medicine? Had Lame Sun "doctored" it while he was out selling his litter of piglets? Possible, he thought, but what proof had he? He was afraid of being involved in case there was an investigation. Who would believe that he had nothing to do with it? He had begun to feel more at ease when the incident was no longer talked about. But now, unexpectedly, here was the Party secretary come to investigate! "To tell the truth, secretary," he finally said, very nervous, "I really don't know why that medicine caused so much trouble." He wiped the sweat from his forehead and went on, "If Lame Sun put something into the package, he must have done it behind my back. I've been suspecting that all along."

"But, how could it have happened?" the secretary asked further.

"You know, I went to the fair that day to sell my piglets. I was going to drive the cart there from the wine shop, but he said it was too crowded there and I'd better walk. He'd watch the cart for me. I agreed. . . . He had asked me what else I had to do besides picking up the cement and I told him about the prescription, but that I'd already got it. He seemed worried about its getting lost, so I told him there was no danger of that because I had put it in the tool box underneath the cart. He knew where the medicine was. But how was I to know he was going to do something like that?"

Fu-kuei's account rang true. But, thought the Party secretary, it was high time Fu-kuei was put on guard against the likes of Lame Sun and took his stand on the side of the poor and lower-middle peasants. "But do you think Lame Sun will accept that? Suppose he says you're responsible, since you had the prescription filled? Could he not say the same as you? Cast the suspicion on you? How could you prove, then, that it was he and not you that tampered with the medicine?"

Fu-kuei jumped up from the *kang*, strode back and forth, and rubbed his hands together. "That. . . . Well. . . ."

"Even if it should be proved that he's the culprit, he could still claim that the two of you were drinking together and that you were in on what he did. How could you prove your innocence?"

"Please believe me, I'll tell all," Fu-kuei almost sobbed. "I really don't know how it happened. To drag me into it would be really unjust. . . ."

"Of course the matter will have to be thoroughly investigated. If you have a part in it, you'll have to answer for it.

If you have a clear conscience in this matter, no wrong will be done you either."

"I swear that my hands are clean. I fell into Lame Sun's trap!"

"But you should think over why you fell into his trap. Why should he single you out especially?"

"It's because," Fu-kuei admitted after a moment's thought, "I can't resist a few cups of wine!"

"That's all it looks like on the surface, but what's at the root of your weakness? You'd better think that over."

Fu-kuei thought for a while, then said, "It's my selfishness — everything for myself, as the poor and lower-middle peasants say of me. I like getting things without paying for them, getting the big end of the stick every time!"

"And do you think Lame Sun doesn't know that? He takes advantage of your weakness and feeds you tidbits. And because of this you hobnob with him and cold-shoulder the poor and lower-middle peasants."

The Party secretary had described the situation precisely! "You're right, secretary! He offers me a few cups of wine and when he needs me he drags me down. I know now. I know what kind of person that Lame Sun is," said Fu-kuei remorsefully.

"So let this be a lesson to you."

"I promise you, secretary, to change my selfish ways," said Fu-kuei, very much moved. "I'll stand with the poor and lower-middle peasants and have nothing more to do with that bad egg Lame Sun! You just watch me. I'll prove it by deeds." Fu-kuei sounded sincere enough.

"That's good," remarked the Party secretary with a smile.

That night Lame Sun could not sleep.

The evening before, when he saw the Party secretary enter the gate of Fu-kuei's home, he intended to listen over the wall to what the two would say. But to his great disappointment, the secretary took Fu-kuei inside. Lame Sun waited for some time in a corner near the wall, hoping to catch a word or two. But he could not, and when he saw the secretary leave the house, he was peeved at not finding out a thing. He was quite sure their conversation must have something to do with him. Could it be about the matter that had been on his mind all these days? If not, would the Party secretary have taken Fu-kuei into the house to talk? Lame Sun decided to find out from Fu-kuei himself.

The next day around noon he went to see Fu-kuei and found him in the courtyard working on the rattan basket left unfinished from the evening before. Fu-kuei looked up at his visitor but said nothing.

"Ah, Brother Fu-kuei, you're not taking a nap on such a hot day?" Lame Sun asked, trying to start a conversation.

"Hum," uttered Fu-kuei, and went on weaving his basket.

Lame Sun stepped nearer and almost whispered, "I've got some wine at home. Come and have a drink with me."

"I don't want any," replied Fu-kuei curtly. "Go and drink it yourself."

"It's good wine," urged the cripple with a forced smile.

"Good or bad, I don't want a drink!" Fu-kuei answered crossly.

"But why?"

"I've given up drinking."

"You've given up drinking? Don't joke with me. A tippler like you? Impossible. I feel sad drinking alone, let's go!" And Lame Sun tried to drag his neighbour away.

Fu-kuei gave a jerk and said loudly and sternly, "Lame Sun, from now on, let's keep a little distance. You needn't

come to my place any more!"

Lame Sun was stunned. He loosened his grip on Fu-kuei's arm, the colour draining from his face. "All right, all right, if you really don't want to. . . ." And Lame Sun, down in the mouth, limped out of Fu-kuei's courtyard.

CHAPTER 17

On the Wild Horse River

IT was getting towards evening on one gloomy, overcast day. Lame Sun returned from work, went into the house and threw his hammer with a terrific clang into a corner of the room. Then, like a heap of clay, he crumpled on to the *kang*.

His wife, a very small woman, was working hard at the bellows to get the supper done. "Looks like a storm blowing up. Better put the things in the yard under cover," she called to her husband.

No answer came, for Lame Sun was staring blankly at the smoke-blackened wall by the *kang*.

"Those piles of straw will get soaked if you don't put them away," she called again.

Still the man lay motionless and silent. The woman grew impatient and, getting up from the little stool she was sitting on while working the bellows, stuck her head into the inner room and asked, "What's the matter?"

"Don't you know what day this is?" asked her husband bitterly.

"What day is it?" The woman did not remember.

"The twenty-fourth day of the sixth lunar month!"

"So it is." only then did the woman recall that Lame Sun's father Big-Head Sun, the local despot, had been executed on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth lunar month. Lame Sun

observed this date as a day of "remembrance." He would go to his father's grave and there he would vow to avenge his death and pray that the "day of revenge" be speeded and he "rise to greatness" again. That very evening he had not forgotten to visit his father's grave on his way home from the day's work. This year it looked to Lame Sun the "day of revenge" was not forthcoming, but that the day of his doom was approaching instead.

Lame Sun shivered as he recalled Fu-kuei's changed attitude earlier that day. The Party secretary's visit must have had something to do with it. Had Fu-kuei told the Party secretary what happened that day in the county town? If so, the Party secretary would certainly go on investigating until all evidence had been dug up. Lame Sun wouldn't have even his one good leg to stand on!

That afternoon at work his mind had wandered, and he could almost feel the handcuffs on his wrists. He was scared, almost mad with fright, and wanted to use his hammer to strike at the poor and lower-middle peasants there on the construction site. But what would be the use? It would be like knocking an egg against a stone. Was Lame Sun to meet his doom just like that, and not fight back? . . . These were some of the thoughts that ran through Lame Sun's mind as he lay like a corpse on the *kang*.

His wife vaguely guessed what was on his mind and ventured to say, "You may as well stop thinking about it. It's no use fighting them. They've got power."

"What do you know!" roared the man, suddenly sitting up and flinging his arms about so that he knocked over the lamp and spilled kerosene over the *kang*. He took up the lamp and with all his might dashed it onto the floor where it lay in pieces.

"Are you mad?" his wife shouted, hurriedly getting a rag

to mop the *kang*.

"I'm mad, all right! And I'm going to fight them like mad rather than wait for my doom!" And he sank down on the *kang* again.

It was really dark now. Lame Sun was still lying motionless on the *kang*, brooding. Only his gaze darted from place to place.

His wife went back to her cooking, pulling and pushing hard on the bellows as before.

Soon the wheeze of the bellows stopped and the house became as quiet as a tomb. Voices were heard clearly from the street.

"Say, Hung-yu, are you going to Stone Valley Village to give Granny Tsun another acupuncture treatment?" It was Chun-hung's voice.

"Of course."

"It's very dark. Can you see your way?"

"I've got my flashlight."

"It's going to rain. Better put it off till tomorrow."

"I can't do that. I told Granny Tsun I'd go every night. I'm to give her several consecutive courses of acupuncture treatment."

"Is she better?"

"A lot. She can raise her arm now, though sometimes she still feels pain."

"Well, you'd better hurry. It's going to rain."

"It doesn't matter. I've got an umbrella."

"Then perhaps you'll stay the night there."

"No, I have to come back. I've something to do after that."

.....

The voices on the street died away. The house was still as silent as a tomb.

Lame Sun's wife got out an oil lamp, lighted it and put it on the table where it sent out a thin flickering light. Suddenly Lame Sun sat up and slammed his fist down on the *kang* as if he had come to a momentous decision. He jumped off the *kang*, went to the cupboard, took out a bottle of spirits and gulped down two mouthfuls, a sinister smile creeping over his face.

The wind rose, and large drops of rain followed. Soon the frail flame of the oil lamp went out, blown by the wind through the window. The room was left in total darkness. . . .

Hung-yu was caught at the edge of the village by the down-pour. He was near the Wild Horse River, which flowed to the west of the village. Ordinarily a dry river-bed, it filled nearly to the bank when it rained and water rushed down from the mountains. Then its muddy water with foam-crested waves would roll like a galloping wild horse. Hence, the name, Wild Horse. Recent heavy rains in the upper reaches had swelled the river, and now its current was swift and strong.

The river was spanned by an old five-arch stone bridge whose side railings had long been gone, though the bridge itself was still quite firm. Hung-yu crossed the bridge in pools of water, the rain beating against his umbrella, which he held with great difficulty.

So much water here going to waste, while in the mountains there's not enough, thought Hung-yu, directing his flashlight beam on the rolling water below. Then he remembered Uncle Ching-tang saying that next spring a large reservoir was to be built to retain these unruly waters of the Wild Horse River, and an irrigation canal tunnelled through the western mountain would bring the water to Date Tree Slope! It was a wonderful prospect, and as Hung-yu thought of the future,

he found the rain and mud of today did not bother him much. Soon he arrived at Stone Valley Village, at a distance of about five to six *li*.

He found the door of Granny Tsun's house latched. So he knocked. Then he heard Granny Tsun tell little Pao-chang to open the door, wondering who could be coming in such a storm:

"Why, it's you, Brother Hung-yu! Granny thought you wouldn't come tonight," said little Pao-chang.

"But of course I'd come!" The two went inside.

Granny Tsun was surprised to see Hung-yu. "You shouldn't have come on a night like this, Hung-yu!"

"Didn't I say you were to have a treatment every day? That's not every other day!" And they all laughed heartily.

Granny Tsun was deeply impressed and kept on saying, "Our barefoot doctors are really fine people — utterly devoted to others with never a thought for themselves." Furthermore, the old woman was ever grateful to Hung-yu for saving her from the clutches of the charlatan Lame Sun when he tried his witchcraft on her.

After treating her, Hung-yu packed up his medicine kit ready to leave.

"It's still raining hard, you'd better stay the night here. You can go back first thing in the morning," suggested Granny Tsun.

Little Pao-chang also asked Hung-yu to stay. "Don't go, Brother Hung-yu. It's dark and rainy outside!"

"It doesn't matter. I must get back." And taking his umbrella, he left.

"Such a fine lad! He never thinks of hardship or danger!" said Granny Tsun approvingly. And Hung-yu started back over the muddy mountain paths in the pouring rain and howling wind. . . .

There was no sign of anyone anywhere around, nothing but wind and rain, for it was a night when none but people with a special aim would venture forth. It was good training indeed, thought Hung-yu as he made his way through the storm.

At the old bridge across the Wild Horse River a man suddenly jumped out from under it. Hung-yu flashed his light on him. It was Lame Sun, who closed in on Hung-yu.

"Lame Sun, what are you up to?" Hung-yu demanded, keeping his light on his face.

"You ask me that? Why, I'm going to do you in, that's what!" the man leered.

Lame Sun drew near and, like a hungry wolf, made straight for Hung-yu, who knew that he had been lying in wait to kill him. It was Lame Sun's final struggle, as a dog cornered tries to jump the wall.

Hung-yu remained calm and kept his presence of mind. He threw away his umbrella and aimed a blow at Lame Sun's head with his flashlight. Sun dodged, grabbed Hung-yu by his jacket and wrestled with him on the bridge.

Sun next tried to seize Hung-yu by the throat, but Hung-yu bit his hand and hung on with a bulldog grip. When the man tried strangling him with his other hand, Hung-yu throttled him with both hands, and the two struggled desperately. . . .

Hung-yu knew that he had not the physical strength of Lame Sun and if this went on for any length of time, he would be defeated. He must think of a way out.

The rain pelted down and the water in the river swelled. Sun was trying to edge Hung-yu over the side of the bridge. It looks like he wants to drown me, Hung-yu thought. Suddenly Hung-yu got an idea. . . .

With his head against Sun's chest, Hung-yu pushed with

all his might, and the man landed in the turbulent water, Hung-yu following. Now Hung-yu had the upper hand.

Lame Sun could swim a little, but could scarcely fight Hung-yu in the water. Hung-yu, on the other hand, swam like a fish.

Lame Sun made for the bank, Hung-yu pulling on his legs so that he gulped a few times in the muddy water. . . .

Hung-yu pushed the charlatan's head under the water till he was dizzy, as though thousands of fists were punching him and hundreds of nooses were tightening round his neck. He fought till he could fight no more, then implored, "Oh, Hung-yu, spare me! Please!"

Lame Sun saw now that his plot had misfired again. He had planned it all out — how he would strangle Hung-yu and throw him into the Wild Horse River. No one should know but that he had slipped and fallen in on his way back from Stone Valley Village during the storm. He had taken no weapon, for that would leave a clue. He must not do that. If he succeeded in his plot, Lame Sun had figured, he would still have the best of the bargain even if his tampering with the old stonemason's medicine was found out and he was thrown into prison. But he had no idea that Hung-yu swam so well and now that things had come to such a pass, there was nothing left for him but to beg Hung-yu to spare his life.

Hung-yu did not intend to drown Lame Sun, just to get him under, make him admit defeat, and so become a teacher by negative example!

"Hung-yu!" he begged, "let me up!"

"Have a few more drinks!"

Soon Lame Sun had drunk so much water that he was unable even to plead for his life. He began to sink, and only then did Hung-yu drag him onto the bank of the river and



tie his hands behind his back. There Lame Sun squatted, swollen with water, by the riverside!

The rain had stopped, and a star or two began to peep from behind the dark clouds. Hung-yu went to look for his flashlight and umbrella. The flashlight was still on and easy to locate at the edge of the bridge. His umbrella had been washed away.

Once more Hung-yu started across the bridge towards the village when suddenly he saw a light at the other end. It was coming nearer and nearer. Someone else with a flashlight, Hung-yu thought, and walked on.

"Is that you, Hung-yu?" It was a man's voice, which he recognized at once as that of the Party branch secretary.

"Yes, it's me, Uncle Ching-tang," Hung-yu answered. "Didn't you go to the commune office? When did you come back?"

"A little while ago."

"Where are you going now?"

"To fetch you. I dropped in at your home to give you the medicine from the commune clinic, and your grandmother told me you'd gone to Granny Tsun's. In such bad weather I thought I'd come to meet you."

The two were now face to face, and the Party secretary was alarmed to see the condition Hung-yu was in. "What's the matter? Didn't you bring your umbrella?"

"Oh, this is not from the rain! I took a ducking in the river!" Hung-yu explained with a smile.

"What? You fell in the river?"

"I wasn't the only one. Lame Sun took a dip too! The two of us had a good bath!"

"Where's Sun now?" asked the Party secretary immediately.

"On the river bank."

"What?"

"He was waiting for me under the bridge and sprang out to choke me to death. We wrestled for some time on the bridge, but I didn't have his physical strength, so I dragged him down into the river with me where I could deal with him. I ducked him and gave him a few drinks, then when he'd about had it, I dragged him up on the bank. There he is. Look at him!"

Hung-yu told about this life-and-death encounter with an enemy as lightheartedly as though it had been an exciting sports event, and the Party secretary admired the boy.

"I was going to get someone from the village to take him back, but now we can do it, uncle."

"Right! And tomorrow we'll hold a mass meeting to give all the facts. After that the public security authorities can take over."

Hung-yu agreed with this and they unbound Lame Sun and took him to justice before the people.

The dark clouds had dispersed and the moon gradually appeared, its silvery rays bathing the mountains in white.

The waters of the Wild Horse River roared on, like the beating of a war drum. . . .

Going On from There

THE county leadership was calling a conference of barefoot doctors to exchange work experience. Hung-yu was asked to represent Redstone Valley Commune at the conference and to make the main speech.

Hung-yu welcomed this opportunity, for he knew he could learn a lot from other barefoot doctors that would help him to serve the poor and lower-middle peasants better. But what had he to say in a speech, and the main speech at that! If his name was called and he had nothing to say, that would not do. Yet, he had little experience to report and what he had done fell far short of what was expected of him. So Hung-yu sat at a table in his room, a blank sheet of paper before him, thinking hard.

Soon the Party secretary came in and, seeing Hung-yu puzzling over the speech he was to make, said, "I'll give you a topic!"

"What would you suggest?"

"Talk about the book you have, and that herb! You're always saying how you turn to those two things when you meet a problem. They will help others, too."

The Party secretary's words gave the answer. "Right, Uncle Ching-tang! That's it. I'll tell how those two things give

me encouragement and strength. There's so much to say!"

"Good. Think over what you will say and speak well," Hung-yu's grandmother interposed.

"Don't you worry. He will come off well," said the Party secretary.

Hung-yu opened the red wooden trunk and took out the book and the herb. He looked at them for some time. . . .

The book was *The Story of Dr. Bethune* which Dr. Li had given him, and the herb was the ginseng root from granny.

The ginseng brought back the life of the poor and lower-middle peasants in the old society: the stories told him by granny, Grandpa Stonemason and other peasants like them from which he understood why and how he should hate the old society and love the new, why and how he should detest the class enemy and be of one heart with the poor and lower-middle peasants. . . .

This love and this hate had been a constant source of strength for Hung-yu, urging him to work with a will, often neglecting sleep and food. And the book. On its first few pages were Chairman Mao's article "In Memory of Norman Bethune." It had been a beacon light to him, pointing out the road he should take. Its message told him clearly what should be the attitude of a revolutionary medical worker, a barefoot doctor of the poor and lower-middle peasants, towards his work, towards the people he served. . . .

"Hung-yu," said the Party secretary, calling him out of his train of thought, "try to sum up your own experience at the conference, but at the same time learn from the experience of others. In that way you'll be able to go in the right direction, be keen in your work, make more rapid progress, and really carry out Chairman Mao's revolutionary line in the

field of medicine."

Hung-yu nodded in agreement.

"And speak up with conviction. Don't be timid."

"Yes."

"I'm on my way to the canal site, and I think I'll take one of your shovels with me. By the way, we're opening the sluice gate tonight."

Hung-yu was overjoyed. "Tonight? Didn't you fix tomorrow afternoon for the event?"

"We consulted with the commune leadership. They agreed that we could move the opening up a day."

Granny was excited, too. "Now that we have the canal we won't have to worry about water for our terraced fields on the eastern hill," she said.

"Lucky me! I was afraid of missing the occasion while I was away at the county conference," Hung-yu confided. Then he added, "I'll go with you to the canal site, Uncle Ching-tang."

"Aren't you going to prepare your speech?"

"I'll do that after I get back. What I want to say is all in my mind and it won't be much of a job jotting down a few notes."

"Are you sure?"

"Quite."

"Well, let's go."

"Getting water for our fields is a big event I can't miss," Hung-yu's grandmother put in. "I'll be along as soon as I've fed the sow!"

"Fine! We'll go ahead," said Uncle Ching-tang. "Huai and the others will be there to open the sluice gate."

And so, the Party secretary and Hung-yu took a shovel from the courtyard and walked towards the eastern hill.

It was another moonlit night. The moon, unblurred by any wisp of cloud, hung in the sky like a translucent lamp lighting the Five-Dragon Mountains and the terraced fields where millet, sorghum and maize were growing luxuriantly. With plentiful water from the irrigation canal, a bumper harvest was assured that autumn!

The Party secretary and Hung-yu heard the ringing voice of Grandpa Stonemason as they approached the site. He was saying, "Fellow commune members, I've good news! The Party secretary and the brigade leader agree that as soon as this canal is completed we'll go on to another bigger project on the western hill. We'll dig another canal completely around the mountain! If we work like we did on this canal, it'll take us at most a year, and by that time the big reservoir on the Wild Horse River will be finished. Every field in the area will have irrigation from reservoirs, canals and ditches. Don't you think that's a fine prospect? Of course, the commune members will discuss this project thoroughly before it's begun."

Here is a sampling of the commune members' opinions when the discussion got under way:

"Who wouldn't agree to such a project?"

"Right, who wouldn't? We must go on with our irrigation projects one after another without stopping."

"Nowadays all production brigades are learning from Tachai. Date Tree Slope must not lag behind."

"Certainly not! We must step out front!"

"Yes, we'll go ahead on winged feet!"

Merry laughter rose from the crowd.

When the Party secretary and Hung-yu arrived at the site, they found so many commune members already there — old and young, men and women. Grandpa Stonemason was among

them, of course, and Chun-hung, Yu-chu, Little Shun, Little Lien, Fu-kuei. . . . Granny Wang too, all smiles at seeing Hung-yu who had cured her of her consumption. Everyone was in joyful mood.

"But aren't you preparing for your talk at the conference, Hung-yu? What are you doing here?" asked Chun-hung.

"I am preparing. I'm thinking over in my mind what I'm going to say!" replied Hung-yu with a chuckle.

Yu-chu came over to join them. "Our barefoot doctor has contributed a lot to the completion of the irrigation canal!"

"You're right," commented Fu-kuei. "Tell them at the conference what you've done, Hung-yu. Let them know that our Date Tree Slope Village has a very good barefoot doctor."

"I haven't done anything worth telling about. I'll mainly be learning from the others at the meeting," Hung-yu replied modestly.

"That's a correct attitude, Hung-yu," Grandpa Stonemason joined in. "Modesty and prudence lead to greater achievement. Be self-complacent and you'll surely lag behind."

"Grandpa is right, Hung-yu!" the people shouted. "Don't forget to bring back the valuable experiences of others!"

Then suddenly someone shouted: "Water — ! Water — !" and all rushed to the canal where the water was rolling and roaring for the first time — water channelled by the commune members' sweat onto the terraced fields of Date Tree Slope!

A holiday atmosphere prevailed through the length and breadth of the construction site with the people running and dancing along the canal to keep up with the on-rolling water. Some were scooping the water up in their hands to drink. "How sweet it is!" they exclaimed.

Smaller sluice gates were opened along the canal and the water rushed through the minor ditches onto the terraces of

the fields. The moon shone high above, the white-crested water rolled in the canal below. Happiness and rejoicing pervaded the terraced fields. . . .

Hung-yu started out for the conference in the county town the next morning after an early breakfast. He had slept little the night before. He had spent some time with the commune members watering the fields; and then he had to write his application to join the Communist Youth League, which he handed to Chun-hung very early that morning. It was only after these that he prepared his talk.

But he did not feel at all tired. On the other hand, he was very energetic and in high spirits as he strode forward. . . .

Things the Party secretary, Grandpa Stonemason and other poor and lower-middle peasants had told him still rang in his ears. And, as he reviewed in his mind the work he had done in the past few months, he was filled with hope and confidence.

The sky was clear; the sun was rising. The Five-Dragon Mountains were bathed in morning light. Densely-leafed trees were growing on the slopes; the green of the crops in the terraced fields struck the eye, while the deep roar of blasting ripped through the distance. The characters: **In agriculture, learn from Tachai** formed of gleaming pebbles stood out especially prominent on this morning.

The main peak of the Five-Dragon Mountains appeared unattainable in the distance. But was it really? Didn't Swallow Ridge appear out of reach that day when he and Little Shun went to find the medicinal herb? But they had reached it. So long as one has the will and exerts his effort, there is no peak that cannot be attained! Thus ran Hung-yu's thoughts. "There's no doubt about it," exclaimed Hung-yu, using his favourite expression. "It can be reached!" Then,

realizing that he was alone, he added, "Who am I talking to? To the trees? To the wild flowers?"

On and on he walked in big strides, over mountain paths that were rugged and winding but which led him to the county town for the barefoot doctors' conference. And then? There was no end to learning and no end to serving.

Hung-yu marched on. . . .

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