CHINESE LITERATURE

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QUARTERLY

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POEMS

The following four poems are by poets from China's fraternal national minorities. Lutpulla-Mutallep, a Uighur, was born into a poor family in 1922 in a little village in Sinkiang. When he was a little boy, he helped his mother to tend sheep to earn a living; for food very often they only had the gleanings from the wheat field. In 1937, when the Japanese launched their full-scale attack on China, he actively participated in the campaign of resistance to the invaders. In the subsequent years he wrote many poems, including "China" and "Challenge to Months and Years" here published. In 1945, when he was only twenty-three years old, he was treacherously murdered by the Kuomintang reactionaries.

Teepjan-Eliev, son of a poor Uighur peasant, is only twenty-six years of age. During the years when the Koreans fought against the American aggressors, he went to Korea three times as a member of the Chinese delegations, which brought the goodwill and the support of the people of the whole country to the Volunteers. "When I See Mountains" was written during his stay in Korea.

Ling Yung-ning is a young poet of the Chuang people. "I Rejoice and I Sing" is one of his recent poems.

CHINA

Lutpulla-Mutallep

China!
China!
You are my native land.
Hundreds of millions of us
Were nursed to life in your warm, loving arms.
From you
We have received protection,
Come to understand ourselves
And learnt the truth of things.
We are so deeply in your debt
That we will pay you back at any cost,
Even of life itself!
Look!
Even though our blood flows free
We win one victory and then another—
History has never known the like.

China . . .
When we look back upon your history
And recall your past,
We see too well
True happiness was never ours.
Let us flick o'er the leaves,
From brutal rulers of past dynasties—
Hangmen who preyed upon your flesh;
Parasites, self-styled gentlemen who stole
And grew fat on your land—
Down to the Japanese invaders,
Who, like foul crows,
Perch on your trees,
Bully you, torture you,
Cajole
And scheme,
Feed on your bleeding flesh to glut themselves.

They too declare:
We are a class of nobles,
Fitted to be your masters.

Hey, History!
You can't retrace the past!
You have already come through the dark ages!
Let the dark record, the dark months and years,
Burn into ashes!
Now we are opening a new history.
We shall inscribe ourselves,
Extolled as liberators,
Wise and brave,
Upon its first clean, glorious page.
We, folk of many nationalities,
We build devotedly
A free, new China on this land of ours!
Only imagine
What a great
And glorious thing that is!

Our will against aggression
Is strong and firm.
We wage a struggle
That will shake the world,
And make the enemy tremble!
The Japanese militarists
Will be no match for us.
Yes! Let us turn a new page of history,
And set down in clear terms
Our months and years of struggle.
Let us write
The starting-point —
The Northeast and Lukouchiao.*

Let us record
Our valiant patriots,
Our young but stalwart fighters.

*Lukouchiao (Marco Polo Bridge), near Peking, was the place at which the Japanese militarists launched all-out war against China on July 7, 1937. They had previously on September 18, 1931, invaded the northeastern provinces.

Let's inscribe
Our strong-willed guerrilleros.
Let's write down
The part played by Sinkiang,
That stands, an iron bastion, in the rear.

China!
You see,
On your land we have fought tirelessly,
Guarding you every minute of our lives,
Trying to win a future bright with hope!
On this earth of ours
We will build a China that is new,
Unchallenged, modern, independent, free!
On Chinese soil
We'll plant
The flag of Liberation,
To fly for aye
And never be put down!

October, 1938

CHALLENGE TO MONTHS AND YEARS

Lutpulla-Mutallep

Time hurries on:
It ne'er turns back or waits:
The months and years are its fast-fleeting steps.
Though dawn and running water
Appear the same today as yesterday,
These flying months and years
Are thieves that steal our life.
Bearing their booty
They take to their heels,
Each hard behind another,
With never a backward glance.
In the garden of childhood
No bird of sorrow flaps its wings,

No tree is ever bare.
Childhood, so fair a time of life,
But oh, how short it is!
Each leaf we tear from off the calendar
Tears off a petal from the flower of youth.
The wind of months and years is blowing.
The fallen leaves strew the earth
And the denuded trees present
A scene of desolation.
The months and years bring gifts aplenty:
Never come empty-handed . . .
Young maidens' faces wrinkle,
And bare-faced boys grow beards.
Take them to task we cannot:
All we can do is let them flow on and on,
For they obey a predetermined rule.
Humanity, however, never lets time pass
Lightly: 'tis human hands
That change the Gobi desert
Into green fields and gardens.
The months and years are generous,
Affording ample opportunity.
Events like mountains
Stand proud athwart their flood.
Have you not noticed how poor, puny babes
That could not stir an inch, even on all fours,
Now dash about, here, there and everywhere?
Battling with life men keep abreast of time,
Begetting others to take up the fight;
And on the tombs of those who gave their all
Grow radiant clusters of luxuriant flowers.
Though months and years have given me a beard,
I will not cease to temper, mould myself
In their enfolding arms.
I have tried to set the imprint of creation,
My poetry, upon the neck
Of every year and month that has decamped.
In the thick of fighting
I never shall grow old.
My poems,

Like a myriad stars in the sky,
Light up the way ahead.
While I scaled heights to fight on,
How trifling death appeared!
I never shall forget: tenacity
And bravery will conquer in the end.
I dare link arms with those who take up arms;
I will stand firm beside the flag held high.
On the road that lies ahead,
On the battlefield of untamed places,
Never will I show sign of tiredness.
I will wrestle with all hardships
And march to ever greater victories.
Months and years,
Do not laugh over your successes.
I'd rather die upon my feet
Than live upon my knees!
You need not tire yourselves to age me:
All your endeavours will be vain,
And after me my sons shall take their place
And wage the final struggle!
O sea of months and years,
Your hateful billows never shall impede
Our prows that cleave you.
No matter what their force, your furious waves
Shall never frighten us!
Time: thou thyself shalt age
Battling with our endeavour to create . . .
Be this my challenge!

1944

WHEN I SEE MOUNTAINS

Teepjan-Eliev

When I see mountains, even think of mountains,
Forthwith my mind, Korea, turns to thee,
To gain fresh inspiration from thy courage,
O mountain giant who ne'er bows the knee.

The green pines standing proudly on the mountain
Ne'er wither, but remain fresh all the year.
Like thee they stand in unassuming pride
And symbolize the hopes you hold so dear.

I have a pride in you, undaunted people
I cannot start to tell in this poor strain.
Your youthful vigour and your strength of purpose
Shall Washington's chill blasts assail in vain.

Korea, November 25, 1953

I REJOICE AND I SING

Ling Yung-ning

I rejoice and I sing:
The days of sorrow are departed!
I sing in exaltation night and day
Freely and open-hearted.

Five years now I've sung my song,
Five years neither short nor long.
I sang when I returned to the misty village on ox-back
When the plains were ablaze with the setting sun,
When I ran through the woods towards school with my friends
When our happy holiday was almost done.

I have sung for countless star-lit nights,
Around me the mountain village girls and boys;

Though sorrow's deep mark still lingered on their faces,
They sang with me with crisp, resounding voice.

I rejoice, I am mad with joy,
Yet not alone this ecstasy I quaff.
If I alone were happy I'd keep silence,
But now the whole Chuang people sing and laugh.

Have my people
Never been bowed beneath affliction?
Did sorrows never come their way?
No . . . no!

For ages sorrow dogged us like our shadows,
And the Tso River, swollen with Chuang tears,
In silent anguish eastward slipped away. . . .

For ages we assembled and we prayed
In temples thick with incense-smoke,
Yet could not God, the "omnipotent,"
Release us from the yoke.

For ages, and beside the sad Tso River
No bright sun e'er arose;
We walked in darkness and the shameless landlords
Made for our necks a noose.

For ages we toiled like beasts of burden,
We shed our sweat and blood,
But poverty drove our people
Like a relentless goad.

Oh, for how many years
We suffered, struggled and groaned!

Five years ago!
For the first time they freely breathed,
My poor, long-suffering people;
The smile of childlike innocence
Lit up each tired, worn face.

For the first time in history
We're masters of our fate.

HSU SHIH-MIN: Spring in the South

Who shall cut us off
From China, our motherland free and great?
The Party and dear Chairman Mao
Like loving parents shield us now!

Proud people are we: we happily sing
The rights the Constitution gives to us;
Upright, with chests thrown out,
Shoulder to shoulder we stand
And march with our brother peoples
The length and breadth of our land!

Translated by Yuan Ko-chia

A THOUSAND MILES OF LOVELY LAND

Yang Shuo

Yang Shuo was born in 1913 in Penglai, a small town on the Chihli Gulf, Shantung Province. He went to study at Harbin, Northeast China, in his teens and left there for Shanghai about 1931, because of the Japanese invasion. Later he took part, as a cultural worker, in the War of Resistance Against the Japanese Aggression.

"From the Highland Region of Pamir," Yang Shuo's first novel, depicts the anti-Japanese activities of the army and people of Yenan, at the time when it was the revolutionary centre. Beginning from 1939, he was with the Communist-led Eighth Route Army in Shansi and Hopei, and wrote "The Moonless Night," a collection of short stories. He worked as an army reporter during the War of Liberation (1946-49) and wrote two novels "The North Front" and "Mount Wangnan." In 1950, he went to Korea with the Chinese Volunteers, doing cultural work until 1954, and wrote "A Thousand Miles of Lovely Land," an abridged version of which is printed below.

THE STORY BEGINS

It was August 1950. In a peasant's house in north Korea flowers were in full bloom along the wall of the back yard. They grew in clusters with crimson petals like those of the rose. Autumn is a dewy season, and morning after morning the glistening beads of dew on the petals glided down the tendrils looking fresh and fair.

"Grandpa, Grandpa," cried a boy about ten, running with a flower he had just plucked, "what's this flower? I don't know what it is."

"Of course you don't. Even your mother doesn't know its name. It's called the flower of endless days (*Hibiscus mutabilis*). It used to grow all over Korea forty years ago," said Grandpa, his hands clasped behind his back, slowly breaking into a smile. He was at least seventy years old. With his snow-white beard and the ribbons of his white gown fluttering in the wind and a black gauze hat on his head, Grandpa looked like a figure in some old Chinese painting.

"I remember you said you didn't know its name when I asked you last time," said the boy's mother softly, as she spread out the freshly reaped millet with a rake to dry in the yard.

Her words sent the old man back to the old days. "Ha, who dared to tell you the truth then? You young people couldn't understand how serious things were then, you would have talked and then we would have been done for!" Grandpa said, sighing and shaking his head. Then he began to recite an old song:

With a history of five thousand years,
With a thousand miles of lovely land,
With the flowers of endless days blossoming all over the eastern hills,
There spreads our beautiful Korea.

Korea, as we know, is a lovely country covered with mountains and rivers. In ancient times, the feudal regime of Korea had taken the flower of endless days as the national flower, though the people had a greater love for the azalea which bloomed all over hills and dales in spring. The flower of endless days grows in clusters, world without end. They bloom from June and July to the end of autumn. They flourish and multiply all over the land; they even manage to grow when dropped in the mud by a careless hand.

At the beginning of the present century, the Japanese had conquered Korea and annexed it. Then the people of Korea lost their freedom. And because the flower of endless days was the national flower of the old Korea,

the Japanese hacked away the shrubs wherever they were to be found and punished people who planted them. So almost all the shrubs in the land were hacked down and used as firewood.

"All hacked down?" asked the child at a loss, his dark eyes staring at the old man. "Then how could we have got some here?"

"That's just it," answered Grandpa, smiling and stroking his beard. "They couldn't destroy the plants, let alone the people. The Japanese tried and failed and now the Americans are trying in vain. Year after year, fine fellows rose to grapple with them; no sooner did one fall than another stepped into his place. Your dad was one of them."

As the old man was speaking, the U.S. troops were bragging about pushing on into China within three days. As if taking over from the Japanese, they were marching north along the road that led the Japanese to ruin.

The child looked up at his grandfather with rapt attention as he listened to the story. Suddenly he heard another boy calling his name, "Kangkunni! Kangkunni!"

He ran out, the flower between his lips.

Grandpa trudged along behind him with his stick. His limbs were as stiff as wood. Autumn was always rainy and it had drizzled for so many days that the air was damp and heavy. What luck to have a fine day like this with dazzling sunshine everywhere! It seemed particularly dry and refreshing. Elated by the fine weather, Grandpa made his way towards the village government to ask for news from the front. Before he had crossed its threshold the sound of laughter and singing reached him. A crowd was gathered at the door, standing on tiptoe and peeping in.

The house was packed with young people of about twenty. The small tables on the brick bed were covered with wine cups and dishes. Squatting in front of a table and raising his cup, the village head was toasting the recruits and giving them a send-off.

"Grandpa, Grandpa, I want to be a soldier too!" cried Kangkunni, suddenly emerging from the crowd and clutching at the old man's stick.

"Don't talk nonsense, how can you become a soldier when you're not the height of a rifle?" Grandpa said.

"When will you let me go then?" asked the child turning up his dark and shining little face.

"When you have grown up," answered Grandpa with a smile.

A group of young women blocked the doorway, laughing and clapping their hands. Some one in the house shouted: "For the thousand miles of our lovely land!" Inside and out a volley of shouts burst forth. Echoes vibrated and Grandpa felt a tugging at his old heartstrings. In the seventy years of his life, much had passed before his eyes; and the sight of these bright young fellows heading for the battlefield, for the freedom of the nation, reminded him of his dead son and the Japanese.

These thousand miles of land now appeared in his mind's eye no longer as an isolated peninsula but as an outpost of world peace; and blossoming all over the land was no longer the flower of endless days, symbol of the ancient dynasties, but flower of heroism which would bloom for ever in the memory of man.

I

The two themes of this novel will unfold like two flowers on one plant; let us look at one blossom first.

The northern part of the land of Korea borders on China, with the deep-blue Yalu River running between. From summer to winter rapid currents surge forward with bluish waves giving a scaly look to the water.

A huge iron-bridge with ornamental railings stretches across the river linking up the two peoples' life and thoughts like a chain. On the northern bank, not far away from the bridge, lived a veteran railway worker about forty, named Yao Chang-keng. With him were his wife and his daughter, Yao Chih-lan, a telephone girl on the railway. Yao had been engaged in road maintenance work until the day of liberation. Then Wu Chen, the new director, came and was at once struck by his honesty, understanding and industry and gave him one promotion after another till now he found himself the chief of the engineering section.

Yao was a man who had weathered storms. For years, he worked through sun and rain till his face was as rugged as stone. He rarely laughed. Many people disliked him at first sight and called him stubborn behind his back. His old acquaintances, however, thought differently. To them he was one in a hundred for mature wisdom and lofty character.

This character was shown by the following event which his wife loved to talk about. Before Yao went to work on the railway, he had earned his living as a mason and house painter. Driven from pillar to post, he changed his job many times. In his early days when the "Manchukuo" puppet regime was in power, he got a job building houses for the Japanese, on the night shift. A vicious Japanese foreman developed a habit of striking the workers with a hammer whenever they displeased him. Once, during the dog-days, when everybody was stripped to the waist, Yao was working hard, mixing cement with water. The sweat was pouring off him. Seeing that he was bathed in sweat, the Japanese with a malicious grin, started to pour sand right on his back. This was more than Yao could bear. Biting his lip he knocked the foreman headlong into the cement.

Mrs. Yao was a half-blind woman with a heart of gold. But she had a weakness for long-winded talk. She was so garrulous that she was sometimes found talking even to cats and dogs. Lifting a broom she would say to a chicken that had inadvertently strayed in, "Who asked you to come in, you little devil. Out you go!"

As soon as the chores were over, Mrs. Yao would sit before her gate, sewing and chatting to her neighbours. She would embark on an endless stream of complaints about how she had to toil and moil for her husband and daughter, while really boasting about them.

"What shall I do now?" she once held forth. "Pa wasn't back until midnight again last night. He doesn't care a bit about regular meals or regular sleep. He stays at his working site day and night and completely forgets the family. There was a snowstorm one night last winter, and everybody was asleep. All of a sudden he got up out of bed and looked out of the window. Then he opened the door and walked out. I called after him but he didn't answer. Then I found out later that he had gone out, in the middle of the night, to get men to sweep away the snow so that it wouldn't put the trains off the rails.—Look, what a long face he's always pulling," she digressed. "I have spent half of my lifetime with him without ever hearing him crack a joke. But strangely enough, one autumn day he came in bubbling with joy. I was wondering what had made him so happy, when he said to me before I had a chance to ask, 'I feel as happy as I did on our wedding day.' That was the day he was admitted into the Chinese Communist Party. You see, practically everybody has become a new man since the Communist Party came."

"You're a lucky one all right, Mrs. Yao," a woman who lived next door put in. "Your husband has come through his long ordeal, and your pretty daughter has learned to write and do accounts. You'll soon be marrying her off and dandling a grandson on your knees."

Mrs. Yao's heart brimmed over with happiness at her neighbour's praise of her daughter, though she pretended to be bored with the subject.

"Why, what luck have I ever enjoyed?" Mrs. Yao said, knitting her brows. "My daughter is nothing to be proud of. She's simply wearing me out. She won't look at a piece of needlework. Goes off walking to the office with her father. And now, on top of it all, she's gone and picked herself a boy friend. I know free choice in love is the height of fashion nowadays and there's nothing I can do whatever I may think about it. But she'll soon be getting married and she can't sew a stitch. So I have to work my fingers to the bone getting her trousseau ready. Even then she's dissatisfied and picks holes in my work. I couldn't please her even if I worked myself to death."

The couple had once had two sons but they lost them both, and the daughter, as the only child in the family, was the apple of their eye. Yao Chih-lan was now a girl of eighteen, tall and slender, with liquid eyes

and heavy eyelids. With two little plaits hanging down her back, she looked as pretty as a lotus fresh from the water.

Chih-lan came to know Wu Tien-pao, her sweetheart, in the evening school for railway workers and employees. To all appearances they looked like competitors rather than lovers. Chih-lan was a telephone girl, Tien-pao a locomotive driver; both were members of the New Democratic Youth League and keen rivals in studies and work. They used to make fun of each other, conveying serious thoughts in jokes.

"How dare I hold a competition with him?" Chih-lan would say, making eyes at Tien-pao while holding back a smile. "He is a regular steam engine and all I can do is try to catch up with him."

"Well, it's no use just talking," Tien-pao would retort with a smile. "Let's have a contest if that's what you want."

Mrs. Yao didn't think much of Tien-pao when she saw him for the first time. He was a rather short fellow with a dark complexion; and with his shock of hair sticking out from under his cap, he had the look of a magpie. But his face was beaming and radiant. Full of some mysterious joy, the young man kept on whistling and laughing alternately like a little imp. Small in size but large in heart, he didn't mind Mrs. Yao's disapproval; he went on talking and smiling until she couldn't help laughing.

"Ma, what shall we have for lunch?" said Chih-lan, feeling relieved. "Shall we ask him to stay and try some of our dumplings?"

"I know how to make dumplings—light as lead," Tien-pao put in.

"Don't bother, you're our guest; sit down and have a cup of water," Mrs. Yao said, beaming.

"How can a man like him sit idle?" Chih-lan said laughing. "Let him go and chop some firewood."

After saying "Idle love to sit idle," Tien-pao threw off his blue coat and flung it to the brick bed. With sleeves rolled up, he got down to his task, whistling while he worked.

"He is nice!" Mrs. Yao mused, her eyes fixed upon Tien-pao while mixing flour with water. "And he is straightforward too, you can see right into him, as if you were looking into a pool of clear water." With a new interest Mrs. Yao began to ply him with questions, trying to worm his story out of him.

Tien-pao winked a glance at Yao Chih-lan, meaning he knew that her mother was taking stock of her son-in-law.

"Oh, so you want to know about my past?" Tien-pao said gleefully. "Well, with a full-grown man, it's not so simple as you might think. Mother died when I was born and father when I was barely three. But, rain and shine, I somehow managed to grow up."

"All you know is how to wag your tongue!" Yao Chih-lan jeered, covering her laughing mouth with the back of her hand. "You never say a single serious word."

"Aren't I talking seriously?" Tien-pao rejoined. "After the death of my parents I lived a life of terrible hardships and sufferings. Even the mosquitoes and lice used to think my flesh too bitter to bite."

"Just listen to the way he talks," Yao Chih-lan said, stealing a look at him. "Making a joke out of bitter experience. How is it that nothing ever worries you?"

"Worries me?" rejoined Tien-pao. "In the past I hated those cursed oppressors so much that I simply had no time to worry about myself. I would have worried to death if I had. Now that life and the world have changed for the better, I can hardly find anything to worry about though I would very much like to. Just tell me what there is for me to worry about."

"With you around, my boy, no one has anything to worry about. You'd put life into a dummy, I believe," Mrs. Yao said, laughing. "There is enough firewood now, and if you are not tired out you can put on your coat and go and fetch some vegetable oil from the little shop at the north end of the street."

Tien-pao put down the axe, shook the dust off his hands, seized a coat and flung it on his shoulders.

"Hey, I've lost something important," he suddenly cried out, fumbling in the pocket.

"What's that?" Yao Chih-lan hastened to ask. "Nothing but that broken harmonica, I expect. You know you bore everybody to death playing on it all day long."

Tien-pao shook his head without answering.

Yao Chih-lan gazed at him for a moment and then turned to her mother, laughing up her sleeve, "Ma, look, whose coat he has put on!"

Glancing down, Tien-pao realized that he was wearing her father's coat which did not fit him at all. He quickly changed it for his own and produced out of the pocket a harmonica and a notebook with a pretty brightly-coloured picture studded in it.

"I thought you had something more important in mind," Mrs. Yao jeered, sniffing.

"Look, what's this?" Tien-pao said challengingly, showing her the picture. "This is Chairman Mao's portrait. Without him, you wouldn't have any dumplings to eat today. You'd probably be living on thin air."

Chih-lan wanted to get hold of the picture and have a good look at it. "No; I know I'll lose it as soon as you lay hands on it," Tien-pao said, drawing back. Then, all in a rush, he put the picture back, closed the notebook, and tucked it into his pocket with a smile.

After that Tien-pao dropped in every time his train passed by. He would go and fetch water and sweep the courtyard for them and attend to all sorts of things. With dexterous hands and sharp eyes, he would soon finish his chores. Then he would sit on the table swinging his legs and playing his harmonica. But he somehow felt ill at ease in Yao Chang-

keng's company. Whenever Yao announced his arrival by clearing his throat at the door, Tien-pao would make a face, leap down from the table in the twinkling of an eye and keep dead quiet.

Yao Chih-lan once asked him with a laugh, "Pa never beats or scolds people and never flies into a temper. What on earth makes you so shy as though you had lost your tongue?"

"Your pa? Well, as the saying goes, he is as hard as nails. He would talk to your face when he finds some fault with you," Tien-pao replied, smiling and scratching the back of his head.

"Don't take him seriously, young man. It's only his character to pull a long face and sulk all day long whenever he happens to be in a bad mood," Mrs. Yao explained, "but he is really very kind-hearted." After a pause she continued, "Do you fancy anything? You didn't have much for lunch? How about a snack?"

Chih-lan knitted her brows but said with a smile, "What are you fussing about, Ma? We had our dinner just a moment ago and now you are asking us to eat again. You never stop offering us something. Do you want us to burst?"

"Is there anything wrong with offering someone a bite to eat?" rejoined Mrs. Yao, slightly ruffled by her daughter's ironical remark. "I won't allow you to go hungry so long as you're within my reach."

In fact, not a minute passed but that her mind was filled with affectionate thoughts of her daughter. No one was more anxious to get her married. It was with the greatest satisfaction that she pictured to herself the married life of her daughter and the orphaned Tien-pao who seemed a man after her own heart. So after she had, through her intensive efforts, got them betrothed she said to Wu Tien-pao one day, "My daughter is approaching twenty; is she to stay on with me for ever? It's high time she was getting married."

But Yao Chih-lan was reluctant.

"When we were young," Mrs. Yao grumbled in her daughter's absence, "our sole hope was to get a good husband to serve as his helpmate. Now what on earth is my daughter day-dreaming about?"

The irresistible loquaciousness of the mother finally brought the young people round to her point of view. The wedding was fixed for November 7, the anniversary of the October Revolution. Tien-pao was at that time nearing the completion of 150,000 kilometres of safe-running, and was expected to fulfil the target by his wedding-day.

Counting the days on her fingers, Mrs. Yao realized with a shock that no more than two months were left. Presently she settled down to preparing the trousseau, buying cloth and ribbons and making garments and beddings. Fearing that the colours and styles of the things she prepared might not suit her daughter's taste, she dragged her along to give her approval to each and every article. Her husband was up to his eyes in work and wouldn't leave his office until the stars lit his way home. No

sooner had he arrived than his wife would torment him with every detail of her preparations, a long-winded discourse often ending up in complaints. "I'm a blind old woman," she would say, "and I'm never certain about these things, and you, the father, don't care a fig about them. How can we go on like that?"

Yao Chang-keng would sit in silence with drooping eyelids, and when her chatter became past bearing, he would get up and go away, murmuring to himself, "What a talkative woman!"

In a fit of anger she would shout after him, "Where are you going? After all she is *our* daughter! And it is you who will lose face in the long run. You know I can bother about it just as little as you do."

With her spiteful words still ringing in the air, Mrs. Yao, mumbling to herself, would settle down and get on with her sewing.

II

Winter had come and the banks of the Yalu River were covered with hoarfrost. The wedding was drawing nearer everyday and Mrs. Yao bustled around like a spinning top. How damnable, she thought, of these Americans to make trouble!

Mrs. Yao often felt her ear-drums battered and pierced by the sound of explosions. Looking over to the southern bank in the dark night, she saw the distant sky turning faintly red as flames burnt below. People said that they were flames of bombardment. It seemed that the enemy was coming near the threshold of China.

Very often the U.S. planes made raids over the Yalu River, now circling, now swooping down to do a bit of machinegunning and drop bombs.

People saw clearly that the situation was getting serious. Any moment the factories, schools, houses, and shops they had built up with such loving care might be bombed and turned to ashes; their homes and property destroyed and their children killed by the murderous hand of the enemy.

War was close at China's door, at the door of every home in this town. Workers, students, and merchants, regardless of the wrench of parting, left the town they had built with their own hands. The city was almost deserted. Stores and shops lining the main streets were all closed, and in the daytime there was hardly a soul to be seen. When night fell the whole city was blacked out and the lights that formerly flooded its streets no longer shone.

The situation put Mrs. Yao in a flutter. She grew more and more anxious to get her daughter married, the sooner the better. To her

great exasperation, for the past few nights her husband, for some reason or other, never showed his face until very late. And sometimes he simply stayed out, keeping her waiting, the whole night. She would be extremely touchy next morning; but as Yao's face looked as overcast as the sky on a stormy day, she would merely mutter to herself, "Who on earth has offended you?"

Weighed down by worries, Yao felt even breathing somewhat difficult under the strain. The situation was getting more and more critical, and everything he saw or heard lashed him into fury. "Are we simply to lie like wax in their hands?" The thought tugged at his heart.

He recalled how for half of his life he had weathered one storm after another, shedding blood and tears. For him, better days were just beginning. It was only in recent years that he had been able to lift up his head; he worked hard without a moment's slacking, getting up early and going to bed late. He knew very clearly that every effort he made went into the building up of a better life for the workingmen. They were just beginning to live. Who could sit tight now and let the enemy disrupt his work of construction?

The central task for the engineering section under Yao's charge now was the defence of the bridge on the Yalu River. To make the defence effective, he sent on patrol day and night picked men who temporarily formed their own Party group. Again and again he went to the bridge himself to get a clear grasp of the situation.

It happened that the trade union called upon them to make wicker baskets and send them to the Korean railway workers by way of assistance. This was a job after Yao's heart. He personally led people to search the hills for shrubs to make baskets during the free hours at night. Although his big hands looked rough and hard, with blue veins swelling out at the back, his fingers were as nimble as crochet needles and he did excellent work. The others sat around and imitated him. In high spirits he went on weaving with drooping eyelids, regaling the company with his early adventures in the Kwantung Mountain digging ginseng and hunting bears. Yao passed every day like this at his office, but it never occurred to him to tell his wife a word about it. What's the use of telling her, he thought.

But the daughter was a different matter. He loved her, gave her things to eat that came his way and was never tired of looking at her. For all that, he had never stroked her hair or said a tender word to her since she had come into the world. Sometimes Mrs. Yao would mutter bitterly, "That man's heart must be made of stone; he's so unfeeling and cold." In fact, Yao was a man of flesh and blood, only he didn't like to wear his heart upon his sleeve. He buried all his joys and sorrows in the bottom of his heart.

Recently Yao Chih-lan had seemed rather out of sorts. What was the matter with her? She was slack and listless and easily got bored.

She couldn't read and often sat by herself in a corner, day-dreaming over a book. Now and then she would look up at her parents as if on the point of saying something but would drop her eyes pretending to read as soon as her father saw it.

"How are you, dear?" Mrs. Yao asked more than once, laying a hand on her forehead. "Are you feeling ill? Why, you have no appetite!"

"Who is feeling ill?" Chih-lan retorted impatiently, throwing back her head. "Don't force me to eat, I can't eat a morsel." And this would set her mother grumbling for hours and hours.

One morning Mrs. Yao rose before daybreak as usual, to get breakfast ready in the lamplight so that her husband and daughter might get to work on time. After that she swept the ground, drew the curtains and looked out. The sky was perfectly clear and the grass had turned yellowish and was tipped with frost. Evidently winter had come.

"Only three days more," Mrs. Yao mumbled to herself. "Well, once the wedding's over, I won't bother any more."

On his way to the station, Yao Chang-keng saw a train in a siding. Beside it a dozen soldiers were squatting in a circle, taking a hearty meal. They wore cotton-padded uniforms, but with neither red-star badges on their caps nor any other insignia. They were not our own People's Liberation Army at all. Getting suspicious, Yao slowed down his pace and pricked up his ears.

"Let's have a good feed!" shouted a soldier who was as solid as a cannon ball, filling his bowl. "This is newly reaped kaoliang. Just smell it!"

"If we had left home a few days later we could have reaped our crops," a soldier with thick lips said slowly. "For a whole year we busied ourselves in the classes and all kinds of exercises, and it was only during the intervals of study that we managed to sow and plough. Now that the crops are ripe, the Americans won't let us reap them. What a pity to leave them all in the fields!"

"You think just like a peasant," the cannon ball chuckled. "So long as there are people to reap the crop and eat the grain, everything's all right and you have nothing to worry about. As the old saying goes, the old ones plant trees for the young ones to sit in the shade. Opening up waste land is our speciality."

Somehow the conversation turned from crops to the local produce of the various places they came from. The new topic being introduced, all the men struck in at once, each insisting that the produce of his native town was the best. One bragged that in the wind the immense wheat fields on the Hopei plain looked like boundless heaving seas; another sang the praises of the natural scenery and inexhaustible store of rice and fish in areas south of the Yangtse River; a third expatiated upon the inexhaustible coal mines in Shansi, which lay near the surface of the earth. A Szechuanese boasted about the limpid water flowing

from the "heart" of the Yangtse River and the tea leaves on the top of Meng Mountain, while a boy from the Northeast pointed to the gigantic factories thick as trees in a wood.

Being a keen fellow, Yao had already gathered something about these people from their talk. Gazing at these robust and plain young fellows, he felt indescribably happy. "O these people! . . ." he thought to himself, unable to hit upon a happier expression. For the moment, he could not yet recognize in them the bulwark of world peace and justice, the heroic volunteers of the Chinese people.

Some one hurried up from behind and patted Yao on the back by way of greeting. It was Chin Chiao, the Korean secretary of the railway administration bureau, who had come to Yenchi when a boy and had become a Chinese citizen. To Yao's surprise, Chin was in the same queer uniform as these soldiers.

"Don't you recognize me?" Chin said, smiling. "What are you looking at? I've joined the Chinese People's Volunteers, you see."

"What volunteers?" Yao inquired.

"Volunteers to aid Korea!" Chin answered. "We railway workers have formed a detachment of volunteers and very soon we shall cross the Yalu River. Comrade Wu Chen, director of the railway administration bureau, is the commander as well as political commissar of the detachment. Are you going to join up?"

This was the first Yao had heard about it. He smiled and parted from Chin without saying anything. Presently he stopped walking; for a few moments he stood rapt in thought as if rooted to the spot.

He came home early that evening. For many nights he had sat up late and hadn't got much sleep, so he returned early this evening after the basket weaving was over. Upon his arrival, he found his wife giving their daughter a dressing down. Chih-lan was leaning over the table, her chin on the back of her hands, her eyes full of tears, and her cheeks puffed.

Mrs. Yao thought that her husband had come to her rescue. Instantly she sang out: "Well, you should do something about this precious daughter of yours. She is vexing me to death. I have done everything for her, brought her up and fed her, haven't I? And now the only thing she does is to do mischief and get me into one set of trouble after another. What sort of a daughter is she? What mortal sins have I committed for God to punish me now by giving me a daughter who's always disgracing me! Oh, what a shame it all is!"

Yao Chang-keng was shocked, but he could make no head or tail of the matter. Again his wife shouted to their daughter: "Your father is to blame for having spoiled you so. I don't know what you're coming to. Now that the trousseau is ready and the wedding will soon be here, you declare you won't get married. Is marriage some sort of a game?

Aiding Korea is your own lookout; but I won't let you go unless you get properly married."

"I don't want to get married! I don't want to!" Chih-lan muttered sulkily.

"I'll flay you alive if you don't," Mrs. Yao said, fuming. "If you're lost to shame, I'm not. Was there ever another girl like you in the world? I never heard of such a thing!"

In the last few days Chih-lan and some others had dipped into the history of American aggression against China and had got a clear notion about American ambitions. It would be too disgraceful for her to bother about her wedding at a time when everybody was talking about and working for the movement of opposing American aggression and aiding Korea. It was for this reason that she had been restless the last few days. What is more, those girls at the telephone office had very sharp tongues; to her dismay, they liked to make fun of her and Wu Tien-pao. One of them, Young Chu, was particularly malicious. She was always ready to touch people on the raw and hold them up to ridicule. Like a sparrow, she would chirrup on and on, sparing nobody.

When Yao Chih-lan went to the office that morning, Young Chu was chatting with somebody downstairs. Chih-lan was in a new coat and Chu, cocking her head on one side, took her in with mocking deliberation. "What a smart dresser!" Chu remarked ironically. "No wonder people say clothes make the man; your new coat certainly makes you much prettier. Well, tell me, who are you all dressed up for?"

"Don't let your high spirits run away with you, or you won't know where or who you are," Chih-lan said blushing and giving Chu a hostile look.

"I won't forget who *I* am or what *my* name is, though somebody I know may soon be forgetting hers. She will have Yao for surname today and Wu tomorrow without knowing which fits her better," Chu said with a giggle and set the others roaring with laughter. "Chih-lan, I suppose you're going to join the detachment," Chu said maliciously, "I'm too backward—not a patch on some other people."

Yao Chih-lan blushed in embarrassment. Presently she turned her head, shut her mouth, and walked away. She enlisted that day, the first one in her section.

The news threw Mrs. Yao into a fury. When her threats proved of no avail, she began to coax and wheedle her daughter. "I know," she said, "you don't care much for your poor mother. But as I am older and have had more experience than you, you might have asked me first. It's all very well for you to talk about going to Korea; but what could your father do if Wu Tien-pao came and asked for you when you were gone?"

"What does Tien-pao think?" Yao Chang-keng asked.

"I don't know," Chih-lan said sulkily. "He's on his train and I've sent him a letter."

"What nonsense did you put in your letter?" Mrs. Yao asked quickly.

"I made a challenge and said let's see which of us crosses the Yalu River first," Chih-lan replied.

"Just listen, the wench is out of her senses!" Mrs. Yao cried out, striking the couch with the palm of her hand. "A young girl wanting to go into war and leave home and comfort behind! Well, I never heard of such a thing. Do you mean to go to your death?"

Yao Chang-keng cast a glance at his daughter, his heart glowing with admiration. He felt very proud of her pluck. But very soon a faint sadness stole upon him as he thought of the separation and long journey she had to take. He wanted to say something but all that he managed to say in a husky voice was: "It's getting late, you'd better go to bed."

After Chih-lan went to her room, her mother began to cry: "From the moment I was married into the Yao family, I toiled year in and year out. From dawn to dusk, I sewed and mended, cooked and washed, without a moment's rest. Now, God be blessed, better days have come to us—and the little hussy won't leave me in peace but insists on making all this trouble. Here I am, already blind in one eye; must I be completely sightless?"

"Do you remember how you went blind in one eye?" Yao Chang-keng asked, without opening his eyes.

"As if you didn't know! Didn't I cry myself blind over the loss of our two sons?" Mrs. Yao began to cry again. "What tragic fate has befallen my sons? For no earthly reason at all the Japanese took them away. They might have been sold to some coal mine. We've never heard of them since, and nobody knows whether they're still alive. If I had my sons with me here, I wouldn't care if my daughter went to the very end of the earth; she could go wherever she liked."

"What's the use of raking up old affairs?" Chang-keng said with a sigh, "will you let the Americans take Chih-lan away from you and sell her like a donkey or a horse?"

"That's impossible. The Americans are in Korea, they're separated from us by the broad Yalu River . . . " his wife retorted.

"Impossible?" said Chang-keng, "even seas and oceans didn't stop them. Broad as the Yalu River is, it's not enough to keep them out."

"It's all very easy for you to talk like that but they simply haven't got the guts to try and cross it," his wife said.

"They will certainly have a shot at it if everybody here only looks after his own matters, like you," her husband said. "You know very well how things stand. If everybody sits tight and keeps on prattling about his happy life, we'll wake up to find ourselves ruined."

His wife made a few more futile attempts to refute him. Then she said sobbing: "Of course I can see that there is something in what you

say. But I have only one daughter. How can I have the heart to give her up? She ought to get married first even if she must go away. It won't be too late for her to leave in the spring, when it's warm. Why don't you go to Wu Chen, the director, tomorrow and talk the matter over with him?"

Yao Chang-keng made a noise in his throat, turned over on his side, and sank into silence. For some time he lay awake thinking things over. It was almost midnight but he could still hear his wife now crying over the loss of her sons, now cursing the Japanese, now complaining about the disobedience of her daughter, now bitterly condemning the Americans.

III

The detachment set up its headquarters on Chenkiang hill on the Yalu River. Let's first acquaint ourselves with Comrade Wu Chen, commander and political commissar of the detachment.

Wu Chen was an open-hearted and guileless man in his thirties, with a dark square face and bright round eyes. He had been a sailor along the Gulf of Chihli in his early youth; for months and years he drifted on the vast sea on board his fishing boat. Being very poor, every spring before going out to sea, he had to borrow money from a certain fishmonger to get his dragnet mended. All fish that came to his net in the whole year would thus go to the fishmonger at any price he would care to pay. Fishermen like Wu carried their lives in their hands; battling against stormy winds and sweeping waves, they never could tell when death would overtake them. To make the most of life while it lasted, Wu took to drink. He would drink like a fish when he had money to blow and pawn his trousers when he had none. Flinging his money on the counter of a dram-shop, he would order two ounces of spirits. He would quaff it up standing. Wiping his mouth, he would go away munching peanuts. Whenever he had a drop too much he would stand at the crossroads cursing all and sundry from the fishmonger to the ancestors of the county governor.

At that time, Wu's grandmother was still living. "O my child," she once exclaimed weeping, "you're a chip of the old block. Your grandpa drank himself to death, your father got drowned at sea, and sooner or later you, too, will come to grief."

But a certain force saved him.

The anti-Japanese war broke out, and the Communist-led Eighth Route Army which firmly upheld the cause of resistance penetrated to the coastal areas. Picking up a rifle, Wu Chen set forth on the right

track. The route was beset with difficulties, full of twists and turns, but it led him to the distant future. For more than ten years, Wu trod along this far-reaching and difficult path with millions upon millions of others. He stumbled along through wind and rain, shedding blood and tears. He had given up drinking long ago and had fewer fits of temper. All his energy was now devoted to a good cause. But he was no longer young. He was grey at the temples and he suffered from indigestion because of his war wounds. So in the autumn of 1949 he was transferred from army service to construction work.

But he couldn't keep army life out of his mind. His heart dwelt on his old days of fighting. He liked to put on his military uniform though it was faded with washing. His belongings were simple; a woolen blanket, a bed-quilt of yellow cloth, exactly what he had possessed in the army.

From time to time he would turn the conversation to the battles he had fought in the past, usually ending on a note of self-mockery: "I'm like an old nag, I can't gallop any more. I've fought battles throughout the length and breadth of the country, so perhaps it's time for me to be tied to a mill-stone and learn to grind rice."

Some comrades advised him: "Wu, you'd better get married. Then you will settle down. You don't mean to remain a bachelor all your life, do you?"

Wu agreed and married Li Ling shortly afterwards.

Li Ling was a quiet and careful woman. Wu's lodgings took on a new look after she crossed the threshold. What used to be an untidy hovel now became a room with bright windows and clean floor and every piece of furniture in its right place. But Li Ling had a weakness for shopping. Every Sunday she came home with all sorts of things good, bad, or indifferent. Once she brought home a doll made of cotton. She took the trouble to make a little red cap for it and hung it on the wall beside the bed. She was never tired of dandling it.

"Why don't you try to bring a real baby into the world," some of her comrades said, making fun of her, "instead of playing with an imitation one?"

Li Ling blushed and smiled without saying anything. In fact, she had felt something stirring within her a long time before; but she was too shy to reveal the truth to anybody, even to her husband. Nevertheless, she took care to buy something from the children's stores every time she went shopping.

Wu was quite ignorant about this side of his married life. "Comrade," he would say to his wife naively, "I hope you're not going to open a shop here. What are all these odds and ends for?"

One night Li Ling quietly shared the secret of her pregnancy with her husband. This immediately put an end to his disapproval of her weakness for buying things. Sometimes he would even go so far as to

help her with suggestions. When they went out together, he would call her attention loudly to pieces of coloured cloth, pretending to be an expert on the subject. And his wife would blush and wink at him in embarrassment.

In spite of her embarrassment, he would stare at her and say half-jokingly: "Why, we should give more thought to the happiness of our children, shouldn't we? You know, we shall build a communist society for the future generations!"

Two months later, about nine o'clock one morning, Wu Chen was to be found sleeping like a log in a chilly small room in the detachment headquarters, with his legs curled up, his head buried under a cotton overcoat. In the big room adjoining his own, a lot of workers sat on the cold floor covered with straw, weaving straw capes to serve as anti-aircraft camouflage.

Chin Chiao came in. He stamped the snow off his feet and went up to the small room. He was about to open the door when Ta Luan, the guard, waved him away, saying: "He is still in bed, been up half the night."

Nevertheless, the noise awoke Wu Chen from his sleep. His mind worked, he felt, even amidst the whirl and tumult of a dream. The Chinese People's Volunteers had crossed the Yalu River almost ten days ago and had gone into action near Woonsan. The volunteers depended on their country for food, ammunition, clothing and what not; yet the detachment in charge of railroad transport still stayed behind, north of the Yalu River. Wasn't that something to worry about? Last evening Wu Chen had called up An Kiu Won, head of the Korean railroad workers regiment. An was at Sinuiju on the other side of the river and would presently go to the front. He had suggested that Wu should try to reach Son Chon first.

But has the detachment got ready? Wu wondered. A report from Chin Chiao said that provisions—biscuits, salt, parched flour, etc.—had reached them and the workers had got rifles and put on their uniforms. Only the chief of the engineering department, whom the Chinese People's Volunteer transport command promised to send to them, had not yet shown up. There was no hurry, of course; he might turn up any moment, as Commander Ching had promised on the phone to send him over as soon as possible.

"Somebody wants to see you, Commander Wu," Ta Luan said, putting in his head.

Chin went out and bumped into Yao Chih-lan.

Yao Chih-lan was in deep distress. She had been the first one in her section to enlist but she was not even allowed to move into the detachment compound. To her chagrin, she had witnessed Young Chu

triumphantly packing up her things at the office that morning, ready to move into the detachment headquarters. What sense could one possibly make of that? Was it because she was not qualified? She flushed crimson with shame at the thought. She became awfully fidgety. With a sudden turn of her head, she ran to the headquarters. She wanted to ask Wu Chen about it. Leaning stiffly against the door, she gave Wu a look of hate and sulked in sombre silence.

Wu knew what she had on her mind. "What has bitten you?" he asked, smiling. "Fancy coming in the cool of the morning with such a long face, looking for a quarrel!"

Yao Chih-lan broke into a laugh in spite of herself. "Commander Wu," she said eagerly still with her eyes cast down, "when shall I move in? I have volunteered but am not permitted to come. What sort of 'volunteer' am I?"

Wu suppressed a smile and said, while washing: "It's splendid, of course, that you should want to come. But on second thoughts, I think you'd better not. You're too young, and a woman, too."

"What, a woman? Is Young Chu a man, then?" Chih-lan interrupted vehemently, "and you know, she is even younger than I. Why should she be called into service but not I? What sort of justice is that? It's enough to make a deaf-mute shout!"

"But yours is a different case," Wu said. "Isn't it true that you're going to get married?"

This made Chih-lan blush like a pomegranate flower. She jerked her head to one side and clenched her fists. Then she said angrily, "Marriage, marriage, always marriage! What if I don't want to get married?"

"What a stubborn girl!" Wu thought to himself with a smile. "Comrade," he drawled, "don't be in such a hurry! Hurrying won't help matters. You're a member of the Youth League, and the first thing you should do is to observe discipline."

A pang shot through her heart and two tear-drops rolled down her cheeks. She hurriedly wiped them away with her sleeve. She felt so utterly wretched. Yet to whom could she tell her grievances? Mother was unsympathetic, and the commander tried hard to put her off with the magic word "marriage." "What sort of girl would I be if I were thinking about marriage at a time like this," she thought bitterly. "Everybody treats me like a child, but I'm not a child any longer!"

Wu was searching for a soothing word or two to say, when his breakfast was brought in. "Stop crying, Chih-lan," he said, "what are you crying about? Have you had your breakfast? I guess not. Let's share what we have got here and continue our talk."

Yao Chih-lan didn't answer. "Come on please," Wu urged, "you can't go on sulking at your stomach's expense!"

Chih-lan burst into a laugh. "You'll let me go to Korea, won't you?" she pleaded, smiling. "You see, I'm so anxious to go that I don't even care for my meals. You don't mean to keep me fasting, do you?"

"Help yourself, help yourself," Wu said repeatedly, pointing to the food with his chopsticks.

They were just about to start when, all of a sudden, a bomb exploded. The walls shook and a big lump of lime fell from the ceiling and was scattered all over the table.

Wu jumped to his feet, throwing away his chopsticks. "It looks as if we'll indeed go fasting," Wu said angrily. Then he opened the window and looked out.

Bombs had fallen in some sections of the town and flames darted up into the air in quick succession. Over the river a big conflagration was burning and smoke spread a thick screen over the bridge. Large puffs of black smoke went up concealing, for the moment, the sunshine from the earth. Bullets swept whistling through the air and fell in a shower. It had been a fine day, dry and refreshing; but in the twinkling of an eye darkness came.

Wu jumped out of the window into the jeep outside the gate and started for the bridge. "Comrade Chin," he shouted back, "send some men to the bridge, quick!" Then a wind rose. Sinuiju on the other side of the river became a hell of fire. The ceiling-paper of dwelling houses was reduced to black ashes. It was blown across the river, fluttering over the streets. On arriving, Wu began to notice a hubbub of screams and groans gathering volume from the southern end of the bridge. In an instant a crowd of Koreans emerged from the smoky haze, men and women, old and young, their clothes torn, their faces badly burnt, some hugging bed-quilts and some carrying children, all crying and cursing, puffing and blowing, madly surging towards the street.

Pale and stern, Yao Chang-keng dashed down the bridge in Wu's direction, exclaiming that the bridge had caught fire.

After the smoke dispersed, they saw the flames gutting the boards of the bridge. With ropes, clubs, hooks and buckets in their hands, the whole volunteer detachment and local railway workers rushed from all directions to save the bridge.

"All the women comrades go over the bridge with the medical units to help the victims," Wu Chen called out, "no one can tell what is happening in Sinuiju!"

Yao Chih-lan ran onto the bridge with the other girls, following those who carried sacks marked with the red cross.

Young Chu was naive and talkative. She kept on chattering to Chih-lan all their way to the bridge.

"Can't you be quiet for a while?" Chih-lan asked. "What are you talking about in front of such a horrific air-raid?"

"Do you mean you're afraid?"

"Quite so. But I hope you're not," Chih-lan replied angrily. "Don't talk big, my girl," she said to herself, "we'll see who'll get scared."

Smoke on the bridge assailed their faces and made Chih-lan cough. The bridge was hit; the rails became crooked and the boards were scattered in all directions. Looking through the glaring gap between the sleepers, one could see water whirling past below.

Dead fish of all sizes drifted down the river with their white bellies turned up. Water splashed on the bridge, froze and became slippery and shiny as glass. The workers rushed into the smoke knocking down the burning boards into the river and fetching water from below to put the fire out. Wherever water was poured, black smoke curled up, hissing. But in a minute flames rose again and the workers had to stamp them out with their feet. In their excitement, they did not even feel pain when their heels were scorched.

Yao Chih-lan was worrying about the difficulty of getting the wounded over the damaged bridge when Wu's crisp and clear voice rang out, "Get some smart fellows to put the footway into shape so that the wounded can be sent over." Quick-witted and courageous, Wu was as resourceful in ideas as he was resolute in action. "He could pluck stars from the heavens if he wanted to," Chih-lan sometimes thought in amazement.

The air over Sinuiju was murky with smoke. The sun had disappeared and even the sky looked burnt. Here and there shells of incendiary bombs were scattered. The uncropped rice had been reduced to smouldering cinders which flew up and into people's faces when the wind blew. As far as one's eyes could reach heaps of Koreans lay dead.

Suddenly a little Korean girl rushed up bare-footed, her torn-up apron fluttering in the wind. Yao Chih-lan stepped forward to meet her. The little girl hugged Chih-lan with a heart-breaking cry as if she were her nearest and dearest in the world. The girl dragged Chih-lan along to her home.

It was no longer a home. The house had been knocked down and the furniture burnt. Only heaps of cinders were left smouldering. Though there was nothing left to burn, the red flames rose steadily.

In the flare of the fire Yao Chih-lan found the girl's mother lying prostrate in the mud. What a sight she was! Her head was turned to one side, her big rough hands lay on her bosom which was gory with blood. She lay motionless but her face looked soft and her limbs alive. A doctor who had come along with Chih-lan knelt down beside her, tore open the blood-soaked garment and whispered, "She is still alive!" Yes, she was alive.

The doctor gave Chih-lan a glance and asked her to help dress the wound. Blood soaked through the dressing and stained her hand. Chih-

lan's heart thumped, her face went white, and her fingers trembled in spite of herself.

"What's the matter?" the doctor inquired.

"I don't know!" Chih-lan said, wiping her face with her elbow and biting her lower lip.

The Korean woman came to herself with a deep sigh. She looked painful and exhausted. For some time, she fixed her eyes upon Chih-lan, her mouth twitched on the verge of a smile. She raised her hand and stretched it out for nobody knew what. As Chih-lan drew closer, the Korean woman smiled sadly. Softly her hands wiped away the beads of sweat on Chih-lan's face and caressed it.

What hands she had! They were chapped, blackened, and hardened through work. But their touch was gentle and soothing. They were hands that had sewn and knitted, sown and planted for a whole life-time. They were the hands of a woman who never had the heart to crush even an ant. Like a swallow, she had devoted her whole being to building a nest and planning a future for her fledglings, fetching now a mouthful of clay and now a mouthful of straw. The imagined future would become reality one day but the mother, its creator, had fallen in a pool of blood spilt by the American invaders.

Again the enemy planes made a raid over the Yalu River. Shells whistled past and smoke rose from the banks. All of a sudden, a great splash of water leaped over the bridge. Hurriedly Chih-lan straightened up and saw some one dashing down the bridge through the dust and disappear. Then he came out again on the embankment. Another bomb exploded and the man rolled over and over.

Looking at the man's back, Chih-lan recognized him as her father.

Yao Chang-keng was bowled over and buried under heaps of earth. He crawled out and felt as if he had just turned a dozen somersaults, his head swimming and stars before his eyes. For a moment he couldn't even remember what he had come for.

Why, of course, he had come to Li Chun-san's rescue. Li was an agreeable young man with a square face and big ears, engaged in road-maintenance repairs. A man of Yao Chang-keng's age tended to take young men around twenty for school boys. Blunt in speech and quick in action, Li was a man after Yao's own heart. Those who liked to give nicknames, however, called him "cold bird." The cold bird, people from Hopei say, chirps in the evening, "I'm frozen to death and I'll feather a nest tomorrow." But next morning as the sun rises and it becomes warm again, it will simply flutter its wings and sing, "Let me enjoy life while I may!"

In some ways Li's nickname was suitable, in some it wasn't. He was a spendthrift in his daily life and played ducks and drakes with his money. But he was a sterling worker, a man who would exert his utmost to excel

in work. Helping to put out the fire on the bridge that morning he was so absorbed in his work that he failed to notice that his trousers had caught fire. When someone doused him with a bucket of cold water, he just burst out laughing. During the air-raid a moment before, Yao thought he saw him clinging to the rails of the bridge. Then an explosion came and shook him down into the river, fortunately not very far from the bank. Perhaps not a heavy fall, if his luck was in.

Gradually Yao recollected this. He turned his eyes to the river bank and saw that Li was no longer there. Shaking off the mud from his body, he trudged onto the bridge.

At that moment Wu Chen was supervising the repair work on the bridge. His dark square face glistened with sweat. Wu Chen saw Yao come up and asked, "Any more people falling behind?"

"There is still Li Chun-san," Yao replied. Turning back, he shambled away.

"Where're you going?" somebody said, trying to stop him. "Do you want to tire yourself to death?"

"I'm forty already and it won't matter much if I die," Yao said, "but Li's a youngster, and it would be a shame if something happened to him."

Somehow Wu managed to stop him. "Don't you bother," he told Yao, "I'll send somebody to look for him."

All the way along Yao felt his heart thudding violently. His legs were like heavy weights. He reached the northern end of the bridge in a daze. He sat down on the ground, unable to move any further. His cotton coat was soaked through with sweat. Wu Chen knew that Yao was utterly exhausted. He asked some of his men to send Yao home for a good rest.

"This is no time for rest, there's work for every one of us," Yao said, smiling weakly and shaking his head. "Comrade Wu, you know me. For years I've lived near this bridge. For more than ten years I saw the Japanese crossing the bridge to murder our people. Now that things are just beginning to pick up, the Americans want to do the same. I can't look on and let them do that. We must never allow the bad old day to return."

Wu Chen fixed his gaze on Yao, his head on one side, not knowing exactly what he meant.

"There is only one thing for me to do, I must join the detachment," Yao said without lifting his eyes.

"Your daughter is coming," someone said, pointing a finger to the southern end of the bridge.

Yao Chih-lan arrived on the scene with another worker. They came up at a snail's pace, dragging Li Chun-san along. Yao Chih-lan thought the raid must have killed her father and tore towards the embankment. But there she found Li Chun-san instead. She was tired out and smeared

all over with mud and blood. Her plaits were scorched and looked yellowish, the tips of her hair were all singed.

Wu Chen looked from the father to the daughter. The past years flashed over his mind. A course of more than ten years is not an easy one to travel. When the force of darkness seemed to have reigned supreme, and when struggles were at their bitterest, Wu Chen saw such fathers and daughters—such people—coming to the fore, fighting shoulder to shoulder through wind and rain, fog and snow. Before such great and plain people, what brute force could hope to prevail or to avoid a crushing defeat? He admitted the Yaos into the detachment right on the spot.

By this time, the northern sky had cleared up and the sunshine was dazzlingly bright. But in Korea south of the river, the smoky haze still enshrouded the sky. Then as the northern wind rose and the smoke began to disperse, the sunshine gradually reached the bridge, the river and the southern bank, and lit all of them up.

That day, under the cover of dark night, Wu Chen and his detachment crossed the Yalu River.

IV

Yao Chih-lan was head of the telephone-squad. The men went their separate ways that evening, leaving only the telephone girls behind. Her father had gone with his men and Chou Hai, an electrician now heading the electrician's section, was ready to set out with another group. Chih-lan went up to Chou Hai and said impatiently, "We came here to work, not to loaf. Why should we be left behind? Let's go with you. If we can't take part in heavy work, we can do some light job. Anything is better than idling."

Chou Hai was in a rush and had little time to talk. "You'd better stay in as Commander Wu told you to, little girl," he said, spreading out his hands. "Don't give us more trouble than we've got. It would be funny, of course, to see you girls climbing up the telegraph poles and to hear you chirping there after they have been set up. But at a time like this, who wants to go out fooling around with you?"

Yao Chih-lan choked with anger. With a toss of her two small plaits she went away.

The girls put up for the night in a deserted hut in a deep ravine. Straw, old shoes, pieces of half-spun thread were strewn all over the place. In the middle of the brick bed, an open-mouthed jar half-filled with pickled cabbage had been knocked over and the sour liquid had flowed out and frozen. Chih-lan hunted up a bundle of straws, tied them to-

gether, and put a match to it. In the light of it they cleaned the place, and spread their camouflage capes on the brick bed. Then they sat down. Through the empty frame of the door the freezing wind blew in and out at its own sweet will.

"With a wind like this, we'll wake up frozen stiff tomorrow morning," Young Chu said in the dark. "Who'll go with me to find something to shut out the wind?" she continued, lighting a hemp-stalk.

"Do you dare to go out," teased a girl with a big head, "there are ghosts walking around out there."

"If there are any, they'll probably have fat heads, like yours. It'll be you they're hunting for," Chu replied, pursing her lips. "If you won't go, someone else will."

"Listen to what a sharp tongue she has!" a thickset girl put in, laughing and nudging Chu. "If you go on teasing people like that, you'll certainly have your tongue cut off in hell!"

She and Chu went out laughing.

The sky was overcast and it was pitch dark outside. The light from the hemp-stalk, flickering and spluttering in the wind, gave off a lot of sparks.

"Tomorrow will be the anniversary of the October Revolution," Chih-lan meditated in silence.

People are apt to forget about dates when battling against a storm. But Yao Chih-lan could never forget this date. Before she joined the detachment she had decided on this day for her wedding-day. But when everybody's life was at stake who could pursue only one's own happiness? Although this was the way Chih-lan talked and thought, love filled her inmost heart. She often felt lost during her free hours. Did she miss Tien-pao? "No, I miss mother," she would say to herself. As a matter of fact, she herself couldn't tell exactly whom she was thinking of. Probably both. On the day of her departure, Wu Tien-pao was not working on his usual line, so Chih-lan had no chance to see him. Of course that was not important. Tien-pao was open-minded and wouldn't be angry with her on that score.

But how pitifully her mother had cried! When she was told that both her husband and her daughter were going, she hated them, especially her husband who went with the daughter instead of persuading her to stay at home. Indeed, what could a half blind old woman do when left to her own resources?

Came the parting hour and Mrs. Yao saw them off at the front door of the house. For the first time in her life, Chih-lan heard her father saying a tender word to her mother. "What're you sad about?" said her father, "the trade union will certainly take care of you after we're gone, and there is nothing for you to worry about. Go back now, or you'll catch cold in the wind."

At the turn of the road Yao Chih-lan cast back a glance. Her mother was still leaning against the doorpost looking at them. Her face was blue with cold. How old she looked!

At long last Chih-lan left her mother and went away. Like a flower whose buds open after the first thunder showers of spring, Chih-lan plunged into the wide world, weathering storms and growing ever brighter. Since crossing the Yalu River, she had pushed on from one place to another, fearless of risks and regardless of the weather. She gave little thought to home. But she was restless this evening.

Indeed, how could any of the girls get to sleep when it was so cold in the room? They lay down, back to back, their heads buried under their overcoats and their feet wrapped in their trousers. Somewhere or other Chu had dug up an old mattress and they had hung it up to serve as a door. But then the northern wind broke loose, roaring and raging against the hut. In the fields the kaoliang leaves rustled. For a moment the hut rocked and swayed, like a battered boat amidst a storm, on the brink of ruin.

After the small hours Yao Chih-lan was woken up by the biting cold. Her limbs were numb and aching. With her teeth set, she sat up to rub her limbs. Suddenly to her great horror, Chu burst into a heart-rending cry.

"What's wrong with you, Chu?" Chih-lan asked, shaking her gently.

"Ma is dead," Chu groaned.

"Silly girl, you're dreaming. Wake up," Chih-lan said, laughing in spite of herself.

"Am I dreaming?" Chu asked vaguely.

"What are you doing if not dreaming?" Chih-lan said. "During the day you were dashing about like anything. How is it that you're homesick now?"

"Who is homesick?" Chu retorted, abashed.

"You! Dreams reflect one's inmost thoughts. I'm not to be taken in," Chih-lan said.

The stout girl twisted her legs and murmured in her sleep. "Let's stop here, or we shall wake the others," Chih-lan said quietly.

To all appearances, the night was peaceful. Not even a dog barked. The wind from the hills carrying the fragrance of the pines surged into the hut, swaying the tattered mattress that hung across the doorway. A shot sounded in the distance. Yao Chih-lan pricked up her ears but could hear nothing more.

"Did you get some sleep?" Chu whispered to Chih-lan, touching her lightly.

"No, it was too cold," Chih-lan said quietly.

"Nor did I. I was thinking just a moment ago about this group of ours. Before we came here, you see, we were scattered all over the place. Some of us weren't even acquaintances. No one of us would have ex-

pected to meet the others here. What luck to have been brought together like the sisters of a family! How good it would be if we could go on like this for ever and ever!"

"Silly! You're talking rubbish again," Chih-lan said. "How can we stay together all our life? We shall part as soon as victory is won."

"How sad it will be to part! Everybody will cry, I'm sure."

"I hope I'll be the first in that case," Chih-lan laughed.

"No. I'll be the first, I've made up my mind," Chu interrupted.

"Nonsense! You'd have no tears in you to shed even if you were ordered to," Chih-lan whispered, hugging her. "You'll be all smiles. Just think. As soon as the war is over, we shall go back to our country, our homes, and our families. We shall be too happy to cry. Let's sleep now, it will soon be daybreak."

For the time being the switchboards couldn't be installed. Meanwhile Wu Chen told the girls to make friends with the Korean telephone-operators, hold discussions with them on their work and start to learn their language. Anxious to render more service, Chih-lan got the girls to wash clothes and mend socks for the men. When the neighbouring station started setting up wires, the girls rushed to help. They often went along a muddy road in the depth of night, carrying heavy wires to the working site seven miles away.

Chih-lan now saw again the plump Korean girl she had first met in the cave. Now and again she would come to see Chih-lan and they soon became fast friends. Taking Chih-lan's arm, the Korean girl would talk quietly, gesticulating and trying out every Chinese or Russian word she happened to remember. Chih-lan could guess what she meant even when she failed to understand her words. A glance, a smile, or a gesture was quite enough to convey feelings. Chih-lan was told that the girl was called Kang Mum Jai and lived in the south. In all probability she had in her family an old man, because she repeatedly imitated the gesture of stroking a beard while meditatively gazing into the distance with her eyes squinting.

One day Chou Hai came back from the working site, begrimed and greasy, his cotton coat torn in several places.

"Oh, Comrade Chou, how thin you've become!" said Young Chu, looking frightened.

"We haven't got much to eat, you see," Chou said. "We go hungry now and then, sometimes for a day or two at a stretch. I've come back to get some supplies."

Yao Chih-lan told him to give her his coat and mended it for him.

"Is Young Chia all right?" Chu asked abruptly. "Last time he sent me a message asking for *sock-folders*. I've got them done. Will you please give them to him when you get back?"

"Who is he?" Yao Chih-lan asked, "how is it that I don't know him?"

"You've forgotten all about him," Chu said. "He is the man who carried things for me when we moved here from the cave. He is dark and handsome and has great big eyes. He works in our electrical section."

Chih-lan stopped mending. She smiled meaningfully, her hand pressing her lips, her head cocked on one side.

"What are you smiling at?" Chu said, reddening.

"What a perfect match he and Chu would make!" Chou Hai said, raising his voice. "He's always up to something. He even plays tricks on the enemy. One dark night, when I was fixing wire on the poles, I looked down and saw a big fire burning on the bank of a river. There were a lot of people sitting round it in a ring. I was wondering who was courting death like that when the American planes came and dropped loads of bombs. I hurried over and, to my surprise, they all turned out to be scarecrows Chia had made."

This made the girls put their hands over their mouths and giggle. Then Chou Hai turned to Yao Chih-lan and asked: "Have you finished the mending? I know you're offended with me for what I said last time. Have you any criticism to make?" "Nothing much," Chih-lan said with a laugh. "I just feel that our men comrades tend to look down upon us girls and dismiss us as if we were no use. I should like to know what difference sex makes in performing a task like ours at a time like this. I hope you won't be like that in future." She broke the thread with her teeth, flinging the coat to him.

Every word of her criticism was grounded on facts. As she talked she looked up at Chou from time to time. The way she argued reminded Chou of a figure in one of those new-year's pictures. It was of a plump little boy wearing his father's coat and shoes, with a bit of a beard painted under his nose and a long pipe in his mouth, assuming all the airs and graces of a grown-up.

That evening Wu Chen planned to make a tour to investigate the trunk line. So he asked Chou Hai to get the supplies ready and go with him. On hearing the news Chih-lan offered, on behalf of the girls, to help the men transport the supplies to the station.

"No, it's not necessary," Chou said, shaking his head. "You won't be able to carry the loads two miles in the depth of a dark night."

"There you go, showing contempt for us girls again!" Chih-lan said, thrusting her head forward. "Are we girls born weaklings? How do you know that we can't do it? We must go, I tell you."

That evening the girls carried the rice bags to the station together with Wu Chen, Chou Hai and the others. The station was as dark as midnight. There was not a lamp to be seen. The girls staggered and stumbled along a rough road. At the entrance of the station lines of barbed wire fenced off a heap of coal. Smoke rose from the coal which had been burning all these days.

Two trains were standing at the station. In the starlight one could see the tarpaulin draped over them and a row of big black cylinders rigidly pointing to the sky.

Chu, being a chatterbox, pulled Yao Chih-lan by the coat and said quietly, "Look, what a lot of anti-aircraft guns!"

"Hullo, hullo!" some one called out in Korean.

"Who is it?" Ta Luan asked at the top of his lungs.

"Oh, it's you!" the unknown voice responded joyfully. Then a man rushed up and, grasping Wu's hand, he said, "I didn't know you'd come!"

Their eyes met and Wu saw he was a wounded Chinese volunteer, his left arm in bandages.

They had been strangers till this moment and even now after they had met and shaken hands they didn't seem to care to know each other's name. What did it matter whether they were acquaintances or not? It was enough that they spoke the same language. When you are far from your native land, the tone and accent of your mother tongue strike you as particularly sweet and endearing, even if you are unable to catch the words in the distance. You are instantly reminded of your country, your home and your family.

The wounded volunteer laughed, his white teeth gleaming in the dark. He said he had come from Woonsan and had already walked for several days. Then he turned his head and shouted into the dark, "Come here, quick. I've found some of our countrymen here." Then two shadowy figures moved up on crutches, both smiling.

They were wounded volunteers waiting to return to China. They wanted to know whether they could go back to China by train that night. As Wu Chen had no idea about that himself, he took them to the station office to make inquiries.

The railway office was a well-built underground shelter, a bomb crater deepened and broadened, covered with piles of boards and earth. Lean as he was, the wounded man was in high spirits. After twenty days' wandering in remote hills and wild dales, everything struck him as new. Pointing to the lamps in the station office, he happily exclaimed, "Oh, you've got electric light here!" When a train screamed he called out, "Listen, here's a train. It's almost a month since I heard one last."

He was very fond of talking. As he was waiting for the train, he told story after story about the front. He compared the American troops to big balloons which swell up like anything but become empty as soon as you give them a prick. He talked about his experience of capturing two American soldiers. Calmly and comfortably lying on their bellies in a pit, covered with woolen blankets, they were warming and enjoying themselves. They never dreamt that he had approached them from behind and was training his rifle at their backs.

It had to be admitted that the enemy were really very resourceful in devising measures of self-preservation. As soon as they were surround-

ed, they would unbutton their coats, exposing in Chinese lettering the words, "Send me home, please!"

This wounded volunteer had a pale face and long unkempt hair, and his cotton coat was worn to shreds. He kept on regaling his audience with wonderful tales but not a single word of complaint escaped from his lips. When he was told that Wu Chen and his men were all railway workers, he said, beaming, "It's splendid that you have come. We don't get enough food at the front. Food is what we need at the moment."

"Listen to what the front expects of us," Wu Chen said, staring at Chou Hai. "This is what we have come here for! Up to now, trains can only get as far as Jungjoo, and telegraph poles haven't even been set up. Think what we owe to the comrades at the front!"

"Give me two more days and all the poles will be in their place," Chou Hai said.

"Two more days? Where do you think you are?" Wu snapped, forcing a smile.

"In the station office, aren't we?" Chou blinked.

"You're dreaming. It's wartime and not peacetime. The war will be affected if we finish our work a minute earlier or later than scheduled. We're working against the time."

Chou wiped beads of sweat away from the tip of his nose without making a reply. He walked to the telephone and rang up. "Commander Wu," he suddenly called out, "the trunk line to China is open now. Is there anybody that you want to speak to?"

Wu jumped up at once. "Ring up the transport command and get Comrade Ching."

On the telephone Commander Ching gave Wu a piece of good news: a large number of men and a great quantity of supplies were coming to meet the urgent needs of the front. But there was also the bad news that the enemy, concentrating all of the 200,000 men he had in Korea, had started a general offensive which he boasted would "end the Korean war before Christmas."

When Wu drove forward in the night, he heard our howitzers roaring like thunder. From time to time lights flashed over the dark horizon. Once again, the tide of war was spreading to the north of the Chongchon River.

V

The detachment had moved its headquarters to a small mountain village north of the Chongchon River. The village was surrounded by pines and larches. At the foot of the mountain stretched a belt of apple trees, their trunks wrapped in straw to keep out the frost.

Wu Chen and his cook lived with a Korean family which was introduced in the first chapter of this book. As we have seen, the flower of endless days was then in bloom along the wall of the back yard. Now winter had come, the flowers had fallen, and Grandpa was no more.

Achimani's* husband had left home many years before. When asked about him, she would answer sadly, "He is in the People's Army." He was a gas worker and an upright man. At first Achimani couldn't understand why the Japanese police were constantly on his track. She could never forget the dark and stormy night he left. She was spinning cotton in the lamplight when her man dashed in. "I'm going away," he gasped out, "take care of yourself and father and our child. I'll come back to you unless death takes me away." Tucking a few bank-notes into his pocket, he pushed open the back door of the kitchen and rushed out into the night. In a flash of lightning, she saw her husband falling to the ground and rising to his feet again, then disappear into the hills beyond.

A long time had passed before one of her husband's fellow workers came and told her that her husband had crossed the Tumen River and fled to the forests on Changpai Mountain to join the guerilla forces.

August 15 of 1945 marked the day that brought freedom to the Korean people. It was a rainy season. Opening the door in the morning, Achimani saw a drizzle hanging like mist over the hills. All was dim around her, but light glowed in her heart. Many of the exiles had come back, and she was expecting her husband to turn up at any moment. At meal times she cooked more rice than necessary in the hope that her man might arrive. She gave no explanation about it and Grandpa knew whom she was awaiting and kept quiet. Days went by, but nothing was heard from him. This made her uneasy and she went about hunting for news. After the Americans had invaded Korea, somehow it came to her ears that her husband had marched forward with the People's Army. This was actually a piece of misinformation, but she wished it to be true. When lashing winds and pattering rains woke her up in the night, she would be seized with a fit of panic. Hugging her child, she would quietly weep herself to sleep.

She dared not cry aloud on such occasions lest Grandpa be awakened. As for Grandpa, he was wide awake, sighing and tossing about in his bed in the next room.

Grandpa was visibly aging. Age had made his head hoary and he couldn't move a step without panting. By the beginning of October, the American forces were drawing near. Achimani saddled her ox, loaded it with food and luggage, and was ready to flee. It was already winter when, as a rule, Grandpa had an attack of asthma. "Go away with the child," he gasped, "and leave me alone. I'm too old to move and I don't

*"Aunt" in Korean, referring to the mistress of the house.

want you suffer for my sake. I'm seventy now and I have lived long enough. I'm not afraid of death."

Then the Americans came and took Grandpa away. Flashing their bayonets and invoking their atom bombs, they kidnapped thousands upon thousands of Koreans. Some of them made good their escape and told people they met, "Thanks to the Chinese People's Volunteers, we have been able to come back. Otherwise nobody can tell where our bones would have been left to rot."

Grandpa's fate was worrying Achimani to death. One day the news got round that a large number of corpses had been unearthed somewhere south of the Chongchon River. They were all the dead bodies of north Koreans captured by the U.S. forces. Leaving her child in the care of a relative, she went away on an ox-cart to get back Grandpa's corpse.

There were hundreds and hundreds of corpses. They were bound together and stacked up. To all appearances, the enemy tanks had rumbled over them in an attempt to grind them to pieces.

Achimani's heart stopped still in horror, her hair stood on end. A shiver ran down her spine. One by one she examined the corpses, looking for Grandpa. But how could she find him? The faces were crushed, with mud and blood all mixed up and frozen together. They were no longer human faces. One by one she turned over the dead men's necks, their hands, hoping to recognize Grandpa from a certain mark she could still call to her mind. But again she failed. Beside the heaps of corpses she began to cry desperately.

Then it occurred to her that Grandpa's dead body might lie elsewhere. Holding her apron in her hand, she rushed back to those dead bodies that bore some resemblance to Grandpa's and one by one she tore their clothes open, looking at the seams. A cotton vest caught her eye and she recognized it as her own needlework. Now that she had found Grandpa, she abandoned herself to weeping. Still wiping her eyes, she dragged the corpse on to the ox-cart and drove it home. Then she dug a hole and buried Grandpa's bones.

After that she immediately set about household affairs. She was busy from morning till night, reaping rice, picking soya beans, harvesting cotton. Once she carried home on her head such a staggering pile of cotton that she was almost crushed by the burden. After putting down the cotton and drawing a deep breath, she went out to the well, with a water pot on her head.

Wu Chen came and occupied the room where Grandpa had slept. It was separated from Achimani's room by a board partition. Late every night he heard Achimani come in, lay herself on the bed, stretch her arms and groan, exhausted by the day's work.

"Exhaustion may keep her in bed tomorrow," Wu used to worry.

But next morning she got up and went to work just as calmly as ever. For decades in the past, she had not been overwhelmed by sorrows. Now

facing a new epoch in Korean history, she was determined to start a new life.

Ta Luan and Old Pao, the cook, who had come with Wu Chen, gave Achimani a lot of help.

Old Pao was all right except for his evil tongue. Every morning you could hear him shouting by the well, "No matter how much water you get for these people, they use it up as soon as you turn your back. Getting the meals keeps me busy enough as it is, without having to fetch water. It will be the death of me!" Thus he would shout all the way from the well to the kitchen, cursing anybody who happened to get in his way. But all this didn't really matter. Despite all his moaning and groaning, the men got their meals and water all right. When fuel was running short, Old Pao would go way off to the railway station to fetch some badly burnt sleepers and grope his way back in the middle of the night. Then throwing the sleepers into the yard, he would, as a matter of course, burst into a fit of grumbling.

Far beneath the old man's curses there lay a heart of gold. He helped Achimani in every possible way, pottering about in the kitchen and pouring forth Chinese words in an endless stream, caring little whether she understood them or not.

Achimani's little boy, Kangkunni, at once became Old Pao's pet. Anyone who had known his father said that the son was a chip of the old block. Clever and daring, he always took the lead in the children's games. As he ordered them about like a general, people called him "Kangkunni" (the general).

Kangkunni took a great liking to Pao's black beard which practically covered his whole face. Whenever he had nothing to do, he would climb on to Pao's lap and pull his whiskers just to pass the time away. And Pao would scream but wouldn't even think of lifting a finger against him.

"You've been spoiled!" Achimani would say, smiling at her son. Then turning to Chin Chiao, she added, "When Grandpa was living, the kid loved to play with his beard. He's still got the habit."

"I've two grandpas," the boy burst out all of a sudden, "one is dead and the other is a Chinese volunteer."

Everyone laughed.

"Which of the two do you think is better?" Chin Chiao asked, smiling.

For a long while Kangkunni was deep in thought. "The other grandpa used to spank me," he said, staring at them with his little round eyes.

"You deserved it, you know," his mother put in. She smiled sadly, remembering the dead Grandpa.

But the volunteer-grandpa wouldn't lift a finger against the child. Whenever he got out of patience he would simply pull down his lower eyelids, put out his red tongue and scream, in order to scare the boy into flight. The child would run away chuckling, for the trick had been

played so often that it amused rather than frightened him. In fact he would often tug at Pao's greasy shirt, entreating him to do it once more.

Then, when his old trick no longer worked, Pao would strike his kitchen-knife against the table and yell furiously, "I'll kill you if you make more trouble."

Old Pao was fond of cats and dogs and so on, as well as children. Achimani's old cow was put almost exclusively under his care. In the early morning, the old man would lead her to the stream, break the ice and let her drink. After that the cow, tied with a rope to a pole by the door, would lie down comfortably, munching and chewing like an old crone. In windy or snowy weather Pao would carefully lay a straw mattress over the cow's back lest she catch cold. When the hours came for Pao to feed her, he would take her to the cowhouse and pour into the feed bin the hot stuff Achimani had prepared. Taking a deep breath the cow would first smell it and then slowly pick up the bean husks with her thick lips. To make sure that the feed was to her taste, he would stand by and look on for a long while, with his hands crossed behind his back.

VI

So far Yao Chih-lan had heard nothing from Wu Tien-pao. Every time the home mail arrived, people trooped up to get their letters, and every time Yao Chih-lan was disappointed. She would mutter dazedly, "Why no letters for me?"

To her exasperation, Tien-pao hadn't written her a single word. "Is he angry with me—why doesn't he write?" She brooded in fury. "Let's break it off if we must; I'm not afraid. But nothing would make me go back to you after that, even if you grovelled in the dust and kept on kotowing till there was a hole in the ground."

Drifts of snow in the courtyard had thawed into small pools of black water. The foot-long icicles hanging from the eaves also melted. Drip, drip, drip went the sound.

Chih-lan felt her head itching. She fetched a basin of water and unbraided her two little plaits, getting ready to wash her hair. Kneeling down on the brick bed, she began slowly to comb her hair.

Yao Chih-lan hated herself for being constantly troubled by petty personal feelings. Commander Wu was never like that, she pondered with envy.

She remembered Wu Chen had once told her quietly: "A man should never care too much about himself. He should always serve the people and love them. Excessive self-love makes one selfish, calculating, and

cowardly. Cowardice, you see, has its ideological basis. It is nothing but a form of selfishness."

Young minds are like spring soil; you can expect to reap from them whatever you have sown. Wu's words took root in Chih-lan's mind, and she followed him as her example in all respects.

Wu Chen gave a savour to everyday meals, he put spice into the life around him; he was a true Communist. Unobtrusive wherever he went, friendly to whomever he met, he served as the standby for all and sundry.

In the old days, no matter how long the march they were making, Wu Chen never rode his horse. It was used either to carry the sick or supplies. One summer day he and Ta Luan set out alone on an errand and came across a soldier who was very ill. They made a stretcher with small birches and carried him over a mountain path for seven miles until they finally reached their camp.

Wu's self-sacrificing spirit was always an inspiring example, though Yao Chih-lan so far hadn't always followed it. Not infrequently, personal troubles engrossed her mind. That was why she hated herself.

Slowly doing her hair, she pondered on absently.

Young Chu was washing clothes in the kitchen. The door opened with a click, and she came in with a basin full of clothes which she had wrung out, blazing like a string of firecrackers. "This Korean weather, just a moment ago the yard was full of sunshine. Now it's all clouded over, before you know where you are. Where am I going to dry these clothes I've washed?" Muttering to herself, she stretched a rope across the room and hung up the clothes.

"I wish you'd be more careful hanging up those wet clothes?" Chih-lan said, turning round. "You're splashing water all over my face. Something must have gone wrong with your eyes. Everything seems to strike you as strange in Korea, except yourself."

"Why, isn't it strange? Look at Kang Mum Jai. When we met her for the first time we all thought there must be an old man in her family. Now we've got to her house, all we find is Achimani and Kang's little nephew, Kangkunni. Nobody has ever hinted that Achimani has got a sister-in-law. There's something fishy about it all, if you ask me."

Yao Chih-lan parted her hair in the middle and let it drape over her shoulders. "Oh, shut up," she said, cocking her head on one side, as she braided the hair. "You'd better mind your own business. We don't know Korean; we may have misunderstood them. You're all right except for that loose tongue of yours. When are you going to take yourself in hand?"

"Oh, God," Chu shrieked, "open your mouth and let me see how many teeth you've got. Other people have thirty-two at most, but you,

must have got more to be able to talk so beautifully!" With a gesture of her hand, she went out.

"Ha! Wu Tien-pao is here," Chu shouted with a laugh, out in the yard. "When did you arrive?"

Yao Chih-lan suppressed a laugh and ignored her. She wouldn't be taken in by this mischievous imp again. Last time when Chu had played the same trick on her, she was foolish enough to rush out to meet Wu Tien-pao and made a spectacle of herself.

"Chih-lan, come out, quick," Chu called again, in real earnest. "What're you so shy about?" She ran toward the door and pushed it open.

Chih-lan blushed to the roots of her hair. The plait she was making slipped out of her hand.

At the door stood Wu Tien-pao, dark and cheerful, his eyes and lips smiling. He looked strong, fresh and happy, his cap pushed back and a shock of hair sticking out of it.

Upon Tien-pao's appearance, the anger and hate that had been brewing in Chih-lan's breast all went up in smoke. Happy as a lark, she completely forgot her previous determination to give him the cold shoulder. In spite of everything, Tien-pao remained the same wonderful person. But when she came to realize that he had come from China, Tien-pao appeared in a new light. In her mind's eye he had now become a completely new man. Without waiting for him to sit down, she plied him with all sorts of questions while smiling sweetly at him.

Tien-pao told her that after the conclusion of the second campaign the lights had again come flooding during the night, on the northern bank of the Yalu River. The volunteers, people said, were like stars in the sky, giving people light wherever they went. As usual, Tien-pao's answers sparkled with wit, though there seemed to be no end to Chih-lan's questions. He remained undaunted even when her questions became more and more pointless.

"Is the Yalu River as blue as ever?" she asked. "What're our folk doing everyday?"

"Oh, lord, how could it change its colour?" Tien-pao laughed, pushing back the cap, and scratching his head. "It's the Yalu River, not the Yellow River, you know. What's wrong with you today? You used to talk good sense, but now you chatter as if you had lost your wits."

But Yao Chih-lan felt differently. She thought many momentous changes and significant events must have taken place in her country during the months since she had left, and they must be highly exciting occurrences, too. She hadn't realized until this moment how anxiously she had yearned for news from her country. Her heart had dwelt not only on her own home but on her country as a whole.

At home, she mused, you could walk about in the daytime and turn on lights at night; you could do whatever you liked and get what you

wanted. But strangely enough, she had always taken these things for granted, utterly unaware of their significance. Only after her arrival in a land of suffering did she really understand the happiness—the great happiness—these everyday things meant.

The first rush of excitement being over, Yao Chih-lan calmed down. She asked Tien-pao why he hadn't written to her.

"What's the use of writing letters?" Tien-pao laughed. "I joined the detachment the moment I received your letter challenging me. I thought I had to cross the Yalu River anyway and we would meet and be able to talk our heads off. So I might very well be spared the trouble of writing and save ink and paper. Besides, I didn't have time. All the workers were speeding up production and my crew was completing 150,000 kilometres of safe-running and trying to set a new record at the same time. We had to put everything we'd got into it, you see, and I had had no time to write. Are you angry with me for that?"

"Have I got such a bad temper?" Chih-lan said with a toss of her head. "You needn't write me for the whole of your life if you don't want to! That's your lookout, and it has nothing to do with me."

"As long as you're not angry with me, I'll be happy," Tien-pao laughed, fumbling in his pocket. "You see, you've been making such a fuss that I forgot to give you my little gift."

Chih-lan peered into the pocket and caught a glimpse of a book. Without waiting for Tien-pao to produce it, she stuck her hand into his pocket, and dug out a number of interesting articles—a harmonica, a diary and a carefully folded picture. Tien-pao snatched the picture away and hid it behind his back, just when Chih-lan was starting to unfold it.

"I don't want to keep it. Just let me have a look at it," Chih-lan pleaded, knitting her brows and swaying her body.

"You may look at it but you mustn't touch it," Tien-pao said. Then, unfolding the picture, he held it up at arm's length. It was the same coloured portrait of Chairman Mao that he had shown Chih-lan the first time he went to her house.

She held the book in her left hand and flipped the pages over. It was a travel book about north Korea and it instantly aroused her interest.

Wu Tien-pao watched her and smiled, "What a bookworm you are," he whispered. "You seem to give up your whole life to books. You never think of me, do you?"

"Why should I?" Chih-lan said, hiding her face with the book. "Everyday I've got so much to think about and so much to do. You simply have no time to bother about such trifling matters."

"Is it a trifling matter?" Tien-pao pressed, grasping her hand.

"Don't touch me," whispered Chih-lan, struggling to get her hand out of his and eyeing the doorway. "What would people say if they caught us?"

"How timid you are," Tien-pao said. "Don't be afraid, I'm not a tiger. I won't eat you up." Instantly he stood up, seized his cap, and started spinning it on his finger.

Yao Chih-lan peered at him from behind the book, smiling quietly. "Now it's you who's losing your temper!" she said to herself. "Well, you may go on sulking until you burst with anger." Burying her head into the book, she deliberately ignored him.

This really got under Tien-pao's skin. He had come to Korea and had passed the previous night in a big cave. He had come to the detachment headquarters on business and then he had gone to visit Chih-lan to show how he felt about her. But apparently she didn't enjoy the visit.

"Don't read now," he cried, snatching the book away. "What's the good of reading now?"

"Nothing wrong with it," said Chih-lan, suppressing a smile.

"I'm no fool!" Tien-pao said. "What about our getting married?"

For some time Chih-lan fixed her eyes upon him. "Don't always harp on that," she said quietly. "This is no time for marriage. You know that. I won't forget you and I believe you won't forget me. So long as we love each other, we can leave that to take its course. What's the use of talking about it now?"

Tien-pao riveted his eyes upon Yao Chih-lan in great astonishment. Outwardly, of course, she remained the same as ever, limp and slender, with heavy eyelids and liquid eyes and two little plaits hanging down her back. But her bearing and her talk had something different about them. She had almost become a new woman, he thought.

"A man should not just care about himself; that's selfish." Chih-lan began to lecture, assuming Wu Chen's tone. "He should always serve the people and love them. What happiness marriage brings us when the enemy is pointing his bayonet at our throats? Everybody knows how a slave lives. You have had the experience, and so have I. So if you love me, love our country."

"What's going on?" somebody chuckled outside. "Enemies one moment and friends the next."

Yao Chih-lan recognized Chu's voice and dashed out to deal with her.

Halting in the middle of the yard, Chu turned back and pleaded: "Now don't make a fuss, please. I only came for my overcoat. Please give it to me. I'm looking for a place where I can get some sleep. I'm on duty this evening, you know. I'm no eavesdropper and I'm not interested in your talk at all."

Outside the sky was overcast. From time to time, a cold draught surged into the room. It looked like snow. The air in the yard was filled with drifting chimney smoke. Quite imperceptibly, the hour for supper had come. Wu Tien-pao had got some night duty to perform and could not stay any longer. When he rose to say good-bye, Chih-lan's

hard heart suddenly softened. She would very much have liked to walk a little way with him, but Chu was there and shyness held her back. To hide her embarrassment, she hastened to sweep the bed with a broom as soon as he went out of the house.

From the distance came the sweet songs of grey thrushes and Mongolian larks. "He is whistling. What a clever mouth he has," Yao Chih-lan thought, quietly smiling to herself.

VII

In the telephone office, several Chinese and Korean girls, including Yao Chih-lan, Young Chu and Kang Mum Jai, were on night duty. Chou Hai also stayed there, so as to be able to give instructions about the repairs without loss of time.

The telephone office was in a cave lined on both sides by piles of stones. A straw-curtain was hung over the small opening that served as the entrance. In the cave there were electric light and switchboards. The cave being low, everybody had to stoop when moving about. The ground was terribly damp and muddy, and was not frozen hard. The girls had spread a layer of grass over the ground and laid mattresses upon it. The mattresses, however, moved like little boats floating on the river when they planted their feet on them.

Chu was on watch for the first half of the night. Shortly after she had sat down to her task came Commander Ching Ming's urgent order to Wu Chen that Train 502 must reach the northern bank of the Chongchon River by two o'clock next morning so that the personnel of the supply-station could carry the loads over the river and right on to the front. The front was about to "wake up," Ching said, and it was waiting for these loads of "big cakes."

Chu could not help laughing. Some cakes! These were no rice-cakes to feed the volunteers. One bite of them and you'd have broken your teeth. They were iron-cakes to feed the big guns. To "wake up" evidently meant to "start an offensive." The regulations, of course, forbid the telephone-operators to listen to anything that was said over the telephone. "I didn't mean to listen," Chu would excuse herself. "I only wanted to know whether they'd finished their talk, and the words just came into my ears."

Presently, Train 502 started for the bank. The earth shook, the lamps swayed, and the rumbling sound increased in volume as it drew nearer to the cave. As it rumbled past over Chu's head, she rocked and swayed happily as if she were on the train herself.

Yao Chih-lan, Kang Mum Jai and several others sat chanting on the newly-made brick bed, pulling the bed-clothes up to their waists.

In front of the brick bed squatted Chou Hai, raking the ashes out of the stove and heating kaoliang in an old shell case. Man needs meat most when under difficult circumstances. Sometimes the desire becomes so strong that a candle may be taken for a piece of sausage. Yearning for good food, the volunteers would spend a good deal of their spare time talking about it. They would talk on and on, their faces beaming and their eyes flashing; any attempt to stop them would upset them as much as snatching food out of their mouths. These "conversational feasts," as they called them, thus became their favourite topics.

"Shall we have dumplings on New Year's Eve, the day after tomorrow?" Chou Hai said, breaking the frozen kaoliang with a spoon. With great relish, he added, "Let's have dumplings stuffed with nice tasty meat, so that the juice simply trickles down from the corner of your mouth when you bite into them."

"There'll be no dumplings for you!" Chu laughed. "All you'll get will be bullets."

"Don't talk like that, just when New Year is coming round," Chou Hai protested, as if in deadly earnest. "We used to eat dumplings at home on New Year's Eve. Some of them were stuffed with dates and nuts, and any girl who got one of those, it was said, would find a good husband during the year and would soon have a baby."

Upon this, the girls set up a howl. "Fancy, a section chief like you, talking like that!" shouted the girl with the big head. "You're never serious."

After a fit of laughter, a girl from Kiangsu brought the conversation back to dumplings. "I can never understand why you northerners like dumplings so much. I think they're simply a waste of good meat. It's much better to cut the meat into slices and spread a layer of rice flour over them and steam them. When you lift the lid of the pan, there they are, submerged in a pool of oil and smelling lovely. A spoonful of sugar and few drops of wine make them delicious." She talked and gesticulated as if the meat were right in front of her and she were in mortal fear that the others might snatch it away to stuff their dumplings.

Pressing her lips with a forefinger, Yao Chih-lan looked at her askance. "All I want is rice-cakes!" she said, smiling. "If only we had some now, fried and sugared, with yellowish crust on both sides! My mouth simply waters at the thought."

"People say the Koreans eat rice-cakes over the New Year. Is that true?" she asked, nudging Kang Mum Jai who was lying by her side.

"Of course, it is," Kang said, smiling, sweeping back her hair. "Come to my house and let my sister-in-law make some for you." She looked quite charming this evening, wearing a snow-white silk scarf with a rosy azalea embroidered on one corner.

"I don't care what you say, I stick to my guns," said Chou Hai, raising his voice. "Nothing is more delicious than dumplings just as

nothing is more comfortable than sleep—the saying is thousands of years old, and it must be true."

"Shut up now!" the girl with the big head laughed. "You've already had too big a feast for the good of your stomach. Let's sleep now and make ourselves comfortable."

The girls consulted their watches. It was late. They huddled themselves together, lying on their backs or on their sides.

At midnight Yao Chih-lan was woken up from her sleep. "Get up, it's your turn now," Young Chu shouted into her ears. "Don't pretend to be dead. Commander Wu will teach you a lesson, if you go on in a daze like that. To carry out Ching's order, he's gone to the dispatch office to arrange things personally. He rang me up just a moment ago. I was a bit slow getting the number and he wanted to know whether I'd been asleep. He almost frightened me out of my wits." Then she lay down on Chih-lan's warm bed and buried her head under the quilt.

Yao Chih-lan got up, wiped her face with a wet towel, and settled herself in front of the switchboard. Putting on the earphones and mouthpiece, she quietly watched the indicators.

There were few calls during the latter half of the night. Practically no one rang up after the dispatch office had made a few inquiries about the supply of coal and water on Train 502. Sitting up at night like this easily made her feel tired.

Kang Mum Jai, in charge of calls from the Korean side, yawned and muttered: "How long the night is! When'll it be day?"

In the quiet of the night, Yao Chih-lan heard something falling with a light soft sound. It was snow, of which she was a great lover. She liked to feel her cheeks softly caressed by its cool flying flakes. When she was very small, she was a calm and brave girl. Together with the boys, she made snow-men, threw snowballs and ran happily about on the snow-covered ground. But when they divided themselves into two sides for a snowball fight, no one would take her on. She was a girl, the boys would say, so she was no use. But was that true?

She thought with satisfaction that she was now fighting a real war. The snow kept on falling and the night was quiet. Leaving her country far far behind, she had come to Korea to work in a damp, cold cave. Sitting beside her was a companion whose existence she would never have known of if she had not come here! Nor would her companion ever have had a chance to meet her. Without the Korean war they would each have lived and laboured, grown old, and passed away as separate individuals, unknown and indifferent to each other. But the war broke out and at once linked their hearts up and brought them to face the common fate.

An indicator flashed. It was the station on the northern bank calling for the dispatch office. Promptly Chih-lan got them engaged.

For some time Wu Chen had been sitting in the dispatch office, shouting into the mouthpiece directing the movement of Train 502, raising his voice to the breaking point. To do this sort of work, he once said, one must have a resonant vibrating voice so as to be able to shout one's words into the ears of people half a mile away. He was exhausted and closing his eyes, he dozed away. On awakening, he found himself completely refreshed. The brick bed was so much heated up from under it that it seemed even cakes could be baked on it. He pushed the door open to get some cold air. The lamplight darted out and he saw that the air was thick with fluttering snowflakes.

"That's good," Wu said happily. Standing under the eaves of the hut, he reached out his warm hands for the snowflakes. A heavy snowfall, he thought, melting in the coming spring, would guarantee a rich harvest.

The northern station again called up. Wu went back into the room, and his face darkened on hearing the news. The railway line from the northern station to the river bank had been bombed and could not be restored, it was estimated, until three o'clock in the morning. Train 502 was moving up that way; what could Wu do?

While hearing the northern station's report on the situation and its request for further instructions, Wu turned the whole thing over and over in his mind. Should the train continue to go forward? Of course, it should; that was Commander Ching's order and was also required by the military situation. But it would be nearly daybreak when the line was sufficiently restored for the train to move far enough to be unloaded. As there was no cave where the train could be hidden, it would have to do at least half of the return journey in broad daylight. To expose the train that way would mean risking its destruction. Here lay the crux of the problem.

"Is it snowing over where you are?" Wu shouted into the mouthpiece.

"Yes," came the answer.

"Is it snowing hard?"

"Yes, as hard as can be. It won't stop for sometime."

At once Wu Chen made up his mind: Let the train run back in the daytime. This, of course, was something new in the Korean war. But if it snowed hard all night, Wu thought, the enemy might not be able to make a raid in the morning. "Let's take a chance on it."

"Listen," Wu rapped out, "the train must go forward as scheduled, no matter what happens. Hullo, hullo . . . I haven't finished yet, who has cut us off?"

"Not me," came Yao Chih-lan's voice. "The line on the other side has been put out of action by bombing."

"When can it be restored?"

"It'll take three or four hours, I'm afraid. It has been cut in several places."

"Damnation," Wu cried. "By the time it's been repaired, the world will be a different place."

"Shall I try the local-circuit?" Chih-lan asked uncertainly, "I might be able to get your order through."

"Yes, of course," Wu replied, "take it down."

Chih-lan took a sheet of paper and put down Wu's order that Train 502 was to start for the front early next morning.

The order contained few words but each weighed heavily on Chih-lan's mind. Whatever happened, she had to transmit them to the northern station. As things were, she could manage it only by transmitting the message station by station, through the local-circuit. She got the local station first and explained what had to be done. Then she gave the order word by word, ending with the request: "Please, let me know where the order finally gets to. I'll be waiting to hear from you."

She waited on tenterhooks. The time seemed to pass with painful slowness. Her mind was so wrapped up in the order that she couldn't think of anything else. Why had no answer come yet? Had the order got lost in the ether? "Comrades, for goodness sake, hurry up. Even Achimani's old yellow cow moves quicker than you do." If anybody had told her that only a few minutes had elapsed since the order had been sent, she would never have believed it. It seemed to her like a hundred years.

Overhead several enemy aircraft droned. They flew back and forth, like flies circling and buzzing round a bowl of sugar.

Chou Hai was giving directions over the phone about setting up the telegraph poles. He pricked up his ears. Sharp as a needle, he could tell the different types of enemy planes from one another by the sound and what they were after. Walking along, he would lower his head a little and cock it to one side to cut out the sound of the wind so that he could hear the planes while they were still a long way off. Not once had they escaped his sharp ears.

Several "black widows" were circling overhead. It seemed as if after an intense search they had found their objective. Glancing back, Chou Hai saw the chimney of the house, and shouted: "Quick, run and see whether the chimney is giving off any sparks."

Chu got up at once and cursed the enemy planes as she rubbed her sleepy eyes: "You disturb us night and day and won't let us have any sleep. We'll get you this time! You see!"

Stooping, Chu groped her way out. "The chimney's covered with grass all right, no sparks can get out," she shouted at the top of her voice. Then suddenly she cried out in astonishment: "Flares from over the hill are marking out our position!"

Her words had hardly left her lips when bombs fell like a shower from the sky.

The bombs littered the ground but none exploded. Yao Chih-lan was wondering why when there was explosion like a thunderclap. The earth shook and a violent blast surged into the cave, blowing out the lamp. Chih-lan was thrown into the air. The next moment she found herself lying flat on the ground. She felt that her eye-balls were bursting and her throat burning, she could hardly breathe.

It was pitch dark everywhere. "Where am I now?" Chih-lan asked herself. Stretching out her hands, she felt a small bench. Then she realized she had been thrown from her seat.

"It's all right, everybody," Chou Hai said, coughing. "That was a time bomb going off. Get a light, quick."

"Where can you get light?" Chu said fretfully.

"There is fire in the stove," Chou Hai said, "has the explosion knocked you out of your senses!"

Yao Chih-lan lay semi-conscious. Vaguely she remembered that she had something important to attend to but she couldn't tell exactly what it was. Chu rolled up a sheet of paper and lit it at the stove. The light at once lit up the cave and dispelled the darkness from Chih-lan's mind. Her memory came back to her. How foolish, she thought, to have forgotten Wu's order written on that slip of paper! She got up quickly, her head heavy, seeing stars. Holding her head in her hands, she staggered to the switchboard and settled herself down.

Word came from the local station that the order had reached the right person.

Crisp and clear, the words rang in Yao Chih-lan's ears.

VIII

By this time, Wu Tien-pao, driving Train 502 without any load, had arrived safe and sound in a big cave, a "hotel" in railwaymen's slang. Liu Fu-sheng, the fireman, banked up the fire with a few shovels of coal. The crew, towels around their necks, overcoats on their backs, rifles over their shoulders, were taken to the mess by a steward.

Tired out as he was, Tien-pao was thoroughly pleased with himself. Joy loosened his tongue and he rattled on with great relish. After all a freight train of "hard cakes" had reached the front to feed the cannon's gaping jaws. He recalled how on his way back he had gone like the wind in broad daylight, through a snowstorm.

As if not satisfied even with this latest trip, Liu said, "How wonderful it would be if we could always run by day! That'd be better than

groping our way in the middle of the night, we hardly daring to switch lights on. How awful that is!"

Liu was a giant of a man. Wherever he stood he looked as big as a wall. His hands were like dust-pans, and the biggest rubber shoes in the market would pinch his feet. His physical strength was astonishing. According to his own account, he had studied boxing ever since he was a boy and this persistent exercise had given him strength. He had a tremendous appetite and ate a couple of dozen rolls at a meal. "You'll eat your family out of house and home," Tien-pao used to say to him.

Liu was fond of singing classical operas, especially the heroine's parts. People's flesh simply crept when he began humming.

The snow was falling steadily. The air was so thick with it that it hung like a veil over the distant hills and woods, blurring their outlines. Further away there spread a white screen of fog, embracing heaven and earth, hiding everything from the human eye.

In the mess the train crew were all a-bustling, stamping their feet and brushing snow from their shoulders. Those who had come in earlier had already finished their meal and fallen sound asleep. In the kitchen stood a Korean woman in white garments, with her sleeping child in faded swaddling-clothes strapped to her back. She had just finished cooking and was waiting the word to fetch the rice.

Getting a basin of water from the attendant, Wu Tien-pao began to wash his face. With his padded coat draped over his shoulders, he looked like a magpie splashing water. The clear water soon became black with mud.

"Hey, Tien-pao, what are you going around in a red vest like that for?" Liu said.

"I'm wearing it because I've got it. I know, you're jealous because it was knitted by my sweetheart."

"You're always talking about that sweetheart of yours," someone put in. "What sort of a girl is she really?"

"She's all right, don't you worry. There's not another girl like her under the sun."

"If your girl's face was covered with pock-marks, you'd just think they were beauty spots," said Liu, with a grin.

Having done their washing, the crew started to eat. But Liu Fu-sheng did not bother about washing or eating. Striking his huge palm against the rice bags, he said, "If I keep on training like this for a few days, I'll be able to tackle any enemy with my bare hands."

"Want to have a wash, comrade?" asked the mess steward, smiling.

"What's the use of doing that? Give me some rice, and that'll be enough. My face needs feeding, not washing."

Putting away the food, they joked and laughed without realizing that they had woken up a driver. He was called Pien Yu-chun. His face

was ruddy, his eyes big, quiet and proud. He sat up, throwing off his overcoat and staring at the diners as he lit a cigarette.

"Is the brick bed cold?" the mess steward asked him solicitously. "Why don't you get some more sleep?"

"Sleep!" Pien snorted. "How can anyone sleep with all this din?"

Liu Fu-sheng picked up something from a dish, letting the sauce drip on the hand of Pien sitting next to him. Ignoring his neighbour's protests, Liu said to Pien angrily: "Who do you think you are? Has everybody got to keep his mouth shut just for your sake?"

Seeing both Pien and Liu getting angry, and afraid that a quarrel might split the unity of the men, the steward hastened to introduce Pien to them. "Comrades, this is Comrade Pien Yu-chun," he began smiling. "He crossed the Yalu River together with the Chinese People's Volunteers and he was the first man to drive a locomotive from China into Korea. He's had a lot of experience and he's always glad to pass it on to newcomers."

Pien looked up at the ceiling and sat quietly swinging his legs. Full of his own importance, he pretended to be taking no notice. Actually, of course, he was watching intently and listening carefully.

"An old hand, eh?" Tien-pao said to Pien with a friendly smile. "We're just worrying about running trains under wartime conditions. Can you give us any tips?"

"To tell you the truth, I haven't got much to tell," Pien answered casually, but his face and voice softening, "except that as I came here earlier, so I have had a harder time of it, that's all."

When Pien got to Korea, the detachment hadn't crossed the Chinese frontier. Occasionally Chinese trains pulled up to bring food and munitions to the Chinese People's Volunteers. No one could tell where a train might be when an air-raid took place. The cold didn't worry them, but shortage of food had been a real problem. There was no oil or vegetables and they had to be content with kaoliang and salt-water provided by the stations at which they happened to stop.

Apart from enemy aircraft, tunnels were also a headache for the railwaymen. One night, crossing a hilly area, Pien went through twenty-one tunnels on a train, as an assistant driver. The longest one was over 3 kilometres in length. In the middle of it the air was so suffocating with black smoke that he had to cover his mouth with a wet towel. But in no time the towel was boiling hot and Pien had to pour cold water over it. Then the fireman fainted on the job. The train was climbing a stiff grade and needed a steady supply of coal. Pien dragged the fireman aside but no sooner had he taken over than his head began to swim. He wanted to vomit, but nothing came out of his empty stomach. Then a piercing pain shot through his head, and with a flop he fell unconscious on the floor.

When he came to, he found his head dipped in a water box. This was a stroke of luck, for if it hadn't been so, he wouldn't have come to at all. Looking up, he saw that the driver, sprawling to one side, had also lost consciousness. The train, like an unbridled horse, had wormed its way out of the tunnel and was tearing downhill. At the end of the slope, a bridge stretched over a river which lay scores of feet below. If the train was not braked in time, it would certainly fall into the stream.

Pien was in a cold sweat but he had the presence of mind to get up and jam on the brakes, bringing the train to a sudden halt at the head of the bridge.

Liu Fu-sheng listened to Pien's story with such rapt attention that he forgot his meal. He sat staring at Pien with his mouth open and asked, "The men weren't suffocated, I hope?"

"No," Pien said. "If they had been, I wouldn't be here now. But they certainly had a narrow escape. I saved them only by mustering all my energy dousing them with bucketsful of cold water. We were sent to a Korean hospital from the first station we reached. It was quite a few days before I was fit again."

"I don't give a damn about enemy planes," Liu said, slapping his thigh, "but tunnels are the death of me."

"Well, a fall in the pit, a gain in the wit," said Pien. "Now we know we must have plenty of cold water, wet towels, garlic heads and vinegar on before we go into a tunnel."

"Are there any good ways of dealing with enemy planes?" Wu Tien-pao asked.

For some time Pien gazed up at the ceiling, smoking and turning the question over in his mind.

"Well, the important thing is not to get scared," he answered. "Once an enemy plane caught us. We kept going through a hail of bullets until we got to a cave. The engine was damaged in several places, but not seriously. Later on, I put on speed whenever we were attacked by a plane. To stop running is to ask for trouble, because stationary targets are the easiest to hit and to hit hard. You know, bullets somehow lose their force when they hit a train that's moving."

"That's perfectly true," Tien-pao said with a grin. "It's no good to be taken in by the enemy's tricks. He'll send up flares, just to frighten you. The first time you see them you panic and don't dare to go ahead."

"That's it," Pien echoed. "In the beginning I thought that the enemy had some way of being able to see the engines down below. So I got scared every time I saw a flare. I didn't realize that it was only to frighten people. So long as the plane is not right over your head, you can keep going, and it can not do you any harm. Now all the train crew count on the enemy's flares to give them light. They light up the whole sky so the train crew wash their clothes by them and read their letters from home."

"I don't care what you say," Liu Fu-sheng said, putting down his chopsticks, "I'm fed up with this business of being attacked by the enemy all the time."

"What? Do you want to run away?" Tien-pao asked.

"Who wants to run away?" Liu growled, staring at Tien-pao. "I want to join an anti-aircraft unit. The thought of just waiting for the enemy to hit you makes me furious."

"Go on, you're talking nonsense!" Tien-pao said. "It'd break your heart if you were ordered to leave your engine."

The meal over, the crew huddled together to get some sleep, with their clothes on. They put their padded coats on their shoes and made them into pillows.

A cat squatted in front of the brick bed, its eyes shut, purring away like an old monk at his prayers.

"You're having a good time, all right," Liu muttered. Then, stretching his legs, he murmured, "Tien-pao, you know it's New Year's Day tomorrow. Let's have a party after we've had some sleep." He fell asleep as soon as his head touched the "pillow," and started snoring loud enough to be heard four or five rooms off.

The New Year really was coming. Without some sort of entertainment, Tien-pao thought, people might easily get homesick. He had a knack of amusing people. Ever since they had come to Korea, the crew had been living a hard life. To divert their attention from their hardships, Tien-pao had found all sorts of ways and means of cheering them up. Picking up a shell case as they were going along, he would beat it to the rhythm of a *yangko* dance. Or cutting up a gourd, he would invent some game to play with the pieces, and whoever lost had to bray like a donkey.

"You've as full of tricks as a monkey," Liu once said to him.

When Liu compared Wu to a monkey, he was referring to more than his playfulness. Like a monkey, Tien-pao was amazingly agile and loved climbing heights. Wandering in the woods, he'd climb up a tree in a twinkling, perch on the branches, and lazily swinging his legs, would play on the harmonica. People admired him most for his being the author of the following episode.

To the crew running trains on the battlefield, the moon always constituted a great threat. The trains were most exposed when the moon shone brightly in the sky. On moonlight nights Liu would curse the moon for being a spy.

"What's the use of cursing the moon," Tien-pao laughed. "You should strive to conquer nature, not just curse it."

"No use shouting at me!" Liu said crossly. "How can anyone get hold of the moon and keep it from coming out of the clouds?"

"Couldn't you pull it down and tuck it away if it comes out?" Tien-

pao laughed, glancing up and half-closing his eyes. "Or put up a screen to keep away the moonlight?"

This, of course, was mere joking. But Wu Tien-pao really did something like that one night when attacked by the enemy planes in bright moonlight. Tien-pao quickly opened the exhaust and spread such a screen of black smoke that all the enemy's bullets went wide of the mark.

Tien-pao was very good at cheering people up. But he was at his wits' end with Yu Liong Tai who had recently joined his crew as a guide. As the Chinese crew were not familiar with the Korean railway lines and as the trains had to run in the dark, a Korean comrade could help a lot in adjusting the speed when they come to slopes.

Wu Tien-pao simply couldn't understand Yu the first time they met. Yu was lean and bony and his face was blank as a wall, except that he blinked his wild eyes from time to time. "Who could have any faith in this sort of person?" Tien-pao wondered. However, Yu rarely made a mistake and worked with great vigour.

It wasn't till later that a Korean driver told Wu Tien-pao: "You should have seen how lively he used to be! He hasn't been the same man since an enemy raid in Sinuiju wiped out his whole family. After the raid was over, people raked about in the ruins of his home and found nothing except his son's little navy cap. When the news reached him, he went to the hill and wept. He's never smiled since."

Tien-pao understood Yu better after this and seized every chance to make up to him, hoping to share his sorrows. He would drag him along to see the crew dancing or to listen to stories. Yu appreciated his intention, and would stay a while with him. But before long he would go away to sit in a lonely corner, quietly smoking the yellow tobacco which he rolled in bits of old newspaper.

Wu Tien-pao would sit by him, pat his shoulders and say: "Don't worry now. What's the good of worrying all the time? You must think more about the future. Things are better today than they were yesterday, and tomorrow they'll be better still. The enemy may destroy our homes, but they can never destroy our future."

"I'm not worrying; I'm just writhing with fury," Yu said under his breath, lowering his head. "You don't know how much I want to go to the front and fight these invaders."

The mess-room was very warm. Everyone had gone to sleep except Yu, who smoked on in silence. Wu Tien-pao stopped urging him to go to sleep after his first efforts came to nothing.

Wu Tien-pao was too excited to sleep. A cockroach was bold enough to worm its way into his collar, causing terrible irritation. He took it out and turned on his back, gazing up at the beam on which a Chinese verse was painted:

Built an eternal palace

With seasoned timbers from a thousand hills;
Beget a line of worthy sons and grandsons
Who will win fame and fortune.
*Thus blessed by the three luminaries in the heavens,**
You will enjoy all the happiness a man can claim on earth.

This verse written in the traditional Chinese style suddenly reminded Tien-pao of his sister's little house. Every new year, his brother-in-law used to ask somebody to put down some such propitious verses on pieces of red paper. Then he would climb up a ladder to paste them on the beams. Their exact wording he couldn't recollect; but then he had forgotten so many things. For instance, he could remember nothing about his father and mother, and only a little about his sister and her husband. One thing, however, was still vivid in his memory: the Japanese arrest of his brother-in-law for working for the Allied Anti-Japanese Army. He could still see the kaoliang shoots, then growing taller day by day, when the Japanese took his brother-in-law away, and set fire to his house. Finally he died in prison, and his wife worried herself to death. Thus Tien-pao was left alone to wander from place to place.

How he had grown up he could not tell. One thing was certain, however, that he had somehow managed to grow up. Perhaps it was just because he had had to blaze a path for himself from his childhood onward that he had become so clever and daring. Herding pigs for a landlord at eleven, he ran about the streets in a threadbare cotton coat in winter, and without a rag to his back in summer. Most boys of that age wouldn't dare to leave their mothers for a minute, but he, year in and year out, from dawn till dusk, roamed the distant hills and wild dales.

He was never plagued by worries for he always knew how to amuse himself. He could keep watch over a bean plant for a long while just to enjoy the pleasure of seeing its leaves slowly unfolding themselves. He had such a knack of mimicking birds' song that real birds in the trees would cock their heads to listen. When the willow branches were pliant and green in spring, he would cut twigs and make whistles out of them. In his hands reeds became flutes. Putting leaves to his mouth, he could tune melodies in many keys.

As soon as the sun was set, he would drive his herd of pigs home with an uneasy mind. He was afraid of the landlord who had a strange way of checking on his work. He would stretch out his hand to feel the pigs' bellies one after another. Whenever he found a pig whose belly was not round and full, the landlord would curse him and make him go without supper. "You little bastard," he screamed. "Don't you try to starve my pigs to death. If you don't let them eat, I won't let you either."

"Things'll change for the better when I've grown up," he consoled

*Meaning the sun, the moon and the stars.

YANG KO-YANG: Rafting on the River

himself on such occasions though he was burning with anger. Day and night, he longed to grow up, so that no one would dare to bully him any more.

At long last he found himself a grown man. Meanwhile, he had roved from the country into the towns, plunging from one trade into another, from herding pigs to driving carts and to running trains. Whenever he was unhappy, he would say to himself, "Wait and see. The future belongs to me!"

Yet for a long time the future perspective remained vague and distant. His vision was blurred until the Chinese Communist Party came to his aid. Leading him to the right path and pointing out the right direction, the Party for the first time opened his eyes to his future.

As the saying goes, a man depends upon his parents at home and upon his friends abroad. But Wu Tien-pao had never had a home; he found himself feeling at home only when he was led on by the Party.

Such were the thoughts rushing through Tien-pao's sleepy mind. A cockroach crept on to his head and slid down the shock of hair hanging over his forehead. He brushed it off and at last fell asleep.

A smile passed over his face as Yao Chih-lan's slim figure drifted through his dream. Vaguely he thought: "What is she doing now? The year is out—a happy new year to her!"

IX

Yao Chih-lan went to Achimani's to spend the New Year's Eve. Saddened by Young Chu's recent departure, Chih-lan had wanted to stay in and spend the evening by herself. But Kang Mum Jai arrived before it was quite dark and insisted on taking her home. So there she went.

It had been snowing for several days and the sky was just beginning to clear. The golden rays of the setting sun filtered down through the clouds, casting a purple light on the hills to the east. The birds chirped in the pine woods on the slope, as they flitted from one branch to another, gently shaking down the snowflakes covering the pine needles.

A group of little girls were playing on the threshing ground in front of Achimani's house. They had swept the snow away and had set a board across a bundle of hay. On one end of the board a girl stood. Then one of the other girls jumped into the air and landing on the empty end of the seesaw would send her playmate flying to the sky. They were rollicking and gay. Achimani's house was filled with a happy bustle. In the kitchen, knives and ladles were clattering. From time to time the sound of laughter escaped from Wu Chen's room. From the voices Yao Chih-lan could tell that the guests were An Kiu Won, Commander

of the Korean Railway Workers' Regiment, and Choi, a director of the Korean railways bureau.

Chih-lan and Kang Mum Jai came to a halt in the courtyard and stood arm in arm, wondering whether they should go further. Suddenly Old Pao, the cook, put his head out of the kitchen, screaming shrilly: "Yao Chih-lan, you little devil. So you've come at last!"

"Come in, quick. You've come just in time," said Wu Chen, pushing the door open and waving to them. "You're in luck. Dinner is almost ready."

It turned out that a lot of gifts for the troops—chickens, pork, wine, and gift bags—had just arrived from every part of China. Words in praise of the Chinese People's Volunteers' heroism were embroidered on the bags in red and green thread. The gifts had come in good time and had been distributed without delay to the various units, for the New Year. And it was to celebrate the New Year that Wu Chen had invited An and Choi to dinner.

The two girls entered Wu's room. The presence of the guests made them ill at ease. They went to sit in a corner, where they whispered and giggled to each other.

An Kiu Won, as brisk, dapper, and eloquent as ever, was holding forth about China, his favourite topic. (He was once a member of the Korean Volunteers Detachment and fought in China during the war of resistance against Japanese. He also took part in China's Third Revolutionary Civil War.) Once this topic was introduced, his thoughts turned to the remote past. The clock seemed to be pushed back and the years to fall away. He told how regardless of season and weather, he and his Chinese comrades, rifles in hand, big straw hats on their heads and straw shoes on their feet, singing the "Eighth Route Army's March," fought back and forth in the mountains of Taihang, Yunchung, and Taching. Not knowing much of the Chinese language, Choi couldn't grasp it in all its details. Though inspired by An's eloquence, he could do nothing but finger his glasses and look on, smiling.

In the kitchen Old Pao's roaring drowned out all the other voices. The old cook, anxious to show off to Wu's guests, was using up all the gifts from home in one single meal. This was typical of him: open-handed, he never took trouble about money matters. And as a big feast took time to prepare, Old Pao had become impatient with himself. He was shouting and swearing at Ta Luan for being a nuisance while turning down Achimani's offers of help.

Achimani, of course, didn't take him seriously. Old Pao might go on shouting as he pleased, but nothing could stop her from helping. What could one do with a woman like her? She was quiet and patient, always wearing a tender, sad look. The moment you took your eyes from her, she would wash your clothes and clean your rice before you could stop her. This being the Chinese People's Volunteers' first

New Year in Korea, she had made up her mind to give a good dinner to Wu Chen and his Chinese associates. Working late into the night, she had ground kidney beans into flour with a hand-mill. And early that morning, she had cooked a pot of glutinous rice. Laying the rice out on a slab of green stone, she asked Ta Luan to help her pound it with a wooden pestle.

"She thinks she's going to make flour-cakes to entertain us," Wu Chen smiled to himself. "Well, I know how to manage her." He thought he could upset her plan by inviting her to a drink.

The dinner was ready. Achimani came into Wu's room, closed the window, lit a candle and laid the table. The first course, much to Wu's surprise, consisted of flour-cakes with a filling of ground kidney beans, sugar and pickled cabbage. This was exactly what Achimani had been preparing before she had her drink. In spite of all the gifts of chicken and pork, she insisted on contributing her share.

"Eat up the cakes or she will be offended," An Kiu Won said, smiling at Wu Chen. "You know we Koreans have one complaint about you volunteers. You're all right in every way except that you're rather slow in accepting other people's hospitality." All the dishes being set out on the table, the diners sat down. Wu poured wine into everybody's cup and raising his own, he said loudly, his face beaming, "Comrades, the third campaign has just been launched!" Everyone present clapped his hands in joy. "The Chinese volunteers and the people's army of China and Korea," he continued, "have already dealt two terrific blows at the enemy who is carrying out aggression against the whole world. Let's drink to our victory in the third campaign!"

The news at once keyed Yao Chih-lan up to a high pitch of excitement. She felt she was once more working out ways of getting Wu's order through as she had done two nights before. She was glad that she had done her bit towards getting the ammunition to the front. That bit was quite small, it was true, but every little helped.

Kangkunni looked gay that evening in a cotton jacket of pale lilac cloth, with a grey waist-coat over it. He danced about at his mother's heels.

"Have you made a happy-new-year bow to your volunteer-grandpa?" Wu Chen took hold of him and asked him.

The boy looked to his mother uncertainly, sucking his thumb. Then with a solemn dignity, he bowed to Wu thrice, his fingers clasped together, his palms touching the ground.

"What a funny little chap!" Wu laughed. "He can imitate whatever he sees people doing. You see, he is doing gymnastics."

"No, he was making happy-new-year bows to you," said Kang Mum Jai, bursting into a laugh.

"O I didn't know that," Wu said half-jokingly, his eyes wide open. Then he turned to Achimani and said, trying to give the boy a scare:

"Please give your son to me when I go back. I'll take him to China and give him a Chinese name."

"What name will you give me?" asked the child, quite unafraid. "How about Wu?" Wu Chen said. "Don't criticize me," he continued laughing, "if I ask what is the surname of Achimani's husband. We don't know yet in spite of our long stay here."

"His name is Kang," Yao Chih-lan put in. "What else could it be?"

"No," Achimani said with a smile. "His name was Yun."

"Yun?" Chih-lan said, puzzled. Looking at Kang, she went on: "Then how could his sister have the surname of Kang?"

"We're not really the same family," Kang said, her eyes moist, scarcely able to hold back her tears. "I used to live with an old uncle before I came here. The American invaders took uncle away and I was left alone. So I came to live with Achimani. She took me in as if I were a member of the family."

This sort of thing occurred in many parts of Korea. Members of different families, men or women, old or young, came together and set up household to take care of each other. Tragic though this was, it brought such war refugees nearer and dearer to each other, in the face of their common destiny.

Under the influence of the wine, the guests grew more and more enthusiastic, and eager to open up their hearts.

Choi's white clean-shaven face was flushed with wine. Now holding Wu's hands, now putting his arm round his shoulder, all he wanted was to give expression to his love and admiration for the volunteers. As he could not speak Chinese, he took a pen to write: "The volunteers are rare troops in all times!"

An Kiu Won looked particularly handsome that evening, his dark eyes shining with joy. He was very tricky in the matter of drinking. He invited Wu to drink and when Wu had drunk his cup to the dregs, An put down his without having touched it.* Immediately he turned to Choi and engaged him in conversation as if nothing had happened. When Wu repeatedly urged him to drink, he pretended not to understand him, blinking his eyes and shaking his head, as though he had suddenly forgotten all his Chinese. When Wu would not let him get away with this, he created a diversion. Clapping his hands and looking towards Yao Chih-lan, he said: "Come on, sing a song for us!"

To escape singing, Yao Chih-lan got up and tried to run away. But An, jumping out of his chair, stretched out his battle-scarred hand to stop her, saying: "I'm the regimental commander and I order you to sing!"

Yao Chih-lan put out her tongue in embarrassment, smiled, then hid

*According to the drinking etiquette common in Korea and China, one tries to make one's friends drink as much as possible, while drinking as little as possible oneself.

her face in her hands. "Will you be an angel and sing instead of me?" she entreated Kang.

Kang Mum Jai would willingly have sung long before then if she had been asked to. Now, sweeping her hair back and looking away, she began to sing a song with the odd title: "Here comes that dirty dog!"

This was a folk song very popular all over Korea. Its proper title was "Song of Kato Kiyomasa." Kato Kiyomasa was a Japanese general who had conquered Korea many years before. The song began as if it were meant to be one of praise of the Japanese general, with the line "Here comes Kato Kiyomasa." When transliterated into Korean, however, the line meant "Here comes that dirty dog!"

While Kang was singing, An rose and danced to the tune, his slim body swaying, his arms waving up and down and back and forth. He signalled to Kang, inviting her to dance.

After a few moments' hesitation, Kang got to her feet and danced with An. To keep time, Achimani fetched a copper-basin of water with a copper-bowl floating in it. She had flung a silver ring into the bowl and covered it with a piece of gourd. When beaten with a broom-stick, from under the gourd there came a sound with a clear, metallic ring.

An and Kang danced on blithely to this simple music. Their movements represented hunters drawing bows and shooting arrows, or dragonflies rising and dipping over the water.

The room was so crammed with the people who had come to see the performance that the air became sultry and suffocating. Under the influence of the wine, Yao Chih-lan felt intolerably hot and stifled. So she slipped away unnoticed.

In the yard the air was refreshing. Chih-lan was taking off her cap to wipe away the sweat on her forehead when a voice came out of the dark: "Take care not to catch cold."

Her heart jumped with surprise. "Oh, it's Commander Wu," she said, recovering her calm. "When did you come out?"

"Just a while ago. It was too hot in there and I wanted some fresh air," Wu said. "What's the matter with you today? You're not happy, are you?"

"Why, I'm enjoying the party thoroughly," Chih-lan said.

"Don't try to hide it from me. I've got eyes to see for myself," Wu told her quietly as if he had probed into her soul. "Young Chu was hurt in an air-raid and has been sent home. You're worrying about her, aren't you? Ah, well, you're still young, and need more steeling. Even if she got killed, the survivors have the duty to carry on the struggle. Many good comrades have received wounds, fallen and laid down their lives before our eyes. Yet what would be the use of grieving over their death? Tears are not the thing to commemorate them with; the right thing is to go on fighting."

Now and again lights blazed up in the southern sky. Yet no sound broke the great silence of the night. What was the enemy up to?

"Oh yes, tonight our people are putting the Chongchon bridge to the test," Wu said remembering, looking to the south. "Please ring up your father for me."

X

At the moment when Wu Chen was talking to Yao Chih-lan, the first fully loaded train slowly climbed onto the bridge and crossed the Chongchon River.

"Am I driving all right?" the driver shouted, poking out his head from the window.

"Fine!" answered Yao Chang-keng who was squatting on the southern bank. Then he wiped his mouth and said to the bystanders, "This is the happiest day of my life." If there had been a light one would have seen a soft smile dancing on his usually stony face.

In this wave of rejoicing it was pleasant to recall the past hardships and frustrations. He remembered how once a doctor had come to the bridge to look into hygiene conditions. "Do you wash your feet everyday?" the doctor had asked.

"Yes, of course; we even have a bath everyday," a young fellow with a square face and big ears answered aptly.

This young fellow, Li Chun-san by name, was a character of absorbing interest. What he said to the doctor was only too true. The bridge was not very far away from the Yellow Sea. Every morning and evening the tide flowed into the river, rushing over the ice. The water on the ice came up to a man's knees and, compared with the river water, was quite warm. But that still did not make it really warm. The workers driving piles in the water were chilled to the bone. If one of them slipped and fell into the water and got drenched through, in the twinkling of an eye, he would find himself covered with ice. The men, after finishing their work in the morning, couldn't help smiling at each other with their puffed-up eyes.

"Hullo, you've grown fat overnight!" one man would say.

"You've got nothing to laugh about, your beard's turned grey too," would be the answer.

After a night's work their faces would be swollen, their brows and beards covered with frost. On their way back they could move only with difficulty because their clothes were all stiff with ice. Even for those who hadn't been in the water it was a trying experience to have their clothes covered by a thin layer of ice. Back in camp, they would dry their clothes over a fire. Then they went to sleep with their half-dried clothes on.

Yao Chang-keng once blamed them for doing this. Sleeping with wet clothes on, he said, could easily make you ill.

"What else can we do?" Li Chun-san said, gesticulating. "If the fire doesn't dry them in time for us to wear them in the evening, at least the warmth of our bodies will."

Korea was then in severe winter, and there was frost and snow night after night. The cold was piercing. As a rule, the men got their clothes dried by dusk, only to be wet through again after a night's work on the bridge. But no complaints ever escaped their lips; from the bridge came nothing but roars of laughter and the sound of the happy chorus they sang while driving piles into the river-bed.

Li Chun-san's voice always rose above the rest. Wherever he went he was like a fire, warming everything up around him. He was best of all at making up verses. Whenever the mood came to him he would stop working to compose, beating time with his shovel:

Work, work, work,
Put your shoulders to the wheel,
We're fighting the invaders
In our work on this bridge;

or,

The main forces rely on bayonets,
And we rely on repair work on the bridge.

Thus verse after verse would roll from his lips to prove his wittiness.

"How many books have you read to be able to compose poetry so easily?" someone asked him.

"Oh, not so many," Li answered. "You can do it so long as you've a few ideas in your head, and think up the words to put them into rhymes. Books aren't really much help. Even a college student, for all his book-learning, may not be able to do it so well."

Li Chun-san had a habit of talking disjointedly. He took it for granted that whatever was clear to him must be clear to everybody else, and he would make obscure references in the middle of a conversation which left his listeners quite puzzled. When he saw somebody slacking on the job, for example, he would say to him mysteriously: "Why do you follow in the footsteps of Che Chang-chieh, of all people?"

The man he addressed, not knowing Che, couldn't make head or tail of this. When asked to explain, Li Chun-san would say, "Che is Che; who else could he be?"

Li had a very low opinion of Che. Slow and taciturn, Che was decidedly odd-looking. He had thick ears, and sometimes he could pass a whole day without uttering a single word. He wouldn't even make a sound if he got bruised or cut, but would quietly suck the wounded part.

But as soon as they set out for the bridge in the night, Che would

become quite useless. Clinging hold of your coat, he would urge you to drag him along. If you refused him, he would stop dead in his tracks. He wouldn't dare to move a step further, as though a ghost was awaiting him ahead. On the bridge he would fumble at his work with a curious inefficiency. People thought him honest but incapable, a man without much in the way of brains.

"Honest? Not on your life," Li Chun-san said.

For some days, Yao Chang-keng had kept an eye on Che. Nothing seemed to be wrong with him except the curse of stupidity. For the time being Yao asked him to dig, which was comparatively light work.

Digging in winter, however, was not so easy as one might imagine. The harsh, yellow earth, packed with small stones, was frozen hard. Even the strong ones couldn't dig up a handful of earth at a time. After an evening's hard work, the skin between the thumb and forefinger would be raw and the palms of the hand would be full of bloody blisters. As the old blisters healed, new ones appeared.

Under such circumstances, the work made only sluggish progress while the men suffered greatly. This is no good, Yao Chang-keng thought. He cudgeled his brains and hit on a solution. As the ground had cracked open here and there with the frost, he told his men to make use of these cracks. By forcing their hoes into them and then pulling them up, they succeeded in digging up big lumps of earth. But who could see the cracks in the earth in the dark, when he could hardly see his own fingers in front of his face? Lights were out of the question. What could they do then? They soon worked something out. They threw handfuls of snow to mark out the cracks in the daytime and happily worked away by night, the surface of the icy ground sparkling under the blows of the hoes.

But to everybody's annoyance, Che Chang-chieh, wittingly or unwittingly, dug all over the place, his hoe falling wide of the line marked out by the snow.

"Have you gone blind?" a hot-tempered fellow yelled. "Why don't you dig in the right places?"

In a panic, Che let his hoe fall right on the fellow's cotton-padded trousers; it sunk right into the cotton padding, but without ripping the inner lining. Wasn't he making trouble on purpose? A lot of people became furious and asked Yao to punish him.

Yao had a talk with Che and tried to find out what he was up to. But no matter how hard Yao tried, he couldn't get him to say anything, until, under the pressure of the questions, he finally broke down. "The trouble is I can't see," he said haltingly. "As soon as the sun sets my eyes become useless."

"You must be suffering from night-blindness," Yao said, frowning. "Why didn't you tell me earlier?"

"I was afraid that you might send me back to China," Che said,

wiping away his tears. "How can I return before the enemy is turned out of Korea?"

As a matter of fact, many people were suffering from night-blindness, owing to lack of vegetables and general malnutrition.

Yao Chang-keng wanted to leave Che at camp to do any work that came his way. But as he insisted upon going to the bridge, he was assigned to the air-raid observation post. Perched on a high crag, he would give warning by firing his pistol when any enemy planes were spotted.

Enemy planes were troublesome; so were spies. Whenever enemy planes came over, signal flares would soar in the direction of the bridge. Sometimes the spies set the surrounding woods ablaze. In the dark night, the flames would climb up and down the mountain ridges, spreading a haze of smoke over the mountains beyond.

"There must be saboteurs around this place," Yao pondered. "Otherwise, we wouldn't receive so much attention from the enemy." He picked out a dozen strong young fellows and sent them out scouting in all directions. Whenever signal flares appeared, they opened fire in the direction from which they were shot. And in a matter of days, they drove away the spies hidden in that area.

Late one night, Yao Chang-keng was directing his men to stack straw bags at the northern end of the bridge, when suddenly three signal flares rose whistling out of a ditch. "You spies just wait," Yao cursed. "I'll change my name if I don't catch you." Taking out his seven-chamber revolver he quietly led Li Chun-san and some others to make a circuit; forming a ring around the ditch, they lay there motionless until daybreak. Then they slowly closed in. The snow had melted and remnants of last year's crops came in view, but not a single soul was seen.

"That's funny!" Li Chun-san said, scratching the back of his neck. "The spy must have hidden himself here, where could he have gone?"

Yao said nothing. Knitting his brows, he looked around and stamped his feet against the ground here and there. Following him, Li raised his bayonet and poked it into the ground. All of a sudden, the bayonet sank deep into a muddy hole.

"Here's a hole in the ground!" Li cried out.

Sure enough, there was a cave covered with layers of straw and earth, with a big stone blocking the entrance. It could easily escape notice unless examined carefully.

Presently a man was hauled out of the cave. He had unkempt hair, about four inches long, hanging from the temples down to the jaws. Holding a small mattress under his arm, glaring at them angrily, he said, "What the hell do you want? I'm a trader in mattresses."

They made a search of the cave but found no arms. They must

have been buried somewhere underground. Yao sent a guard to take the spy to the district government.

A few days later Li Chun-san dropped into the district government on his way to a fair. The government people told him that the spy they had turned over was a landlord in north Korea who, after murdering seven members of the Workers' Party, had fled with the Americans. Then he had been parachuted back into north Korea and been hiding himself in a cave by day and coming out for disruptive activities at night. His activities had covered a wide range. It was he who had fired signal flares during the enemy's last raid on the detachment's telephone office. Whenever the enemy planes droned like mad without dropping bombs, the government people added, they were about to drop spies.

As the repair of the bridge had become pressing and night work could yield only poor results, Yao and his men went to work by day. Che, willing to stay on at the air-raid observation post, insisted upon joining them. Wearing his cotton coat inside out, which had a white lining to serve as camouflage in the snowy field, he worked furiously with all the others. Even Li Chun-san couldn't beat him.

It was people like Li and Che who, with sweat and blood, restored the bridge. And if to repair it was hard, to defend it was no easier. Any moment the enemy planes might come to try and destroy it. In order to meet any emergency in time, Yao and his men decided to remain near the bridge.

The allied forces of China and Korea finally broke through the enemy line at the 38th parallel. Like a flash, the news of the liberation of Seoul came to the men on the bridge. They were filled with joy. But the news also made them anxious to march forward. Things were moving fast.

"If everybody goes forward, who'll take care of this bridge?" Yao asked placidly. "Our superiors have told us time and again that this bridge is our life-line. Only by securing this bridge can we hope to secure victory. Don't make light of our work here, comrades, we're fighting enemy just as people at the front."

This, of course, was clear enough. Every bit of work helped fight the enemy. In their slang, to dig up a piece of hard frozen earth was to take an enemy fort, and to carry a straw-bag of earth was to capture an enemy POW. When the bridge was hit by bombs, Li Chun-san would roll up the sleeves of his cotton coat and yell: "Come on, comrades, let's launch a counter-offensive."

These men could bear all sorts of hardships and difficulties, but they were furious about enemy planes' wanton bombing.

At that time, enemy planes were running wild. They flew low, just over the top of the hills and down to the same height as the telegraph poles; sometimes the pilots popped their heads out and glanced down.

"To hell with those devils!" Li shouted, stamping his foot.

Somebody fired at one of the planes. Taken by surprise, it took flight.

Everybody thought it must be Li Chun-san who had done it. But the one who emerged out of a ditch, with a gun in his hand and shaking dust from his trousers, was none other than Che.

Yao had quartered his men in a little mountain village a few miles away from the bridge, leaving only one man at the observation post. One night, after lying down and shutting his eyes, he was thinking over the latest enemy raids. For a long while he tossed about, unable to get a wink of sleep. All of a sudden, there was a tremendous din. It sounded like the beating of drums. In astonishment, he flung his coat on and went out.

Outside people were exclaiming, "Come out, quick. It's beautiful. Better than new year's fireworks." Amidst all the noise a string of red balls rose from beyond the bridge, spreading out a network of fire. In the centre of the network anti-aircraft shells burst, shedding a flood of light. But no plane was in sight. Everybody strained his eyes peering at the sky. Suddenly blades of bright light surged up from below, sweeping back and forth across the sky. At last a plane came into sight and all the searchlights quickly converged upon it. The plane, translucent and silvery, now looked like a moth fluttering about a light. The anti-aircraft guns below roared forth a hail of shells.

All Yao's men had come out. They looked on, clapping their hands as if at a performance.

"It's down," said a man with a child-like voice. The plane had been hit. Its tail caught fire and its wings shook violently. Down it fell like a drunkard losing his balance. Then it steadied itself and whining over their heads, fled towards the Yellow Sea.

Spring had come. Although the hills and dales were still covered with snow, spring was peeping through. The wind had become damp and was no longer chilly. The bark of the apple trees had worn a light purple and become more and more glistening every day. Ashy grey shoots had come out on the branches.

But for Yao Chang-keng, spring only brought fresh worries. With the falling of the spring rain, a big flood was to be expected. Would the Chongchon bridge be able to stand the test?

The spring rain was heralded, as a rule, by sleet. Snow fell, half mixed with rain and then grew into a steady downpour for a night and a day. The ice in the river began to break, floating up and surging towards the piles of the bridge. The rain stopped the next day and the snow melted all over the place. The water overflowed, rising to the level of the bridge, sweeping the ice violently down the river.

The flood rolled and surged, ice floes tossed and tumbled, jostling against each other. Yao ordered six men to stand on each set of floating

sleepers, holding poles with ice-axes attached to them and trying to steer the ice away from the wooden piles of the bridge. Some of the ice floes escaped them and crashed against the bridge. Some people went white with fear.

All their labour was of no avail, however, when the rush of the tide again brought the ice floes back into the river. The river became so packed with ice that some floes were driven up against the bridge and stood up like swords. At times, some were even crowded on to the bridge with enough force to kill a man.

On the third day, rows of ice floes drifted down, so big and heavy that the men could hardly steer them away. They rushed at the bridge with great force. The bridge shook and the men on it trembled. In apprehension, Yao Chang-keng sent some of his men up the river to break the ice floes with hammers and clubs before they came down to the bridge.

In the spring the ice was not so hard to break. With two or three strokes, the men could break one into pieces.

Squatting on a raft, Che hammered at the ice, his thick ears all blue with cold. Suddenly, he said, "Don't be frightened by the size of the ice floes. After all they're only dying imperialists trying to bluff people."

The word got round and everybody on the river started to call ice floes imperialists.

"My God, the arch imperialist has come!" Li Chun-san said, pointing to an ice floe, a metre thick and score of metres wide, drifting down towards them slowly and majestically. At Li's shout, the men rushed up to cope with it. But this floe was so big and heavy that they could hardly do anything about it. It blundered forward, sending the rafts whirling round and round.

Li Chun-san was afraid. It would cause great damage, he thought, if the ice floe should be allowed to crash against the bridge like this. While breaking ice, he kept on glancing at the bridge which grew bigger and higher as it drew nearer to it. The dreaded crash, it seemed, would come any minute.

At this moment, a man jumped on to the floe with a charge of explosive. It was Che Chang-chieh. Tongue-tied and foolish as he appeared, he was a man of lively intelligence and precise and quick movements. In a flash he had laid the explosive on the ice, ignited the fuse, and run back to the raft.

"It's going out," someone exclaimed in despair.

The hissing fuse got wet, and presently went out.

Casting a look at the bridge, Li boiled with rage. It stretched ahead, helplessly awaiting the crash.

Once more Che rushed on to the ice floe.

"It's too late now," Li yelled anxiously. "Don't get yourself killed!"

Late it was. The fuse was a foot long, and the ice floe would have crashed against the bridge before the explosive went off.

Ignoring Li's warning, Che ran on to the ice floe and lit the fuse, not at the end but at its root. In a flash, the ice floe burst into fragments with a great crash. The broken pieces of ice, guided by the men's long poles, drifted gently under the bridge.

When the explosion took place Che rolled off into the water. The waves surged up, gleaming white and swept him away. Everyone was worrying about him when his head popped out of the water. In a splash of snow-white foam Che swam up, shaking his head and spitting out water.

"Well, you really know a trick or two," Li Chun-san said admiringly, seizing him by the arm. "I never know that you could even swim a stroke."

XI

That day when Yao and his men were fighting their fiercest battle with the ice floes, Wu Tien-pao was driving the wounded homeward from south of Pyongyang. In the middle of the journey he took shelter in a cave south of the Chongchon River.

The fourth campaign had been on for a month, and along the banks of Han, the volunteers were fighting furiously to block the enemy's retreat. A large number of the wounded had recently arrived from the front. At first, the military director at the station hesitated to put all of them into Tien-pao's train lest it be overloaded.

"Never mind," Wu Tien-pao said, "give me all of them."

"Do you think you can manage them all?" the director asked.

"Of course, I can take even more than this," Tien-pao replied without hesitation.

"He's a real Communist worker," said a wounded soldier who heard his reply, and sighed in the dark.

"Why, comrade!" Tien-pao called out into the darkness. "I'd be ashamed of myself if I couldn't even do this much for you. You've been fighting for all of us, haven't you? Nothing would make me happier than to get you back home and on your feet again in the shortest possible time."

He took minute care in driving the train full of wounded soldiers. In his eyes, the wounded were the greatest treasure in the world. He started and stopped the train slowly so as not to cause the wounded men any pain. He drove as carefully as if he were carrying the wounded in his arms. While the train was hidden in a cave by day, Tien-pao got his crew to help the nurses to carry the wounded down to a ravine so that they could get some fresh air.

At last the wounded lay quietly under the nut trees, their faces pale. There was a strong smell of disinfectant. Now and then someone heaved a heavy breath.

One soldier, Kao Ching-yun by name, had attracted Tien-pao's attention. Kao was a boy of under twenty, with a ruddy face and clean-cut features. He would smile at anybody who looked his way as if nothing was causing him any pain. Actually, however, he was seriously wounded, being badly burnt up to the waist. With the wounds all bandaged up, he couldn't move a single step by himself.

"They must be suffering terribly, though they didn't utter a groan or cry," Tien-pao mused. "We must think up some way to amuse them." Standing on a height, his hands on his hips, Tien-pao called out: "Comrades, wouldn't you like to hear some opera? We've got an actor of nation-wide renown here who can play young lady's part. Let's invite him to sing for us!"

All the men turned their eyes in the direction Tien-pao's finger pointed and burst out laughing in spite of themselves. Standing like a brick wall in front of an oak tree was a huge fellow, broad as a barrel, brandishing his fists, evidently doing some sort of gymnastics. How could a man like him act the part of a young girl?

This, of course, was Liu Fu-sheng. Liu was a great opera-lover. He loved to sing opera, and the more bored the audience became, the more cheerfully he sang. He would keep on humming and droning away, asking people at intervals as he slapped his thigh: "What do you think of that bit, eh? Pretty good, isn't it?" Then without awaiting the answer, he would do it all over again.

Sometimes his mates, tried to the limit of endurance by his incessant singing, would plead: "Please stop now! Have mercy on us. We don't want to die in this way, you know."

"Rubbish!" Liu would retort. "You simply don't appreciate first-class singing. You've got no ear for music."

But when asked to sing before the strangers, he closed his mouth tight.

"Come on and sing," Tien-pao pressed him. "I'll stand you a dinner with fish from the Yalu River after we get back to China."

"Why pick on fish of all things?" Liu said, making a face. "Eating fish is a nuisance. You've got to separate the flesh from the bones carefully or you get hurt. Treat me to pork if you really want to stand me a dinner. There's nothing I like better than swallowing a nice juicy piece of pork."

"All right, make it pork instead of fish. Now fire away!" Tien-pao said.

"Why don't you start first? I'll go next," Liu challenged. And pointing at Wu Tien-pao, he added: "This fellow can play the Russian dances on a harmonica."

But full of curiosity, the audience insisted upon having Liu perform.

Liu raised his right hand in a salute and said: "All right, I'll sing. But first, I'll ask you a riddle. If you guess right, I'll sing as long as you like; if not, you comrades have to tell me some stories."

"Go ahead, don't waste your breath!" the wounded urged him impatiently.

Making the most horrifying grimaces, Liu stuck out his tongue and started to massage it vigorously, as if he was almost going to pull it out by the roots. "Now," he cited, "what does that mean? What place does it represent?"

The audience roared with laughter at his antics but no one had managed to guess correctly. "Come on. What is it? Out with it," came shouts from all sides.

"Why, Washington of course; washing-tongue." And once more he started making grotesque faces and gestures, with his tongue out, singing in a girlish falsetto, "washing-tongue, washing-tongue."

"All right, that's enough," said Tien-pao, slapping Liu on the shoulder and laughing.

"None of your lip!" Liu laughed. "I am making a spectacle of myself just to amuse the comrades. I'll think I've done my duty if I can distract them from their pain, even if it's only for a moment."

The wounded were all cheered up and began to talk and laugh. The air became alive. Losing no time, Liu pressed them to tell him stories.

Judging by the duration of the campaign and the forces the enemy had thrown into it, one could well imagine how fiercely the battles must have raged. Yet, strangely enough, the wounded described them with a light touch of humour as if they were mere games.

A platoon commander, badly burnt by a napalm bomb, compared fighting to fishing. "The enemy are fools," he said. "Like cat-fish, they took whatever bait they were given. Last time they launched an offensive against one of our high positions, we stopped firing in the middle of the battle and let heaps of stones roll downhill. They thought we had run short of ammunition, and rushed up to capture us. When they got half way up the hill, we opened fire again. This took them by surprise and sent them flying in panic, yelling at the top of their voices."

The nurse who was dressing Kao's wounds nodded towards her patient and said: "If you want stories, just ask him. He climbed up onto an enemy tank the other day and dragged one of them out of it by the legs."

Tien-pao looked at Kao who smiled bashfully and kept silent. As far as he could see, he had very little to say for himself. All he had done was to destroy four enemy tanks, which fell far short of his plan. He had set his heart on destroying eight; that, perhaps, would have won him the honour of going to Peking and speaking to Chairman Mao Tse-tung.

As Kao kept quiet, somebody else spoke up for him. Kao was a noted anti-tank hero, and many people knew of his exploits.

One could not hope to tell what sort of person Kao was, merely from his appearance. Quiet and shy, he always smiled at people like an innocent young girl. When he joined up, the squad leader asked him, "Why do you want to join the volunteers?" "For my mother's sake," Kao answered, his head low.

Everybody in the squad knew that Kao had been brought up by his mother throughout her long years of widowhood. When he left home for the detachment, she went some way with him in a sedan-chair carried by the villagers. No one was dearer to him than his mother. She had shared his joys as well as his sorrows from the time he was a tiny baby. And even when he was only a little boy, he would fly at anyone who dared to scold her, and bite him and kick him, shielding her with his small body if anyone dared to lift a hand against her.

After going to Korea, however, he had discovered another name which rang as dear to him as "mother." That was the word "Motherland." The motherland was the comrades' favourite topic at meals or rest times and during the intervals between fighting and training.

When fighting ceased temporarily, they would squat on the top of a hill. Producing a pinch of yellow tobacco, someone would say yearningly: "Well, let's smoke some tobacco from home." If it rained, someone would observe, looking up at the sky, "I wonder if they're getting enough rain at home this year."

At the beginning of the year, the folks at home had written a lot of letters to the volunteers. They were distributed among the companies and Kao Ching-yun got one of them. After reading it over and over again, he tucked it into his shirt pocket. After that he often sat alone brooding as if something were worrying him.

The squad leader went to him for a talk and asked, "What's wrong with you, lad?"

Kao produced his letter. It had been written by a woman and read in part:

> My son, never forget our past sufferings or our present happiness, the sufferings you shared with your mother and the happiness the Communist Party has brought to us. Put your shoulder to the wheel, do brave deeds. You should never allow anybody to trample on your old mother.

"What luck to get a letter from one's mother!" the squad leader said with envy.

"It's not from my mother," Kao explained, gazing into the distance. "I don't really know who she is. All I know is that she's a woman of our country, a mother just like my own."

Before going into a battle, he would take the letter out of his shirt

pocket and read it over and secretly pledge to it: "Don't worry, Mother! Your son'll never allow anybody to trample on you again."

With this determination he plunged into the battle on the southern bank of the Han River. To protect an important crossroads, his company had dug in, and the ground was seamed with a network of trenches. For a fortnight they held the ground against the attacks of the enemy infantry, motorized units, and tank corps. . . . From first to last, the enemy failed to move a step forward.

It was in this battle Kao got wounded.

"It was a critical moment," said Kao's nurse, beginning to tell his story. "Two enemy tanks rumbled towards Kao, their guns blazing. He had thrown two anti-tank grenades at them and had destroyed one of them. But another tank came up from the flank. Kao had run out of anti-tank grenades by now and the tank was gaining on him. With one bound he was up on the tank, trying to force open the turret and throw a hand grenade into it.

"But it was closed tight and for all his efforts, he couldn't open it. The guns on the tank turned and Kao turned round with them. At last the enemy had to open the turret because it had become filled with smoke. Kao thrust a hand grenade in and the tank burst into flames, shaking Kao down to the ground. He was wounded, his clothes were on fire. . . ."

"I felt at that moment that my mother and motherland were just behind me," Kao explained later, touching the letter in his pocket. "If I couldn't hold the enemy tank off them, it would rumble past them. And I simply couldn't let that happen."

Wu Tien-pao listened to the story with rapt attention. He asked Kao eagerly: "Are you glad to be going back?"

"Not particularly," Kao answered, looking up at the azure sky, a smile on his lips. "I don't mind much whether I stay or go."

"No, it'll make a world of difference," Tien-pao corrected him. "As soon as you've crossed the Yalu River, you'll see dazzling lights blazing before your eyes. Won't that be fine!" Kao smiled.

"Comrade, what do the people at the front want most?" Tien-pao asked. "Just tell us, and we'll send it up even at the risk of our lives."

"For one thing, we want more anti-tank grenades," Kao said. And then he asked: "Do you think we'll cross the border this evening?"

"Yes," Tien-pao replied. "If the Chongchon River doesn't hold us up."

It was on that dark night that Yao Chang-keng and his men conquered the ice floes while Wu Tien-pao drove the wounded volunteers towards China's frontiers at full speed. The early spring evenings were chilly and the cries of the wild geese had a sad note. The southeast wind brought to the men a smell of earth, remindful of their far off native soil. By dawn the train was running across the fields of the motherland, carrying back her sons who had shed their blood for her sake. For their

country's happiness and welfare they had shed blood and sweat, and some had even laid down their lives, without a single tear. Yet when they came back home once more and smelt the fragrance of the winter wheat in the fields, these men of iron began to weep. How deeply they loved and longed for home!

Finally, the train pulled up at a station. Tien-pao jumped down to the platform. To his great delight, he saw that there were new shoots of green grass beside the road.

XII

The grass was green again. Over Korea's one thousand miles of lovely land, the azalea and forsythia had come into flower all over the hills and dales. Brilliant red patches of azalea stretched fresh and lovely. A symbol of youth, every flower was smiling its welcome to the spring.

It was the end of April 1951. Under the western sun, a jeep sped towards the Chongchon River, sending up a cloud of yellow dust. On both sides of the highway a host of young Korean women, with white tin pots of earth on their heads, were busy doing road repairs. As the jeep passed by, they called out, "Long live the volunteers!" Running up, they threw clusters of wild lilacs in full bloom, into the car.

Wu Chen was driving, looking quietly forward, his face intent and expressionless. Though the jeep was sweeping forward at full speed, he thought it slow, in his eagerness to reach the bridge at once.

As the sun reached the middle of the western sky, the jeep got to Yao Chang-keng's place. In the village some workers, baskets over their arms and hoes in hands, were digging for wild vegetables. Some were blithely swinging on the straw-ropes attached to the forks of a nut tree.

Yao was rather surprised at Wu's sudden arrival. Only business of importance, Yao guessed, could have brought him up in a jeep in broad daylight.

It was true, Wu did have something important on his mind. He called the officers together for a meeting as soon as he arrived. Sitting by the light, Wu took out a coded telegram from his pocket. Fingering the paper, he said: "This is an order from Commander Ching. Let me read it to you: 'On the evening of April 30, huge loads of supplies will pass across the Chongchon bridge. Make sure that the bridge will cause no trouble.'"

Forgetting the bridge which Commander Ching had put under their charge, the men at once started to guess what the huge loads were. Some guessed anti-aircraft guns, others howitzers. For several months, news from the front had been equally exhilarating. The enemy had bragged about his war of attrition, but in the end it was MacArthur's troops who had been worn out.

Before the enemy could catch his breath, we started the fifth campaign. The enemy shouted in panic: "The Communist planes (meaning the people's air forces of Korea) flew in like rockets," "A hundred thousand Communist troops have crossed the wooden bridge on the Imjin River in a single night," etc., etc. When this new lot of mysterious huge loads reached the front, the officers at the meeting thought, the enemy would be thrown into an even greater panic.

Rapping the table with his knuckles, Wu said: "Enough of all this wild guessing! This is a military secret, and no one is to make any fuss about it. Let's discuss the condition of the bridge, that's more important."

Yao Chang-keng wrinkled his brows and thought. "The foundation of the bridge is not strong enough to carry the load; it must be strengthened. It's the 29th already, and by tomorrow evening all repairs will have to be completed. We must do something about the sleepers tonight."

Yao always thought with care and precision. Like a steady walker, he plodded on step by step, without haste or delay. Presently he put forward his opinions for discussion. Finally a decision was reached and men were sent to the bridge straightway.

Wu Chen was worried about a possible night raid. Fortunately, the bridge was protected by anti-aircraft guns at both ends.

Next morning Wu went to the headquarters of the anti-aircraft battalion, giving the people there an idea of their work during the coming night. From there he made his way to the bridge. On the way, he saw an anti-aircraft gun out in the field, covered with a camouflage net.

Wu Chen had heard a lot about these gunners. They and the workers were of the same mind in some ways, but differed from them in others. If no enemy planes showed up for a few days, the workers would feed well and sleep soundly; but the gunners would grow restless and worried, as if they were lovesick. "Why didn't they come?" the gunners would grumble. "Why don't they come and get some of our nice hot fresh cakes straight from the oven?" Or they would come out with a stream of curses. "All right, to hell with you. Stay away if you don't want to come. We don't care a damn."

The air on the bridge was thick with spring mist and the water in the river was clear and blue. In the shallow water several snow-white cranes stood motionless. At times they dipped their beaks into the water to catch fish. Since dark, all along the bridge the men had been busily pulling out the nails, turning over the sleepers and hammering in the nails again. For want of light, someone took off his vest and poured oil over it, making it into a torch. (If enemy planes came over they would put it into the mud and lie motionless on the ground.) So far all the piers had been strengthened except one near the bank.

When Wu Chen arrived on the scene, a group of men were carrying

sleepers on their shoulders towards the piers. At their head was a man breathing hard, energetically carrying three sleepers at once.

"Bravo!" Wu shouted to him.

Yao Chang-keng looked at the man and saw that it was Che Chang-chi. Throwing the sleepers off his shoulders, he grinned awkwardly. He was on the point of saying something, but shyness held him back. Wiping beads of sweat from his face, he went away without uttering a word.

"There's a man with a heart of gold!" Yao said, looking at Che's broad back. "He looks dull, but beneath his hard crust there's more than meets the eye."

"Yes, he's seasoned timber; fit for a beam!" a voice suddenly put in from under the bridge. And out of water Li Chun-san emerged. His muscles were taut all over and he had gone purple with cold.

"Commander Ching wants you on the phone," Ta Luan said, rushing up.

Wu always had the feeling that Ching was pushing him forward with a huge hand, giving him little chance to relax. He always felt the push and he liked it. In fact the stronger it was, the more he liked it. To him even a word of reproach from Ching was bracing.

Over the telephone he reported to Ching on their work on the bridge and added: "Tomorrow's May Day and the comrades here are all in high spirits; they're determined to greet the festival by making tonight's work successful."

"Very good," Ching approved, his words ringing clear and definite as if he were right beside Wu. "Give my congratulations to the comrades." After a pause he continued happily, "Have you heard the good news from the front? We sent a number of units into the rear of the enemy, they cut the enemy up, encircled them and wiped a lot of them out. Tell this to all our comrades so that they can understand better the meaning of their work. Well, tell me about your successes next time you ring me up."

Wu Chen hung the telephone up. For some time he stood motionless, looking out of the back door. Before him a bright green slope stretched away and several apricot trees were in full bloom. On the slope a group of women were doing their spring ploughing, the strong ones at the ploughs. A woman in red, following a plough, was sowing seeds out of a basket. Behind her stretched a file of other women, all carrying children on their backs. They shovelled earth on the sown seeds with their feet, humming tunes and tripping along like dancers.

Though Wu Chen saw all this, his mind still dwelled on the bridge. He fully realized the importance of that night's task and he would throw all his energy into it. All of a sudden the women put down the ploughs and scattered in all directions. They stood in the shade of the trees, their eyes straining at the sky. Wu promptly guessed the reason, and

his heart sank. He had expected the enemy to make this move. Walking out of the command post, he hurried to the bridge.

A squad of four enemy jets appeared in the sky over the Yellow Sea, sneaking in along the ravine. These devils, mortally afraid of being attacked, had taken to secretive flying. You couldn't hear them until they were already above your head.

The anti-aircraft guns fired, and each shell burst into a ring of white smoke. Seven shells exploded in succession, seven rings of smoke forming a network around the enemy jets.

The jets rose higher into the air fleeing from the network of fire and smoke. They circled and presently Wu found them over his head. Squatting in a small ditch full of water plants, Wu expected the anti-aircraft gun he had seen on the field to open fire. But strangely enough, the gun kept dead quiet. In his anxiety he craned his neck and saw the gunners standing at their respective position, calmly looking up at the sky. The last thing they looked like doing was getting ready to open fire. It was only after the jets had swept past that the chief gunner turned his gun round to point at the empty sky over Wu's head, where a light veil of spring mist hung. God alone knows, thought Wu, what he's aiming at.

The pilot jet circled, taking stock of the positions of the anti-aircraft guns. Then together with the other jets, it swooped down towards the bridge along what it thought the safest line—just over Wu's head—with black smoke trailing behind. At last the anti-aircraft gun flashed and a red light flared up in the sky. The pilot jet was hit, and with an explosion it burst into pieces which rained the air in great confusion.

It turned out that when the imperturbable chief gunner saw in the mirror that the jets were diving and heard the order to fire, he bided his time. Only when the fore part of the jet was clearly seen in the mirror did he fire. The shells flew straight into the jet.

The other three jets got frightened and pulled up violently, dropping their bombs into the river at random. Puffs of black smoke rose high. A group of alarmed white cranes came out of the smoke, beating their wings and scudding towards the Yellow Sea.

"Another jet's down!" Ta Luan called out abruptly after Wu Chen.

Sure enough, another plane had been hit. The pilot, taken by surprise, pulled the air-controls and forced the plane up so that he could escape by parachute. But it was too late and the jet fell down with a whine into the wheat field a stone's throw from Wu Chen. With a crash, it sank deep into the ground.

In the crater the water was waist-high, petrol floating on its surface. Broken fragments of aluminium were strewn all round.

Thinking of his men and his task, Wu Chen made a dash towards the bridge.

The smoke had now dispersed. Wu saw that the bridge was damaged in several places and that many sleepers had been torn asunder.

Yao Chang-keng got wounded and Che Chang-chieh, too—even more seriously.

When the enemy jets appeared, Yao was standing on the bridge directing the defence. It was too late to run away, so he simply lay down on the bridge. Then the bombs fell. The air blast blew his cap away and filled his eyes with dust. With an effort he opened his eyes but saw nothing except a thick screen of black smoke. His sides felt numb and from the blood-stains on his hand he realized that some splinters had cut into them. Despite the pain, he picked out the splinters with his fingers and got up, covering the wound with his hand.

Yao looked down and saw Che Chang-chieh lying under the bridge, his body covered with earth, his face caked with blood.

Forgetting his own pain, Yao hurried down below the bridge and held Che in his arms. Binding up the wounds on his head, Yao said reproachfully, "Why did you stay under the bridge? Why didn't you go and take shelter?"

In the back of his mind Yao understood what must have prevented this man from going away. He knew, it was his enthusiasm for his work which had done the mischief.

Some time before, a large quantity of sheep-liver pills had arrived from China to combat the night-blindness among the men. Like the others, Che was gradually cured of the disease. Much moved by this, he repeatedly told his comrades, "You see how well our people look after us!"

One night, Yao and his men were digging near one end of the bridge. Enemy planes kept dropping bombs but Che, instead of running away, went on digging. Yao shouted to him to stop. And to please him, Che put down the hoe, but secretly continued digging with his hands. He wouldn't stop even when big blood blisters come up on his hands. The sharp-tongued called him a fool but he did not mind.

This time again his love of work had kept him at the bridge. Now, holding the wounded man in his arms, Yao riveted his eyes on the pain-racked face, his heart glowing with affectionate admiration. All over the world, Yao thought, he held no one so dear as this man.

In the throes of death Che gasped for his last breath. Holding Yao's hand, he said: "Chief, my working days are over. Let me say good-bye to you. And say good-bye to my people for me. I'll always be grateful to you for your kindness."

Che's eyes closed, his hands still clasping Yao's.

Quietly he had lived and quietly he passed away. No newspaper had ever announced his birth and none announced his death. But he had rendered signal service to the people in his peculiarly quiet way.

Hot flames burnt in Yao's breast. He recalled that he had had the

same feeling ten years before when the Japanese took away his sons to make them slaves in their coal mines. Quietly he laid down the corpse, stood up, looked at the workers and said in a broken voice: "Comrades, we've all heard Che's last words. Difficulties can be overcome and must be overcome. If we don't finish repairing the bridge tonight, so that the trains can pass safely across it, we shall not be living up to the expectations of our country, of the people, of the martyrs of our class. We shall not deserve to be called Chinese."

He motioned with his arms, and the workers made a sprint for the bridge. It was not until this moment that Wu Chen noticed that Yao's coat was torn to shreds and soaked with blood; the seven-chamber revolver at his belt was also damaged. But for that revolver, all would have been up with him.

"You're wounded," Wu exclaimed in astonishment, "you must get your wound dressed."

A nurse came up and dressed the wound. "Never mind," Yao said. "It's only a scratch."

Though he made so little of it, his age, the wound, and nervous excitement were too much for him. He was all in a sweat, his face ghastly pale. Wu ordered some of his men to carry him back to camp on a stretcher.

"No, I don't want to go back," Yao said, his eyelids heavy with sleep. "It's a flesh wound; nothing serious. How can I leave the bridge at a time like this?"

"Better do as you're told. It's Commander Wu's order." The nurse urged.

"My side's hurt, but my mouth's still all right," Yao persisted. "I can still supervise the work by word of mouth, can't I?"

"Of course, you can. But you're no youngster, and a little rest will do you good," someone tried to persuade him.

Yao remained silent, his eyelids drooping, utterly unmoved by all this argument and persuasion. To try and talk him into going back was like trying to persuade the water in the Yellow River to flow backwards. At last, Wu explained to him that he could supervise the work himself and once again he ordered him to leave. Picking up an oak shrub to support himself, Yao went away, the stretcher-bearers following at his heels. "To be carried back on a stretcher—that would be awful!" he thought. "I'll go the way I came—on foot."

Quite imperceptibly night fell. The first stars came out and were mirrored in the river. In a twinkling the river was filled with their reflections. In the dim moonlight one could see from a distance a film of white mist floating over the river like the vapour over a spring field. But it was not mist; it was a white veil made out of the hot breaths of Yao's men who, all in shirts, were working hard on the bridge under Wu's personal guidance.

XIII

When Wu Chen's men were working hard on the Chongchon bridge, a heavily loaded train ran across the Yalu bridge and raced towards the front. The driver's cab was heavily curtained so that no light should show. From between the black-out curtains a head poked out, looking forward, and the dim moonlight revealed the lean face of Yu Liong Tai, guide on Wu Tien-pao's train.

Yu was a man of few words and always said only what was necessary: "Going uphill . . . going downhill . . . slow down . . . stop. . . ." And the driver would act accordingly.

As the train approached a station, the stationmaster on duty would come out to greet it, hiding a small signal-lamp inside his coat. Opening the coat for a brief moment, he would flash a green light to the train, which rushed past without stopping.

Tien-pao sat in the driver's seat, looking from the water-indicator to the steam gage. He steadily increased the speed and the train tore cheerfully on, shaking and rattling over the bumpy, war-damaged roadbed. Tien-pao remembered how Kao Ching-yun had said he wished they had more anti-tank grenades. The train now carried not only anti-tank grenades but heavy tanks. Before starting off, Tien-pao had walked up and down the train, itching to lift the tarpaulin draped over these tanks and touch them. But to his regret, the train-escort wouldn't allow him to. "What's he afraid of?" Tien-pao said to himself. "I don't mean any harm. What's wrong with touching them?"

Tien-pao smiled at his own thoughts.

Liu Fu-sheng was shovelling coal. Straightening up, he saw Tien-pao smiling and asked: "What are you smiling at?"

"Guess," Tien-pao answered, still smiling.

Liu, being a straightforward man, had little patience for guessing. He never could hide anything from anybody. He hated to keep anything to himself. When he woke up in the morning he would tell what he had dreamed about the previous night.

The train pulled up at a big station to take on coal and water. Wu Tien-pao leapt down, a small hammer in one hand, and started tapping the rails. He felt the axletrees with the back of his hand and tested the screws. Liu stood on the step, blocking the entrance to the cab with his bulk, folding his sinewy arms. "It's chilly," he said. "Autumn only chills one's flesh but spring chills one to the bone. It's really too early to leave off your padded clothes. In my home in Shantung, the ears must have formed on the wheat by now."

"Oh, have you got a home?" Tien-pao asked casually, still hammering.

"Why shouldn't I have a home? I didn't just spring out of thin

air, when I was born," Liu said. "I wonder what my wife's doing at home just now."

"Oh, I expect she's thinking of you," said Tien-pao with a laugh.

"I must admit she is a good wife, all right," Liu said. "She's a hard worker. Every night she sits by the lamp doing needlework after getting the kid to sleep. That child was born at the right time all right. When I was a boy of six, you see, I had nothing but water and gruel to live on. I was just a skeleton with a big belly. My son has things different. He's not only got plenty to eat, but can go to school. Do you know he's the first one in our family for three generations, who ever had a chance to go to school? All this time while I have been here fighting Americans and helping Koreans, my son has been at school. I would have insisted on coming even if Chairman Mao didn't like it."

Beyond the hills lights flashed up now and again. They were enemy's flares.

"None of your nonsense now!" Tien-pao said. "Have you raked out the ashes? Get everything ready, we've got to get a move on."

"Pooh! They're only trying to scare us!" Liu said, spitting contemptuously at the flares. "It would be up with us if we let you frighten us with those things!"

The train rumbled forward once more. Time and again Tien-pao poked his head out of the curtain, looking ahead.

The night was far spent. The damp wind gently swept over Tien-pao's face. To his annoyance, the half-moon was still there as if glued to the sky.

Only after they had started did Liu's question once again come to Tien-pao's mind: "I wonder what my wife's doing now?" It was a good question. Tien-pao wondered what people at home were doing. "Having a good rest after a day's hard work? But Chairman Mao wouldn't have gone to bed yet. People say he always works late into the night. He has brought happiness to the people yet he takes little rest himself. Chairman Mao, you mustn't overwork yourself."

While such thoughts rushed through his mind, he instinctively raised his hand to feel Chairman Mao's portrait in his shirt-pocket and recalled Chairman Mao's instructions which he had copied at the bottom of the picture: "Love for the motherland, love for the people, love of labour and of science, and respect for public property should be cultivated in the country as the common virtues of the people." "I always want to do as you bid," Tien-pao thought, "though I still have to make more effort." In the past four months or so he had only performed one meritorious deed which had won him a medal. He wanted to perform more. "I must win enough medals to decorate my coat, when I return home in triumph." He wanted to live in glory as Chairman Mao taught.

When he went home, Tien-pao thought, he would have a few days' rest. But first of all, he would give his engine a good cleaning. His

heart always ached at the thought that it had got so dirty. He was determined to make the copper parts shine so that you could see your face in them. As for himself, he would have a really good dinner and a good sleep.

He was very tired because he hadn't had enough sleep. He often heard Liu Fu-sheng say: "After I get home I'm going to sleep for ten days and ten nights. And I won't let anybody wake me up even at mealtimes."

"Then there is the question of getting married," said Tien-pao to himself as his thoughts turned to his own affairs. "Chih-lan's really wonderful. She always said, don't run after pleasures at this moment. What happiness can marriage bring us when the enemy is pointing his bayonets at our throats? What she says is right. When victory is won, we shall live together as man and wife and never part again. After the day's work, we'll have supper at the same table and study by the same lamp. She is a great lover of flowers. She used to plant balsam under the window and rouged her finger-nails with the petals. We'll surround our house with all sorts of flowers so that we can pass everyday among them."

In the moonlight dark ranges of lofty mountains loomed in the distance. All of a sudden, a great noise leapt out of the sky right over Tien-pao's head, and a black cloud skimmed over the train.

"An enemy plane!" Yu Liong Tai called out.

It was one of the enemy's "black widow" fighter planes, specially designed for night raids. An idea flashed into Tien-pao's mind: "Get into the ravine ahead."

But it was too late. A napalm bomb fell and lit up the rice fields in a blaze of light. Wheeling round, the "black widow" swooped down again, its machineguns barking.

"Quick, the train's caught fire!" Yu yelled.

"Stop! Let's go and put out the fire first," Liu called out anxiously.

Shutting up the steam port, Tien-pao jammed on the brake. The train came to a sudden halt and Tien-pao jumped down to the ground. But he had only run a few steps when there was another explosion. He was thrown up into the air and then fell to the ground unconscious.

Close by, Yao Chih-lan was helping Young Chia, an electrician, set up telephone poles. Just a little before, Chia had rung up from the working site for more wire. As no one was free except Chih-lan, who was off duty, she came up with a coil of wire on her back and was helping him out.

This was the second time that Chih-lan had met Chia. He had the knack of making friends with any one after exchanging a few words with him. Chou Hai had told Chih-lan about his ability, his mischievousness, and his fooling of the enemy. As Young Chu had knit a pair of gloves for him and spoken nicely about him, Chih-lan had suspected that something was going on between the two. She had plied Chu with questions about it, but Chu swore there was nothing between them. Now the mys-

tery unravelled itself. It turned out that Chu had been writing Chia quite often, telling him that her wound wouldn't matter very much, for only one of her eyes had been burst and her only regret, Chu said, was that she couldn't come back to Korea again. "I'll have it out with her when she does come," Chih-lan said to herself, "so as to stop her making fun of Tien-pao again."

Chia was at the top of the pole when the enemy plane hit Tien-pao's train. He saw it clearly and yelled: "That's a train from the north. It must be carrying important things. Let's run to the rescue."

People rushed up from all directions, men of the rear service, and of the engineering brigade, and Korean peasants, shouting. Yao Chih-lan and Chia ran forward in the middle of them all.

The car that was hit was second from the last. It was loaded with anti-tank shells. Flames went up as more napalm bombs exploded. Several telegraph poles along the railway caught fire and burnt like huge candles.

Chih-lan dashed through the flames to the train, her face and clothes badly scorched, her rubber shoes smouldering. Paying no attention to all this, she concentrated on helping to put the fire out. The men stripped off their clothes, sucked them in water in the rice fields and beat them against the flames. Others poured sand or threw mud on the fire.

"Push the last car away!" Liu Fu-sheng yelled. Instantly some one uncoupled it and, with hands and shoulders, it was pushed away from the fire.

Liu also wanted to separate the second car, which was burning, from the rest of the train. But the anti-tank shells were exploding right and left. The men dashed off, no longer daring to go near the train. Some one was hit by splinters and several people called for nurses in a chorus. Then came the shout: "Here's someone lying on the ground. Come and help!"

Yao Chih-lan ran up and saw it was Wu Tien-pao. She had often been woken up at night by raids. And as she heard trains rumbling past in the distance, she naturally thought of Tien-pao. At such moments she would toss about in bed, worrying and fretting. When at last she managed to overcome her worries she would feel ashamed of herself. "Isn't it selfish of me only to worry about Tien-pao? Every train driver has someone dear to him, and they are all running the same risk. Why should I care about nobody but him!" Thinking such thoughts, she would calm down.

Now, the moment she saw her lover lying wounded, her heart ached. But she bore up under the sorrow, calm and unshaken. She seemed to have inherited from her father his indomitable spirit. As there was no blood to be seen anywhere on Tien-pao's body, she grew less strained. She took down the water-bottle from her shoulder and gave him a drink.

Tien-pao had come to by now, but his mind was still very confused. "What's wrong with me?" he murmured.

"You were knocked out," Chih-lan said, with relief.

"How did that happen? Where're we going?"

"To the front. Don't you remember?" said Chih-lan, wiping his forehead with a wet handkerchief.

"To the front?" Tien-pao said, still at a loss.

"Yes, you were taking munitions to the front," Chih-lan explained, bending over him. "You've forgotten all about it."

Tien-pao swept a hand over his forehead and felt better. Yes, he began to recall, he had come with munitions. What kind of munitions? He couldn't tell. Had he been sleeping and dreaming all this time? Then a glance at the burning cars brought it all back to him. He had come up with anti-tank grenades and heavy tanks. How had he come to be lying here? He sat up at once and tried to get to his feet.

Yao Chih-lan at once clutched his arm. What a queer man! A man extremely lively in his movements, he wanted to be up and about when he had only just regained consciousness. That would never do!

"Take your hands off me!" Tien-pao cried out, struggling to free his arm.

"What do you want to do?" Chih-lan asked impatiently.

"Take your hands off me, please!" Tien-pao said. "I must go and pull that burning car away from the rest, otherwise the fire will spread."

Liu Fu-sheng and Yu Liong Tai had gone before Tien-pao had time to get up.

What a fire it was! Half of the sky was red and the bombs in the train were exploding, with pieces of shrapnel whistling in the air. Liu and Yu had brought their cotton coats with them. Covering their heads with the coats, after soaking them in water, they dashed up through the haze of smoke.

Big flames were guffing the train. A booming sound filled their ears while the iron boards were licked by the fire, as if the enemy planes were coming back.

As a matter of fact, all this while the enemy plane had been circling in the air. Now it again swooped down to do machinegunning. Some of the men were about to run away but were stopped by a voice shouting: "Don't run away! Fight the enemy to a finish!" The enemy pilots kept on machinegunning the car which was already on fire. Had they aimed at the other ones, they would have set all of them ablaze.

Liu and Yu continued to crawl forward although the plane was right above their heads. As soon as Liu put aside the coat protecting his head, a lump of mud hit him in the face. He was angry but he wanted to laugh. "You stupid devils," he cursed.

When he reached the car which had been blown up, Yu Liong Tai went round and crawled along under the train. He stretched out his

hand to uncouple it from the one next to it. But the couplings were so hot that he burnt his hand as soon as he touched them. Protecting his other hand with his coat, he tried again without success. Then Liu came to his aid. Striking a club against the couplings, he finally got them apart.

In a few minutes, the whole crew climbed back on to the train. Mustering all his strength, Tien-pao also ran up.

"Get wounded?" Liu called out to him. Yu was ready to drive the engine for him.

"Nothing serious," Tien-pao yelled, pushing Yu away.

Settling himself into the driver's seat, he started the engine, leaving the car which was on fire to the others. The train sped forward. Tien-pao's chest was aching but he didn't mind. The most important thing was to get moving again.

Yu stood leaning against the door, his legs stretching apart. He looked grim and constantly urged the driver to speed up.

The train raced forward at full speed, and a cold wind blew in against Tien-pao's chest. He wanted to button up his coat but found that the buttons had all been torn off. His fountain pen, too, had slipped through a hole in his pocket.

Damn that moon still leering up there in the sky, he thought.

The "black widow" spotted the train as soon as it got moving. Its machineguns barked, pouring out a hail of bullets at the whirling wheels. Some hit the stones beside the rail, sending up a shower of sparks.

Yu drew back a few steps from the door. Then he went up to it again and shouted, "Speed up!"

Tien-pao felt exhilarated as he let out the throttle. Kao Ching-yun's image flashed into his mind. He could see him pouring anti-tank grenades into the enemy tanks. Now he had run short of the grenades and all the time the enemy tanks were pressing forward. Kao shouted for more anti-tank grenades.

"I'll bring them, don't you worry," Tien-pao thought, and the wheels rolled faster.

The "black widow" was hot on their trail, determined not to let its prey escape. It reminded Tien-pao of how, once, when he was a small boy, he had climbed a tree to pick apples, and had stirred up a hornets' nest. The bursts of machinegun fire brought back to his mind the angry buzzing of the insects.

The "black widow" flew almost on a level with the engine, raising a great cloud of dust. Sweeping past the train, it would immediately turn back and fire, belching flashes of bright flame from its guns.

How Wu Tien-pao wished that he could drive the train straight into the ravine! He stuck his head out. A bullet whistled past his ear. His left thigh trembled, and he felt a hot wave running through it.

Liu Fu-sheng was busy shovelling coal. He had stripped himself to

the waist. Unscrewing the water pipe, he doused water over himself. Then he took up the shovel again.

Once more the machineguns rattled and bullets ploughed up the ground.

"There's a fog coming up!" Yu Liong Tai called out suddenly.

In Korea fog is liable to rise at any moment. Now, coming out of the ravine, it was spreading a veil over the hills and the sky. It surged forward like a cloud of dust. Tien-pao knew that they would be out of danger as soon as he could set the train into the ravine, for then the "black widow" would no longer be able to fly low. And what luck to be aided by fog at a time like this! Opening the throttle wide, he dashed towards the fog.

Once the engine was hidden by the fog Tien-pao shut off the steam and let the train slide into the ravine. Now all the cars had got in except the last one.

The "black widow" seemed mad with fury. Four times it swooped down, strafing, but the train remained undamaged. The enemy pilot seemed to realize that the train was loaded with important munitions and must be destroyed at all costs. The "black widow" made a fresh attack from the rear.

But the last car had gone into the ravine too and the new attack was fruitless. The "black widow" gave up after a lot of aimless shooting. Suddenly a red light flashed over the misty top of the hill and was immediately followed by a big crash.

Liu Fu-sheng's eyes opened wide. Then he realized what must have happened. "The 'black widow' has crashed against the hill!" he yelled.

It was true. The plane had crashed to pieces. The "black widow" had become a dead widow. By his courage and skill in making use of the favourable conditions, Tien-pao had won the battle against the enemy plane.

Yu Liong Tai gave Tien-pao a joyful hug. For the first time since war began this Korean, weighed down by great sorrows, gave out a hearty laugh.

The train went on. Tien-pao was tired out but he struggled against fatigue. Dimly he saw flames burning in the southern sky across which the searchlights swept back and forth. He was worried about the Chongchon bridge and kept on muttering: "Is the Chongchon bridge being bombed again? I hope nothing'll happen to it." He knew that on the other side of the river, the Korean crew were waiting for his train.

From station to station the train was given the green light. But as it drew near to the river bank, a red light appeared before it glimmering in the fog.

"Damn it!" Liu yelled, putting down the shovel. "After all our efforts, we still can't cross the river."

The train came to a halt. "So you've come!" the man with the red lamp shouted. It was a familiar voice.

"Yes, we made it all right," Tien-pao replied.

"Get ready to cross the river," the man said.

"So we can go across after all," asked Tien-pao, poking out his head.

"Yes," came the answer out of the fog. The man climbed up into the train. He held up the lamp and let the light fall on the crew's faces. It was Wu Chen himself.

He was in high spirits. "You've done a good job!" he said, with a grin. "The dispatch office has sent me a report and I know all about what's happened to you. . . . So you brought down an enemy plane, eh! Good work! Let me thank you on behalf of the people. Commander Ching rang me up several times inquiring about your train. Thanks to your efforts, it has got through. You'll have to go across slowly; they've only just finished repairing the bridge. I'll guide the crossing myself."

Holding a lamp in one hand and placing the other hand on the railing of the engine cab, Wu Chen led the train slowly on to the bridge. A thick fog hung over the river and the bridge was quite invisible. When they reached the middle of it, it began to creak as if it might collapse at any moment. Hurriedly Wu Chen ordered them to stop. The people on both banks held their breath. What if the bridge suddenly gave way?

Worried about Wu Chen rather than about the bridge, Liu Fu-sheng popped his head out of the cab and said: "Commander Wu, get off now. Don't risk your life that way. We can go ahead by ourselves."

Wu jumped down from the train and carefully examined the bridge. Then he came back and climbed up onto the engine as if he had not heard Liu's pleading. Swinging the lamp, he cried: "Go ahead!"

The train started again and crept slowly on, with the wooden bridge creaking under it all the way.

Finally they reached the southern bank. With a heavy puff of its steam the train drew in at the station. The new crew took it over and were ready to drive on to the front with a new engine.

Wu Tien-pao took a deep breath and relaxed on the foot-plate of his engine. He wanted to get up but his legs failed him. Suddenly, with a flop he fell down.

"Come on. Up you get," Liu said.

But Tien-pao couldn't move. Liu bent down to help him. His hands touched Tien-pao and became sticky with blood. A strong smell of blood assailed his nostrils. In the light of the furnace fire, he saw that Tien-pao's trouser-leg was drenched with blood. A good horse, it is said, will run like the wind even when it has been hit by a bullet, until it reaches the destination. It was the same with Tien-pao. He had been wounded inside and now his left leg was also injured, but with his whole heart in his task he had forgotten the pain and himself. His

strength did not give out until he had fulfilled his task and began to relax.

Ignoring the pain in his own hand, Liu tore open Tien-pao's trousers and bound up the wound. Then he went and called out at the top of his lungs to the men at the station: "Send for a doctor!"

A doctor came and with him Wu Chen. Tien-pao could hardly talk for loss of blood. "What're you shouting about?" he asked Liu feebly, forcing a smile. "Even Commander Wu has come. . . ." Then he turned to Wu Chen and asked: "The loads'll reach the front in time, will they? They must be sent on without delay. These tanks're as big as hills . . . our men are waiting for them."

"It's all right. There won't be any delay." Wu Chen answered, bending over Tien-pao. "You don't need to worry about that. How do you feel now?"

"I'm all right. Just tired," he said quietly, closing his eyes. After a while, he opened his eyes and said, "Do me a favour. I want to have a look at Chairman Mao's portrait."

Liu Fu-sheng understood and took the portrait from his pocket and handed it to him.

Wu Tien-pao held the picture up before him. A red light glowed out of the furnace and lit up his own face as well as the portrait. Both the coloured picture and Tien-pao's face gleamed in the light. For a long time he looked at the portrait with a smile. "Good-bye, Chairman Mao," he said softly, "I've done the job the people gave me."

Wu Chen's eyes became moist and he choked back his tears. Liu Fu-sheng began to weep.

"What're you crying about?" Tien-pao said, with a smile. "Tell Chih-lan not to cry, but to give her love for me to our country. . . ."

Tien-pao's eyes began to wander; a smile hovered round the corner of his mouth. "I'm so sleepy," he muttered. "I'm done in. Let me sleep a while . . . just a little while. . . ." Gradually his voice grew softer and softer, his eyes closed, his hands still clasping the portrait. . . .

At last he slept the sleep that knows no awaking. He passed away peacefully like a man who, having finished his day's work, stretches his legs and yawns and dozes off in comfort.

To give Tien-pao an undisturbed sleep, Wu Chen buried him on a quiet distant slope. The grave faced south, open to the sunshine and the wind at all seasons, and was surrounded by a belt of pine trees. It was safe from the menace of mountain floods as well as the enemy's bombing. Tien-pao wouldn't be lonely either, because right beside him lay his comrade, Che Chang-chieh.

There lay two good fighters who had battled for peace and justice. They had given up their personal interests, parted from their families, shed their blood and laid down their lives so that others might live in happiness. On May Day, 1951, when the whole world was rejoicing and

singing for the festival, these fighters had quietly fallen for the sake of their own country, of Korea and of the people all over the world.

It was a wonderful day. Small yellow flowers dotted the supple pine branches. The bomb-craters had disappeared from the fields of luscious green spring wheat. Small green apples hung from the trees that had shed their blossoms.

Before the martyrs' graves lay the wreaths sent by the local peasants. Every pine branch and every wild flower in the wreaths was filled with the Korean people's deep affection for the volunteers.

Wu Chen and Choi, director of the Korean local railway bureau, and the many other comrades went away after bidding the martyrs farewell. But two girls still lingered behind.

Vaguely Yao Chih-lan felt that Wu Tien-pao was still alive. The image of a dark lively young man flashed across her mind, his eyes smiling, his face beaming, a shock of hair sticking out from under his cap. She simply couldn't bring herself to believe that such a man would ever die.

But he was dead. "It's spring now, I'll leave you to lie here on the soil for which you have laid down your life, so that all the Koreans can come to visit your grave."

"Don't cry!" Kang Mum Jai said, putting her arms round Chih-lan's shoulders. "Your face is full of burns; you ought to go back to have your wound dressed."

"I'm not crying and I'm not going to," Yao Chih-lan said firmly. "He lived happily and he has died for the happiness of other people. He used to say that he had never shed a single tear for as long as he could remember. Tears are not the thing to commemorate him with."

Kang Mum Jai's eyes reddened. Gazing into the distance, she said thoughtfully: "We Koreans will never forget what the volunteers have done for us. I often think that when victory is won, we ought to set up a monument in an open space in memory of the volunteers so that every Korean can see it."

"Where could you find such a place?" asked Chih-lan calmly.

"That's easy. Right here, you see," said Kang, pointing to her heart.

Night fell. From the fields the blended fragrance of wild flowers was wafted on the chilly evening breeze. A noise was issuing from the mouth of the newly dug cave where the telephone office was situated. It was the sound of shouting and seemed to come from the throats of thousands upon thousands of people. Yao Chih-lan couldn't understand it at first. Then it suddenly struck her that the May Day celebrations were being broadcast from Peking. At this very moment, on the May Day evening, the people of New China were dancing and singing songs of freedom and joy before the Gate of Heavenly Peace in Peking.

Thunderous applause, loud shouts, roars of laughter followed each other. All of a sudden the noise subsided and a child's voice rang out

clearly, "We are the young pioneers of China. . . ." A few minutes later a strong deep bass boomed: "Speed up production and practise economy to support our volunteers!"

Then came the sound of trumpets and drums. Dimly Yao Chih-lan heard the people's footsteps, the footsteps of thousands upon thousands of China's working people marching towards peace, reconstruction and victory.

Then came the rising sound of the beating of side-drums and the rhythmic of the *yangko* folk-dance. And after that the clear voice of a woman singer leading the chorus of "The International." The song surged up and down like rolling waves.

Hot tears rolled down Yao Chih-lan's cheeks. Looking to the north, she said with a trembling voice: "My country! For your sake I can give up everything, even my life!"

NOT THE END

The spring of 1952 soon came. Spring never grudges men the good things of the earth—prosperity, happiness and life. But unlike the wild grass, man's happiness does not grow by itself. It draws its strength from the people's blood. So those now living in happiness should never forget the martyrs who gave it to them.

Late one warm spring night, Wu Chen sat up studying documents by the lamplight. Whenever a train rumbled past in the distance, he pricked up his ears to listen. He would not return to the documents until he could hear it no more. Sometimes the passing trains would send him into a reverie, staring blankly at the lamp.

Wu Chen was writing a summing-up of the detachment's work in Korea, and he had to review the past events in his mind. It was a full year and a half since the detachment crossed the Yalu River in the winter of 1950. All this time it had travelled along a road which, though beset with difficulties, led to final victory. Many events already seemed remote at this distance of time.

During their first months in Korea, Wu Chen remembered, they had to set up a telephone office in a muddy tunnel for want of a better place. Once they were encircled by enemy time-bombs. But now the enemy couldn't do any harm even if he resorted to atomic bombs. All the offices had been moved into deep caves specially dug. Parched flour mixed with icy water now sounded like something out of remote antiquity. There was now a steady supply of sausages and egg powder—all sorts of good things to eat from home. To relieve the shortage of vegetables at the front, the soldiers were now growing their own cab-

bages, carrots, tomatoes and egg-plant. There were also plenty of entertainment and cultural activities. When the train crew did a *yangko* dance they no longer needed to beat time on napalm shell cases. They had all the musical instruments they wanted—accordions, cymbals, fiddles and so on.

Wu Chen's eyes fell on the desperate statement which the U.S. air force's spokesman had made the previous summer.

> . . . In the past year or so, the U.S. air force has been persistently bombing the Communist transport line, but the Communist train service in north Korea continued uninterrupted. The Communists not only possess an almost inexhaustible resource of manpower but also a considerable power for construction. In getting round the damaged bridges on the railway lines they have demonstrated a mysterious technical mastery as well as a great determination. . . . The repairs have been done and new wooden bridges built up at an astonishing speed.

"They know we possess an inexhaustible resource of manpower all right," said Wu to himself, thinking of Wu Tien-pao and Che Chang-chieh, "but they don't know what kind of men we have."

In paying tribute to the death of Tien-pao and Che, Ching Ming had said in a telegram: "Their brave deeds which cost them their lives have ensured victory at the front. Their spirit will last as long as heaven and earth and will shine as brightly as the sun and the moon."

They were truly immortal. After the conclusion of the fifth campaign, whenever the crew were told how powerful our tanks had been at the front, they thought of Wu Tien-pao. They recalled how he had laid down his life to win victory, to save the lives of countless peace-loving people.

Liu Fu-sheng had taken over Chairman Mao's portrait from Wu Tien-pao and pasted it on the train, covering it with a sheet of cellophane. The entire crew swore solemnly before the portrait to follow Tien-pao's example. To commemorate the hero, the Transport Command issued a special order that the locomotive Tien-pao drove in his lifetime should be named after him. Wu Tien-pao had died, but many more heroes like him were coming to the fore.

Wu Chen turned his thoughts to Yao Chang-keng, a man of steel. When he had been wounded in the spring of the previous year, the doctor ordered him to go back to China to be treated in a hospital. But in spite of all the doctor's arguments, Yao refused to go. When the doctor got angry, Yao simply closed his eyes, pretending to be asleep. He didn't give in until Wu Chen came forward, trying to convince him and at the same time ordering him to return. Within three weeks, however, he had got back to Korea by train.

"Why do you come back so soon?" Wu asked.

"My wound is better. What do I want to stay in the rear for? And. . . ." Yao smiled with embarrassment. For some reason or other, the comrades of the detachment had always occupied his thoughts when he was back to China. He had even dreamt about them. But he didn't like to mention this. And he was not going to be sentimental like an old woman. As to his wife at home, she was very well looked after by the trade union. He had nothing to bother about in that connection. "Don't worry about home," his wife had told him when he saw her last. "Take care of yourself and write me more often." Apparently, his wife had become able to face reality.

Wu Chen knew how Yao felt about things and he thought it might be just as well for him to stay and rest at the working site. In a few days, however, Yao came to him asking for work.

"I'm quite all right now. Please give me something to do," Yao said. "Otherwise I'll go out of my senses for want of work!"

"No hurry," Wu said sternly. "What're you so anxious about? Go back and get some more rest. Don't talk to me about your work before you're better."

Next day Yao came again but he no longer talked about work. For a long time he sat in sulky silence, facing the doorway. Wu simply didn't know whether he should laugh at him or be angry with him. Well, let him sit there if he wanted to. Day after day Yao came in to sit in meaningful silence.

On the fifth day, Wu Chen had had enough and asked Yao what was on his mind. He cast his heavy-lidded eyes down at his weather-beaten hands with their swollen blue veins, and muttered: "I'm not worrying about anything. It's these hands of mine that want some work to do."

Wu could hardly squelch this middle-aged man. Yao was no longer a child even though he behaved like one. He sat there in silence, his face impassive, his lips sticking out, determined to outstay Wu. What could Wu do? Well, let him go back to his work, though the doctor said he was still a bit weak.

Deep in thought, Wu didn't hear the droning of an enemy plane overhead. Suddenly a bomb came whistling down. There was no explosion and Wu decided that it was probably a bacteria-bomb. He immediately rang up Chin Chiao and told him to conduct a search for similar bombs in the neighbourhood of their position. These shameless American pirates, he thought to himself; they're placing their trust in flies and bed-bugs since their appeals to God have come to nothing.

Quite unaccountably, the image of his son floated up before his eyes. He opened the drawer and took the child's picture out of the envelope with the latest letter from his wife. He held it to the light and looked at it. He was a fine big baby, for less than twelve months. There he sat smiling like a wooden statue of Buddha, his fat hands on his big feet.

Then Wu Chen's thoughts turned once more to bacteriological war. "Never mind, little man," he said reassuringly to his son. "The future is ours!"

Wu Chen leaned the picture against the *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung* and buried himself in his documents again. He made an outline, worked in the important points and started to write a summary. He kept on writing, oblivious to the passing of time. Suddenly a chirping sound came from outside. He opened the window and saw that it was already dawn. From newly-built nest under the eaves, a swallow flew out chirping, and another flitted on to the nearby wires, cocking its head to one side and blinking. After a while it, too, flew away skimming over the ground.

Wu Chen put out the light and lay down on a cot, without taking his clothes off. His left arm felt sore from a recent anti-epidemic injection. He turned over and fell asleep.

Spring had come. Achimani busily set about her household affairs. This morning, Ta Luan was helping her to make a hedge and Old Pao, the cook, balancing on the ridge pole, was thatching the roof.

The sunshine was comfortably warm. The vegetable garden behind the house had just been ploughed and the earth was soft and damp. A bright coloured hen, squatting on the ground, dug hard into the earth. She was making a deep hole in which she could sun herself. She caught sight of some worms and started clucking and pecking at them. The chickens all ran up chirping and scrambling for the worms.

Old Pao started singing too. Only those of his own generation could have told what he was humming.

"Grandpa," Kangkunni asked him, throwing back his head and looking up, "how can you sing with that beard?"

Ta Luan didn't get the point of the question until he glanced at Pao. The old chap's beard was so flourishing that his mouth had become invisible. As he sang, it seemed to be only his beard rather than his lips that moved.

"Lord Pao," Ta Luan said jokingly, "you're a queer fellow. How is it that the longer you live, the younger you get?"

"Rubbish!" Pao retorted. "Why must one grow old as he lives on?"

"Everything's upside down nowadays," Ta Luan said gleefully. "Otherwise how could you grow backwards—getting younger instead of older?"

"None of your nonsense," Old Pao said, staring at him. "Don't you try to get a rise out of me, or I'll soon shut you up."

Achimani straightened up and smiled. When they had first come to help her, their squabbling often puzzled her. By now she had got used to it. Besides, she had got to understand them better. "Fancy," she would say to herself, "they are really on the best of terms, though they

often snapped at each other." When Pao really flew into a temper, she knew, he would keep on sulking in silence.

Kangkunni listened to the men's give and take. Then suddenly he clutched his mother and said with a sigh: "Mother, I feel sad."

"Why," the mother was astonished. "What've you got to feel sad about?"

"You see, how slowly I'm growing!" the child said. My volunteer-grandpa (Old Pao) told me that I could grow taller by swinging myself on the door-bolt in the early morning on New Year's Day. Well, I've been doing it everyday but I've not grown any taller. When shall I be tall enough to carry a rifle, Mother?"

Everybody burst out laughing.

"Why should you worry about that?" Ta Luan said. "You've grown so old, already, that your teeth have begun to fall out."

The boy promptly clamped his small mouth tight shut.

"No use closing your mouth now. It's too late," Ta Luan said laughing. "Two teeth right in the middle have disappeared. Is it because you've been naughty and have fallen down?"

Kangkunni was on the point of opening his mouth in a laugh. Then, awakening to the risk he was taking, he quickly covered his mouth with his hand: "You're the one who's being naughty!" he quipped. Then turning round, he ran away.

"Just like his Dad," his mother said quietly, looking tenderly at her son's back.

"Any letters from his Dad?" Ta Luan asked.

"No," the mother said in a low voice, suddenly stopping her work on the hedge. "He's in the People's Army." She believed that her husband was still living and fighting for the freedom of Korea. Letters or no letters, in her heart her husband would live and fight for ever.

A group of men headed by Chin Chiao trooped into the yard. They all wore anti-epidemic masks and were covered in dust. Yao Chih-lan brought up the rear, her uniform badly torn.

Ta Luan waved them to stop because Wu Chen hadn't gone to bed until daybreak. "What's the matter? What's all the hurry?" he asked.

"Haven't you woken up yet?" a nurse snapped. "The enemy's been spreading bacteria. . . ." Then she went on to say that on Wu's instructions they had been scouring the hill for half of the night. At daybreak they came upon many leaflets which the enemy had dropped into the big pine woods beyond the hill. As warnings had previously been issued that such leaflets carried bacteria, they gathered them together and burnt them to ashes. Later, in the oak woods they found a dead fish, almost a foot long, with flies humming around it. Needless to say, this, too, had been dropped by the enemy. So they dug a deep hole and buried it.

"Bastards!" Old Pao cursed from the roof. "If they were real soldiers, they'd fight us man to man. Who's afraid of bacteria?"

"They use bugs just because they're no good as soldiers," Chin Chiao said, taking off his mask and brushing the dust off his clothes. "The five campaigns have crushed them and forced them to accept the truce talks. They're so afraid of peace, they'll do anything to gain time."

Wu Chen was woken up by their talking. He called them in. Yao Chih-lan was tired and stayed outside. She had changed a lot. Outwardly she was still very much the same slender, wide-eyed girl, with two plaits hanging down her back. But there was no childish air about her any more. She looked dignified and calm. She was decidedly mature. She no longer needed to pretend to be grown-up. Not for a single minute had she forgotten Tien-pao, but she had never mentioned him or wept over his death. She would remember him for ever and go on fighting.

A brief meeting was held in the room. Yao Chih-lan's name was mentioned and Wu Chen called her in.

"You're tired, Chih-lan," Wu Chen said, looking at her searchingly. "You're overworked, I know. You take over the other girls' work when they're ill and you're always offering to do this, that and the other. You must take a bit more care of yourself, you know."

"That's nothing," Chih-lan said. "Getting tired doesn't do you any harm, nor does a little bit of extra work."

"If you don't take my advice, I'll have to order you to rest," said Wu, half seriously. "You are right in not caring too much about yourself; but it's my duty to look after you."

Yao Chih-lan smiled faintly.

A nurse who had come with the group caught sight of the picture leaning against the *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*. "Whose baby, yours —such a big chap already?" she asked smiling.

"Looks like me, doesn't he?" Wu said triumphantly.

"Yes, he's the image of you," the nurse said, still smiling. "His big, bright eyes are exactly like yours. What's his name?"

"He is called Ho Ping,"* Wu said, his mouth stretching into a broad smile as if his son's small hand were tickling him. This was not the first time he experienced this curious feeling. For reasons he himself could not tell, a smile came over his face whenever he mentioned his son. "My little son," he often said to himself, "you are my blood and flesh, my self in another form. For the sake of your life and your future, I'll never hesitate to go to the forefront to defend you—to defend Peace."

A thunderous noise came out of the sky, and high in the air, our "little swallows," our jet fighters, came flying. One, two, three . . . soon they were all over the sky. Machineguns rattled. There was a battle in the air. In no time the enemy planes were surrounded by the "little

*Chinese for "Peace."

swallows." Machineguns barked again, and black smoke rose from one of the enemy planes. It wavered, then fell down, down into the Yellow Sea while another vainly struggled to escape.

More "little swallows" rose in the air, circling and breathing white smoke. Higher and higher they flew and soon went out of sight. Nothing but puffs of white smoke were left hanging in the sky, forming rings around each other. Gradually the rings of smoke broadened out and faded into a light haze.

Translated by Yuan Ko-chia

REMINISCENCES

LU HSUN

Of the four essays of Lu Hsun published here, the first three, "The Fair of the Five Fierce Gods," "Wu Chang, or Life-is-Transient," and "Mr. Fujino," are from "Dawn Blossoms Plucked at Dusk," a collection of ten essays published in 1926 which take as their theme episodes from Lu Hsun's early life. The last one, "The Hanging Woman," written in 1936 not long before his death, is also a reminiscence.

Lu Hsun had a passionate love for the labouring people of his country. This love, grounded in his revolutionary democratic ideals, grew out of the emotional ties which bound him from childhood to the common people and their culture—ties which could never be broken. One characteristic of Lu Hsun's essays is the depth of his feeling for the beauty of childhood, the charm of his native province, the character of simple working folk and their cherished customs and wisdom.

Such essays are extremely difficult to render into another language; but we have attempted to translate a few of them in order to give our readers some idea of Lu Hsun's writing in this genre.

THE FAIR OF THE FIVE FIERCE GODS

In addition to New Year and the other festivals, we children looked forward to the temple fairs in honour of certain gods. But my home was rather out of the way, so not till the afternoon did the processions pass our door, by which time the retinue had dwindled away until there was almost nothing left of it. Often, after hours of craning our necks and waiting, all we saw was some dozen men running hastily past, carrying an effigy of a god with a golden, blue or crimson face. And that was all.

I always hoped that *this* procession would be bigger and better than the last, but the result was invariably more or less the same. And all I was left with was a souvenir bought for one copper before the god passed by—a whistle made of a bit of clay, a scrap of coloured paper, a split bamboo and two or three cock's feathers. This whistle, known as a "tootle-toot," produced a piercing blast, and I blew it lustily for two or three days.

Now when I read Chang Tai's *Reminiscences of the Past,* I am struck by the splendour of temple fairs in his time, even if these Ming Dynasty writers do tend to exaggerate. We still welcome the dragon king today when we pray for rain, but it is very simply done, with only some dozen men carrying a huge silk dragon and making it twist and coil while some village boys dress up as sea monsters. In the old days they acted plays, and it was most spectacular. Here is Chang Tai's description of a pageant from *Water Margin*:*

". . . They went out in all directions to find one fellow who was short and swarthy, another who was tall and hefty, a mendicant friar, a fat monk, a stout woman and a slender one. They looked for a pale face too and a head set askew, a red moustache and a handsome beard, a strong, dark man and one with ruddy cheeks and a beard that covered his chest. They searched high and low in the town, and if they failed to find any character they went outside the city walls, to the villages and hamlets in the hills, even to neighbouring prefectures and counties. A high price was paid to the thirty-six who played the heroes and heroines of Liangshan, but each looked his part to the life, and they went out in force on horseback and on foot. . . ."

Who could resist watching such a lifelike pageant of the men and women of days gone by? The pity is that such brave shows disappeared long ago along with the Ming Dynasty.

Though these processions were not prohibited by the authorities—unlike women's long gowns in Shanghai today or the discussion of politics in Peking—still, women and children were not allowed to watch them, and educated people or the so-called literati seldom went to look on either. Only loafers and idlers would gather before the temple or yamen to watch the fun; and since most of my knowledge of these festivities comes from their accounts it is not the first hand observation so much valued by researchers.** I do, however, remember once witnessing a rather fine show myself. First came a boy on horseback called The Announcer. Then, after a considerable interval, The High Pole

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**Shui Hu,* the famous novel by Shih Nai-an describing the heroic outlaws of Liangshan during the Sung Dynasty (960-1279).

**This and various other allusions in these essays are to some intellectuals who supported the warlords in their repression of progressives, and posed as "upright gentlemen," champions of justice or scholars dedicated to research work. One of the prominent members of this group was Professor Chen Yuan.

arrived. This was a great bamboo pole to which a long banner was attached, and it was carried in both hands by a huge fat man dripping with perspiration. When in the mood he would balance the pole on his head or teeth, or even on the tip of his nose. He was followed by stilt-walkers, children on platforms carried by men, and other children on horseback, all masquerading as characters from operas. There were people dressed in red like felons too, loaded with cangues and chains, some of whom were also children. To me each part was glorious and each participant extremely lucky—I no doubt envied them this chance to show off. I used to wish I could have some serious illness, so that my mother would go to the temple to promise the god that I would masquerade as a felon. . . . So far, though, I have failed to have any association with these processions.

Once I was going to Tungkuang Village for the Fair of the Five Fierce Gods. This was a great occasion in my childhood, for this fair was the grandest in the whole county and Tungkuang Village was very far from my home, more than sixty *li* by boat after you left the town. There were two remarkable temples there. One was the Temple to Mistress Mei, the virgin mentioned in the *Tales of Liao-chai** who remained unmarried after the death of her betrothed and became a goddess after she died, but then appropriated someone else's husband. On the shrine, sure enough, the images of a young man and woman were smiling at each other, counter to all the laws of propriety. The other was the Temple of the Five Fierce Gods, the very name of which was strange enough. According to those with a passion for research, these were the Wu Tung gods who play such havoc with women. There is no conclusive proof of this, however. The images were five men, who did not look particularly fierce; and behind them sat five wives in a row, this intermingling of sexes falling far short of the strict segregation practised in Peking theatres. In fact, this was counter to all the laws of propriety too; but since these were the Five Fierce Gods, nothing could be done about it. They were obviously an exception to the rule.

Since Tungkuang Village was a long way from the town, we all got up at dawn. The big boat with three windows booked the night before was already moored at the harbour, and to it our man started carrying the chairs, food, a stove for brewing tea, and a hamper of cakes. Laughing and skipping, I urged him to get a move on. Suddenly from his respectful expression I knew there was something up. I looked round and saw my father standing behind me.

"Go and fetch your book," he said slowly.

The book he meant was the *Rhymed History*** which served as my

*A collection of short stories by Pu Sung-ling (1640-1715).

**By Wang Ssu-yun of the Ching Dynasty (1644-1911). This book gave a rhymed account of Chinese history to the end of the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644).

primer. I had no other book. In our district children started school when their years were odd not even: that is how I know I must have been seven at the time.

With trepidation I fetched the book. He made me sit beside him at the table in the centre of the hall and read to him sentence by sentence. Inwardly quaking, I read to him sentence by sentence.

Two sentences made one line, and I must have read twenty or thirty lines.

"Learn them by heart," he said. "If you cannot recite them correctly, you will not be allowed to go to the fair."

This said, he stood up and walked into his room.

I felt as if someone had doused me with icy water. But what could I do? Naturally I had to read and re-read, and force myself to memorize —I would have to recite it too.

*In the beginning was Pan Ku,**
Born from primeval void;
He was the first to rule the world,
The chaos to divide.

That is the kind of book it was. The first four lines are all I can remember. I have forgotten the rest, including of course the twenty or thirty lines I was forced to memorize that day. I remember hearing it said at the time that studying the *Rhymed History* was more useful than studying the *Thousand Characters* or the *Hundred Names,*** for from it you could learn the outline of all history past and present. It is naturally a very good thing to know the outline of all history past and present. My trouble was that I could not understand a word.

"In the beginning was Pan Ku."

Yes.

"In the beginning was Pan Ku."

I read on and learned it by heart.

"In the beginning was Pan Ku,

"Born from primeval void. . . ."

Everything needed had been carried to the boat. The noise and bustle at home had turned to silence. The morning sun shone on the western wall. The weather was clear and fine. Mother, the servant, my nurse Mama Chang or Ah Chang—none of them could rescue me. They had to wait in silence till I had learned my lesson and could recite it. In the utter stillness it seemed as if iron pincers would thrust out from my head to seize that "Born from primeval void," and all the other lines. And I could hear my voice quaver as I read desperately on, quaver like a cricket's chirping on a late autumn night.

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*According to Chinese mythology, Pan Ku created heaven and earth.

**Two primers for children in the old schools.

Everybody was waiting. The sun had risen even higher.

Suddenly I felt a surge of confidence. I stood up, picked up the book and went to my father's study to recite all those lines in one breath. I recited as if in a dream.

"Good. You may go." Father nodded his head as he spoke.

At once everyone sprang into action, breaking into smiles as we set out for the harbour. The servant carried me high as if to congratulate me on my success as he strode ahead of the rest.

I was not as happy as they were, though. After the boat cast off, the riverside scenery, the cakes in the hamper, the bustle of the fair when we reached Tungkuang Village—none of these seemed to me very interesting.

Now everything else is forgotten, vanished without a trace. Only my recitation from the *Rhymed History* is as clear in my mind as if it happened yesterday.

Even now, when I think of it, I still wonder why my father made me learn a lesson by heart at that particular time.

May 25, 1926

WU CHANG, OR LIFE-IS-TRANSIENT

If the gods who parade at temple fairs have power of life and death —no, this is wrongly put, for all gods in China seem able to kill men at will—if their task rather, like that of the guardian god of a city or the Emperor of the East Mountain, is to control human fate, in their retinue you will find some unusual figures: ghostly attendants, the ghostly king, and Wu Chang, or Life-is-Transient.

These spirits are usually impersonated by farm labourers or clumsy villagers. The ghostly attendants and their king wear red and green and go barefoot, while on their blue faces are painted fish scales—perhaps the scales of dragons or some other creatures—I am not quite clear on this point. The ghostly attendants carry steel prongs with rings attached which clang when shaken; and the ghostly king carries a small tiger-head tally. According to tradition, the king should walk with one foot; but since he is simply a clumsy villager after all, even though he has painted his face with the scales of a fish or some other creature, he still has to walk with two feet. Hence spectators are not much impressed by these ghosts and pay scant attention to them, with the exception of some devout old women and their grandchildren, who treat all spirits with proper reverence in order that none of them may feel left out.

As for the rest of us—I believe I am speaking for others as well as myself—what we most enjoy watching is Wu Chang. Not only is he lively

and full of fun; the mere fact of his being completely in white among that gaudy throng makes him stand out like a stork in a flock of fowls. A glimpse of his tall white paper hat and his tattered palm-leaf fan in the distance makes everyone feel pleasantly excited.

Of all spirits he is the nearest and dearest to men, and we often come across him. In the temple of the guardian god of a city or the Emperor of the East Mountain, for example, behind the main hall is a dark room called the Court of Hell; and barely perceptible through the gloom are the images of ghosts: the one who died by hanging, the one who fell to his death, the one who was killed by a tiger, the one who expired in the examination cell . . . but the long white figure you see as you enter is Wu Chang. Though I once paid a visit to the Court of Hell, I was much too timid then to take a good look. I have heard that he carries an iron chain in one hand, because he is the summoner of dead men's spirits. Tradition has it that the Court of Hell in the temple of the Emperor of the East Mountain in Fanchiang was strangely constructed with a movable plank just inside the threshold. When you entered and stepped on one end of this plank, Wu Chang would fly over from the other end and throw his iron chain neatly round your neck; but after a man had been frightened to death in this way they nailed the plank down. Even in my young days it no longer moved.

If you want to take a good look at him, you will find his picture in *The Jade Calendar*.* It may not be in the abridged version, but in the complete version you are sure to find it. He is wearing deep mourning and straw sandals, with a straw belt round his waist and a string of paper money round his neck. He holds the tattered palm-leaf fan, a chain and an abacus; his shoulders are slightly hunched and his hair is dishevelled; his eyebrows and eyes tilt down at the sides like an inverted V. He wears a peaked, rectangular hat, which, reckoned in proportion to the portrait as a whole, must be about two feet high. In front of the hat, where old and young gentlemen left over from the Ching Dynasty would fasten a pearl or jewel on their melon-shaped caps, are these words written vertically: Lucky to meet. According to another version, the words are: You are here too. This is the same phrase sometimes found on the horizontal tablet over the Court of the Venerable Pao.** Whether Wu Chang wrote these words on his hat himself or the King of Hell wrote them for him I have not yet been able to ascertain in the course of my researches.

The Jade Calendar has Life-is-Transient's opposite number, a ghost similarly equipped whose name is Death-is-Predestined. He also appears

*An old religious book, probably dating from the Sung Dynasty, describing the torments of hell as a warning to mortals.

**Pao Cheng was a magistrate of Kaifeng during the Northern Sung Dynasty (960–1127). Respected and loved for his justice, he became a popular character in Chinese folklore and was worshipped as one of the ten kings of hell.

CHEN SHAO-MEI (1908-1954): Ink and Water-colour Scene

in temple fairs, where he is wrongly known as Death-is-Transient. Since his face and clothes are black, nobody cares to look at him. He too appears in the Court of Hell, where he stands facing the wall with a funereal air about him—a genuine case of "knocking against the wall."* All who come in to worship and burn incense are supposed to rub his back, and this is said to rid you of bad luck. I rubbed his back too when I was small, but I never seem to have been free of bad luck. Perhaps if I had not rubbed it my luck would have been still worse. This again I have not yet been able to ascertain in the course of my researches.

I have made no study of the cannons of Hinayana Buddhism, but I hear that in Indian Buddhist lore you have the god Yama and the ox-headed devil, both of whom reign in hell. As for Mr. Life-is-Transient, who summons spirits, his origin cannot be traced to ancient times; yet the saying "life is transient" is a common one. I suppose once this concept reached China, we personified it. So Wu Chang is actually a Chinese invention.

But why is everyone pleasantly excited to see him?

When a great scholar or famous man appears anywhere, he has only to flourish his pen to make it a "model district."** At the end of the Han Dynasty Yu Fan praised my native place; but that after all was too long ago, for later it gave birth to the notorious "Shaohsing pettifoggers."*** Of course, not all of us—old and young, men and women—are pettifoggers in Shaohsing. We have quite a few other "low types" too. And you cannot expect these low types to express themselves in such wonderful gibberish as this: "We are traversing a narrow and dangerous path, with a vast and boundless marshland on the left and a vast and boundless desert on the right, while our goal in front looms darkly through the mist."**** That would be expecting too much. Yet in some instinctive way they see their path very clearly to that darkly looming goal: betrothal, marriage, rearing children, and death. Of course, I am speaking here of my native district only. The case must be quite different in model districts. Many of them—I mean the low types of my unworthy district—have lived and suffered, been slandered and blackmailed so long that they know that in this world of men there is only one association which upholds justice,***** and even

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*In previous articles Lu Hsun described himself as always "knocking against the wall" when he tried to do what he thought right.

**Professor Chen Yuan described his native place, Wuhsi, as the "model district" of China.

***Many of the pettifogging yamen clerks in the old days were natives of Shaohsing, hence the term "Shaohsing pettifogger." In an attack on Lu Hsun, Professor Chen Yuan declared he had the temperament of a Shaohsing pettifogger.

****Quoted from Professor Chen Yuan's open letter to the poet Hsu Chih-mo.

*****Referring to the so-called Association of Educational Circles for Upholding Justice set up by Chen Yuan and other professors.

that looms darkly. Inevitably, then, they look forward to the nether regions. Most people consider themselves unjustly treated. In real life "upright gentlemen" can fool no one. And if you ask ignorant folk they will tell you without reflection: Fair judgements are given in hell!

Of course, when you think of its pleasures life seems worth living; but when you think of its sorrows Wu Chang may not be unwelcome. High or low, rich or poor alike, we must all appear empty-handed before the King of Hell, who will right all wrongs and punish evil-doers. Even low types sometimes stop to reflect: What sort of life have I led? Have I "leapt with rage"? Have I "stabbed other people in the back"?* In Wu Chang's hand is a large abacus, and no amount of superior airs will do a man any good. We demand undiluted justice for others, yet even in the infernal regions we hope to find some mercy for ourselves. But when all is said, this is hell. And the King of Hell, the ox-headed devil, and the horse-faced devil, invented by the Chinese, are all getting on with their job whole-heartedly and fairly, though they have published no significant articles in the papers. Before becoming ghosts, honest people who think of the future have to search for fragments of mercy in the sum total of justice; and to them Mr. Life-is-Transient appears the least of the evils confronting them.

You cannot see Wu Chang's charm from the clay figure in the temple or the printed picture in the book. The best way is to see him in the opera. And ordinary opera will not do: it must be the Great Drama or Maudgalyayana Drama. Chang Tai has described in his *Reminiscences of the Past* what a fine spectacle the Maudgalyayana was, taking two to three days to stage one play. It was already not nearly so grand in my young days, but just like an ordinary Great Drama, starting in the evening and ending at dawn the next day. Such operas were performed to honour the gods and avert calamities, and each one had an evil-doer who met his end at dawn, when the cup of his sins was full and the King of Hell issued a warrant for his arrest. This was the point at which Wu Chang appeared on the stage.

I remember sitting in a boat below such a stage, with the audience in a different mood from usual. Generally, as the night wore on the crowd grew listless, but at this point they showed fresh interest. Wu Chang's tall paper hat which had been hanging in one corner of the stage was now taken inside, and the musicians took up a peculiar instrument and prepared to blow it lustily. This instrument looked very much like a trumpet, being long and slender, seven or eight feet in length; and it must have been a favourite with ghosts, for it was only played when there were ghosts on the stage. When you blew it, it blared: Nhatu, nhatu, nhatututuu! And we called it the Maudgalyayana trumpet.

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*In a slanderous attack Chen Yuan said Lu Hsun always "leapt with rage" when criticized and "stabbed other people in the back" in his essays.

As the crowd watched eagerly for the fall of the evil-doer, Wu Chang made his appearance. His dress was simpler than in the illustration, and he had neither chain nor abacus; he was simply an uncouth fellow all in white, with white face, red lips and knitted, jet black eyebrows so that it was hard to tell whether he was laughing or crying. Upon his entrance he had to sneeze a hundred and eight times and break wind a hundred and eight times before introducing himself. I am sorry I cannot remember all he said, but one passage went something like this:

The King of Hell issued a warrant,
And ordered me to arrest the scabby head next door.
When I asked who he was, I found that he was my cousin's son.
What was his illness? Typhoid and dysentery.
What was his medicine? Aconite, amarantus and cinnamon.
The first dose brought on a cold sweat;
The second made his legs turn stiff;
His mother was weeping so sadly
That I let him come to life for a little while;
But the king said I had been bribed;
He had me bound and given forty strokes!

The King of Hell does not cut too good a figure in this description, misjudging Wu Chang's character as he did. Still, the fact that he detected that Wu Chang's nephew had been allowed to come to life for a little while shows him not to be lacking in the attributes of a just and omniscient god. However, the punishment left our Wu Chang with an ineradicable impression of injustice. As he spoke of it he knitted his brows even more and, grasping his tattered palm-leaf fan and hanging his head, he started to dance like a duck swimming in the water.

Nhatu, nhatu, nhatu-nhatu-nhatututuu! The Maudgalyayana trumpet also wailed on in protest against this unendurable wrong.

So Wu Chang made up his mind:

Now I shall let no man off,
Not though he is surrounded by a wall of bronze or iron,
Not though he is a kinsman of the emperor himself!

He has no mercy now. But this hardness was forced upon him by the punishment he received from the King of Hell. Of all the ghosts, he is the only one with any human feeling. If we ever become ghosts, he will naturally be the only one with whom we can make friends.

I still remember distinctly how in my home town, with those other low types, I enjoyed watching this ghostly yet human, just yet merciful, frightening yet lovable Wu Chang. We enjoyed the distress or laughter on his face, the bravado and jokes that fell from his lips.

The Wu Chang in temple fairs was not quite the same as on the stage. He went through certain motions but did not speak, as he followed

a sort of clown who carried a plate of food. Wu Chang wanted to eat, but the clown would not give him the food. There were two additional characters as well—the wife and the child. All low types have this common failing: they like to do to others as they would be done by. Hence they will not let even a ghost be lonely, but pair them all off; and Wu Chang was no exception. His better half was a handsome though rather countrified woman who was known as Sister-in-law Wu Chang. Judging by this mode of address, Wu Chang must belong to our own generation. No wonder he did not give himself any professorial airs. Then there was a boy in a smaller tall hat and smaller white clothes. Though only a child, his shoulders were already slightly hunched up while his eyes and eyebrows slanted down. Obviously he was Wu Chang Junior, though everyone called him Ah-ling and showed him little respect—perhaps because he was Sister-in-law Wu Chang's son by a former husband? In that case, though, how could he look so like Wu Chang? Well, it is hard to fathom the ways of ghosts and spirits, and we shall simply have to leave it at that. As for why Wu Chang had no children of his own, this is easy to explain now. Spirits can foresee the future. He must have feared that if he had many children gossips would try to use this as circumstantial evidence to prove that he had accepted Russian roubles. Hence he not only studies birth control but practises it as well.

The scene with the food is called "The Send Off." Because Wu Chang is the summoner of spirits, the relatives of anyone who dies have to give him a farewell feast. As for not allowing him to eat, this is just a bit of fun in the temple fairs and not the case in fact. But everyone likes to have a bit of fun with Wu Chang, because he is so frank, outspoken and human. If you want a true friend, you will find few better than him.

Some say he is a man who goes to the spirit world, in other words a human being whose spirit serves in hell while he is asleep. That is why he looks so human. I remember a man who lived in a cottage not far from my home, who claimed he was such a Wu Chang, and incense and candles were burnt outside his door. I noticed, though, he had an unusually ghostly expression. Could it be that when he became a ghost in the nether regions his expression became more human? Well, it is hard to fathom the ways of ghosts and spirits, and we shall simply have to leave it at that.

June 23, 1926

MR. FUJINO

Tokyo was not so extraordinary after all. When cherry blossom shimmered in Ueno, from the distance it really resembled light, pink clouds; but under the flowers you would always find groups of short-term "students from the Chinese Empire," their long queues coiled on top of their heads upraising the crowns of their student caps to look like Mount Fujiyama. Others had undone their queues and arranged their hair flat on their heads, so that when their caps were removed it glistened for all the world like the lustrous locks of young ladies; and they would toss their heads too. It was really a charming sight.

In the gatehouse of the Chinese Students' Union there were always some books on sale, and it was worth going there sometimes. In the mornings you could sit and rest in the foreign-style rooms inside. But towards the evening the floor of one room would often be shaken by a deafening tramp of feet, and dust would fill the whole place. If you questioned those in the know, the answer would be: "They are learning ball-room dancing."

Then why not go somewhere else?

So I went to the Medical College in Sendai. Soon after leaving Tokyo I came to a station called Nippori; somehow or other, even now I remember the name. The next place I remember was Mito, where Chou Shunshui who remained loyal to the Ming Dynasty after its downfall died in exile. Sendai was a small market town, very cold in the winter, with as yet no Chinese students studying there.

No doubt the rarer a thing the higher its value. When Peking cabbage is shipped to Chekiang, it is hung upside-down in the green-grocer's by a red string tied to its root, and given the grand title "Shantung Vegetable." When the aloe which grows wild in Fukien comes to Peking, it is ushered into a hot-house and given the beautiful name "Dragon-tongue Orchid." In Sendai I too enjoyed such preferential treatment; for not only did the school not ask me for fees, but several members of the staff even showed great concern over my board and lodging. At first I stayed in an inn next to the gaol, where although the early winter was already quite cold there were still a good many mosquitoes, so I learned to cover myself completely with the quilt and wrap my clothes round my head, leaving only two nostrils exposed through which to breathe. In this area, shaken by my continuous breathing, mosquitoes could find no place to bite; thus I slept soundly. The food was not bad either. But one of our staff thought that since this inn also catered for the convicts, it was not fitting for me to stay there; and he pleaded with me earnestly time and again. Though I considered the fact that this inn also catered for the convicts had nothing to do with me, I could not ignore his kindness, so I had to look for a more fitting place. Thus I moved to another house a

long way from the gaol, where unfortunately I had to drink taro tuber soup every day, which I found rather hard to swallow.

After this I met many new teachers and attended many new lectures. The anatomy course was taught by two professors. First came osteology. There entered a dark, lean instructor with a moustache, who was wearing glasses and carrying under his arm a pile of books, large and small. Having set the books on the table, in measured and most rhythmic tones he introduced himself to the class:

"My name is Genkuro Fujino. . . ."

Some students at the back started laughing. He went on to outline the history of the development of anatomical science in Japan, those books, large and small, being the chief works published on this subject from the earliest time till then. There were first a few books in old-fashioned binding, then some Chinese translations reprinted in Japan. So they had not started translating and studying new medical science any earlier than in China.

Those sitting at the back and laughing were students who had failed the previous term and been kept down, who after one year in the college knew a great many stories. They proceeded to regale the freshmen with the history of every professor. This Mr. Fujino, they said, dressed so carelessly that he sometimes even forgot to put on a tie. Because he shivered all winter in an old overcoat, once when he travelled by train the conductor suspected him of being a pickpocket and warned all the passengers to be on their guard.

What they said was probably true: I myself saw him come to class once without a tie.

A week later, on a Saturday I think, he sent his assistant for me. I found him in his laboratory sitting amid skeletons and a number of separate skulls—he was studying skulls at the time and later published a monograph on this subject in the college journal.

"Can you take notes of my lectures?" he asked.

"I can take some."

"Let me see them."

I gave him the notes I had taken, and he kept them, to return them a day or two later with the instruction that henceforth I should hand them in every week. When I took them back and looked at them, I received a great surprise, and felt at the same time both embarrassed and grateful. From beginning to end my notes had been supplemented and corrected in red ink. Not only had he added a great deal I had missed, he had even corrected every single grammatical mistake. And so it went on till he had taught all the courses for which he was responsible: osteology, angiology, neurology.

Unfortunately, I was not in the least hard-working, and was sometimes most self-willed. I remember once Mr. Fujino called me to his

laboratory and showed me a diagram in my notes of the blood vessels of the forearm. Pointing at this, he said kindly:

"Look, you have moved this blood vessel a little out of place. Of course, when moved like this it does look better; but anatomical charts are not works of art, and we have no way of altering real things. I have corrected it for you, and in future you should copy exactly from the blackboard."

I was very stubborn, however. Though I assented, I was thinking:

"My diagram was a good drawing. As for the true facts, of course I can remember them."

After the annual examination I spent the summer enjoying myself in Tokyo. By early autumn, when I went back to the college, the results had long since been published. I came halfway down the list of more than a hundred students, but I had not failed. This term Mr. Fujino's courses were practical anatomy and topographic anatomy.

After roughly a week of practical anatomy, he sent for me again and looking very gratified said, still in the most rhythmic tones:

"Having heard what respect the Chinese show to spirit, I was afraid you might be unwilling to dissect corpses. Now my mind is at rest, since this is not the case."

One day the executives of the students' union came to my hostel and asked to borrow my lecture notes. I found them and handed them over, but they merely looked through the notes without taking them away. As soon as they left, however, the postman delivered a bulky envelope, and when I opened it, the first line read:

"Repent!"

This was probably a quotation from the New Testament, but it had recently been used by Tolstoy. It was then the time of the Russo-Japanese War, and Count Tolstoy wrote to both the Russian tsar and the Japanese mikado, opening his letter with this word. The Japanese papers denounced him roundly for his presumption; patriotic youths were most indignant too, though they had been influenced by him without knowing it. The rest of my letter was to the effect that the questions for our anatomy test the previous year had been marked by Mr. Fujino on my lecture notes, and it was because I knew them beforehand that I was able to pass. The letter was unsigned.

Then I recalled an incident a few days earlier. Because there was to be a meeting of our whole class, the students' executive had written an announcement on the blackboard, concluding with the words: "Please come without fail, and let there be no leakage." The word "leakage" was underlined. Though I thought at the time that this underlining was funny, I paid no attention to it; now I realised it was directed against me too, implying that I had got hold of the questions through some leakage on the part of our teacher.

I reported this to Mr. Fujino. A few students who knew me well

were indignant too, and we protested to the executives against their rudeness in examining my notes under another pretext, and demanded that they publish the results of their investigation. So finally the rumour died, the executives tried by every means to recover that anonymous letter, and in the end I returned them their Tolstoyan missive.

China is a weak country, therefore the Chinese must be an inferior people, and for a Chinese to get more than sixty marks could not be due simply to his own efforts. No wonder they suspected me. But soon after this it was my fate to watch the execution of some Chinese. In our second year we had a new course, bacteriology. All the bacterial forms were shown in films, and if we completed one section before it was time for the class to be dismissed some news-reels would be shown. Naturally at that time they were all about the Japanese victories over the Russians. But in these films there were some Chinese too who had acted as spies for the Russians and were captured by the Japanese and shot, while other Chinese looked on. And there was I, too, in the classroom.

"Banzai!" The students clapped their hands and cheered.

They cheered every film we saw; but to me the cheering that day was unusually discordant. Later when I came back to China I saw idlers watching criminals being shot, who also cheered as if they were drunk. Alas, there is nothing one can do about it. At that time and in that place, however, it made me change my mind.

At the end of my second year I went to see Mr. Fujino to tell him I was going to stop studying medicine and leave Sendai. A shadow crossed his face and he seemed on the point of speaking, but then thought better of it.

"I want to study biology, so what you have taught me, sir, will still be useful." As a matter of fact, I had no intention of studying biology; but seeing he looked rather sad I told this lie to comfort him.

"I fear subjects like the anatomy taught to medical students will not be of much help to you in the study of biology," he said with a sigh.

A few days before I left he called me to his house, gave me a photograph on the back of which he had written "Farewell," and said he hoped I would give him one of mine. Since I had no photographs at that time, he told me to send him one later when I had taken one, and to write to him regularly to tell him how I was doing.

After leaving Sendai I did not have a photograph taken for many years, and since I was drifting rather aimlessly and telling him would only disappoint him, I did not even dare write to him. As the months and years slipped by, there was so much to tell that I did not know where to start; so though sometimes I wanted to write I found it hard to begin, and I have not yet written him a single letter nor sent him a photograph. As far as he is concerned, he must think I have disappeared for good.

But somehow or other I still remember him from time to time, for of all those whom I consider as my teachers he is the one to whom I feel most grateful and who gave me the most encouragement. And I often think: the keen faith he had in me and his indefatigable help were in a limited sense for China, for he wanted China to have modern medical science; but in a larger sense they were for science, for he wanted modern medical knowledge to spread to China. In my eyes he is a great man, and I feel this in my heart, though his name is not known to many people.

I had the lecture notes he corrected bound into three thick volumes and kept them as a permanent souvenir. Unfortunately seven years ago when I was moving house, a case of books broke open on the road and half the contents were lost including these notes. I asked the transport bureau to make a search, but to no effect. So all I have left is his photograph which hangs on the east wall of my Peking lodging, opposite my desk. At night if I am tired and want to take it easy, when I look up and see his thin, dark face in the lamplight, as if about to speak in rhythmic tones, my better nature asserts itself and my courage returns. Then I light a cigarette, and write some more of those articles so hated and detested by "upright gentlemen."

October 12, 1926

THE HANGING WOMAN

I believe it was Wang Ssu-jen at the end of the Ming Dynasty who said: "Kuaichi* is the home of revenge, not a place that tolerates filth." This reflects great credit on us Shaohsing people, and it gives me great pleasure to hear or quote these words. It is not strictly true, however; for really any description can be applied to our district.

It is a fact, nonetheless, that the average citizen of Shaohsing does not hate revenge as much as those "progressive writers"** in Shanghai do. Just look at our art, for example. In our opera we have created an avenging spirit, lovelier and stronger than all other ghosts. This is the Hanging Woman. To my mind Shaohsing can boast two unique ghosts. One is Wu Chang, so helpless yet careless in the face of death, whom

*The ancient name for Shaohsing.

**Referring to certain progressive writers who misinterpreted the policy of the Chinese Communist Party regarding the national united front against Japanese aggression. In the name of this policy they abandoned the struggle against the Kuomintang and other reactionaries and criticized Lu Hsun for insisting, rightly, that a struggle would have to be waged against wrong ideas whether this concerned the building and consolidation of the united front on a national scale or particularly among writers and artists.

I had the honour of introducing to my fellow-countrymen in *Dawn Blossoms Plucked at Dusk*. Today I will speak of the other.

The Hanging Woman may be a local name, which would have to be expressed in standard speech as "the ghost of a woman who died by hanging." The truth is, when we talk of ghosts who died by hanging we naturally assume they are females, for there have always been more women than men who met their death in this way. There is a spider which suspends itself in mid air from one thread which is called the Hanging Woman in *Erh Ya*.* This shows that as early as the Chou or Han Dynasty most of those who hanged themselves belonged to the feminine sex; hence the spider was not called the Hanging Man nor given a neuter gender and called the Hanging Creature. But during the performance of a Great Drama or Maudgalyayana Drama you hear the name Hanging Woman from the audience, as well as the name Hanging Goddess. I know of no other case in which a ghost who died an unnatural death has been deified; and this shows how much the people love and respect her. Why do they call her the Hanging Woman then? The reason for this is simple: in the opera there is also a Hanging Man.

The Shaohsing I knew was the Shaohsing of forty years ago. Since there were no high officials there at that time, there were no private performances in the houses of the great. All performances were a kind of religious drama. The gods in their shrines were the guests of honour, while we mortals owed them thanks for this opportunity to watch. For the Great Drama or Maudgalyayana Drama, a yet more comprehensive audience was invited. That the gods came goes without saying; but ghosts were invited too, especially those avenging spirits who had died unnatural deaths. This made the occasion more exciting and solemn. I think it very interesting that the presence of these avenging spirits should make the occasion more exciting and solemn.

I may have mentioned elsewhere that though the Great Drama and the Maudgalyayana Drama were both performed for gods, mortals and spirits, they were nonetheless very different. One difference lay in the actors: in the former they were professionals, in the latter amateurs—peasants and workers assembled for the occasion. Another difference lay in the librettos, the former having many, the latter just the one *Maudgalyayana Rescues His Mother*. Both types, however, opened with the same "Summoning of the Spirits," ghosts put in an appearance from time to time, and in the end the good men went to heaven and the evildoers to hell.

Before the performance started you could see this was no ordinary religious opera, for on both sides of the stage hung paper hats for the gods and ghosts to wear. So when an old stager had leisurely had his

*A dictionary of various terms, probably written during the early Han Dynasty (206 B.C.—220 A.D.).

supper, drunk his tea, and strolled across to watch, he need only look at the hats left hanging there to know which gods or ghosts had already appeared. Since these operas started rather early, the "Summoning of the Spirits" would be played at sunset; hence by the time supper was over the performance would be fairly well advanced; but the beginning was by no means the best. Actually, the only spirits summoned were those who had died unnatural deaths. Of course this included all those fallen in battle, as we see from the ode by Chu Yuan:*

Their spirits deathless, though their bodies slain,
Proudly as kings among the ghosts shall reign.

When the Ming Dynasty fell, many Shaohsing people revolted against the invaders and were killed, and they were called rebels in the Ching Dynasty. Their gallant spirits too are summoned on this occasion. In the gloaming, some dozen horses stand at the foot of the stage while an actor masquerades as the ghostly king with a blue face painted with lines resembling scales, and a steel prong in his hand. There are also about a dozen ghostly soldiers, and for these parts ordinary boys can volunteer. In my teens I served as such a volunteer ghost. We scrambled up the stage to express our wish; then they smeared some colours on our faces and handed each of us a steel prong. When we numbered about a dozen, we rushed to the horses and galloped to the many deserted graves in the open country. There we described three circles, alighted and cried aloud, then lunged at the grave mounds again and again with our prongs. This done we seized the prongs and galloped back, mounted the stage, gave a great shout together, and hurled the prongs to stand transfixed in the floor. Our work now at an end, we washed our faces, left the stage and were free to go home. Of course, if we were found out by our parents we could hardly escape a beating with the split bamboo (the most common implement in Shaohsing for beating children), to punish us for mixing with ghosts and to vent the parental relief that we had not fallen off the horses and killed ourselves. Luckily I was never found out. I may have been protected by evil spirits.

This ceremony signified that the manifold lonely ghosts and avenging spirits had now come with the ghostly king and his ghostly soldiers to watch the performance with the rest of us. There was no need to worry, though. These ghosts were on their best behaviour, and would not make the least trouble all this night. So the opera started and slowly unfolded, the human beings interspersed with apparitions: the ghost who died by fire, the ghost who was drowned, the one who expired in an examination cell, the one eaten by a tiger. . . . Boys could have these parts too if they wanted, but few boys cared to play these insignificant

*An ancient poet, believed to have lived from 340-278 B.C. See *Chinese Literature* No. 2, 1953.

ghosts, nor was the audience much impressed by them. When the time came for the Hanging Ghost Dance, however, the atmosphere grew much more tense. As the trumpet wailed on the stage, a noose of cloth about two fifths the height of the stage was let down from the central beam. The spectators held their breath, and out rushed a man with a painted face wearing nothing but a short pants. This was the Hanging Man. He dashed to the pendent cloth and, like a spider clinging to its thread or weaving its web, swung himself to and fro, worming in and out of the noose. He used the cloth to suspend himself by various parts of his body: the waist, the sides, the thighs, the elbows, the knees, the nape of the neck . . . in forty-nine (seven times seven) different places. Last of all he came to the neck. But he did not actually fasten his neck in the noose: instead he gripped the cloth with both hands and stretched his neck through it, then jumped down and made off. This dance was most difficult, and the Hanging Man's was the only part in the Maudgalyayana Drama for which a professional had to be engaged.

The old folk told me then this dance was extremely dangerous, for it might cause the genuine Hanging Man to appear. So behind the scenes there had to be someone dressed as Wang the Controller of Ghosts, who held up one hand in a magic sign, grasped a mace in the other, and fixed his eyes on a mirror reflecting the stage. If he saw two Hanging Men in the mirror, one must be the real ghost. In that case, he had to leap out at once and beat the false one with his mace so that he fell off the stage. As soon as the false one fell off the stage he had to run to the river and wash the paint off his face, then squeeze his way into the crowd to watch the performance before going slowly home. If beaten down too slowly, he would hang to death on the stage. If he washed off his paint too slowly, the real ghost would recognize him and follow him. This squeezing into the crowd and watching his own people playing on the stage is like the case of a high official who resigns and must embrace Buddhism or go abroad to study foreign conditions—a ceremony of transition which cannot be dispensed with.

After this came the Hanging Woman Dance. Of course this too was preceded by mournful trumpeting. The next moment, the curtain was raised and she emerged. She wore a red jacket and a long black sleeveless coat, her long hair was in disorder, two strings of paper coins hung from her neck, and with lowered head and drooping hands she wound her way across the stage. According to the old stagers, she was tracing out the heart sign; but why she should do this I do not know. I do know, though, why she wore red. From Wang Chung's *Lun Heng** I learned that the ghosts of the Han Dynasty were red. In later pictures or descriptions, however, ghosts do not seem to have any definite colour, while in drama the only one to wear red is this Hanging Goddess. This

*A collection of essays written during the first century A.D.

is easy to understand. When she hanged herself she intended to become an avenging spirit, and red, as one of the more vital colours, would make it easier for her to approach living creatures. . . . Even today, some of the women of Shaohsing powder their faces and change into red gowns before hanging themselves. Of course, suicide is an act of cowardice, and to speak of avenging spirits is unscientific; but these are all foolish women who cannot even read or write, so I hope our "progressive" writers and "fighting" heroes will not be too angry with them. I fear you may make utter fools of yourselves.

Only when she shook back her dishevelled hair could people see her face clearly: a round, chalk-white face, thick, pitch-black eyebrows, dark eyelids, crimson lips. I have heard that in the opera of some prefectures in eastern Chekiang the Hanging Goddess also has a false tongue several inches long lolling out; but we do not have this in Shaohsing. It is not that I want to favour my own district, but I do think it is better without the tongue. And compared with the present fashion of slightly darkening the eyelids, we can say her make-up is more thorough-going and charming. Only her lower lip should curve slightly upwards to form a triangular mouth, and this is not bad-looking either. If in the dim light after midnight a woman with a powdered face and red lips like this appeared faintly in the distance, old as I am I might still run over to look at her; though I doubt if I would be tempted to hang myself. She shrugged her shoulders slightly, looked around and listened as if startled, happy or angry. At last in mournful tones she began singing slowly:

I was a daughter of the Yang family,
Ah me, unhappy me! . . .

What followed I do not know. Even these lines I have just learned from Keh-shih.* At any rate, the drift of her song was that she had become a child-bride and been so cruelly treated that she was forced to hang herself. As her song ended there was the sound of distant wailing from another woman who was weeping bitterly over her wrongs and preparing to kill herself. The Hanging Woman was overjoyed to hear this, and wanted to make this woman take her place. Just then, however, out jumped the Hanging Man and declared the new ghost must take *his* place instead. From words they fell to blows, and naturally the weaker sex was outmatched; but luckily at this juncture Wang the Controller of Ghosts appeared on the scene. Though not a handsome man, he was a fervent supporter of the feminine cause; so with one blow of his mace he killed the Hanging Man, setting the Hanging Woman free to go about her business.

The old folk told me that in ancient times the same number of men hanged themselves as women; but after the Controller of Ghosts killed the

*Alias of Chou Chien-jen, Lu Hsun's younger brother.

Hanging Man, few men committed suicide in this way. Again, in ancient times there were forty-nine (seven times seven) different places on the body by which you could hang yourself; it was only after the Controller of Ghosts killed the Hanging Man that the neck became the single fatal spot. Chinese ghosts are peculiar this way: after becoming ghosts they can die again. In our district we call this sort the ghosts of ghosts. But if the ghostly Hanging Man was already killed, why need we fear his appearing during the dance? I cannot understand the logic of this, and when I asked the old folk they could give no satisfactory explanation.

I must say Chinese ghosts have one bad habit, that is this practice of finding substitutes. This is pure selfishness. If not for this, we could mix with them quite at our ease. This being the custom, however, even the Hanging Woman is no exception, and sometimes in her search for a successor she forgets to take revenge. In Shaohsing we cook rice in iron pans over firewood and straw. When the soot beneath the pan becomes too thick, the heat will not penetrate; thus we often find the soot scraped off on the ground. It always lies scattered, though, for no countrywoman will take the easy way of setting the pan upside-down on the ground and scraping the soot off round it to form a black circle. This is because the Hanging Goddess makes her noose to lure folk to death out of just such soot. To scatter the soot is some sort of passive resistance, aimed merely at preventing her finding a substitute, not for any fear of her taking revenge. Even if the oppressed are not bent on taking revenge, at least they do not fear lest others take revenge on them. Only those assassins and their stooges who secretly suck men's blood and devour their flesh will give such advice as "Do not take revenge" or "Forgive past injuries." This year I have seen more clearly into the secret thoughts of these creatures with human faces.

September 19 and 20, 1936

UIGHUR FOLK TALES

Folk tales about Nasrdin Avanti, some of which are printed below, are peculiar to the Uighur people. Through the interesting adventures of Avanti, an imaginary character full of good sense, we see the humour and intelligence of the Uighurs, their hatred of injustice and their support for righteousness. The other three short stories given here are also very popular among the Uighurs. The reader can perhaps notice with interest that in some respects they resemble European folk tales.

STORIES ABOUT NASRDIN AVANTI

HEAVEN HAS EYES TO SEE

One day, when Avanti's wife had washed his shirt, she hung it up to dry on a log in the yard.

Avanti came home in the evening, so exhausted that he walked through the yard and into his room without as much as a glance around. The moment he lay down on his bed, he was fast asleep. He woke up in the middle of the night and went out into the yard. In the dim light, the shirt on the log looked like a thief to him. He quietly crept back into his room to get his gun. Then he came out again, took aim and fired. In the cold night, the shirt was frozen stiff, so that it fell from the log with a clatter.

The shot woke his wife. Avanti said to her: "There was a thief in the yard but I shot him. He won't be any more trouble. Go to sleep again now, we'll remove the corpse in the morning."

Next day, getting up early, Avanti found that it was his own shirt that had been shot. He was in ecstasy. Clapping his hands and slapping his thighs, he said to his wife:

"Heaven has eyes to see! Just think—if I'd been inside that shirt when the shot was fired, wouldn't you be a widow by now?"

I'M WRONG

One night, Avanti was passing by a graveyard. Some horsemen galloping in the same direction made him suspicious that they might not be up to anything good. So he lowered himself into a freshly dug grave and hid there. But the horsemen had seen him slip down and were wondering in turn what he was up to. So they came up and shouted at him: "Who are you?"

Avanti put his head out of the grave and answered them:

"Oh, I'm one of the dead men buried in this graveyard."

"And what does a dead man want to be up for at this time of night?"

"Just to get some fresh air."

"Does a dead man need fresh air too?"

"Ah yes, yes. . . . You're right, and I'm wrong!"

So saying, Avanti crept back into the grave again.

EARLY START

Avanti had a donkey that was so lazy it took a long time to make it budge even an inch. One day, a friend of Avanti's met him riding this donkey and asked him where he was going.

"I'm going to the mosque for the Friday Service."

"But it's only Thursday today, isn't it?"

"My dear friend—look at the way my donkey goes! How slow and stubborn it is! I shall consider myself lucky if I can reach the mosque in time for the service tomorrow!"

SELLING A COW

Avanti's wife wanted to sell their cow which was bad-tempered and barren, so Avanti took the animal to market.

Customers came and looked at the cow, but all walked away again without buying her, because Avanti kept saying: "You may not be able to get any milk from this cow, but she's quite capable of horning you!" Why should anybody have wanted to buy the cow after such a recommendation?

A cattle-dealer who had listened for a while was greatly amused by Avanti's naivety and said to him:

"You better let me sell this cow for you."

"You are very kind," Avanti said. "May you prosper! Take charge of her then." With this, Avanti handed him the rope by which he held the cow.

As soon as the cattle-dealer had taken over, he began his spiel.

"Look at this cow—how gentle she is! And not only that—she'll give you fifteen bowls of milk every day. You won't be sorry to have bought her!"

At that, Avanti took the cow's rope out of the cattle-dealer's hand again and said: "If she is gentler than a lamb and gives fifteen bowls of milk every day, why should I sell her?"

THE RING

One of Avanti's friends was a businessman who came to say good-bye one day, on the eve of a long journey. He saw Avanti wearing a golden ring and schemed to get it. So he said:

"I cannot live in peace, Avanti, to be separated from you for a long time. For the sake of our friendship, let me have your ring. Whenever I look at it, it'll be like seeing you near me, and it'll be a great comfort and solace."

But the ring was the only property Avanti had ever had in his life and he didn't like to part with it.

"I'm deeply grateful for your kind sentiments," he replied. "But I too cannot live in peace if I have to miss you for a long time. So be merciful to me! Let me keep the ring. Whenever I look at it I'll think that I didn't give it to my friend when he asked me for it, and so I'll be constantly reminded of you."

ALL RIGHT, NINE YUAN!

Once Avanti dreamt that he was selling a hen, making his customer feel how big and fat his hen was and how much it weighed.

"I'll sell it only for a good price!"

"How much do you want?"

"Twelve yuan."

"Seven."

"No."

"Well, eight then."

And so they kept bargaining. When they got to nine yuan, Avanti woke up. When he opened his eyes, there was no hen and no customer. It had only been a dream! Avanti quickly closed his eyes again and stretched out his hand, saying: "Let it be nine yuan then!"

EXPIATION

Once, Avanti found a stray sheep. He took it home, killed and ate it. A friend of his heard of this sin with which Avanti had burdened himself and asked him:

"What will you say to our Lord about this affair when he calls you before him after your death?"

"I shall say that I haven't eaten the sheep."

"But that won't do. What if the sheep appears to give witness?"

"If the sheep appears? Let it do so, then! I'll take it back to its owner and settle the whole business."

THE POT THAT BEARS YOUNG

One day Avanti borrowed a pot from a neighbour. A week later, he returned it to the owner together with a smaller pot inside it. Astonished, the owner asked him why he had put the smaller pot there.

"Your pot was with young when I borrowed it," Avanti said. "It gave birth to this smaller pot the second day after I brought it to my house."

"That is strange! But, whenever you need a pot again, just come and borrow mine!" The owner happily took both the bigger and the smaller pot from Avanti and went back into his house.

A few days later, Avanti borrowed the pot again.

One week, two weeks, a month passed. Avanti still didn't return the pot. Its owner became worried and went to demand it back.

Avanti met the owner with tears in his eyes and said:

"This must be the wish of the Almighty. Your pot died on the second day after I brought it into my house. I meant to break the news to you forty days after its death, so that you could hold a service for the salvation of its soul."

Hearing this, the neighbour became angry.

"Come now, Avanti! Don't act like an idiot! Is there a pot in the world that dies? Give me back my pot!"

"Ah, it is sad to see how unreasonable you are!" Avanti sighed. "If you believed that your pot could bear young, why don't you believe that it can die?"

THE ONLY REMEDY

A mischievous neighbour intended to make fun of Avanti and told him: "A mouse crept into my stomach while I was asleep last night. What can I do about that?"

"What you must do is to catch yourself a live cat at once and swallow it. There is no other remedy for you," was Avanti's immediate rejoinder.

HIDING FROM THE THIEF

One day a thief broke into Avanti's house. Avanti saw him and hid in a chest.

The thief ransacked the house without finding anything worth taking. In the end he opened the chest and saw Avanti. "Aha!" he said, "and what are you doing inside the chest?"

"I was ashamed that there was nothing in my house that would appeal to your taste. That's why I hid here," Avanti confessed.

WHAT DID THE OWL SAY?

Once Avanti bragged about his talents, and that he also understood the language of the birds.

The king heard about this and took him along on a hunt. On their way they saw a wall in ruins and an owl hooting above it. So the king asked Avanti: "What does the owl say?"

"It said this:" Avanti answered. " 'If the king doesn't stop ill-treating his people, his kingdom, like my nest, will soon be in ruins too, very soon.' "

BAGGAGE OF TWO ASSES

King Tomur and his favourite courtier went hunting and took Avanti along. On the way, Tomur and the courtier felt hot. They took off their coats and put them on Avanti's back. When Tomur saw how hot Avanti then was, he laughed at him.

"Avanti, you're carrying as much baggage as that of an ass!"

But Avanti retorted: "No, my Lord, I'm carrying the baggage of two asses."

THE THIRSTY POUCH

One day Avanti attended a wedding. One of the guests not only ate a lot of the sweetmeats offered, but stuffed his pouch with them. When Avanti saw what he was doing, he picked up a tea pot and quietly, from behind, poured some tea into the guest's pouch. When the guest discovered what Avanti had done, he was not at all abashed but reproached Avanti.

"What's my pouch got to do with you that you come and pour tea into it?"

"I meant no harm," was Avanti's defence. "When I saw how many sweets your pouch had tucked away, I was afraid it would get thirsty. That's why I gave it a drink."

DIFFICULT QUESTIONS

Three tradesmen came once to a certain kingdom and were entertained by the king in his palace. After a few days' stay, they said that each of them had a difficult question to ask of the king. The king listened with great attention to their questions, but not one of them could he answer. He summoned his counsellors, his orators and magicians, but they were of no help either.

Ashamed and annoyed, the king grumbled: "Isn't there a single wise man in my kingdom to answer the questions of our guests?"

Thereupon one man stood up and said: "There is no one who can answer their questions except Avanti. If it pleases Your Majesty, I suggest that he be summoned."

The king immediately issued a summons for Avanti. Stick in hand, Avanti rode straight up to the king on his donkey and dismounted.

"How do you do, Your Majesty! What can I do for you?"

"Answer the questions our guests put forth!" said the king. Avanti readily lent his ear to the questions.

One of the guests asked: "The earth has a navel. Where is it?"

Without hesitation, Avanti pointed with his stick: "Right there, on the piece of ground under my donkey's right front leg."

"How do you know it's right there?" The guest's manner changed with his amazement over the prompt reply.

"If you don't believe me, go and measure it for yourself! If it's even a hair's breadth out of place, you can come back to ask me again!" was Avanti's reply. The guest had nothing more to say, so he stepped quietly aside.

Avanti then asked the second guest to come forth with his question, which was: "How many stars are there in the sky?"

"Count the hairs on my donkey's back and you'll know how many stars there are in the sky," Avanti answered.

"How can you prove that?" the guest asked, trying to confound him.

"If you don't believe me, you can go and count the hairs of my donkey one by one. If there's one hair more or one hair less, come and ask again!"

"How can you possibly count the hairs on your donkey's back?"

"Now you are smartening up a bit!" Avanti said. "How can you possibly know how many stars there are in the sky!"

At this, the second guest also lapsed into silence. Avanti waited for the third guest to ask his question.

"You see the beard I have—tell me the number of hairs in it!"

"If you tell me how many hairs there are in my donkey's tail, I'll tell you how many hairs there are in your beard!" Avanti replied.

Thus, the third guest also had to give up and admit defeat.

THE MOON

Someone asked Nasrdin Avanti: "What becomes of the old moon every time the new moon comes up?"

Avanti replied: "When the crescent moon comes up, Allah cuts up the old moon into little pieces and makes stars of them."

IN ALL DIRECTIONS

One day Avanti's friends asked him: "Why do people go hither and thither in all directions as soon as it dawns?"

"Aiya, isn't it a pity to see how foolish you are!" was Avanti's rejoinder. "Isn't it quite clear? If all the people went in the same direction, wouldn't the earth list on that side and turn over?"

THE SEA

Someone asked Avanti why the sea water was salty.

He replied: "The water in the sea always stays in one place and never flows anywhere else. Our ancestors were afraid that it might turn putrid, so they salted it up to preserve it."

GOOD ADVICE

One day Avanti thought of earning some money. So he took a length of rope, about twenty or thirty feet, and went to the market-place. Just as he got there and stopped among a group of porters, a man came up and said:

"I've a crate full of bowls and cups here. Whoever carries it home for me shall get three pieces of good advice as his pay."

"That's a fine lot of rot!" said the porters and didn't pay any attention to him. Avanti, however, bethought himself: "A thing like money can be obtained any time, but good advice is difficult to get. I better hear what advice he has to give, in order to learn something." So he agreed to carry the crate for the man.

As they were walking along, Avanti said to the owner of the crate:

"How about telling me now what good advice you have to give?"

The owner of the crate said:

"Don't believe anybody who tells you that it is better to go hungry than to eat your fill."

"That's very good advice!" Avanti agreed.

They walked on a further while, then Avanti said: "Well, let's have the second piece of advice now!"

"Don't believe anybody who tells you that it is better to go on foot than to ride on horseback."

"Aiya! That really is excellent advice!" Avanti exclaimed.

After they had gone on for another distance, Avanti demanded to hear the third piece of advice.

"Don't believe anyone who tells you that other porters are even more foolish than you," the man said. But hardly had he finished, when Avanti suddenly let go of the rope in his hand and said:

"And don't you believe anyone, either, who tells you that the bowls and cups in this crate aren't broken!"

A WOMAN'S LOVE

It is often said that true love lasts for ever; true love is strong and unbreakable. It comes spontaneously; no amount of forcing can ever bring about. Now let me tell you the love story of a woman, to illustrate this point. She was born in a small village and her family was poor, but she was beautiful and talented. She had clever hands, too, and could do beautiful embroidery. The flowers and buds she sewed were so pretty and delicate that you could not find their equal anywhere in the country.

She fell in love while she was still a child. He was as poor as she. Certainly he had a room to live in but there was nothing of value in it. However, he was very industrious and by dint of hard work earned his daily meals. He was by no means a clever man; just what we call in the villages a "solid" type. Honest and simple, he never fooled anyone but he tended to believe what other people told him too easily. Having known each other since childhood, they understood one another well, and she loved him with a single-minded devotion. Her parents were agreeable to the match and the two were betrothed. They planned to marry in autumn, when the man would get his wages from the big lord's house.

But you know how it is the world over. Even the village where an outstandingly beautiful and fine girl lives becomes famous. The fame of the girl's beauty spread far and wide, until it reached the ears of the king. Of course the king had not laid eyes on her himself; he was not one to bother with the villages. Someone told him about her beauty, and that was enough for him. He wanted to have her. If she took his fancy when he got her, he would amuse himself for a couple of days; if not he would just cast her aside and look for some other plaything. But there was one thing which already fascinated the king. That was the girl's embroidery, which his courtiers had shown him. He was very taken with the delicate handiwork.

The king's men went to the girl's father. "Your daughter is in luck," they said. "The king wants to marry her."

"My daughter is already betrothed," said the father. "She decided the thing herself, so don't come to me about it. Go to her yourselves." The men approached the girl. I suppose these messengers from the king used words sweeter than the golden oriole's song but the girl's mind was made up. In vain did the messengers plead the king's suit. "Please go back," she said. "I thank the king for the compliment he pays me. But I have no wish to marry him. I'm a poor man's daughter. I would rather marry a poor man and with him struggle for our daily meal. I do not want to live in a palace and feast on fried rice and steamed dumplings. Moreover, if the king marries me, a poor maid, I shall hardly do credit to his honourable name." The messengers were not very pleased with this soft-toned refusal but they had to return to the king. They told him word

for word what she had said. "I'll get her one of these days, come what may!" The king swore, biting his lips with malice.

She married her poor young man and they lived frugally and worked hard. Slowly they saved up eight coppers. "Let us not spend this money on food and drink," she said. "Take it to town and buy some thread." The husband bought the thread and the wife busied herself day and night weaving it into four pieces of ribbon. Her fine handiwork was very quickly sold, and they got 16 coppers for it. He spent 12 coppers on food but with the rest of the money bought more thread. This time she made some super-fine ribbons, which were sold for forty coppers. In this way, thanks to the wife's skilful fingers, they were able to put by a little. One day the girl said to her husband, "Will you get some coloured thread this time? I'll make a tapestry." When she finished the tapestry she sent her husband to the town to sell it, saying, "This tapestry should bring us twenty silver pieces. Take it to any of the forty streets in town, and if you can't sell it, bring it back. But please remember that you must not take it to the forty-first street."

In the town, people marvelled over the beautiful tapestry. They crowded around the man to admire and praise its workmanship. But as soon as they heard the price they went away. Times were not so good and it was not easy to find anyone in town who could afford to pay twenty silver pieces for a tapestry. The husband went round and round the streets, until it was dark; but he still could not find a buyer. He was about to turn homewards when he thought how much time and effort his wife had put into the tapestry. "She would feel so unhappy if no one buys her excellent handiwork," he mused, "I must make every effort to sell it. Even if I'm a bit late home, it's better than hurting her feelings." As he thus pondered his feet led him unconsciously into the forty-first street, his wife's words completely forgotten for the moment.

This street was lined with tall buildings. It was very quiet; not a soul was in sight. "I must be getting near a palace," he thought. Then he remembered that his wife had told him not to go into the forty-first street. He was just going to retrace his steps when a crowd of people came out through a big gate in the wall. They had hounds on leash and hawks on their forearms and looked fierce. In their midst was the king, on horseback. The king spied the young man at once. "What are you doing here? Don't you know these are the palace precincts?" The king's voice boomed like a gong and hammered on the poor man's ear drums.

"I didn't know! I didn't know I was near the palace. I'll go away at once," he said, and turned to walk away. Just then the king noticed he was carrying something in his arms and asked what he had there. "Nothing of importance, just a tapestry," he said. "Let me have a look," said the king. The look produced a lot of trouble because the king had seen the girl's handiwork before and it was something that he could never forget. He recognized at once whose hands had made the tapestry and glared with envy at the man standing before him. "Who made this tapestry?" he asked. The man was taken unawares. As he was a simple, honest soul he spluttered, and then answered. "I made it." All the king's train guffawed loudly. The poor man realized that his lie was not convincing and became even more flustered. "Come, tell me the truth," said the king. "What are you afraid of?" "My sister did it," the man quickly amended. But he knew very well that he had no sister and his tone again betrayed him. "That's another lie!" cried the king. "Now, tell me the truth!" The simple man could see no way out, and had to tell the truth. "My wife made it." At this the king nodded, and asked with a sinister smile, "How much do you want for it? It's a good tapestry." "Twenty silver pieces," said the man. The king took the tapestry and told his men to give him the silver. "I'm going hunting tomorrow," said the king, "and I shall pass through your village. I shall honour you with my presence. Be sure you have some food ready for me."

The poor man went home. The more he thought about it the more he reproached himself for not remembering his wife's words. Oh, why was he so anxious to sell the tapestry, and why must he have gone to that particular street? When he got home, he gave the silver pieces to his wife, but he looked utterly miserable. His wife knew at once that something had gone amiss. "Why do you look so worried?" she asked. He could never keep anything from her and told her all that had happened. The wife was very upset when she heard. "I asked you not to go there. Why must you do it!" said she sadly. "Look, now you've got us into dreadful trouble!" He felt even worse, and was so full of remorse that tears came to his eyes. His wife softened, and tried instead to comfort him. "Never mind, when they come tomorrow I'll hide somewhere. If they ask you where I am, just tell them I've gone out."

Sure enough, the next day the king arrived. As soon as he crossed the threshold he asked for tea, thinking this would make the wife of the house come out to serve him. He was surprised that the husband went himself to the kitchen to make the tea. "Tell your wife to get it," said the king, "I want to ask you something." "My wife hasn't been home for several days," the man said. The king frowned and his face darkened. But on second thoughts he realized it was not likely that the girl was really away from home. She must have hidden herself somewhere. "Ha, you can't get out of my clutches now," he thought with glee. He falsely assumed a friendly air and said to the husband, "Hey, come here and sit down and drink some of my wine with me." The man could hardly refuse such an offer from the king, so he accepted the cup of wine and drank it. Now, the wicked king had drugged the wine beforehand with a certain potion which made whoever drank it fall into a stupor for three to four days. The poor man fell senseless before he even finished one cup.

The king then ordered a thorough search to be made. It was easy enough to find the girl hiding, in such a little place. The king was utterly charmed when he saw her. She was indeed so lovely that it was no wonder people talked of her beauty. No one could ever glance at her without being carried away by her loveliness. The king asked her to marry him. He pleaded and cajoled, and promised her everything under the sun. But the girl maintained a flat refusal. "I am married already. My husband is still living and I still love him. Even if you were to kill me, I cannot love anyone else."

The king flew into a rage. He ordered his followers to tie her up and put her on a horse, so that he could take her back to the palace. "We'll see whether you'll go on refusing me, then!" he thought. The girl became really worried. If she were to let them take her away like this, how would her husband know where to look for her when he woke up? An idea came to her, and she said to the king, "If you insist on marrying me, I must ask you to do one thing for me." The king was beside him-

self with joy. "You have but to say it: not one thing only, but anything you ask." "According to our custom," said the girl, "when a woman remarries, she must worship the gods with *shang** and water or else it will not be propitious." "Certainly, certainly! do whatever you think best."—The king consented with alacrity. So the girl arranged the *shang* into a shape pointing in the direction of the king's palace and put it with the bowl of water down beside her husband. The king then took her away. And every so often, all the way to the palace, she left pointers of *shang* and bowls of water.

Three days later, when the husband woke up and found himself all alone, he realized that he had been tricked by the king, and that his wife must have been seized. Then he saw the water and the *shang*. He understood at once that his wife had left them there for him. He prudently ate the *shang* and drank the water, and set out in the direction of the palace. After a short distance he saw another pyramid of *shang* and a bowl of water. So he ate and drank all the way and met with no difficulty, nor lost his way, until he reached the palace gates.

But there were high walls around the palace, and soldiers were guarding the entrance. How was he to get in? He loitered around outside the walls for a whole day and night, quite unable to think what to do. Then an old woman came along, who, when she saw him pacing back and forth so sorrowfully, asked him what he was looking for. She had such a kind face that he told her everything. "I'll give you a copper," said the old woman. "You buy some thread, needles, combs and mirrors, such as women fancy, and then you can go to the palace gates and peddle your wares. In that way you may be able to see her."

Behind the high walls of the palace, the king had demanded that she marry him as soon as they got back. "Since I've come with you, it means I've agreed to marry you," said the girl. "But at the moment I can't. I have an illness in me. For a month you must not come into my room. When I'm bored I must be allowed to amuse myself at the gates, otherwise I can't get well. Anyway, you've got me to your palace already. There's no call to be so impatient." The king could find no answer to this and agreed to let her have her way.

A few days later, when the king had gone hunting, the girl went to the gate. She heard a pedlar selling his wares and thought she recognized her husband's voice. Full of joy, she went nearer and found that it was really him. He didn't know her, though, because her face was covered with a veil. She called him to her, and asked him a lot of questions about the prices of this and that, so that he would know her by her voice. Then, making sure there was no one near them, she whispered, "Here, take these two pieces of gold. When you meet with a person selling horses on the street, buy them. Three days later, wait for me at midnight outside

**Shang*—a kind of bread common among the Uighurs.*

this wall." She handed him the money and slipped into the palace, glad that no one had seen her.

When the king returned from his hunt, he immediately went to see her, and found her looking cross and unhappy. "What has offended you now?" he asked. The girl pouted charmingly. "Who else but you? You say you want to make me your wife, but what am I supposed to be, here? I have no say in anything." When the king heard this, he produced 41 keys out of his pocket. "Take them, take all of them. You have full charge over them." She accepted the keys and smiled for the first time. "The month you asked for is nearly up. Remember your promise!" said the king. "I know," said the girl, "but there're three more days to go. Why do you hurry me so?"

Three days later the king went out hunting again and she went to the royal stables and picked out two good steeds, and directed a servant to go and sell them in the street. When the servant had left the palace, he met the girl's husband, and sold the horses to him for two pieces of gold. The husband counted up the days on his fingers, and realized that it was already the third day, so that night he led the two horses to the palace and waited outside the walls. The more he waited, the more impatient he became; by midnight there was still no sign of her. An unexpected spell of drowsiness overcame him and he dozed off at the foot of the wall. Just at this juncture, Baldy, the town's executioner, passed by, tipsy and tottering, after a drinking bout somewhere. He saw the sleeping man and the two horses and wondered what they were doing there in the dead of night. Before he had time to interfere, two bundles rolled down from the wall and then somebody jumped down. Baldy recognized the person to be the woman recently brought home by the king. "Aha," he thought, "something's up!" The girl did not look at him closely. She told him to put the bundles on one of the horses, while she quickly mounted another. With a cut of her whip, she galloped off. Baldy hurriedly jumped on the remaining horse and followed close behind her. When they had got outside the town they galloped on for some distance in the moonlight.

The girl looked back and saw that they had left the town far behind. She breathed a sigh of relief. Smoothing back her hair with one hand, she tightened the reins and slowed down her horse. "How did you manage to find me?" she asked her husband. Baldy dared not answer and made a little noise through his nose. The girl felt that something was wrong, reined in her horse to a standstill and waited until he drew near. When she saw it was old Baldy, she was greatly alarmed, and cursed herself for being so careless. After so much effort she had finally escaped from the tiger's den, but only to land in the clutches of the executioner!

But she did not despair. She rode on again and started thinking of a way out. "I had made a plan already," she told Baldy at daybreak. "I have decided to take the first man I come across after I leave the palace.

But you should take a look yourself at your bald pate. You look terribly ugly! D'you think you can marry me, looking like that? I tell you what I'll do. Here're five coppers. Go and get a pan of oil. I'll cure you of baldness, and then we can get married. How's that?" When Baldy heard that not only would she marry him, but would cure him of baldness, he rejoiced that such good fortune had come his way. He went straight away to a village to buy a frying pan, had it filled with oil, and made a fire with some faggots. The girl heated the pan of oil over the fire until it was boiling. She hardened her heart and told herself he deserved a bad end for doing harm to people all the time and then tipped the whole panful of oil on Baldy's head. The executioner was instantly burnt to death.

On she rode by herself. After a little while she met four hunters. The moment they caught sight of her, they started to quarrel. "She must marry me," said one. "She must marry me," said another. "What's the use of you four quarrelling like this?" said the girl. "You know perfectly well I cannot marry all four of you. I'll tell you what to do. Give me your bow and arrows and I will shoot in four directions. The first person to bring me back an arrow can marry me." The hunters were very pleased with this suggestion. Each was confident that he could easily outrun the others. "Yes, this is a good method. Come on, start shooting!" they cried together. The girl picked up the arrows and sent them out in four directions. She had strong arms and the arrows went a good distance. When the four hunters had rushed off to get the arrows, the girl lashed her horse and galloped away.

Further on she came across four gamblers. As soon as they caught sight of her they forgot their gambling and started to quarrel. All of them wanted to marry her. "I'll tell you what," said the girl. "I'll pour a cup of wine for each of you. Whoever finishes his wine in one gulp without getting drunk, can marry me." The gamblers agreed to this, gulped the wine and all became drunk. She quickly made her escape.

It became clear to her that a woman travelling alone would run into endless difficulties. So the girl got out a suit of men's clothes from the bundle she had brought from the palace and changed into them. Now she looked just like a man. That day she reached a town.

Strange things were happening in that town. The citizens were dressed in bright holiday clothes, and were out in the streets, big hunks of meat, live chickens and pigeons in their hands. They were all looking up into the sky as they jostled one another in the crowd. The girl approached one man and asked, "What has happened here? What are you all doing?" "Our emperor is dead," he replied. "Today we release his bird of happiness. The person on whom this bird alights will become the new emperor." Even as he spoke, the bird of happiness appeared, and the people became wild with excitement. A great clamour arose, as everyone cried out, hoping that the bird will come to him. The bird circled

over the heads of the crowd, and then perched itself squarely on the shoulders of the girl, in her men's clothes. The people tossed away the meats they held and surrounded her. Without further ado they asked her to enter the emperor's palace. This was too sudden for the girl. She was not prepared for such a thing happening. She tried to get out of it but the people would not let her. They told her it was a sacred custom, handed down from ancient times and whoever violated it would meet with severe punishment.

So she became the emperor. Her dominion extended over a large area; even the king who had wanted to marry her was under her protection and came within her rule. Amidst the congratulations of her people she began to learn how to deal with the business of state. She was so fair and just in every way that the people became more and more enthusiastic about her. "How lucky we are, to have such a brilliant and good emperor!" they told themselves. Since she brought happiness to her people, they, on their part, wished to make her happy. "Beloved emperor," they said, "as yet you have no wife. Will you not find yourself a fair damsel and get married?" "I'm in no hurry," she said. "I don't feel like getting married yet. When I do I'll let you know." So they had to leave it at that.

One day, while she was busy at work, a minister came and said, "There are four hunters here. They want to bring a suit against a woman who they said promised to marry one of them, but ran away. They thought perhaps the woman had come here. How will you, O emperor, deal with this case?" "Take them into custody for the time being. We can deal with them when we have found the woman," said the emperor. The minister did as he was bid. A few days later the minister came again. "Four persons came today and they too say a woman promised to marry one of them but she made them drunk and tricked them." "We can deal with them when we've found the woman," said the emperor again. A few days later, the king who had wanted to marry her and who was now under her protection as emperor, came. Of course, the emperor had to receive him with the customary pomp and ceremony. She recognized the king at once;

she hated anything about him! "There is a small matter which I beg the emperor to help me settle," said the visiting king. "Talk it over with my ministers," said the emperor and she left him with a toss of her long sleeves. After a while the minister came to the emperor. "The king said he married a woman who ran away from him. Word has come to him that she escaped to our country." The emperor became very angry. "Yet another person looks for a woman? Put him in custody. We'll deal with him when we've found the woman." The minister was a little startled. Was it proper to put a king under custody? But the emperor's mind was made up. "Do as I tell you!" The minister could do nothing but answer, "Yes, yes."

A few days went by. The minister came again. "Today another man came to look for a woman. He is a poor man and very young. O my emperor, I suppose we'd better take him into custody too." "Bring him to me," said the emperor. The minister could not understand his emperor at all, but he had to do as she ordered, and brought the man to her. It was her husband! The man she had longed for day and night, the man for whom she had lost sleep and appetite. But of course he did not recognize his wife disguised as a man. The emperor sent all her attendants away. "You say you are looking for your wife; do you happen to know any special mark on her?" she asked. "Of course I do," said he. "There is a little black birthmark on her breast." The emperor unbuttoned her robe. "Take a look, and see if the mark is like this!" He raised his head and cried out in astonishment. "Is it truly you?" The emperor quickly stopped him. "Hush, do not make an outcry. Today, I shall dismiss you. Tomorrow, disguise yourself as a woman and go and dine in the tavern." The emperor let him go, and the case was finished. The ministers dared not ask any questions.

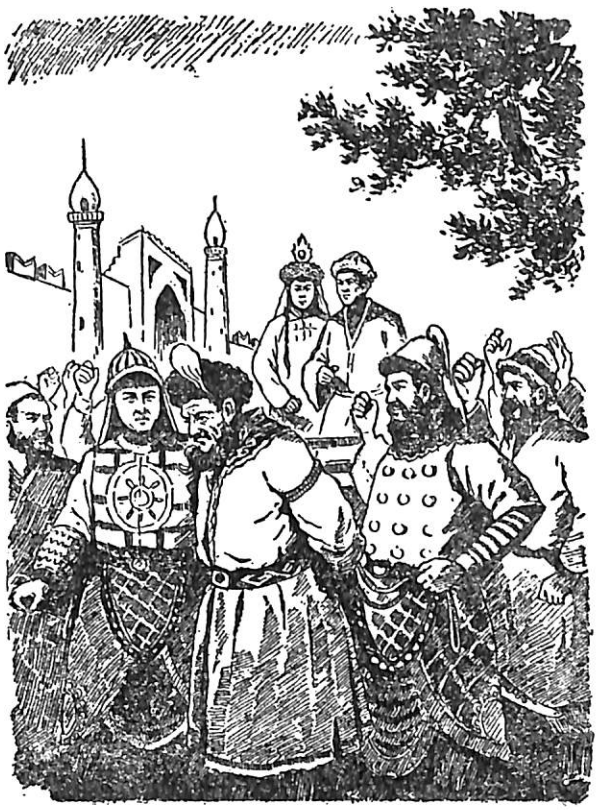
The next day the emperor and her ministers went strolling in the town. She suddenly stopped outside a tavern where a young woman was eating her meal. The emperor stood on the threshold and gazed, transfigured, at the woman inside; for a long time she seemed lost to the world.

"I know you all hope to see me married," she told her ministers on their return. "That woman we saw in the tavern today is the woman for me. I would like to marry her." When the ministers heard this good news they were overjoyed and ran to do as she wished. They promised to negotiate the matter and a match was arranged with all speed. The wedding was as grand as a wedding could be. After the wedding, the emperor taught her husband how to manage the affairs of state. When she thought he had learned everything, she put the emperor's robe on him and sent *him* out to deal with the ministers. On his return, she made him tell her everything that had passed. When she found that he was really managing the work very well she told him, "We can't go on like this all the time, both in disguise. Let us call the ministers here and

make a clean breast of it. It is time, too, that we dealt with the cases of the men in custody."

When the ministers left the court that day, they discussed among themselves why the emperor's face looked so different and wondered if the emperor were not suffering from some ailment. Before they reached home, the palace bell began to peal. It was a signal for the people of the town to gather before their emperor. The ministers hastened back to the palace, where the townspeople had already collected. One and all wondered why the emperor had called them there. In a few minutes the girl appeared on the high platform and told her true story to the whole people. It was impossible not to sympathize with her; all the citizens shed tears of compassion for the brave woman. They asked her to pronounce a just punishment on those who had mistreated her.

"Let us release the four gamblers," said she. "If I had not run into them they would not have tried to harm me. After some time in jail they have had enough. Release the four hunters too; they did not do me much harm. As for the king, he had better stay in jail all his life, otherwise he'll again try to bully other women."



THREE TREASURES

Once upon a time a widow and her two sons lived in a village. The older son was clever and capable and good at making money. He was his mother's favourite. The neighbours also thought highly of him. The younger son was just a lad, straightforward and simple, with no idea of how to make money. His mother called him a good-for-nothing, his brother often mocked at him and the villagers called him "a fool."

One day his mother called him and gave him a few pancakes, saying: "Here, take these and be off. Don't come back until you have made some money. You are not to set foot in this house again, if you come back empty-handed."

The lad put the pancakes in his pocket and set off to win his way in the world. But he did not have the faintest idea of where to go to make his fortune. He roamed about aimlessly and finally came to a river. He sat on the bank, took out a pancake and began munching it. He had just taken a few bites, when suddenly he caught sight of a snake no longer

than a chopstick. It lay on the ground motionless, probably struck down with illness. The lad, moved with pity, fished a small paper box out of his pocket and put the snake in it. The idea popped into his head that perhaps some day he might make a bit of money out of the snake.

He took good care of the snake and shared his cakes with it. Day by day, the snake grew bigger and longer till the paper box could hold it no longer. Then the lad found a pool and kept his pet there. Whenever he had any thing to eat, he came and shared it with the snake. His pet grew plump and big until at last even the pool was too small for it.

One day when the boy came to the pool, the snake said to him: "You must take me to a big river! I'll smother here." This upset the boy, and he confided in the snake: "I had in mind keeping you until you grew up and then I would sell you. You see, my mother won't let me come home unless I bring her something."

The snake thought for a moment, and then replied, "All right, then, if that's what you want. Just take me to a big river, and I'll see that you are well rewarded."

The good-hearted lad wove a wicker basket, put the snake in and slung it over his shoulder. He walked to the riverside. No sooner had he tossed the snake into the river than it became a dragon with golden fins and scales. It darted this way and that, stirring up storms and waves. Then it swam over to the lad. "You are a true benefactor," the snake declared. "Now I will keep my promise to you. Here is a little donkey for you." The instant he finished speaking, a donkey appeared. "Whenever you want money," said the dragon, "just say to the donkey 'Give me some gold or silver.' " The lad was overjoyed and thanked the dragon for his kindness. As he took the donkey's halter and turned to go, the dragon called out after him: "But remember! You must not tell a soul about this."

As the lad and the donkey trudged the dusty road home, night fell, and they chanced upon a little inn by the roadside. The lad entered and asked for a night's lodging. As the innkeeper took the donkey to the stable, the lad said: "Please feed my donkey well but you must not ask him for any gold." The innkeeper agreed but was very puzzled. In the dead of night, he slipped quietly into the stable, and whispered to the animal: "Donkey, donkey, I want some gold." He had hardly finished speaking, when a small heap of gold appeared at his feet. Chuckling with delight, the innkeeper substituted a donkey of his own for the lad's. Both donkeys looked alike, so the change could not be detected. Then the innkeeper hid the magic donkey. At dawn, when the lad arose the innkeeper treated him with great courtesy, led out the donkey and wished the lad a good journey.

When he arrived home, his mother demanded to know how much money he had made. Proudly he announced: "Mother, look at this donkey I have brought with me. He will give me gold and silver any time I ask him. Hurry up and fetch a rug, I'll show you." His mother could scarcely believe her ears. She immediately spread a new rug on the floor. The lad then dragged the reluctant donkey on to it and said: "Donkey, donkey, I want some gold." The animal looked at him blankly. Again the lad said the command, but nothing happened. He became flustered and his mother flared up. "What's all this nonsense?" she fumed. Her son tried to calm her down: "Be patient, mother. I'm sure he'll give us gold in a minute." Instead, the donkey brayed, lay down on the rug and began to snore. He could not be budged. Bursting with rage the

mother gave the lad a sound drubbing and drove both him and the donkey out of the house.

Aching from the beating, the lad's thoughts turned bitterly toward the dragon who he considered was to blame. He went straight to the river and called for the dragon at the top of his voice. Suddenly the water whirled and the dragon put his head out: "What do you want now?" he asked. The lad, very displeased, complained: "Why did you fool me? Take back your donkey, he won't give me any gold." The dragon did not try to explain, but said: "Well, if you don't care for the donkey, I'll give you something else." In an instant he threw a lovely table-cloth on the bank of the river. "Take this," he said. "When you feel hungry, spread it out and it will give you delicacy you want to eat." The lad took the table-cloth, and started home. When he reached the inn, night was again falling, so he decided to stay over.

The innkeeper was so taken aback to see him again that his eyes popped. He was afraid that the lad had come for his donkey. Much to his relief, the lad said nothing about the matter. Before he went to bed, the lad folded the table-cloth and cautioned the innkeeper not to let anybody touch it nor ask it for a meal. The wicked man nodded, but he was laughing in his sleeve, thinking the table-cloth must be another treasure. During the night while the lad was fast asleep, the innkeeper stealthily substituted his own table-cloth for the lad's. With the first cock's crow, the lad got up, took the table-cloth and started out on his journey again.

On arriving home, he was in high spirits. "Everything is all right now," he told his mother. "Just ask for anything you want to eat." Baffled by the lad's words, his mother said: "And what's the good of that?" The lad spread out the table-cloth. "There you are, name whatever you want." Sceptical but curious, his mother laughed: "All right. I'll ask for something simple. Let me have some tasty rice!" The lad turned to the table-cloth and ordered: "Give me some tasty rice!" But no matter how much he pleaded and shouted, nothing happened. His mother's face grew red with anger, and she gave him another thrashing and drove him out.

Again he returned to the riverside, and summoned the dragon. "What an ungrateful thing you are!" the boy shouted. "Why did you make fun of me? If you really don't have any treasure, don't give me anything. But now I have been beaten twice all because of you." The dragon did not question him, but only said: "Wait a minute, I'll get you something

else." In a little while he returned with a wooden stick that he handed to the lad. He warned the lad that when he stopped at the inn again, he must be sure to tell the innkeeper not to say "Wooden stick, wooden stick, beat me!"

The greedy innkeeper welcomed the lad with joy, wondering what treasure he was bringing this time. He did his best to make the lad comfortable. Before going to bed the boy placed the stick beside him and told the innkeeper: "You must not say to it, 'Wooden stick, wooden stick, beat me!'" The innkeeper nodded in agreement, saying, "All right, all right!"

Later when all was quiet, the innkeeper stole the wooden stick and as soon as he reached his room, he cried, "Wooden stick, wooden stick, beat me!" The words had scarcely left his mouth when the stick jumped out of his hand and struck him hard on the top of his head. The innkeeper yelled and screamed but the stick was merciless. It thumped and whacked him again and again, hitting every part of his body. The innkeeper tried to escape, but no matter where he ran, the stick pursued him. He was black and blue, but could find no place to hide. Finally, he ran to the boy's room and begged him to call off his stick. "I can't stand this beating any more. Make your stick stop! I'll give you back your donkey and the table-cloth."

The next day, the lad took his table-cloth and the stick and made his way home happily, followed by the magic donkey.

KING OF THE POMEGRANATE TREE

Amtak was a very poor man, the only thing he owned in all the world was a pomegranate tree. On this tree he lavished his care, tending it and watching over it. When the pomegranates were ripe, he would sit day and night under the tree and keep watch, not even daring to blink his eyelids for fear the fruit might come to harm. If any children tried to climb over the wall, he would give them a scolding as soon as he saw them appear and drive them away; if they succeeded in getting over the wall, he might even teach them a lesson by giving them a good beating. Through this stern manner, he acquired the nickname King. When more and more people heard about him, he became "King of the Pomegranate Tree."

In autumn one year, when the pomegranates were ripe again, he was keeping watch as usual. But he could not keep up his vigilance day in

day out after all. One night, he dozed off. When he woke up with a start, he found some of the pomegranates gone. He blamed himself for not keeping a good watch. But, nevertheless, he couldn't help falling asleep the next night again. This time, a lot of pomegranates had disappeared during his doze. What a grievous loss!

He decided he had to do something about it. So he sat down under the tree and pretended to be asleep; he had to find out who the thief was. After a while, something crept over the wall. From under his eyelids Amtak saw a fox jump down and crouch by the wall. Then, thinking him asleep, the animal slunk up the pomegranate tree without the slightest noise. Suddenly Amtak sprang to his feet and, stretching his arms, caught the animal by its tail, vowing to teach it a lesson for stealing the fruit from his tree.

But the fox was tricky—rolling himself up, he managed to be gone with a jump like a puff of smoke. All that was left were two handfuls of hair in Amtak's hands. Amtak was worried. Mounting guard against the children had been difficult enough; how was he to deal with this fox? An old neighbour of his who came on a visit found him deep in thought.

At the neighbour's question why he looked so unhappy, Amtak pointed to the pomegranate tree and said: "A fox comes and steals my pomegranates. Now I get only half the fruit I used to. . . ."

The old man then advised him: "I'll tell you how to catch that fox! Heat a pot of glue and pour it out at the foot of the wall where the fox jumped down so that he'll get stuck in it when he comes again." The old man's method worked—the fox got caught the very same night. Amtak was so angry that he wanted to beat the thieving animal to death. But the fox begged him very earnestly: "Forgive me, King Amtak! I'll try and serve you all my life! I'll even get you a good wife." When Amtak heard this, he became even more enraged: "Are you stinking fox making fun of me? How can I get married, penniless as I am? Who'll give me his daughter for a wife?" And again he brandished his stick but the fox pleaded with him: "Don't beat me before you've heard me out and know that I'm speaking the truth! Not only will I get you a wife, but she'll be the daughter of a real king." It took quite some time, but finally Amtak let himself be persuaded that the fox was telling the truth and set the animal free.

Thereupon the fox went straight to an old king in the neighbourhood and asked: "Would you please lend me your sieve? The king who is my master has heard that only you possess a sieve that can sift agates and pearls, and since his jewels got dusty and need sifting, he sent me here to borrow your sieve."

Since the old king had heard about Amtak's kingdom, he willingly let the fox borrow his sieve. Then the fox stole some precious stones and pearls somewhere and stuck them here and there into the meshes of the sieve. After a few days, he returned the sieve to the king. As he was thanking the king for its use, he let the sieve drop to the ground, so that the precious stones and pearls rolled out. The princesses and princes immediately rushed to pick them up. The fox feigned astonishment: "Do you really care for such trifles? If I had known that, I would have brought you a whole sieve of them! My lord, King Amtak, has plenty of them!"

When the old king heard this, he conceived a great admiration for King Amtak. He gave the fox a courteous reception and said: "I'd like to marry one of my three daughters to your king. It'll be my daughter's good fortune to be married to the noble King Amtak and it'll also be an honour to me. Would you care to be the match-maker?" The three princesses also indicated that each would have liked to be married to King Amtak. But the fox put them off. "Don't be impatient. I have no idea whether my lord, King Amtak, intends to marry at all. Let me go and ask him. If he's willing, I'll come back and tell you."

Upon his return the fox then told Amtak: "Everything is arranged! The king has promised to marry one of his daughters to you. Now get ready in a hurry, so that I can present you." Amtak leaped with joy, but then the thought struck him: How could he get married without any money? When he talked the matter over with the fox, however, the sly animal assured him there was no need to worry, that there was a way out. When the fox and Amtak reached the big river that flowed around the old king's domain, the fox said: "Go out into the river so that only your head is above water. Don't move, I'll make everything come out all right." Amtak did as he was told. The fox then ran to the aged king and reported: "My lord, King Amtak, wanted to bring you forty camels loaded with precious stones and pearls, but unfortunately the river current was so swift that in crossing all the camels were swept away. My lord, King Amtak, himself nearly drowned. I was able to save him. He is unharmed but, alas, all his clothes have been carried away by the current. . . ."

When the old king heard that King Amtak had come with forty camel loads of presents to marry his daughter, he was more impressed than ever and said: "It's a small matter that the presents are lost. I'm just as grateful to King Amtak as if I'd received them. Now, let's hurry to go and welcome your king!" He called for rich clothes and a horse

to be taken to Amtak while he and his court set out to receive the visitor. Thus Amtak entered the city well-dressed and mounted on a fine horse. The king gave banquets in his honour and celebrations of the marriage between Amtak and the youngest princess continued for forty days.

After his marriage, Amtak one day said to the fox: "I'm married now, but what will happen when I go home? I haven't a thing to live on, and I can't stay here for ever. If the king asks me to take the princess home with me, what am I to do?" The fox comforted him: "Don't you worry! While you're here, make yourself at home and enjoy yourself. Accept whatever comes your way as a matter of course. But be sure not to give yourself away. When the time comes for us to leave, I'll tell you what to do."

Another few days went by and the old king ordered one of his courtiers to escort the princess and Amtak on their way home with a large retinue of men on horseback. Before they got under way, the fox said to them: "Let me run ahead so that I can warn you if anything happens." Running along the road, the crafty animal came across a camel caravan. The leader asked why the fox was in such a hurry and

received the reply that a band of brigands who killed everyone they met were coming, and that the caravan leader better do something quickly for his own safety. . . .

Raising his head, the man saw the dust rising high up into the sky in the direction whence the fox had come. What should he do? Anxiously he begged the fox to find a way of escape for him. Whereupon the fox advised him: "When they come and ask you whose camels these are, just say they belong to King Amtak, then they will not kill you."

The leader of the caravan agreed and the fox ran on. When the train of the princess and Amtak came up to the caravan, the courtier accompanying them asked: "Whose camels are these?" The leader hastened to reply: "They belong to King Amtak." The courtier said in admiration: "What a big caravan of fine camels! How wealthy King Amtak must be!"

Running on and on, the fox came upon a drove of horses. The man grazing them invited the fox to rest a while and asked for the reason of such hurry. The fox replied: "You'd better not ask—I almost lost my life! There are brigands coming, they kill whomever they see and take away their horses." Frightened, the man inquired what he could do to avoid such a fate. The fox then told him: "Say that these horses belong to King Amtak and your life will be spared." With that, the fox ran on. When Amtak, the princess and the courtier came near and saw the fine horses they asked whose they were. With a trembling voice the herdsman replied: "They're King Amtak's." On hearing this, the princess began to calculate in her heart what she would be able to do with all this wealth in future.

On the road ahead, the fox saw a flock of sheep in the distance and shouted: "Shepherd, hurry up and run! Brigands are coming—they'll kill you!" The shepherd was so frightened that he nearly burst into tears and barely managed to ask what he should do, since he couldn't outrun the brigands. So the fox said: "Try and see whether you will be spared if you say that this flock of sheep belongs to King Amtak." When the shepherd said all right, the fox ran on again. The courtier approached with Amtak and the princess, and the reply to his question: "Whose sheep are these?" was that they were King Amtak's. The courtier could not restrain his admiration for Amtak's wealth, but Amtak himself did not know what all this was about.

The fox went on running at top speed, right up to the palace of the King of Demons. Out of breath, the animal darted from room to room till the King of Demons demanded to know what the matter was. The fox then rasped out the dreadful information that King Amtak was coming, fierce King Amtak who had vowed to kill the King of Demons! That he was bringing along a great many soldiers, that even the fox feared for its life, and that a safe hide-out had to be found without delay. The King of Demons became thoroughly frightened and asked the fox quickly to do something for him. The fox then said: "If you hide in the fireplace, you might be safe if I put logs over you to hide you from view." The King of Demons took the advice and jumped into the fireplace. The fox then put a big pile of logs over him and set fire to them. The King of Demons screamed with the scorching heat, but very soon his voice was stilled.

After that, Amtak took possession of the fine palace. One day the fox asked him: "After all that I've done for you, what will you do when

I die?" Amtak said: "When you die, I will put you on my head. I'll never forget you!" A few days afterwards, the fox was found stretched out on the ground in the courtyard. Amtak's wife said to him: "The fox is dead." Amtak replied: "Throw the animal into the ditch!" But before he had finished, the fox walked in and wanted to know why Amtak didn't keep his word. When Amtak saw that the fox was still alive, he did his best to defend himself and vowed: "If and when you are really dead, I shall carry you on my head!" Several days later, the fox died and Amtak did not dare break his word again. So he put the fox on his head. People thought this such a nice idea that they all began to imitate Amtak. And this is the reason why hats made of fox fur are still the fashion today.

FA-HSIEN'S PILGRIMAGE TO BUDDHIST COUNTRIES

Ho Chang-chun

Fa-hsien is one of China's great travellers, and the record of his journey to India in search of Buddhist monastic rules is one of the earliest and important travel books in our literature. Now that Buddhists the world over are celebrating the two thousand five hundredth anniversary of the Parinirvana of Sakyamuni Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, Fa-hsien's *Record of Buddhist Countries* is arousing wide interest and attention, for it describes the early contacts between China and India.

Since the time of King Asoka (274-237? B.C.), Buddhism had spread to Central Asia. By 128 B.C., when Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty sent Chang Chien as his emissary to Central Asia, there was already a fair amount of trade between Bactria and India. And the fact that in Bactria Chang Chien saw bamboo stick and cloth originally produced in western Szechuan, which had been brought from India to Central Asia, proves that there was traffic between southwest China and India either by sea or by the land route.

As trade developed, the Buddhist religion spread. According to Chinese historical records, Buddhism was introduced into China proper during the reign of Emperor Ming (A.D. 58-75) of the Later Han Dynasty. During the second century, more Buddhist monks came to China from India and other Buddhist countries. In A.D. 147, for example, a monk named Lokaraksha from Central Asia settled in Loyang, the capital of the Later Han Dynasty; and other monks and devout laymen came from Central Asia to propagate their religion. Quite probably their evangelizing zeal was the result of the promotion of Buddhism by the well-known Buddhist monarch Kanishka.

During the second, third and fourth centuries, the foreign monks who came to China devoted most of their time to the translation of Buddhist Sutras. At least twenty-five Indian monks engaged in this work before the time of Fa-hsien, and such men made an important contribution to the cultural exchange between China and India. From the beginning of the second to the end of the fourteenth century, according

to the records of the time, more than two hundred monks came to China from the Buddhist countries to translate Buddhist Sutras.

The flourishing caravan trade of that time had much to do with the spread of Buddhism. For instance, Buddhayasa, a native of Kashmir who returned to his own country after translating Buddhist Sutras with Kumarajiva in Changan, sent a copy of some Sutra with a caravan to Liangchow for translation into Chinese. Fa-tu, the famous fifth century monk whose father was an Indian merchant who travelled for many years between India and Canton, was born in the province of Kiangsi. And Fa-hsien, when in Ceylon, saw a white silk Chinese fan taken there by some merchant. Many other facts could be cited to show that there was considerable trading by land and sea between China and her neighbours to the west, and this facilitated the spread of Buddhism eastwards.

Most of the earliest Buddhist Sutras to reach China came from Central Asian kingdoms instead of directly from India, many of them passing through Chinese Turkestan by way of Khotan on the south route or Kucha on the north route, for these were then important centres of Buddhism; we know this because sometimes the translator's place of origin in Central Asia is mentioned in the Chinese text. And since the majority of the first foreign monks to come to China were from this region, their translations were based for the most part on Sutras already translated into Central Asian languages.

By the time of Fa-hsien, however, these texts gradually ceased to be used. This was partly because the Buddhist kingdoms in Central Asia were in a state of decline, and also because more Sanskrit texts were available, while the number of those who knew Sanskrit had increased. According to Fa-hsien, all the Central Asian monks in his time were studying Sanskrit and basing their monastic rules on Indian rules. A movement was therefore set afoot in China to obtain first-hand material, and this is one of the reasons why Chinese Buddhists risked their lives and endured great hardships to make the journey to India and search for Sutras there.

Another reason was the rapid growth of Buddhism in China at this time. The number of monks had increased, and the monasteries were growing larger; therefore Chinese Buddhists all over the country felt the need for consistent monastic rules, and it was largely on this account that Fa-hsien travelled to India. Chinese monks before him who had travelled west in search of Buddhist Sutras had gone no further than north India; but since he found that the monks there handed down their precepts orally and had no written records, he continued his journey to central India. Although some of his companions chose to remain in India, Fa-hsien returned alone to China; for the purpose of his journey was not simply to make a pilgrimage to the land of Buddha nor to seek Buddhist teachers, but to obtain the monastic rules so urgently needed by

monks in China. On his return to China after fourteen years abroad, he intended to go to Changan to complete his mission; but because the political situation had changed in his absence, he had to go to Nanking instead, where he translated some Buddhist Sutra with the help of the Indian monk Buddhabhadra.

Fa-hsien's original name was Kung. He joined the Buddhist order at the age of three and was given the religious name Fa-hsien (Law Manifest). He was already sixty-five when he set out from Changan in A.D. 399, accompanied by nine or ten other monks. He crossed deserts and the Pamir plateau, travelled through north, central and east India, and then to south India, Ceylon and Sumatra, returning by sea to Laoshan in the Shantung peninsula and reaching Nanking in A.D. 413. Some of his companions had turned back, some had died, and some had remained in India; Fa-hsien was the only one resolute enough to press on and overcome all obstacles. He was seventy-nine by the time he finally made his way back to China. In A.D. 414, the year after his return to Nanking, he wrote the record of his travels. And later, by request, he added certain supplementary material to make the version which we have today. His *Record of Buddhist Countries,* also known as *The Travels of Fa-hsien,* gives a complete description of his journey, and is the earliest comprehensive account we possess of the geography, customs and history of Central Asia, India and the Indian Ocean.

Two hundred and fifty years later, Hsuan-tsang (Tripitaka) wrote his famous *Record of Western Regions.* During the two and a half centuries which separated Fa-hsien from Hsuan-tsang, many Chinese pilgrims to India had written records of their journeys; but unfortunately all these works have been lost, although brief references to them can be found in other ancient books. Since Hsuan-tsang wrote at a much later date, he was able to draw on additional knowledge of history and geography, hence his account is richer in content than Fa-hsien's; but the latter's *Record of Buddhist Countries* contains much valuable material.

Fa-hsien went to India during the reign of King Chandragupta II (also known as Vikramaditya) of the Cupta Dynasty. This was the most prosperous period of the Cupta Dynasty; but apart from a few works of sculpture and some coins, the *Record of Buddhist Countries* is probably the only historical record left of that age. Fa-hsien's descriptions of Asoka's stone pillars with decrees inscribed on them, and the other sculpture of that time, provide extremely useful material for research into King Asoka's age. Similarly, he described many of the Buddhist monuments left by King Kanishka in northern India, which were still in good condition when he saw them. Again, we know that Fa-hsien strictly observed the Buddhist practice of remaining in retirement during the summer or rainy season, and from this and what is said in Hsuan-tsang's book, we can deduce certain differences between the Chinese and Indian

calendars. Fa-hsien's attitude towards Mahayana and Hinayana Buddhism also deserves attention; while the places he named in Central Asia, India and the Indian Ocean are of great interest to all who study the trade routes between China and the west and the geography of that region. Above all, his account helps us to understand conditions in many countries in Central Asia and India during the fourth and fifth centuries. Thus Fa-hsien's *Record of Buddhist Countries* is not only an important travel book in our literature, but also a valuable document to historians.

RECORD OF BUDDHIST COUNTRIES

FA-HSIEN

The extract presented here from Fa-hsien's "Record of Buddhist Countries" describes his travels in Central India and Ceylon. The earlier and later sections of this work, which have both been omitted, deal with Fa-hsien's journey through Central Asia and North India and his return to China.

THE LESSER SNOW MOUNTAINS AND THE COUNTRIES OF ROHI, BANNU AND BHIDA

. . . After staying in Nagarahara for three months during the winter, Fa-hsien and his two companions, Hui-ching and Tao-chen, struck south across the Lesser Snow Mountains which are covered with snow in summer as well as winter. As they were climbing the northern side of the mountains, which has no sun, sudden icy blasts swept down and made them shiver. White foam began to issue from Hui-ching's mouth, and he could go no further.

"It is all up with me," he said to Fa-hsien. "But you press on. Don't stay here to perish with me!"

And thereupon he died. Fa-hsien caressed him, lamenting bitterly.

"You have failed in your purpose!" he cried. "Yet such is fate!"

They gathered their remaining strength to push forward again and, proceeding to the south side of the mountains, reached the country of Rohi. Here they found about 3,000 monks of both the Mahayana and Hinayana Schools. And here they stayed for the summer retirement.* The summer over, they descended into the valley to the south, and walked for ten days till they came to the country of Bannu. Here there are also about 3,000 monks, all of whom study Hinayana Buddhism.

Journeying eastward for three days, they re-crossed the Indus River where the ground is smooth and level on both sides. Beyond the river

*It was the Buddhist custom for the monks to remain in retirement during the summer or rainy season.

lies the country called Bhida. Buddhism flourishes here and both the Mahayana and Hinayana Schools are studied. On seeing two monks from China, the people of that country were greatly moved.

"How is it that men from across the border will leave their homes for the sake of the Law and come so far to seek Buddhism?" they demanded.

They therefore provided them with all that they needed, and entertained them according to Buddhist customs.

THE COUNTRY OF MATHURA

Travelling southeast for nearly eighty *yojanas*,* they passed a great number of monasteries with some ten thousand monks altogether. Having passed all these, they reached a country called Mathura where, once again, they crossed the Yamuna River. On the right and left sides of the river are twenty monasteries with some 3,000 monks. Buddhism flourishes there.

All the kings of the Indian countries west of the Desert of Lop are devout believers in Buddha's Law. When making offerings to monks they take off their crowns and, with the members of the royal house and their ministers, serve food to the monks with their own hands. This done, they spread a carpet on the ground and sit down on it in front of the principal monk. They dare not sit on couches in the presence of monks. The rules for this making of offerings by kings have been handed down from the time of Buddha till now.

THE CLIMATE AND CUSTOMS OF THE MIDDLE KINGDOM

The region to the south is known as the Middle Kingdom. The climate is temperate without frost or snow. The people are rich and contented, unencumbered by any poll-tax or official restrictions. Only those who till the king's land pay a land tax, and they are free to go or stay as they please. The kings govern without recourse to capital punishment, but offenders are fined lightly or heavily according to the nature of their crime. Even those who plot high treason only have their right hands cut off. The king's attendants, guards and retainers all receive emoluments and pensions. The people of this country kill no living creatures, drink no wine, and eat no onion or garlic. The single exception to this is the Chandalas, who are known as "Evil Men" and are

*A *yojana* was regarded as a day's march for the army; but in Buddhist canons it is sometimes as little as five miles.

segregated from the others. When they enter towns or markets they strike a piece of wood to announce their presence, so that others may know they are coming and avoid them. Neither pigs nor fowl are kept in this country and no living creatures are sold. There are no butchers or wine-sellers in the markets. Shells are used as currency in trading. Only the Chandala hunters sell flesh.

After Buddha's Nirvana, the kings, elders and lay Buddhists built monasteries for the monks and provided them with houses, gardens and fields, with husbandmen and cattle to cultivate them. Title-deeds inscribed on iron were handed down from king to king, and since none dared to annul them they are still in force. The monasteries are supplied with beds and bedding, food, drink and clothes, so that the monks want for nothing. This is the case everywhere. The monks devote themselves to practising virtue, reciting the scriptures or sitting in meditation. When a monk from elsewhere arrives, the resident monks welcome him and carry his robes and alms-bowl for him. They also bring water to wash his feet and oil to anoint them, and offer him a collation.* After he has rested, they ask him how long he has been ordained and provide him with a room, bedding and other things according to Buddhist law.

Wherever monks live they build stupas in honour of the saints Sariputra, Maudgalaputra and Ananda,** also in honour of the Abbidharma or *Buddhist Commentaries,* the *Monastic Rules* and the Sutras. A month after the summer retirement, all devout families collect offerings for the monks and supply them with collations, while the monks hold a great assembly to expound the Law. The assembly at an end, they offer all manner of incense and flowers at the stupa of Sariputra, and keep the lamps there burning throughout the night. Actors are hired to perform a play in which Sariputra, who was originally a Brahman, goes to Buddha to ask for ordination. The lives of Maudgalaputra and Kasyapa are also performed in this way.

Most nuns present offerings at the stupa of Ananda, for it was he who entreated Buddha to allow women to take orders. The novices for the most part present offerings to Rahula, the teachers of the Buddhist Commentaries to the commentaries, and the teachers of the Monastic Rules to the rules. These offerings are made once a year, each on its appointed day. Followers of the Mahayana School make their offerings to the saints Prajna-paramita, Manjusri and Avalokitesvara.

When the monks have received their yearly offerings, the elders, laymen, Brahmans and others bring all manner of robes and necessities to offer to them. And the monks also make offerings to one another.

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*According to Buddhist rules, one should take no meal after noon. One could, however, partake of light refreshments such as honey or fruit juice.

**Three disciples of Buddha.

These rituals and rules of conduct for holy monks have been handed down without interruption since Buddha's Nirvana.

After passing the Indus River, proceeding towards southern India, it is forty to fifty thousand *li* to the sea in the south. And all this land is flat, without great mountains or valleys, having only rivers and streams.

THE COUNTRY OF SAMKASYA

Eighteen *yojanas* towards the southeast there is a country called Samkasya, where Buddha descended from the Highest Heaven after ascending to preach the Law to his mother for three months. Buddha went up to heaven by the exercise of supernatural power, unknown to his disciples. Before the elapse of seven days, through his supernatural power he flew, and thus Aniruddha with his divine sight saw the Blessed One afar.

"You may go to salute the Blessed One," said Aniruddha to the Venerable Maudgalaputra.

Accordingly Maudgalaputra went to worship at Buddha's feet and exchanged greetings with him.

This done, Buddha said to him, "After seven days I shall descend to Jambudvipa."*

Then Maudgalaputra returned to earth.

At this time, the great kings, ministers and people of the eight countries round were all eager to see Buddha, having been deprived of the sight of him for so long, and they assembled like clouds to wait for the Blessed One.

Then a nun by the name of Utpala thought: "Now the kings, ministers and people have all come here to meet Buddha. I am only a woman —how can I see him first?"

Thereupon, by means of supernatural power, she transformed herself into a holy, universal monarch,** and as such she was the very first to render homage to Buddha.

When Buddha descended from the Highest Heaven, three gem-studded ladders appeared in the air, and Buddha walked down the ladder in the centre, which was made of the seven precious substances.*** The god Brahma caused a white silver ladder to appear at the right side, and on this, holding a white duster in his hand, he attended Buddha. The god Sakra caused a bright gold ladder to appear at the left side,

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*The ancient Indians believed that the world consisted of four continents, the continent in the south being Jambudvipa, or India.

**The Wheel King, Chakravartti Raja or Universal Monarch, ruled over one continent or more.

***Gold, silver, lapis-lazuli, crystal, beryl, red pearls, and agates.

on which, holding a parasol made of the seven precious substances, he attended Buddha. Countless devas followed Buddha to earth. When Buddha had come down, all three ladders disappeared into the ground, only seven steps remaining visible. Afterwards King Asoka,* wishing to know how deep into the ground the ladders had penetrated, sent men to dig down and find out. They went on digging till they reached the Yellow Spring at the base of the earth, yet still did not reach the bottom. This increased the king's faith and reverence, and he built a temple over the steps. On the central step he placed a full-length statue of Buddha sixteen feet high. Behind the temple he erected a stone pillar thirty cubits high, on the top of which he placed the figure of a lion. On the four sides of the pillar, which was clear and transparent as glass, images of Buddha were carved.

Once a heretical teacher came to the monks and contested their right to live here.

Defeated in argument, the monks prayed together: "If this is where we should live, let there be some miracle to prove it!"

As they uttered this prayer, the lion on top of the pillar gave a loud roar as a sign. Then the heretic was frightened and, humbled, went away.

After living on heavenly food for three months, Buddha's body emitted a heavenly fragrance, very different from that of men. So at once he took a bath, and a bathhouse was built here by men of later years, the same which is there today. A stupa was also built at the spot where the nun Utpala was the first to worship Buddha. There are also stupas at the places where Buddha cut his hair and pared his nails, as well as where the three former Buddhas and Sakyamuni Buddha** sat or walked, and wherever there were images or traces of the Buddhas. These stupas still remain. A stupa was also built where Lord Sakra and the god Brahma came down to earth with Buddha. Here are about a thousand monks and nuns, who take their meals together and study both Mahayana and Hinayana Buddhism. At their dwelling-place is a white-eared dragon that acts as their patron. It brings this region rich harvests and rain in season and preserves it from all misfortunes, so that the monks may live in security. The monks, grateful for its favours, have built a house for the dragon and provided it with a seat. Moreover, sacrificial food is prepared and offered to it, and every day three monks are selected to take their meal in the dragon's house. At the end of each

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*A famous Indian monarch of the third century B.C.

**Buddhists believe that a Buddha appears from time to time in the world to preach the true doctrine. After a certain lapse of time this teaching is corrupted and lost, and is not restored till a new Buddha appears. In Europe, Buddha is used to designate Sakyamuni (Gautama) Buddha. The three former Buddhas were Krakuchchanda, Kanakamuni and Kasyapa.

summer retirement, the dragon often assumes the form of a little serpent whose ears are edged with white. The monks, recognizing it, place it in a copper vessel filled with curds, and carry it around from the highest seat to the lowest as if to pay greetings to all. After making the rounds it disappears. It comes out once every year.

This country is rich and fertile, with a people prosperous and happy beyond compare. The men of other lands, coming here, are entertained and provided with all they need.

THE TEMPLE OF AGNIDAGDHA

Fifty *yojanas* north of this monastery is a temple called Agnidagdha. Agnidagdha was formerly an evil spirit, whom Buddha converted. After this conversion, people built a temple at this spot and offered it to the Arhat. Once, when the Arhat washed his hands here, some drops of water fell on the ground, the traces of which are still apparent. In spite of constant sweeping, they have never disappeared.

Here there is another stupa for Buddha, which is always swept and kept clean by good spirits without the help of men.

"Since you spirits have this ability," said a heretical king, "I shall station a large body of troops here, who will pile up dirt and filth. Will you be able to clear all that away?"

But the spirits caused a great wind to spring up, which blew the place clean.

There are a hundred small stupas here, but no one can count the actual number even if he spends a whole day trying. If he insists on knowing the number, he can place a man by the side of each stupa and then count the men. But still there will sometimes be more and sometimes less, and it will be impossible to tell the number exactly.

There is another monastery here where six to seven hundred monks live. This is where a Pratyeka Buddha once fed, and here is the place—about the size of a cart-wheel—where he entered Nirvana. Grass grows all around, but not on that spot; neither does it grow on the place where he sunned his clothes. The marks made by the stripes on his clothes can still be seen on the ground.

THE CITY OF KANAUJ AND THE VILLAGE OF HARI

Fa-hsien stayed in the Dragon's House for the summer retirement, and when summer was over travelled seven *yojanas* towards the south-east, to the city of Kanauj. This city is on the Ganges and has two monasteries, both belonging to the Hinayana School. Six or seven *li*

to the west of the city, on the northern bank of the Ganges, is a place where Buddha expounded the Law to his disciples. Tradition has it that here he discoursed upon impermanence and pain, the likeness of the body to a bubble or foam, and other similar matters. A stupa was built there which remains to this day.

Crossing the Ganges and continuing three *yojanas* towards the south, they reached a village called Hari, in which stupas were built at the places where Buddha preached the Law, where he walked and where he sat.

THE GREAT COUNTRY OF VAISAKHA

Going southeast for ten *yojanas*, they reached the great country of Vaisakha. Outside the South Gate of the city of Vaisakha and on the east side of the road is the place where Buddha planted a willow twig which he had used to clean his teeth with. This willow grew to exactly seven feet, and thereafter never increased or diminished. Excited by envy and jealousy, heretical Brahmans would often cut it down or uproot it and throw it far away; but another willow always sprang up in the same place as before. Here too they built stupas where the four Buddhas walked and sat. The ruins are there to this day.

THE CITY OF SRAVASTI IN THE COUNTRY OF KOSALA AND THE JETAVANA RETREAT

Travelling northward for eight *yojanas*, they reached the city of Sravasti in the country of Kosala. This city is sparsely populated, having only about two hundred families in it. It was under the rule of King Prasenajit. Stupas were later built in this city on the sites of the ruined monastery of Mahaprajapati and the home of the elder Sudatta, and over the spots where Augulimalya attained sainthood and was cremated after he entered Nirvana. Out of jealousy, heretical Brahmans planned to destroy these stupas; but the heavens thundered and lightning flashed so that they were foiled.

About 1,200 paces out of the South Gate of this city and on the west side of the road is a temple built by the elder Sudatta. Its door faces east and it has two chambers before which stand two stone pillars. On the top of the left pillar is the image of a wheel, and on the top of the right one the image of an ox. The water in the pool is clear, the trees and plants luxuriant, and flowers of many colours make a lovely sight. This place is called the Jetavana Retreat.

When Buddha ascended the Highest Heaven to preach the Law to his mother for ninety days, King Prasenajit, eager to see his face, carved

an image of him out of *gosirsha* sandalwood* and placed it on the seat on which Buddha usually sat. When Buddha returned to the retreat, the image left its seat and went out to meet him.

"You may keep that seat," said Buddha. "After my Nirvana you will be the model from which my followers of the four groups** will make images."

Upon hearing this, the image returned to its seat. This was the first image ever made of Buddha, and later generations copied it.

Then Buddha moved to a smaller dwelling on the south, about twenty paces from the one occupied by this image.

The Jetavana Retreat originally had seven storeys. And the rulers and citizens of many countries vied with one another in making offerings here, hanging silk pennants and canopies, scattering flowers and lighting lamps which burned day and night without ever being extinguished. Then a rat carried off the wick from one lamp in its mouth, thereby setting fire to the flowers, pennants and canopies. The whole seven-storey building went up in flames. The rulers and citizens of all the countries round lamented bitterly, thinking that the sandalwood image must also have been burned. But four or five days later, when they opened the door of the small dwelling on the east, they were amazed and overjoyed to find the image unscathed. Together they rebuilt the retreat as a two-storey building, and moved the image back to its original place.

On arriving at the Jetavana Retreat, when Fa-hsien and Tao-chen reflected that the Blessed One had practised asceticism here for twenty-five years, they regretted having been born in a far-off country. Of the companions who had travelled with them through many lands, some had returned to their homes and some had died. As they gazed at the places where Buddha could no longer be seen, they were deeply moved and their hearts were filled with sorrow.

The monks there came forward to question them.

"Where do you come from?" they asked.

"We come from China," replied Fa-hsien and Tao-chen.

"How wonderful," exclaimed the monks, "that men from a far-off country should come all this way to seek for the Law!" And they commented to each other: "Not from the earliest times has any of our teachers ever seen a Chinese monk here!"

Four *li* to the northwest of this retreat is a wood named The Wood of Sight Restored. There had been five hundred blind men living near this retreat, but when Buddha preached to them they all recovered their sight and were so overjoyed that they drove their staffs into the ground and prostrated themselves to pay homage to Buddha. The staffs took

*The finest variety of sandalwood.

**I.e. monks, nuns, laymen and lay-women.

EMPEROR HUI TSUNG OF THE
SUNG DYNASTY:
Listening to the Lute

root in the earth and grew into trees, and out of respect no one ventured to cut them down. Thus the place became a wood, and was named The Wood of Sight Restored. Here the monks of the Jetavana Retreat often go after their mid-day meal to sit in meditation.

Six or seven *li* northeast of the Jetavana Retreat is the site of the monastery Mother Vaisakha built for Buddha and his monks. The ruins can still be seen.

The spacious grounds of the Jetavana Retreat have two gates, one facing east and the other north. It was in this garden that the elder Sudatta covered the ground with gold coins to buy the site for Buddha. The retreat is at the centre of the garden, and Buddha spent longer here than in any other place. Stupas, each with a distinctive name, have been built where he preached for the salvation of men, and where he walked and sat. Here too is the spot where the courtesan Sundari was murdered in order to slander Buddha.*

Seventy paces north of the east gate of Jetavana Garden, on the west of the road is the place where Buddha debated with the followers of ninety-six heretical sects. The king, his ministers and the lay Buddhists all gathered to hear the disputation. An envious woman heretic named Chinchimana fastened a bundle of clothes to her belly to make it appear as if she were with child. Then before the whole assembly she accused Buddha of evil conduct. On seeing this, the king of the gods Sakra transformed himself into a white mouse and nibbled through her sash so that the bundle fell to the ground. The earth gaped, and she fell alive into hell. Here too is the spot where Devadatta, who poisoned his nails in order to murder Buddha, also fell alive into hell. All these places were marked by later generations. At the spot where the disputation with the heretics took place, a shrine about sixty feet high was also built, containing an image of Buddha seated.

On the east of the road is a temple named "Overshadowed." This is also about sixty feet in height and was built by Brahman heretics just opposite the shrine erected over the debating place. This temple is so named because, when the sun is in the west, the shadow of the Buddhist shrine covers the heretics' temple; but when the sun is in the east, the shadow of the heretics' temple falls towards the north and can never overshadow the Buddhist shrine.

The heretics sent men regularly to look after their temple, sweep it, water it, burn incense, light the lamps and present offerings. But by the morning their lamps always disappeared, and they would discover them in the Buddhist shrine. The Brahmans grew angry, and said, "The monks are taking our lamps to offer to Buddha. We must stop

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*Some heretics sent Sundari regularly to listen to Buddha preaching. Later they murdered her and buried her corpse in Jetavana Garden, and then announced that Buddha had killed her to conceal his illicit relationship with her.

them." So they kept a watch by night. Then they saw the gods they worshipped take the lamps, circle the Buddhist shrine three times, offer the lamps before the image of Buddha, then suddenly disappear. At that the Brahmans realized that Buddha was greater than their gods, and they forsook their homes to become his followers. It was said that this had occurred only recently.

Around the Jetavana Retreat are ninety-eight monasteries, of which all but one are occupied by monks.

In the Middle Kingdom there are ninety-six heretical sects, who claim to know not only the present but the future. Each sect has its disciples, who also ask for alms but do not use alms-bowls. They also do good deeds, building hospices by the side of solitary roads to provide shelter, bedding, food and drink for wayfarers, monks and passers-by. But their aim in doing this is not like that of the Buddhists.

Here are also Devadatta's disciples, who make offerings to the three former Buddhas but not to Sakyamuni Buddha.

Four *li* southeast of the city of Sravasti is the place where Buddha stood by the roadside when King Virudhaka set out to attack the Sakya clan. A stupa has been built to mark the spot.

Fifty *li* to the west of this city, they reached a town called Tadwa, where Kasyapa Buddha was born, where he met his father and where he entered Nirvana. Stupas have been built at all these places. A large stupa has also been built over the remains of Kasyapa Buddha.

THE TOWN OF NAPIKA, THE CITY OF KAPILAVASTU AND THE GARDEN OF LUMBINI

Travelling twelve *yojanas* southeast from the city of Sravasti, they arrived at a town called Napika, where Krakuchchanda Buddha was born, met his father and entered Nirvana. Monasteries and stupas have been built at these places.

Less than one *yojana* to the north they reached the town where Kanakamuni Buddha was born, met his father and entered Nirvana. Stupas have been built at all these places.

Less than one *yojana* to the east they reached the city of Kapilavastu. This city has neither king nor citizens, and looks completely deserted; for here live only some monks and a few dozen families of the laity. Among the ruins of the palace of King Suddhodana is an image of the prince's mother, showing the prince,* riding on a white elephant, coming to enter his mother's womb. A stupa has been built over the spot where the prince, having left the city by the East Gate, saw a sick man and

*I.e. Buddha.

ordered his charioteer to drive back to the palace. Here too are the places where Asita observed the marks on the prince, and where the prince with Nanda and others brought down an elephant. An arrow shot from here entered the earth thirty *li* to the southeast, causing a fountain to spring up; and the people made a well from which wayfarers might drink. Stupas have also been built at the following places: where Buddha returned to see his father after attaining Buddha-hood; where the earth quaked six times when five hundred men of the Sakya clan saluted Upali after renouncing their homes; where Buddha expounded the Law to devas while the four celestial kings guarded the four gates of the hall so that his father, the king, could not enter; and where Buddha sat facing east under a *nyagrodha* tree—which is growing to this day—while Majaprajapati offered him a robe. Here also can be found the stupa built at the place where King Virudhaka slaughtered the descendants of the Sakya clan, who had all attained to the first stage of sainthood. A few *li* to the northeast of the city is the royal field where the prince sat under a tree to watch men ploughing. Fifty *li* to the east of the city is the royal garden called Lumbini. It was in this garden that the queen entered the pond to bathe. After bathing she came out from the northern side of the pond, walked for about twenty paces and, holding the branch of a tree and facing east, gave birth to a princely son. As soon as the prince was born he took seven steps, and was bathed by two dragon-kings. A well has been made at that bathing place, and monks often drink the water from it as well as from the pond.

Four places are always determined in advance: where Buddhas shall attain Buddha-hood; where they shall begin to preach; where they shall expound the Law and refute heretics; and where they shall descend from the Highest Heaven after having preached to their mothers. Other places are chosen according to circumstances.

The country of Kapilavastu is deserted and few people travel its roads for fear of the white elephants and lions there. One cannot journey without taking great precautions.

THE COUNTRY OF RAMAGRAMA

Five *yojanas* east of Buddha's birthplace lies the country of Ramagrama. The king of this country obtained a share of the relics of Buddha, and upon his return home built a stupa named Ramagrama. Beside this stupa is a pond in which lives a dragon that keeps constant guard over the stupa and worships there day and night. When King Asoka was living, he determined to demolish eight stupas and built 84,000 new ones; and having pulled down seven, he came to raze this of Ramagrama. But then the dragon appeared and took him to its palace, where it showed him all the vessels it used in worship.

"If your vessels are better than mine," it said to the king, "then destroy this stupa and take it away, and I will not quarrel with you."

Knowing that the dragon's vessels were not of this world, King Asoka had to go home.

Since this place was completely deserted, there was no one to sweep and water it. But a herd of elephants would often come with water in their trunks to water the ground, and they offered fragrant blossoms of many kinds here. A monk who came from another country to worship at this stupa was terrified at the sight of the elephants, and hid behind a tree. But when he saw these beasts presenting offerings in the approved manner, he was deeply moved to think that there were no monks here to look after this stupa and that it was left to the elephants to keep it clean. He thereupon gave up his status as a fully ordained monk to take up the duties of a novice, cutting the weeds and brambles himself and levelling the ground, till all was in good order. This done, he urged the king to build a monastery there, and volunteered to be the abbot of it. There are monks now living there. This occurred recently, and the abbot of this monastery has always been a novice since that time.

Three *yojanas* east of this is the place where the prince dismissed Chandaka and his white horse. A stupa has also been built here.

Travelling east again for four *yojanas*, they arrived at the Ashes Stupa, where there is also a monastery.

THE CITY OF KUSINAGARA

Twelve *yojanas* further east, they reached the city of Kusinagara. It was north of this city, between two trees beside the Hiranyavati River, that Buddha entered Nirvana with his head towards the north. Here are stupas and monasteries which were built at the following places: where Subhadra, Buddha's last disciple, entered the Order; where the Blessed One, lying in a golden coffin, received homage for seven days; where Vajrapani laid down his golden mace; and where the eight kings shared the relics of Buddha. This city is almost deserted, with only a handful of monks and a few laymen as its inhabitants.

THE LAST FAREWELL OF THE LICHCHHAVIS TO BUDDHA

Travelling twelve *yojanas* to the southeast, they reached the spot where the Lichchhavis wished to follow Buddha to the place of his Nirvana, but could not gain his consent. Out of affection for him they would not go away; so Buddha made a deep ditch appear which they

were unable to cross. He then gave them his alms-bowl as a relic, and sent them home. A stone pillar with inscriptions was erected at this place.

THE COUNTRY OF VAISALI, THE STUPA OF BOWS AND LANCES LAID DOWN, AND THE COUNCIL FOR COLLATING THE MONASTIC RULES

Continuing five *yojanas* to the east, they arrived at the country of Vaisali. North of the city of Vaisali is the storeyed Monastery of the Great Forest in which Buddha lived and the stupa built for half the relics of Ananda. In this city also dwelt the Lady Amrapali, who built a stupa for Buddha, the ruins of which may still be seen today.

West of the road three *li* to the south of the city is the garden which the Lady Amrapali offered to Buddha as a dwelling-place.

When Buddha was approaching the time of his Nirvana, he left Vaisali with his disciples by the West Gate and, turning to his right, looked back at the city and said: "This is the last place I shall have visited." Later a stupa was built on that spot.

Three *li* northwest of the city is the Stupa of Bows and Lances Laid Down, which received this name because of the following happenings:

In the upper reaches of the Ganges lived a king, one of whose inferior wives gave birth to an unformed foetus. The queen, who was jealous, said: "You have given birth to an omen of misfortune."

Then they put the foetus in a chest, and threw it into the Ganges.

Another king, who was then on a pleasure trip in the lower reaches of the Ganges, saw the chest floating in the river. Having brought it ashore and opened it, he found it contained a thousand handsome, royal-looking infants. The king brought them up and they grew into brave, strong warriors, who conquered every country they attacked. And at last they came to attack their father's kingdom. The king was so greatly dismayed that his inferior wife asked what had caused him such alarm.

"The king of a neighbouring state has a thousand sons," he told her. "They are all of them brave and strong beyond compare, and now they are coming to attack us. That is why I am alarmed."

"Do not let that alarm you, O King," she said. "If you build a high pavilion on the east of the city and place me on it when the invaders come, I shall be able to quell them."

The king did as she proposed. And when the invaders came the inferior wife called to them from the top of the pavilion.

"You are all my sons," she cried. "What makes you so rebellious?"

"Who are you that claim to be our mother?" they asked.

"If you do not believe me," she said, "look up, and open your mouths."

Then she pressed her breasts with both hands, and from each breast gushed five hundred jets of milk, which spurted into the mouths

of her thousand sons. Thereupon the invaders realized that she was indeed their mother, and laid down their bows and lances.

Meditating on this event, both the kings became Pratyeka Buddhas. The two stupas built in their honour are standing today.

After his accession to Buddha-hood, Buddha informed his disciples: "This is where I laid down my bow and lance."

When the people knew this, they built a stupa there, and gave it this name.

The thousand sons were in fact the thousand Buddhas of this *Bhadra-kalpa.**

By the side of the Stupa of Bows and Lances Laid Down, Buddha said to Ananda: "After another three months I shall enter Nirvana."

But Ananda was so bewitched by the king of demons at the time that he did not request Buddha to remain longer in the world.

Three or four *li* to the east of this there stands another stupa. One hundred years after Buddha's Nirvana, some monks in Vaisali began to commit the ten acts forbidden by the Law, and defended themselves by maintaining that Buddha had decreed these practices. Then the Arhats, monks, and laymen—seven hundred in all—who strictly observed the rules, edited and collated the Monastic Rules afresh. And a stupa was later built here, which remains to this day.

THE CONFLUENCE OF THE FIVE RIVERS AND THE DEATH OF ANANDA

From here they journeyed eastward for four *yojanas* till they came to the confluence of the five rivers. When Ananda was travelling from Magadha to Vaisali, intending to enter Nirvana there, the devas informed King Ajatasatru of it. Then the king, at the head of his troops, hastened to the bank of the river. And the Lichchhavis of Vaisali also, hearing that Ananda was coming, came to meet him on the opposite bank. Ananda reflected that if he proceeded King Ajatasatru would be grieved, while if he turned back the Lichchhavis would complain. Accordingly he went to the middle of the river where he engaged in the Fire Meditation and by this means burned himself to death. His remains were divided into two portions, one for each side of the river. Thus each of the kings had half of Ananda's relics, and they built stupas for them after returning home.

THE CITY OF PATALIPUTRA IN THE COUNTRY OF MAGADHA

After crossing the river and travelling one *yojana* south, they reached the city of Pataliputra in the country of Magadha. Pataliputra was King

*A *Kalpa* is a period of time. *Bhadra-kalpa* is the present cosmic age.

Asoka's capital. The royal palaces in the city were all constructed by genii and spirits. The walls and arches are of stone, with carvings and sculptures cut by no human hand. The ruins can still be seen.

The younger brother of King Asoka, having attained Arhatship, spent all his time on Gridhrakuta Mountain, where he found pleasure in quietness and repose. To show his respect, the king invited him to his palace. But since the recluse enjoyed living in the quiet hills, he declined the invitation.

"If you will consent to come," said the king, "I shall make a hill inside the city for you."

Then the king prepared food and drink and summoned genii and spirits.

"I hope you will all accept my invitation for tomorrow," he said. "But as there are no seats, I must request each of you to bring your own."

On the following day each of the great genii and spirits came with a huge boulder four or five paces square. After the feast was over, the king asked the genii and spirits to pile up these rocks to make a hill, using five boulders to form a cave underneath, about thirty feet in length, twenty in breadth and more than ten feet in height.

There was a Brahman of the Mahayana School named Radhasvami living in this city. Intelligent and wise, he had mastered all the knowledge of his time, and he lived in a state of tranquillity. The king respected him as his religious teacher, and dared not sit in his presence whenever he paid him a call. If the king took his hand out of affection or respect, the Brahman would wash himself afterwards. Almost fifty years old, he was honoured by the whole country. It was due to this one man that Buddhism was propagated and the heretics could gain no advantages over the Buddhists.

By the side of King Asoka's stupa is a magnificent Mahayana monastery. There is also a Hinayana monastery, and in these two monasteries live six or seven hundred monks whose behaviour is most decorous and orderly. Monks of high virtue and scholars from every quarter flock here to seek for knowledge and truth. The Brahman teacher Manjusri, who is honoured by all the holy monks and devout Mahayana priests of the country, also resides in this monastery.

THE IMAGE PROCESSION AND THE CHARITABLE HOSPITALS

Pataliputra is the largest city in the whole Middle Kingdom. The people are rich and prosperous, and vie with each other in performing good deeds. Every year in celebration of the eighth day of the second month they hold an image procession. They use a four-wheeled cart on which five tiers are constructed in bamboo, with a halberd-shaped central post about twenty feet high, the whole structure resembling a pagoda.

This is covered with white woollen cloth, painted with various devas in colour, adorned with gold, silver and glass, and hung with silk pennants and canopies. There are four shrines on the four sides, each containing a seated Buddha, attended by standing Bodhisattvas. About twenty such cars are prepared, each decked out in a different way. On the day of the procession the monks and laymen of the country assemble together to dance, play music and offer flowers and incense. The Brahmans come out to receive the images of Buddha, which are brought into the city one after the other, and remain there till the next day. Lamps burn throughout the night, and there is dancing and music to honour the gods. This ceremony is the same in all the Buddhist countries.

The elders and laymen of this country have established charitable hospitals in the city, to which all the poor, homeless, deformed and ill can go. Here all their wants are supplied, and the physicians who attend them prescribe the food and medicine they require. When cured, they are free to leave.

King Asoka, after he had destroyed seven stupas, built 84,000 new ones, the first being the great stupa three *li* or more to the south of this city. In front of this is one of Buddha's footprints, over which a temple has been erected, its door opening north towards the stupa. South of the stupa there is a stone pillar fourteen or fifteen feet around and more than thirty feet high. The inscription upon this reads:

"King Asoka offered Jambudvipa to monks from all parts of the world, then redeemed it again with silver. And this he did three times."

Three or four hundred paces north of the stupa is the site of the city of Niraya which King Asoka built, and here stands a stone pillar more than thirty feet high, with the figure of a lion above it. An inscription on the pillar relates the reason for building it and the year, the month and the day.

THE SOLITARY CRAG AND THE VILLAGE OF KALAPINAKA

Travelling southeast from here for nine *yojanas*, they arrived at a solitary crag. On the summit of the crag is a stone cell, facing south, with a seated image of Buddha in it. This is where Sakra sent the heavenly musician Panchasikha to play the harp for Buddha's pleasure, and it was here also that Sakra questioned Buddha on forty-two points. Buddha traced a line on the rock with his finger at each question, and the marks of his finger are there to this day. There is also a monastery here.

One *yojana* to the southwest, they reached the village of Kalapinaka. This is where Sariputra was born, and here he returned to enter Nirvana. A stupa built here is standing to this day.

THE NEW CITY OF RAJAGRIHA AND THE OLD CITY OF KING BIMBISARA

One *yojana* to the west they arrived at the new city of Rajagriha, built by King Ajatasatru. There are two monasteries here. Three hundred paces out of the West Gate of the city towers the magnificent stupa built by King Ajatasatru over the share of Buddha's relics which he obtained.

Leaving the city by the southern side and proceeding for four *li*, they entered a valley surrounded by five hills as if by a city wall. This is the site of the old city of King Bimbisara, which is five or six *li* from east to west, and seven or eight *li* from north to south. This is where Sariputra and Maudgalaputra first met Asvajit, where Nirgrantha made a fiery pit and prepared poisoned rice for Buddha, and where King Ajatasatru gave wine to a black elephant in order to injure Buddha. In the garden of Amrapali in the northeast corner of this city Jivaka built a monastery to invite Buddha and his 1,250 disciples to receive his offerings. The ruins still remain. But the city is desolate without inhabitants.

GRIDHRAKUTA MOUNTAIN

After entering the valley and travelling fifteen *li* to the mountains in the southeast, they reached Gridhrakuta Mountain. Three *li* from the summit of the mountain is a cave facing south, in which Buddha used to sit in meditation. About thirty paces to the northwest is another cave where Ananda was once sitting in meditation when Mara Pisuna took the form of a vulture and hovered in front of the cave to terrify him. But Buddha with his supernatural power stretched his hand through the rock and patted Ananda's shoulder, so that his fears were allayed. The traces of the vulture and the hole made by Buddha's hand can still be seen today. Thus the name of this mountain is the Mountain of the Vulture Cave. In front of the cave is the place where the four Buddhas sat. The Arhats each have a cave in which to meditate — several hundred in all. Once Buddha was pacing to and fro in front of his cave when Devadatta rolled down a stone from the precipice in the north, injuring Buddha's toe. The stone is there to this day. The hall in which Buddha preached the Law has been destroyed, and only the foundations of the brick walls remain. The peaks of this mountain are beautiful and imposing, and it is the highest of all the five hills.

Fa-hsien bought incense, flowers and oil for lamps in the new city, and requested two resident monks to guide him to Gridhrakuta Mountain. There he offered the incense and flowers and lit the lamps.

"This is where Buddha used to live," he said, shedding tears of emotion. "And here he expounded the *Surangama Sutra*. Fa-hsien,

who was born too late to see Buddha himself, can only gaze at the traces left by him and the places where he lived."

He recited the *Surangama Sutra* in front of the cave and, after spending the night there, returned to the new city.

THE RUINS IN THE OLD TOWN OF KING BIMBISARA

On the west side of the road about three hundred paces out of the North Gate of the old city stands the Retreat of the Karanda Bamboo Grove, which is kept clean by the monks there. Two or three *li* north of the retreat is a *samasana*, or burial ground.

Three hundred paces west along the southern hill is the Cave of Pippala, where Buddha used to sit in meditation after his meals. Five or six *li* further west is the Cave of Saptaparna, on the shady side of the hill. It was here that the five hundred Arhats made a compilation of the scriptures after Buddha's Nirvana. During this work, three high seats were prepared and adorned in a stately manner. Sariputra took the left seat and Maudgalaputra the right. Of the five hundred Arhats one was absent, and great Kasyapa presided over the assembly while Ananda, who was unable to enter, stood outside the gate. A stupa built at this spot remains to this day. Along the hillside are many caves used by the Arhats for meditation.

Three *li* to the east from the North Gate of the old city is the Cave of Devadatta. Fifty paces from this there is a great, square, black rock. Once a monk paced this rock, meditating on the impermanence, sorrow and vanity of life. Conscious of human impurity, he loathed his body and drawing his knife longed to kill himself, but then remembered that the Blessed One had made a rule forbidding suicide. He reflected, however, that though this was so, he would only be killing the Three Mortal Foes,* and so he cut his throat. When his knife gashed the flesh, he attained to the stage of Srotapanna; when his throat was half severed, he realized the sainthood of Anagamin; and when he had made an end of himself, he achieved Arhatship and entered Nirvana.

THE CITY OF GAYA

Travelling west from here for four *yojanas*, they reached the city of Gaya. This city is desolate and completely deserted.

Going another twenty *li* south, they arrived at the place where Buddha lived as an ascetic for six years. This district is richly wooded.

*Lust, hatred and ignorance.

Three *li* to the west, they visited the spot where Buddha bathed once and a deva lowered the branch of a tree so as to help him out of the water.

Two *li* to the north, they reached the place where the maidens of Gramika offered milk and rice to Buddha.

Two *li* further north is the spot where Buddha sat facing east on a rock under a great tree to eat the rice. Both the tree and the rock are still there. The rock is about six feet square and two feet high. As the climate in the Middle Kingdom is temperate, a tree may grow for several thousand or even ten thousand years.

From here they proceeded northeast for half a *yojana*, till they came to the cave which Buddha entered and in which he sat cross-legged facing the west. He reflected that if he were going to attain to Buddha-hood, there should be some divine manifestation. Then the shadow of a Buddha about three feet high — which is still distinctly visible — appeared on the rock wall. At the same time heaven and earth quaked, and devas in the air proclaimed:

"This is not the place for Buddhas of the past or the future to attain to Buddha-hood. In the southwest, under a *pattra* tree less than half a *yojana* from here, is the place for Buddhas of the past and the future to attain to Buddha-hood!"

This said, the devas led the way forward, singing, and Buddha rose and followed them. Thirty paces from the tree, the devas presented him with *kusa* grass, which he accepted. When he had advanced another fifteen paces, five hundred blue birds came flying towards him, encircled him three times and flew away. Having reached the *pattra* tree, he spread the *kusa* grass on the ground and sat down facing the east. Then Mara the demon king sent three beautiful girls from the north to tempt him, and led troops from the south to try him. But Buddha pressed his toe on the ground, and Mara's soldiers retreated in confusion while the three girls turned into old women.

At all these places visited by Buddha while he lived as an ascetic for six years, and at each spot subsequently mentioned, men of later times have built stupas and set up images of Buddha, which exist to this very day. Stupas have also been built at the following places: where Buddha, seven days after his accession to Buddha-hood, looked at the tree and enjoyed the bliss of emancipation; where he walked from east to west for seven days under the *pattra* tree; where the devas raised a terrace of the seven precious substances to make offerings to Buddha for seven days; where the blind dragon Muchilinda revolved around Buddha for seven days; where Buddha sat on a square rock facing east under a *nyagrodha* tree when Brahma came to invite him; where the four celestial kings presented him with his alms-bowl; where the five hundred merchants offered him flour and honey; and where he converted the Kasyapa brothers and their thousand disciples.

There are three monasteries at the place where Buddha attained to Buddha-hood, all of which are occupied by monks. These monks are supported by the local people who supply them liberally with all they need, so that they lack for nothing. The Monastic Rules are strictly kept, and they also observe with decorum the ritual of sitting, rising and taking part in assemblies practised by the holy monks during Buddha's lifetime.

Good care has been taken of the four great stupas ever since Buddha's Nirvana. The four great stupas stand at the place where Buddha was born, where he attained Buddha-hood, where he began to preach, and where he entered Nirvana.

THE HELL OF KING ASOKA

When King Asoka was a child in a former life, while playing on the road he met Sakyamuni Buddha begging for alms. Delighted, he offered Buddha a handful of earth, which Buddha took to spread on the ground where he used to walk. As a result of this good deed, the child became King of the Iron Wheel and ruled over Jambudvipa. Once, while making a tour of inspection in Jambudvipa, he saw the hell between two iron-encircled hills where the wicked are punished.

"What place is that?" he asked his ministers.

"That is where Yama, the king of spirits, punishes the wicked," they told him.

On hearing this, Asoka reflected that if the king of spirits could make a hell to punish the wicked, why should not he, a ruler of men, make a place of punishment for criminals?

So he asked his ministers: "Who can make a hell for me and take charge of punishing evil-doers there?"

"Only the most wicked man can do that," they replied.

Thereupon the king sent his ministers out in all directions to look for wicked men. Eventually they found a man by the side of a pond who was tall, strong and swarthy, with yellow hair and blue eyes. He could catch fish with his feet, and make birds and beasts come when he called; but then he shot them, not sparing a single one. Having found this man, they sent him to the king.

"Make a square enclosure with high walls," the king charged him secretly. "Plant it with a profusion of flowers and fruit trees and build a handsomely ornamented bathing pool, so that passers-by will be eager to look inside. Make the doors and windows strong. Whenever anyone enters, put him to every torture you can devise and do not let him out again. Even if I should enter the place myself, you must torture me as well, and never let me go. Now I appoint you the keeper of this hell."

Once a monk who was begging from door to door entered the gate of this hell, and the keeper promptly seized him and prepared to torture

him. But the terrified monk pleaded with him and was granted a brief respite to have his mid-day meal. At that moment another man came in, and the keeper immediately put him into a mortar and pounded him till a red froth appeared. Having witnessed this, the monk reflected on the impermanence, sorrow and vanity of bodily existence, which is like a bubble or foam upon the water. And so he achieved Arhatship. Thus when the keeper seized and thrust him into a cauldron of boiling water, the monk was glad at heart and his face was serene. The fire went out, the water cooled, and up sprang a lotus flower with the monk sitting upon it.

The keeper went to inform the king of this.

"Something amazing has happened in hell," he said. "Will Your Majesty please go and have a look?"

"I dare not," replied Asoka. "Remember our former agreement."

"This is no small matter, sire," protested the keeper. "Never mind that agreement, but come with me at once."

So the king followed him to the hell. Then the monk expounded the Law to King Asoka, who accepted the faith, destroyed this hell and repented of all the crimes he had committed. From that time on he believed in and respected the Three Precious Gems,* and often repaired to a *pattra* tree under which he repented his sins and observed the Eight Precepts.**

"Where is it the king always goes?" inquired the queen.

"His Majesty often goes to the *pattra* tree," replied the ministers.

Then the queen sent someone to fell the tree when Asoka was not there. When he came and saw what had happened, he fell senseless to the ground. His ministers dashed water in his face and eventually he recovered consciousness. He piled up bricks round the stump of the tree and watered its root with a hundred pitchers of milk, then prostrated himself on the ground and vowed:

"If the tree does not grow, I shall never rise again!"

As he uttered this vow the tree began to grow till it reached its present height, which is nearly a hundred feet.

THE KUKKUTAPADA MOUNTAIN

Continuing three *li* to the south, they reached the mountain called Kukkutapada. Kasyapa is at present in this mountain. He split the mountain to enter it, but that opening is now closed. And his body is

*Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

**Not to kill, not to steal, not to have sexual intercourse, not to tell lies, not to drink wine, not to use cosmetics and personal adornments or to dance and play music, not to sleep on fine beds, and not to take food in the afternoon.

preserved entire in a chasm at a great distance from this in one side of the mountain. Outside the chasm is the place where he washed his hands. If the people of this country suffer from headaches, they rub the earth from this spot on their heads and the pain is cured. Since Kasyapa's Nirvana Arhats have lived in this mountain, and each year the monks of neighbouring states go there to worship Kasyapa. If anyone comes with doubts in his mind, some Arhat will appear to reason with him by night, disappearing as soon as his doubts have been resolved. This mountain is thickly overgrown with brambles, and is so infested with lions, tigers and wolves, that one cannot wander there freely.

THE CITY OF BENARES AND THE DEER PARK

Fa-hsien returned to Pataliputra and, travelling west along the Ganges for ten *yojanas,* arrived at a monastery called Atavi in which Buddha once lived. There are monks in residence now.

Again proceeding west along the Ganges for twelve *yojanas,* he reached the city of Benares in the country of Kasi. About ten *li* north-east of the city is the Deer Park Retreat of the Rishis. Originally a Pratyeka Buddha lived in this park, and wild deer often came here for shelter. When the Blessed One was about to become a Buddha, devas announced from the sky:

"The son of King Suddhodana, who renounced his home to acquire supreme truth, will attain to Buddha-hood after seven days."

On hearing this, the Pratyeka Buddha entered Nirvana. Therefore his place is called the Deer Park of the Rishis. After the Blessed One's accession to Buddha-hood, men of later ages built a retreat here. Buddha wished to convert Kaundinya and his four companions, but these five men said to each other:

"For six years this monk Gautama lived as an ascetic on one grain of sesame and one of rice a day, yet he did not obtain the truth. Now that he is living among men, having thrown off all mental and physical restraints, what truth can he have obtained? If he comes today, let us be sure not to speak to him."

When Buddha arrived, however, the five men felt impelled to rise and salute him.

Sixty paces further north is the place where Buddha sat facing east when he preached his first sermon and converted Kaundinya and his companions. Twenty paces north of this is the place where Buddha predicted the future of Maitreya. Fifty paces to the south is the spot where the dragon Elapatra asked Buddha when he could be freed from his dragon form. Stupas built at all these spots are standing to this day. There are also two monasteries, both of which are occupied by monks.

THE COUNTRY OF KAUSAMBI AND THE GARDEN OF GHOSHIRA

Thirteen *yojanas* northwest of the Deer Park Retreat is the country of Kausambi. The monastery there is called the Garden of Ghoshira, and here Buddha once lived. Most of the monks in residence at present study Hinayana Buddhism.

Eight *yojanas* to the east is the spot where Buddha converted an evil demon. Stupas also mark where he lived, walked and sat. A hundred monks or more live in the monastery here.

THE COUNTRY OF DAKSHINA AND THE PARAVATI MONASTERY

Proceeding south for two hundred *yojanas*, they came to the country called Dakshina. Here is a monastery of the former Kasyapa Buddha, hewn out of a great mountain of rock. It has five tiers: the first in the shape of an elephant, with five hundred chambers; the second in the shape of a lion, with four hundred chambers; the third in the shape of a horse, with three hundred chambers; the fourth in the shape of an ox, with two hundred chambers; and the fifth in the shape of a dove, with one hundred chambers. At the very top there is a spring of water which flows down in front of the chambers through a circuitous channel till it reaches the lowest tier, then, passing the chambers, issues at last through the door. A window has been hewn in the rock of every chamber in each tier; thus they receive ample light and no corner is dark. At the four corners of this edifice steps have been hewn in the rock. Since men of the present time are short, they have to climb the stairway, while the men of old could reach the top in one step. This monastery's name is Paravati, which means "dove." There have always been Arhats here. The land is barren and void of inhabitants.

At a great distance from the hill is a village in which all the inhabitants are monks or Brahmans who hold heretical views and do not believe in Buddhism, or are followers of other heretical schools.

The people of this country often see men flying to the monastery here. Thus they ask those monks who come from abroad to worship here:

"Why don't you fly? All the monks we see here can fly."

The monks then answer evasively: "Our wings have not yet grown!"

The roads in Dakshina are dangerous and hard to travel. Even those who hear of the place and wish to go there have to present money or goods to the king of the country, who then appoints men as their guides who will pass them on from one post to another in order to show them the way. Fa-hsien was unable to go there. He has related simply what men of that country told him.

Travelling east from Benares they returned to Pataliputra. Fa-hsien had come to seek the books of monastic discipline, but in the countries of North India these rules are handed down by word of mouth, hence there were no written records for him to copy. He had therefore to travel as far as Central India, where in a Mahayana monastery he obtained a collection of the precepts of monastic discipline. It was the *Rules of the Mahasanghika,* which were first observed by the great assembly of monks while Buddha was yet alive. This copy has been handed down in the Jetavana Retreat. Though each of the eighteen sects has its own rules of conduct, they agree in all essentials, simply paying more or less attention to certain minor matters. But this book is the most comprehensive. He also obtained a copy of the rules in about 7,000 verses. This was the *Rules of the Sarvastivadah*—the same rules as those observed by monks in China—which was also handed down orally from teacher to pupil without being committed to writing. In this monastery he also obtained a copy of the *Samyuktabhidharma-hridaya Sastra* in about 6,000 verses, a copy of the *Nirvana Sutra* in 2,500 verses, a copy of the *Vaipulya-parinirvana Sutra* in about 5,000 verses, and a copy of the *Commentaries of the Mahasanghika.*

Fa-hsien spent three years in studying written and spoken Sanskrit and in copying these books.

Upon arriving at the Middle Kingdom and seeing the excellent rules and decorous conduct of the monks here in their daily life, Tao-chen sighed over the imperfect rules of the monks in far-away China and prayed that never again might he be reborn in a far-off country till he should attain to Buddha-hood. So he settled down in India and never returned to China. But Fa-hsien had gone there in order to bring back the Monastic Rules to China, so he returned, alone.

THE GREAT COUNTRY OF CHAMPA AND THE KINGDOM OF TAMRALIPTI

Eighteen *yojanas* to the east along the Ganges, on the south bank of the river, is the great country of Champa. Stupas have been built at Buddha's dwelling-place, where he walked and where the four Buddhas sat. There are monks living there.

Nearly fifty *yojanas* to the east, Fa-hsien reached Tamralipti which borders on the sea. Here there are twenty-four monasteries, all with monks living in them, and Buddhism flourishes. After staying here for two years to copy sutras and make drawings of Buddha's images, he set sail in a large merchant ship across the ocean towards the southwest. Taking advantage of the fair wind of early winter, the vessel sailed

for fourteen days and nights till it reached Simhala, the Country of the Lion.

SIMHALA, THE COUNTRY OF THE LION

The people of Simhala informed Fa-hsien that the distance of the voyage was about seven hundred *yojanas*. The Country of the Lion is an island some fifty *yojanas* from east to west and thirty from north to south. To its left and right are about a hundred small islands, ten, twenty or two hundred *li* from each other, all of which are under the rule of this large island. Most of these islands produce precious stones and pearls, and there is a district of about ten square *li* which produces the *mani* jewel. The king has posted guards here, and takes a levy of three-tenths of the jewels that are found.

There were originally no inhabitants here, only spirits and dragons. When merchants from other countries came to trade, the spirits did not appear, but simply set out their rare merchandise with the prices marked. The merchants paid accordingly, and took away the goods directly. Owing to this traffic of merchants, the people of all the countries round heard how pleasant a land this was, and came here too. In this way a large kingdom was formed. The climate is temperate winter and summer alike. Plants and trees bloom the whole year round, and the fields may be sown whenever the people please—there are no fixed seasons.

BUDDHA'S FOOTPRINTS AND THE MONASTERY CALLED ABHAYAGIRI

Buddha once came to this country to convert a wicked dragon. With his supernatural power, he planted one foot at the north of the royal city and one on a mountain top fifteen *yojanas* away. Over the footprint north of the royal city, a great stupa four hundred feet high was built, adorned with gold and silver and studded with all kinds of jewels. By the side of this stupa a monastery was erected which is called Abhayagiri (The Hill of Fearlessness), and here are five thousand monks. It contains a hall for the worship of Buddha, engraved with gold and silver and adorned with precious stones. In it stands an image of Buddha made of green jade, some twenty feet high. The entire image sparkles with the seven precious substances, and its splendour and magnificence defy description. In its right hand the image holds a priceless pearl.

Fa-hsien had left China for many years and associated with none but men of foreign lands. All the mountains, rivers, plants and trees that he saw were strange to him. Moreover, his companions had left

him—some had remained behind, while some had died. Looking at his lonely shadow, he was often filled with sadness. So when he stood by the side of this jade image and happened to see a white silk fan from China—the offering of some merchant—tears filled his eyes and he gave way to his grief.

A former king of this country had sent a messenger to the Middle Kingdom to fetch a seed of the *pattra* tree to plant beside the hall, and this grew some two hundred feet high. This tree inclined towards the southeast and, fearing that it might fall, the king set up a huge pillar that required eight or nine men to encircle it, to support the tree. At the place where the tree was propped, a branch grew out from the trunk and pierced the pillar, then sent down roots to the ground. This branch was so thick it took four men to encircle it. Though the pillar is cleft in two, since it still supports the tree it has not been removed.

Under this tree is a rest house containing a seated image of Buddha, to which both monks and laymen pay homage continuously. In this city there is also the Temple of Buddha's Tooth, constructed entirely of the seven precious substances. The king leads a pure life and observes the Buddhist precepts, while the citizens of the capital also have the greatest reverence for Buddhism. Since the establishment of this kingdom, there has been no famine or trouble here. The monks' storehouses are filled with precious stones and *mani* jewels. When the king once went to inspect these storehouses and saw the *mani* jewels, he coveted them and longed to seize them. After three days, however, he repented, and going to the monks and saluting them he confessed the evil desire he had felt.

"I hope you will make it a rule," he told the monks, "never to let the king inspect your storehouses; and admit no monk who has not been in the Order for forty years."

BUDDHA'S TOOTH AND THE MONASTERY OF BODHI

In this city are many Buddhist laymen, elders and merchants of all trades. The houses are beautiful, the roads level and trim. Preaching-halls have been built at the crossroads, where, on the eighth, fourteenth and fifteenth of each month, high seats are set, and monks, laymen and believers of the four groups gather to listen to the preaching of the Law. The people of this country say there are about 60,000 monks fed at the public expense, while the king supports five or six thousand more in the royal city. Those who need food may bring their own alms-bowls to fetch it, and carry away as much as the vessel contains.

Buddha's Tooth is usually displayed in the middle of the third month. Ten days before this event, the king adorns and caparisons a great

elephant, and bids an orator in royal robes ride on this elephant and sound a drum, then make this proclamation:

"For three *Asankhycya-kalpas,** Buddha practised asceticism. Never sparing himself, he gave up his kingdom, his wife and son, and even tore out his eye to give to another. He cut his own flesh to deliver a dove, gave away his head as alms, offered his body to a ravenous tiger, and did not grudge his marrow and brain. Having suffered these pains for the sake of all living creatures, at last he became a Buddha. While in this world he spent forty-nine years expounding the Law and edifying the people. He gave rest to the weary, and saved those who were lost. And when he had fulfilled his mission among men, he entered Nirvana. Since his Nirvana, 1,497 years have passed, during which the Eye of the World has been closed and all living creatures have never ceased to grieve. Ten days from now, Buddha's Tooth will be brought out and carried to Abhayagiri Monastery. All monks and laymen who wish to do good deeds may level the road, adorn the lanes and streets, and prepare all kinds of flowers and incense as offerings."

After this proclamation, on both sides of the road the king sets images of the five hundred forms which Buddha assumed in his earlier existences, when, for example, he was born as Sydana, Sama, the king of the elephants, a deer and a horse. Painted and richly adorned, these images appear extremely lifelike. Then Buddha's Tooth is brought out and carried along the main road, and offerings are made to it all along the way till it reaches the hall in Abhayagiri Monastery. There monks and laymen gather to burn incense, light lamps and perform all manner of religious ceremonies day and night without rest. After ninety days, the Tooth is carried back to the temple in the city. And this temple is open on fast days so that believers may worship the Tooth according to the Buddhist custom.

Forty *li* to the east of Abhayagiri Monastery there is another hill, and on it stands a monastery called Bodhi, in which live some 2,000 monks. Among them is a monk of great virtue, by the name of Dharmakoti, whom the people of this country revere. He has lived in a stone cell for some forty years. And, such is his compassion, he can make serpents and mice live together without injuring each other.

MAHAVIHARA MONASTERY

Seven *li* to the south of this city is Mahavihara Monastery, where live 3,000 monks. There was once a monk here of the highest virtue, who observed the Monastic Rules so faithfully that the people of the country suspected he must be an Arhat. When he was about to die

*Previous cosmic ages.

the king came to visit him and, in accordance with the Buddhist custom, assembled all the monks. Then in their presence he asked this monk: "Have you attained to sainthood?"

At that the other told him the truth: "I am an Arhat."

After his death, the king had him cremated four or five *li* east of the monastery, in accordance with the funeral ceremony for Arhats decreed by the Monastic Rules. A fine, great pyre of wood was built, about thirty feet square and thirty feet high, with sandalwood, aloes and other aromatic wood at its top. Steps were made at the four sides, and the whole pyre was covered with snowy white woollen cloth of the best quality. Above the pyre would be the bier, similar to the hearse which is used in China, except that it had no dragon and fish designs. At the time of the cremation, the king and people, including all the believers of the four groups, assembled together. After offering flowers and incense, they followed the bier to the place of cremation. The king then made his personal offerings of flowers and incense. This done, the bier was placed on top of the pyre, great quantities of butter were poured over it, and it was set ablaze. As it burned, all present took off their upper garments to show their reverence, and from a distance cast these and their feather fans and parasols as additional fuel into the fire. After the cremation was over, they collected the remains over which to build a stupa. Fa-hsien did not reach Simhala in time to see this Arhat in the flesh, but he witnessed his funeral ceremony.

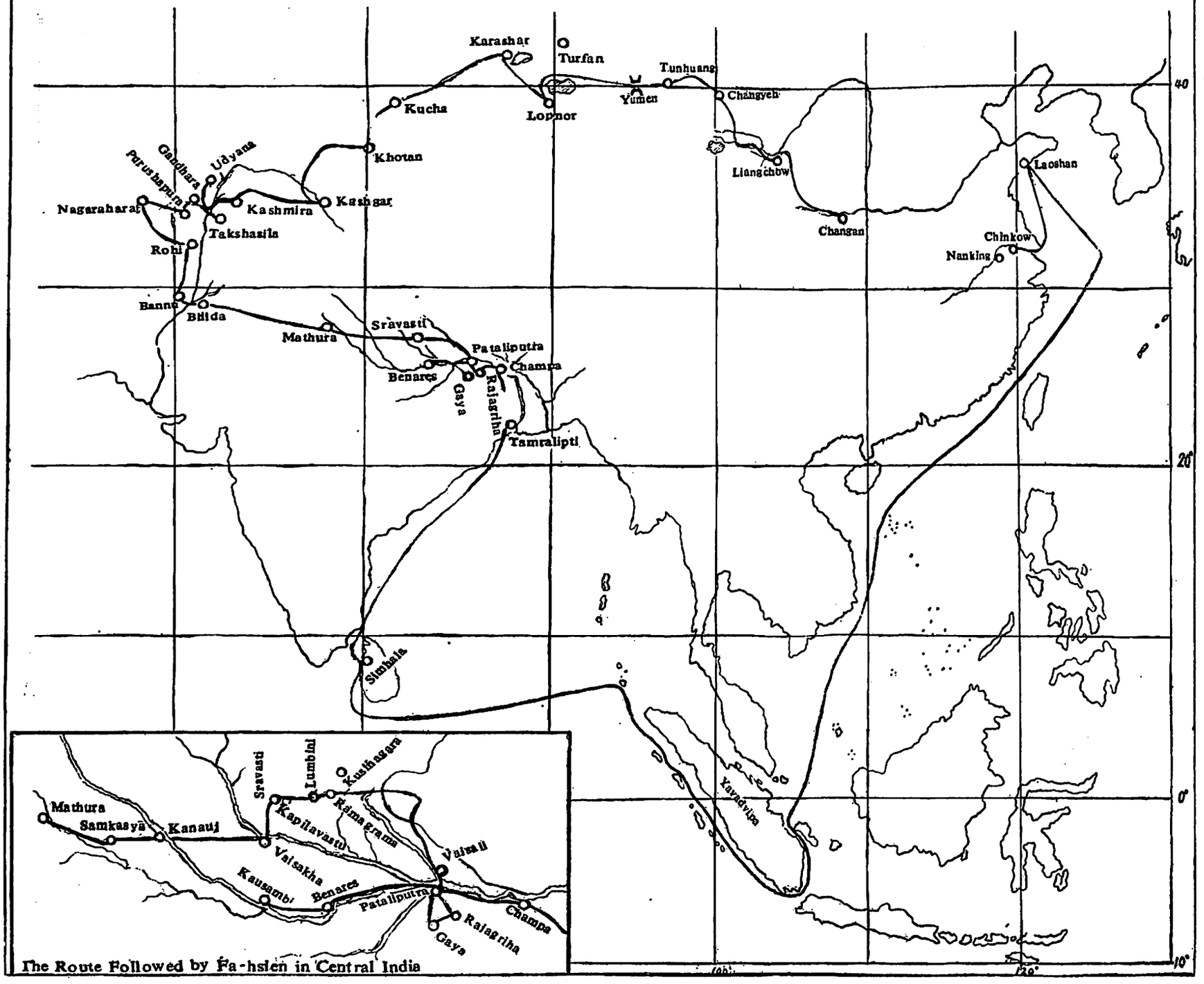
The king, being an earnest believer in Buddhism, desired to build a new monastery for the monks. First of all he summoned a great assembly of monks and offered them a splendid feast. After offerings had been made he selected a pair of his best oxen, and adorned their horns with gold, silver and other precious objects. Then he himself ploughed the four sides of a plot of land with a fine golden plough, and ceded this land to the monks, with all the inhabitants, fields and houses on it. An iron title-deed was engraved and given them, to be handed down from generation to generation, for none would dare alter or annul it.

A SERMON PREACHED BY AN INDIAN MONK

While in this country Fa-hsien heard an Indian monk, seated on his high seat, deliver the following sermon:

"Buddha's alms-bowl, which was first at Vaisali, is now at Gandhara. After several centuries (Fa-hsien heard the monk mention a definite period of time but he has forgotten the exact number of years stated), it will go to the country of Western Sakas; after several more centuries it will go to the kingdom of Khotan; after several more centuries it will go to the kingdom of Kucha; after several more centuries it will go to China, where it will remain for several more centuries before

Map Showing Fa-hsien's Travels



The Route Followed by Fa-hsien in Central India

going to Simhala; and after several more centuries it will return to Central India. After having returned to Central India, it will ascend to the Tusita Heaven, where the Maitreya Bodhisattva on seeing it will exclaim:

" 'The alms-bowl of Sakyamuni Buddha has arrived!'

"Then together with all the devas, he will offer flowers and incense to it for seven days. After the seven days it will return to Jambudvipa, where the king of the sea-dragons will carry it to his dragon-palace for safe keeping until Maitreya Bodhisattva is about to become a Buddha. The bowl will then be divided into four and returned to its original place on Mount Vinataka.* After Maitreya's accession to Buddha-hood, the four celestial kings will worship him in the same way as the former Buddhas. The thousand Buddhas of the *Bhadra-kalpa* all use this same alms-bowl. When this bowl vanishes, Buddhism will gradually disappear; and after it has disappeared, the life span of human beings will diminish to as little as five or ten years. By that time there will be no more rice or butter, and men will have grown so savage that even a piece of wood will serve as a weapon in their hands for injury and slaughter. Those who have done good deeds may escape to the mountains to avoid destruction, and come out again after all the evil-doers have killed themselves.

" 'Man's life was once long,' they will say to each other. 'But as men were guilty of many sins and committed all manner of crimes, our life has been shortened to no more than ten years. Therefore let us all do good together and, with charity in our hearts, cultivate virtue and righteousness.'

"Thus all will believe and conduct themselves with propriety, till by degrees their life span is lengthened to as many as 80,000 years. Then Maitreya Bodhisattva will be born into the world. When he begins to expound the Law he will first convert the followers and monks of the Law bequeathed by Sakyamuni Buddha, and those who make offerings to the Three Precious Gems, take refuge in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha and observe the Five or the Eight Precepts. The second and third groups will be those who are fit to be saved."

Fa-hsien at that time wished to copy down this sermon.

"There is no written record," said the monk. "I deliver it orally only."

Fa-hsien stayed in this country for two years, and obtained a copy of the *Rules of the Mahisasakas.* He also procured a copy of the *Dirghagama,* the *Samyuktagama,* and the *Sannipata,* all of which were unknown in China. . . .

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*When Buddha first attained Buddha-hood, each of the four celestial kings presented him with an alms-bowl, and he combined the four into one. After Buddha's Nirvana this bowl became four again, and returned to Mount Vinataka.

How Life Unfolds . . .

TEN APPLE TREES

WANG AN-YU

In the village of Yinchiaho lives an old man, Yin Hsiang-shun by name, who has a son in the army. He is quite famous in all the villages round for his apple trees. He is rather short in stature and fifty-three this year. His hair and beard are grey, but his cheeks are as ruddy as ever. Although a man of small build, he could, when he was younger, push a cart with six or seven hundred weight on it as fast as the next man. He has never been really ill, and always walks with a straight back.

His son joined the army ten years ago and is now an officer with a unit south of the Yangtse. Ten years is a long time. The old man always wanted to go on a visit, but was never able to find time. In the busy seasons he not only had his farm work to do but his little orchard to look after as well. In spring he had to manure and water his orchard. In summer he had to prune the trees and keep a sharp look-out for insect pests. Even after autumn harvest, you'd still see him bustling about, turning up the soil, earthing up the roots or wrapping the trunks. What with one thing and another, the long dreary winter slipped by in a flash. Every year he made a plan to visit his son, and every year had to give it up for his orchard's sake.

The orchard was a small square of level land on the east bank of the river. There were only ten apple trees all told. It is surrounded by a great stretch of wasteland divided into tiny plots which belong, or rather belonged, to as many as three hundred owners. On almost every plot could be found young trees which, viewed from a distance, looked like the flagstaffs you find in front of temples dedicated to the God of Earth. The owners suffered a lot from the cattle which the cowherds used to graze there. As often as not, the cows ate the saplings before they saw much of sunshine. Whenever the old man stood at the edge of his orchard, looking up and down the river, he would shake his head and mutter, "What a pity to let such good soil go to waste! It would mean a fortune if it were turned into a big apple orchard."

Nobody with any sense would make light of Yin Hsiang-shun's ten apple trees. He tended them with such care and skill that they brought

him in a solid income. He loved them as dearly as if they had been his own children. Indeed, he wouldn't have swapped them for the yield of five *mou* of land. When he joined the co-op he handed over everything he had and held dear—the sprayer the government gave him as a gift and the lovely little donkey which pulled the millstone for the family. Everything, that is, but one thing: he kept the orchard back. They'd seen him, before he finally made up his mind to join the co-op, squatting in his orchard the whole day, as if keeping watch over the trees for fear they might disappear. Sometimes he'd even stay there and forget all about food, so that his daughter had to bring his meals out to him.

Once he'd decided about his orchard, his mind was at rest. When the worst of the farm work was finished, he started making preparations for a visit south. Mrs. Yin began bustling round, preparing a dozen hard-boiled eggs and a bag of roasted peanuts. These and some apples and leaf tobacco for their son filled a whole basket. When the old man was leaving to catch the train, his wife said she was a bit worried that she might find it hard to make up her mind about things while he was away. "Don't worry, wife," he replied. "Nothing much ever happens in winter, and there's always the lass to help you. You two are quite capable of deciding things without me."

Nothing much ever happens in winter. . . . But this time the old man was wrong. Shortly after his departure, the villagers all agreed to turn their land over to the co-op as communal property—to make it a real socialist one. From then on things started moving fast.

The Daylight Co-op, as they called it, was formed out of three older ones; it had recruited some new members last autumn and now had almost three hundred families in it. The room they'd been using for the farming tools was now too small with all the new ones streaming in, to say nothing of the old brooms, shovels and rakes. The cow shed only had room for a third of the cattle they now possessed. As for pigsties, the position was even worse. The old sows alone numbered thirty-nine, not to mention hogs and pedigree boars.

When the co-op went socialist, the old members who wished to stay in had to sign up anew. Yin Hsiang-shun was then away and his wife, after talking the matter over with her daughter, went to the chairman and put their names down. Yin Hsiang-chiang, the fifty-year-old chairman, was her husband's cousin. They'd always got on very well together, and in the old days, when they'd both been tenants of a landlord, when the one was in trouble the other helped him out. "Good," he said confidently. "I don't suppose Hsiang-shun'll raise any objections when he comes back."

Yin Hsiang-shun had been very keen on seeing his son. But when he got there he found that he simply couldn't ever get that orchard of his out of his mind. He started fretting over all sorts of things. It

was time, he'd think, to start loosening the soil under the trees and earthing up the roots. He'd get scared that if there wasn't enough snow pests might survive the frost. He was on tenterhooks. Three weeks later he found himself on his way back.

By the time he got home, however, the transformation of the co-op was complete. Yin couldn't help seeing the changes that had come over the village. The very day he arrived, on his way home he saw many of the villagers out at work, one group digging a well, another ploughing land. Some peasants were already in thin summer clothes. Their hoes glinted in the sunlight. It looked as if the cold winter was over and spring had come. Puzzled, the old man paused to wonder what had happened. Then, with the air of a man who has suddenly remembered some thing, he made a dash for his orchard.

While he was still some way off, he noticed a line of lime-wash on the ground running from south to north, as if to mark off a building site. He stopped and looked along it in both directions, but it stretched as far as the eye could reach. It was really bewildering.

When he entered the orchard, he had a still greater surprise. The ground had been loosened and dry mule dung spread over it, just as he used to do himself. At first he thought his daughter had done it. The idea tickled him and he gave a little chuckle. Then he noticed the footprints. They were much too big for his daughter's. "Queer!" he muttered. "Who could have done it?"

Then he walked across the orchard towards the river. He was nearly there when another white line came into view. There was no way of knowing how far these lines ran, but it dawned on him that they were there to enclose land for some new purpose, and his little orchard was right in the middle. That upset him. With a troubled mind, he slowly made his way home, not without a backward glance at that stupefying white line.

It was almost one o'clock when he reached home. He found his daughter busy in the kitchen. She threw aside the poker she was holding and rushed up, smiling, to greet him and take his things. "Dad," she said, "what kept you away so long? The good white rice people eat there, I suppose."

"No, no," said the fond father with a laugh. "I should have been back long ago, if only your brother had let me."

"How is he, Dad?" asked the daughter, fetching him a little stool.

"He's all right," said the old man, taking out his tobacco pouch. "A young man of high promise, I tell you—a most capable officer!"

Their chat was interrupted by the arrival of Mrs. Yin. She was a member of the co-op management committee and leader of a stock-rearing team. Mrs. Yin always had her hands full. She was just back from work and her hair and shoulders were still thick with chaff.

"Oh, here you are at last," she cried, with a smile, "after keeping us waiting so long!"

The old man smiled back but said nothing. Mrs. Yin sat down beside him and began to ply him with all sorts of questions about her son. Her last query finished, she started blaming him for coming back so late. She said, "You don't know the trouble I've had making up my mind about things while you were away. But it was a good thing you trusted me to look after everything, otherwise we'd have missed the chance of joining the co-op."

"Joining the co-op?" asked her husband in astonishment. "We joined long ago, didn't we?"

"Yes, we did. But the co-op has changed since you left."

"Changed?" said the old man, rather taken aback. He turned and faced his wife squarely. He was about to ask more questions when his daughter cut him short.

"Dad," she said, "have a rest, and then go and see for yourself. The three co-ops we had before are now one, with two hundred and ninety-four families in it."

"Oh, I was wondering what was up when I saw such a crowd out working on my way home. So that's what you mean by 'changed,' eh?"

Yin gave a sigh of relief and began to fill his pipe. He was just going to put a match to it when his daughter went on to explain.

"No," she said. "There's much more to it than that. You know, in the past we joined the co-op, but the land we pooled still belonged to us and we drew dividends on it. Now all the land belongs to the co-op. . . ."

"Belongs to the co-op?"

"Yes. The co-op's being run on proper socialist lines."

"Yes, such a nuisance," Mrs. Yin put in, "you being away while all these changes were taking place. Have your lunch, and then you can go and have a look round. Our people at the co-op have been trying to work out how we all fit into the general production plan. The chairman's kept asking me about you for the past fortnight."

The old man sat in silence, clutching his tobacco pouch, and gazing absently at the corner of the kitchen-range. Suddenly he thought of his orchard and a frown clouded his face.

"What about our orchard?" he asked. "I suppose you've given that to the co-op, too."

"Of course I have," said Mrs. Yin after a moment's hesitation. "When we join the co-op, we join the co-op wholeheartedly and without keeping anything back. What's the use of hanging on to a handful of apple trees? All the land has gone to the co-op."

The old man's face was a picture of anguish and misery and the sweat stood out on his forehead. He jumped to his feet, flung the tobacco pouch on the ground and stood there gasping with fury.

"Do you know what you're doing?" he shouted to his wife, fixing

her with his eyes. "Murdering me by throwing such an orchard away. I don't think I can live without it."

And, choking with anger, he dashed out, without even waiting for his wife to explain. She hurriedly followed him to the door and said: "Wait a bit. You must let me explain. Where are you going?"

"No!" cried the old man, without turning his head. "I won't have my orchard thrown away like that. I must talk to the chairman, get it back and pull out of the co-op."

Mrs. Yin was greatly shocked. Exasperated and enraged, off she went to the chairman's house.

Yin Hsiang-shun didn't know the co-op office had moved since he'd been away, so he went to the old place, on Fore Street. When he got there he saw the doorway blocked by a big crowd. A score of young men and women stood there peeping in. The late-comers had to stand on tiptoe to get a glimpse over the others' shoulders. Yin pushed his way through and found that the object of all this curiosity was eight piglets in the courtyard, plump little things with tiny ears, small mouths and smooth skins. They were snuffing the ground with their little snouts quite unafraid of the onlookers. Yin had never set eyes on such fine black-and-white pigs. He was greatly attracted, and quite forgot what he'd come for.

He stood gazing at them for some minutes. Then he bent down and picked one of them up, and patted and stroked it before he put it down. Then a girl in a white apron came up. She was about fifteen and probably in charge of the pigs. "Look, Dad," she said, pointing to the other end of the courtyard, "what do you think of those over there!" Yin raised his eyes and saw a row of pigsties lining away the opposite wall. Thirteen of them all told, four for the old sows. Yin could not guess how many pigs there were, but from the din they kicked up he could tell that there were quite a few.

"How many have you got?" he asked, after a while. "Fifty?"

"Twice that—more than twice," was the reply.

"What, over a hundred?"

"Yes. Of course. . . ."

At this point somebody called the girl and, with a toss of her head and a swing of her plaits, she turned on her heel and ran off. Yin stood there for a moment, and then strolled toward the four rooms where the chairman and his colleagues used to work. He found nobody in occupation and all the furniture gone; but along the wall stood six tawny cows. An old man was standing behind them, preparing fodder. In answer to Yin's inquiry, the man told him that the office had moved to what used to be the club house on Back Street.

He was struck, on arrival, by the telegraph poles along the street and the lines that went right into the club house. That was something

new in the village. When he entered the outer gate, he heard a telephone ringing. Somebody in the room at once began answering it. "Hullo! County Supply and Marketing Co-op? Yes, Daylight Co-op here. Saplings have arrived, eh? Fine! We'll send over for them right away."

Yin looked up and saw that the walls had been newly whitewashed. For the moment he couldn't believe his eyes. The place looked altogether too grand for a co-op office. Yin put his head round the door and found the place packed with furniture and people working at desks. Some of them, sitting face to face, were doing accounts, others quietly writing. There was a man intently counting money, and around a table sat three men, working out something on a sheet of paper. The place looked like a bank. Yin hesitated a moment, then ejaculated, "Sorry, wrong door," and turned tail.

"Hullo! If it isn't Uncle Yin!" a voice called after him. "Wait a bit. You don't know how you've kept us waiting all this time!" A young man ran up to the door. It was Young Mang, the co-op's book-keeper.

"Come in," he said, with a broad smile and taking Yin's hand. "Why, you really should have come back earlier. We've been rather worried about you, you know."

"Where's the co-op office now?" asked the old man stiffly.

"Why, right here."

"Oh! I thought it was a bank!"

Yin Hsiang-shun went in and looked round. The book-keeper fetched him a stool and, before he could ask for the chairman, began to tell him about the changes. The old man, however, was too much troubled about his orchard to want to listen. He sat there, all on edge, his eyes constantly wandering off in search of the chairman. After making sure that he was not in, he rose to go.

"No, don't go, Uncle," said Young Mang. "I was just getting round to telling you something important. We're in the same team, you see—the one that's going to specialize in the cultivation of fruit trees." His finger moved to and fro over a piece of paper marked with pencil lines. "Our plan," he continued, "is to turn the whole of that tract of waste, which runs for a mile along the river bank, into a huge fruit garden with apple trees, apricots, walnuts and persimmons. It'll take five years, we reckon. We've got thirteen men in our team, and of course we can get help from the other teams if need be. We met the other day and elected you leader of our team, and to look after the technical side as well. At first we thought we wouldn't start planning till you came back. But we didn't know when that would be and the other teams got started one after another, and we felt we couldn't wait any longer. So we put our heads together and decided to start with twelve hundred apple trees

on that plot which stretches northward from your orchard. We've just had a phone call to say they've arrived."

At this point, Young Mang broke off to ask somebody standing by to make arrangements about fetching the young trees. Then he returned to the subject and went on to describe the hundred and one difficulties they'd met in working out the plan owing to lack of practical experience in the cultivation of apple trees, and to say how sorry they were that the old man had come back so late. "The management committee," he added, "told us to get the saplings in as soon as they arrive. No matter what happens, we've to finish the whole job before the frosts start."

Yin Hsiang-shun was now all ears, staring at Young Mang in amazement. Once more turning to the paper, he gave it a long, searching scrutiny. For a long time he was silent, turning things over and over in his mind. Only now did the true purpose of those white lines dawn on him.

"Twelve hundred trees in one stretch? How much land shall we need?" he wondered. "Why, when they've grown, there'll be a huge, enormous orchard." It was as if he saw it before his very eyes.

"Well, I never!" he said to himself, with a soundless laugh. "Twelve hundred trees! Grand!"

Yin Hsiang-shun used to treasure that orchard of his as if it had been an inexhaustible granary. But beside the co-op's great plan, it hardly seemed worth thinking of. Young Mang's glowing talk captured his fancy so completely that he clean forgot what he'd come for.

When he heard he had been chosen leader of his team, it made him feel that he'd be planting an orchard not only for the co-op but for himself as well.

"How are you going to plant the saplings?" he asked after a long silence.

"Oh, we'll dig holes at measured distance and put 'em in one by one."

"That won't do," said the old man, in shocked tones.

"Won't do? Why not?"

"Well, the soil there's all sand, isn't it?" Yin explained. "If you don't see that they have plenty of earth round the roots, they won't fruit."

"That's too bad," Young Mang cried in astonishment. "We didn't know that. And now we've told the management committee how many days it'll take us. What will they think if we tell them it'll take more?"

"Can't help that. There's no alternative," said Yin, rising, with a tinge of exasperation in his voice. "Without proper soil, water and manure will just seep through the sand and disappear."

Just then they heard people coming to the office.

Yin Hsiang-chiang, the chairman of the co-op, was eating his lunch when Mrs. Yin Hsiang-shun popped in. He'd heard that her husband was back and wanted to leave the co-op, and was greatly worried. Putting

his bowl away unfinished, he got up and hurried out with his sister-in-law. They spent some time looking for Hsiang-shun on Fore Street. They didn't find him there, so they turned into Back Street and went to the office.

Yin Hsiang-shun walked over to the door when he heard somebody approaching. When he saw who it was, he hurried forward to meet them. Yin Hsiang-chiang, still worrying about his cousin's decision to withdraw from the co-op, was rather taken aback when he saw his cousin making straight for him. He was just going to ask what it was all about when Hsiang-shun said anxiously: "You can't plant saplings like that, cousin. The land is sand, and you must put enough earth into the holes you've dug before you start planting anything. I was shocked when Young Mang told me about it just now. It is no easy matter to grow fruit trees. How can you plant them on sand?"

Hsiang-chiang had been expecting something quite different. From the way Hsiang-shun spoke, it didn't sound as if he was bent on leaving the co-op, though he didn't commit himself either way. Hsiang-chiang couldn't help wondering where he stood, but after a few more words, he came to the point.

"I hear you want to quit," he said.

Hsiang-shun was lost for an answer.

"What's the matter with you? Is it because you feel we've given you too few shares for your orchard? We took a long time discussing it and we all thought you wouldn't be the loser. Or is it because you want to keep the orchard to yourself? If so, I'd like to give you a piece of my mind." Coming closer, Hsiang-chiang continued: "I remember when Chiang Kai-shek's troops attacked us, you didn't hesitate to send your son to the people's army. Chiang must be downed, you said, before we can hope to start building socialism. But now that he's been overthrown and our socialist construction's begun, you let a dozen apple trees hold you back. Do you think they're more precious than the life of your own son?"

The chairman looked up and found his cousin sweating with embarrassment. But Hsiang-shun still said not a word.

Then the chairman went in to talk to the chief accountant.

Hsiang-shun suddenly turned on his wife angrily. "It was you told him all that, wagging your evil tongue, wasn't it?"

"You said you wanted to quit. Why blame me?"

"All right. All right," said the old man furiously, striking his forehead. "I suppose you're always right. I've been a big fool, anyway."

While they stood talking like this in the courtyard, a group of people trooped in. They were members of the team, ready to go and fetch the apple saplings. They greeted their team leader warmly and asked questions about his trip. The old man was glad to see them too, and invited them to go in with him and have a chat. But the men told him that

they'd come for a letter of introduction to the County Supply and Marketing Co-op so that they could pick up the young trees, and had to leave in a minute.

"What are you going to carry them in?" the old man asked anxiously.

"We've got carts with us," said the men.

"But what about sacking to wrap up the roots properly? They'll be ruined without it."

"Sacking? Where should we get that amount of sacking from?" said one young man.

The old man saw the difficulty at once, but he insisted that they must get plenty of rags or straw if they couldn't get sacking. He'd never rest easy, he said, if the saplings were carried exposed all the way.

The men agreed and went away, coming back shortly afterwards with their carts and plenty of straw. Then they set out in a long line. Yin Hsiang-shun followed them on foot, continually shouting all sorts of cautions and endlessly repeating what he thought was important. He had gone a mile before he was stopped by his daughter who had rushed up to take him home.

"Dad," she said, "let's go home now. Lunch is ready."

"Oh, I'd clean forgotten it," murmured the old man.

A NEW SHIPYARD ON THE WHANGPOO

CHI YIN

No sooner was New Year over than a cold wave from the North China Plain swept down to the Yangtse River. Strong northwest winds howled along the Whangpoo River throughout the day. The Whangpoo, which very rarely froze, now had thick ice along the banks. Transparent white ice floes were washed ashore by the muddy tide.

At the Hsinchien (New Construction) Shipyard drydock, the temperature had fallen to eight degrees below zero centigrade. The drydock, put up only three months earlier, sheltered the workers from rain and snow, but was quite ineffective before the icy blast that penetrated every corner. Workers on the building slips either pulled down the earflaps of their caps or wrapped their heads with towels quickly stained black by the dust. All that could be seen were their attentive eyes and faces reddened with cold.

The dock was full of all sorts of sounds: the creaking of winches hauling steel plates, the roaring of the motor of the circulating pump, the hissing of electric welding, the clanking of the punchers making

rivet holes in the steel plates, and the constant banging of riveters against metal parts. This world of many noises drowned out the howling gale.

"This is our dock," Yu Teh-chung, deputy secretary of the shipyard Party branch, shouted in my ear. "We've already launched three ships this year. This is our fourth since joint state-private concern was formed. She'll be launched in a few days' time. We made her after a Soviet design. She has a displacement of 760 tons and a capacity of 550 tons!"

In front of our eyes a big ship was suspended in the air by cement and wooden props. She had a huge hull which stretched some 170 feet. Work on the hull had by and large been completed, the workers were busy finishing it off with riveting and electric welding. On the bow and on the scaffolding near the gunwales groups of workers were hard at work, the banging of the riveters shook the whole dock.

We got onto the main deck of the new ship by winding our way up a flight of stairs made of wooden planks. The wind was even stronger there. The freezing wind cut us to the bone and swept the ship from stem to stern. Small puddles in the cabins and on deck were frozen hard. Sparks from the furnaces to heat the rivets flew wildly in the wind. The workers removed red-hot rivets from the furnaces without stopping and tossed them into the cabins for the riveters. At our feet two electric welders bent over their work, white flames sizzling.

"Aren't you cold, you young people?" the deputy secretary shouted behind them. One of them turned around at the shout and, lifting the mask, shot a glance at us. It was a girl of seventeen or eighteen! Seeing us visitors, she seemed a bit embarrassed, and her face, red with cold, became even more scarlet. She quickly pulled her mask down and went on working. She said nothing—and that, it seemed, was her reply to the deputy secretary.

"It's eight degrees of cold. Coming from Peking, you don't find it too bad, but to us in Shanghai, it's really bitter weather!" The deputy secretary who had been a ship-builder himself was evidently proud of the workers' bustling activities, as well as excited.

He pointed to the factory panorama spread beneath our feet, for we were high on the deck and could see the whole of the Hsinchien Shipyard. Rows of make-shift sheds, the huge drydock at the side of the Whangpoo, and the hulls of the ships that had been fitted up or were being worked on; the high-tension transmission lines above; the steel plates and other things for ship-building that have come from the Anshan Iron Works, and the workers busily working amidst the whirring of machines and the clatter of metal. . . .

Three months earlier, the site of the joint state-private Hsinchien Shipyard had been a strip of muddy flats—mildewed garbage, wet sand and rubble rank with weeds—a desolation several miles wide. Although workshops were now built, traces of the old days could still be seen. The one-storey buildings on the high slopes were the only ones built in the

old days, now they were offices for the shipyard directors and section chiefs.

The bare director's office was not any warmer than the dock. Several panes of glass from the north window were missing and the northwest wind poured in furiously. Half a cup of water on his desk was stone-cold. Hsiung Kuei-cheng, the shipyard director representing the state, was formerly a trade union leader. He briefly recounted the three-month history of the shipyard. It had not been built with government investments. It was a merger of three small shipyards—the Hsinchi Shipyard, the Hungtai Iron Foundry and the Hungchang Ship-building Company—that were converted into a joint state-private concern. Later, twenty small factories which applied for joint operation were amalgamated with it and that was how it had developed into its present form. These small factories covered a wide range: some were ship-dismantlers, others only ship repairers, and some were just small blacksmith shops. The biggest had around a hundred workers, the small only three or five. Not a single one of them could turn out ships needed by the state. Last year, the capitalists of these plants had applied for joint state-private operation and their applications had been approved by the Shanghai municipal government. In October the Hsinchien Shipyard had been set up. Nobody cared very much about them when the small plants had been scattered on both banks of the Whangpoo, and the workers and the capitalists found less and less interest in the enterprises. Now all had been amalgamated and become joint state-private operated big shipyard—a going concern.

As the shipyard was jointly operated, the state placed orders for ten large barges, each with a capacity of 550 tons, to be built in five months. The barges would be turned over to the Yangtse Navigation Bureau. This heavy order caused no end of worry to Hsiung Kuei-cheng, the state-share director, who had just been transferred from the trade union and had little knowledge of ship-building. The private-share deputy directors sighed helplessly, and said the state was demanding too much of them.

"But now when I think back on it," Hsiung told me, "I have to admit that we had a very conservative outlook. We underestimated the strong points of joint state-private operation, but the workers saw things a lot more clearly. They looked on the transformation as one of the most important events in their lives and were so happy they did not sleep well for nights. Indifferent workers now became real live-wires. In the past, the bell urged the workers to go to work, but now they complained that the bell always rang late. Before working hours started, the dock would be echoing banging and tinkling. Things moved so fast it almost seemed like magic. You couldn't believe your own eyes!"

Hsiung Kuei-cheng then led me to the workshop.

When we arrived at the workshop, people told me how things had been going in the drawing office. When the first ship was ordered, the

drawing office ran into difficulties at first. There were only two skilled draughtsmen in the whole office, the rest—scores of them—were all beginners. They just couldn't turn out the ship designs on time and their plan was five days late. Without the designs, the workers doing the next job could not go ahead and building the ship was stuck in the blueprint stage. This was the first order after joint operation. They had to make a go of it and prove themselves worthy of the trust placed in them. At this point, the twelve Youth League members in the drawing office formed a shock brigade—they voluntarily extended their working hours to get their rough drawings done earlier, then the rest of the workers in the drawing office followed suit. Draughting, of course, precedes every other step in shipbuilding. Now that the drawing office had caught up with the work, the punchers, who manned the next section, found themselves up against a host of tasks, and a shock brigade was formed in that section, too. One wave followed another, and soon the whole shipyard became a big shock brigade. By knocking-off time when the bell rang shrilly and piping-hot dishes and rice were waiting in the dining hall, from the dock you could still hear the din of riveting and see the sparks where the welders were still at work. New production records were constantly sent into the offices of the directors and the Party secretary. The administrators were amazed at the new records: in the past, riveters had handled 300 rivets a person, on the average; now they handled 800 or even 1,200! The workers who did the counter-sinking jumped from 800 holes to 2,100, punchers from 1,200 holes to 1,900. In the past, three draughtsmen turned out two wooden models of the shell plates a day; now they turned out five. The loudspeakers were constantly announcing new records in the shipyard, as still newer records were being sent in.

The capitalists working in the shipyard were simultaneously amazed and overjoyed at the situation. At first, they couldn't believe the ships could be turned out on time. Now they voluntarily joined the workers in the drawing office. Chang Kuo-hsiang, a capitalist who headed the planning and production section, actually worked side by side with the draughtsmen. The first ship was launched in the Whangpoo on December 3, one day ahead of schedule. Then the second ship was completed two days ahead of schedule and the third, five days.

Comrade Hsiung Kuei-cheng and I crossed the floor covered with steel plates and stopped at the door of a new work-shed. It was different from the quiet drawing office. It trembled with the clanking of metal parts. Here and there were blazing fires in furnaces or make-shift earth pits. Perspiring workers were tempering long steel plates in the fire and some of them were working steel plates red-hot from the fire on a huge anvil, sparks flying in all directions. On the ground finished ship parts were stacked. Hsiung told me this was their smelting shop. I was taken aback by the primitive equipment, for it looked just like an

old-fashioned blacksmith shop. Comrade Hsiung must have read my feelings on my face, for he said:

"Our shipyard is not in good shape at the moment. But it'll gradually improve to keep in line with production. Do you hear the hammering of the riveters? It's a mighty good sound!" He looked toward where the banging was coming from and pointed at the noisy dock. "We only got these riveters after joint operation. When the privately-owned concerns merged, we had only six worn-out old riveters. Before, the workers used to rivet with ordinary hammers. Usually their hands became blistered and bleeding and they could hammer only around 300 rivets a day. After the merger, we bought scores of riveters. Now some of the workers manage 1,200 rivets a day. These young lads are crack workers, for all that they're beginners."

Then I visited several other workshops. These were also housed in make-shift sheds, covered with reed mats. The ground was squelchy and cold winds poured in from every direction. There were no tables or chairs, only steel of all kinds for ship-building. It was clear that they were still in the first stages of construction and still had many difficulties. But in the workshops, just as at the dock, the workers were warmed to their job; they had a single aim—to build their ships as quickly as possible.

Yu Hsih-ching, a veteran ship-builder of 27 years who was in charge of the depot, was perhaps the busiest man in the Hsinchien Shipyard. He seemed to be everywhere at once, shouting and directing the workers who were hauling steel plates or shifting cement props. The depot is an indispensable part of building a ship, from beginning to end. And Yu was never idle for a moment; he attended to everything that needed his care.

Yu had come to the Whangpoo River bank at seventeen, and he knew the river like the palm of his hand. Over the past twenty years and more, he had left one foreign shipyard for another. Everything he handled was imported steel plate and the ships he built were for foreigners. Times without number he despondently saw the ships he and his mates had painstakingly built launched in the Whangpoo flying British or Japanese flags. In the years after liberation he worked in a private shipyard. But he was very unhappy—how badly the country needed ships, but he could not use his experience fully because the shipyard was so poorly equipped that it could not turn out any ships! Last year when several private shipyards were amalgamated into the Hsinchien Shipyard, he was put in charge of the depot. At the inauguration meeting, he didn't say a word. His face was flushed and his hands trembled as one thought ran through his mind. He told me that he was overwhelmed by one idea—"Let's get to work and build ships for our country!".

Yu did everything he could to speed up the building of ships. He would often hang around the river bank, thinking. As the tide came in, the dock would be inundated, and work would have to be stopped at the

river's edge until the tide ebbed. This had always been done and so it did not strike anyone as a waste of time and something to be changed. Yu felt uneasy when he saw the work stopped. If the ships were built at such a pace, he thought, how would the ten ships ever be turned out on time? So he inspected the river bank to see what could be done. He thought to himself: "If we built an earth dam beyond the dock to keep the tide out, we could keep on working when the tide is in. Then when we launch a ship, we could break the dam temporarily. This would help us do a lot more work." He told his idea to his mates and they agreed it was practical. Right away they set to work and in no time a 660 feet long earth dam was built and the tides no longer held up their work.

In the noisy dock I came across Chou Wei-an and Chou Wen-chung, the two deputy directors representing private shares and Chuang Kuo-hsiang, chief of the planning and production section. They had been owners of private shipyards, and after joint operation, they were appointed to new jobs. Each of them had a desk in the shipyard office, close to that of the state-share director. Though I went to the office many times, I never saw them there. Each time I was told that they had gone to the dock or the workshops. When they received the order to build the new ships, they were rather dubious if it could be done. They thought no one understood the enterprises and the workers as well as they did. But they were in for a surprise. The workers set out to beat the targets and began an emulation campaign. The building of the first new ship went pretty smoothly. The enthusiasm shown by the workers inspired them and gave them confidence.

On a bitterly cold morning just after the New Year, I met Chuang Kuo-hsiang by the dock. He had just fixed the circulating pump that had broken down in the freezing cold of the previous night. Before joint operation, the workers had a very bad opinion of him and called him "the man who never keeps his word." He had shown no sense of responsibility toward the enterprise. When the workers had made any suggestions, he would spread his hands and shrug his shoulders and said indifferently, "There's absolutely nothing I can do." Now the workers didn't call him that any more, for he had changed radically. Like the other capitalists, he did a lot of work in building the new ships. He told me that though he had skill, he had not had a good, formal education. After joint operation, he was given the important job of managing planning and production by the director representing the state share. He had been very moved by this, but felt he was not equal to the tremendous task. He decided to do his job as best he could and try to become an honest wage-earner.

At the noon on January 13, I attended the launching of the fourth ship made by the Hsinchien Shipyard. Despite the unusual cold wave, the workers finished their fourth ship a day ahead of schedule. The new ship was nicely decorated, the hull painted a pleasant green and cabins a

creamy yellow. The bridge, the cabins, the galley and lavatory were all spotlessly clean. I met Yu Hsih-ching alongside the dock again. Together with deputy directors Chou Wei-an and Chou Wen-chung, he was directing the workers to get ready to launch the ship. The depot workers had made all preparations for the launching — the earth dam beyond the dock had been breached and the water let into the dock; the boards of the slipway were smeared with a thick layer of grease and most of the wooden and cement props removed. As soon as the tide came in, the ship would slide into water off the slipway.

The tide came in very slowly and they anxiously scanned the river. Chou Wen-chung said jokingly: "We ship-builders are like women in labour. After long pregnancy, we are straining to give birth to our child—the new ship." It was indeed a moment of mixed feelings—excitement, happiness and anxiety. Yu Hsih-ching paced back and forth along the river bank, tense and energetic, puffing at his cigarette. Now and then he would go down the slipway and gauge the water level with a folding yardstick that he fished out of his pocket, to see how much the tide had risen. He looked as though he would send the huge ship into the water with one mighty push all by himself.

Suddenly firecrackers burst on the deck of the new ship. Ignoring the water, the workers on the dock rushed to the edge of the bank. Those in front skipped over muddy puddles and those following pressed forward, muddy water spattering up on all sides.

As it turned out, the tide had risen imperceptibly and the muddy river water had rushed into the dock from the breach in the earth dam. It swiftly swept away clods of earth and drift-wood. The earth at the side of the dock was crumbling into the river. The workers on either side of the new ship raised their hammers and knocked away the last wooden props supporting the ship. The hull slightly rolled and swiftly glided down the slipway into the river.

A big swell rose on the quiet Whangpoo. On the dazzling gold waves, the new barge joined the ranks of ships plying the Whangpoo. Yu Teh-chung, the deputy secretary of the Party branch, stood on the deck of the new barge and waved to the workers and capitalists on the river bank.

HAPPINESS GROWS ON NEW SOIL

SHU HSIAO-PING

Like a roll of black satin, the Heilungkiang, (Black Dragon River), rushes down from the Lesser Hsingan Mountains. If you throw some

flowers into the river which is nearly five *li* wide, they will be carried far downstream by the current and out of your sight in a few seconds.

Our great neighbour the Soviet Union is on the other side of the river. One often sees Soviet women come down to the river, to water the cattle.

The waves foam and roar incessantly around an islet in the middle of the river. Looking downstream at the expanse of black water touching the horizon makes you think the river is flowing away into eternity. . . . The wind wafts up the smell of fish from the Heilungkiang together with the fragrance of grass and mushrooms. At such moments, you feel you want to open your lungs wide and fill them with this air.

The morning frost covers the land evenly with a white blanket. Big flocks of wild geese bound for the south fly leisurely in a line where sky and water meet. The saying "The wild geese get under way in October and bring frost to all the places they fly over" is quite correct. The steppe, still green only a few days ago, suddenly looks like an old man, his head covered with white hair.

The uncultivated land of the north, shaped like the back of a fish, stretches over the area where the Heilungkiang and the Sungari meet. The land here is richly endowed by nature. During a drought, it holds the water like a pot; when there is a flood, water filters through as if it were a sieve. No wonder the peasants call this huge uncultivated area a golden plate! No fertilizer is ever put on this land, season in and out, but when it is time to plough, the ploughshares sink deep into the rich soil.

And all this vast area of fertile black earth has been sleeping, practically untouched.

What a difference on the opposite bank where our Soviet friends live! Just listen every Saturday night to the broadcast music, the singing and dancing, while the place is bright with electric lights. People there have a gay time of their week-ends. But then, listen also to the tractors, working day and night during the week! The Soviet people, too, have organized teams of young people who are bringing the arable land under cultivation.

The word "transition to socialism" has tangible and concrete meaning for the people on the south bank. Seeing tractors on the opposite bank has put ideas into their heads, the roar of the tractors has stirred their energy.

Fertile but bleak land of the great north, you have slept long enough! The young people of our country stand ready impatiently to wake you up. They want to turn up this virgin soil so that fifteen million acres of steppe will be a sea of crops, by the time the Second Five-Year Plan is accomplished.

WHAT CAN WE DO FOR OUR COUNTRY?

Even at first sight, Yang Hua would give you an impression of strength. This young fellow seems to have lived in the sunshine all his life. His skin is a dark tan, he exudes a feeling of the sun's heat. He looks preoccupied, as if there were always a heavy load on his mind. He is so tall and lean that he stoops a little; otherwise he is the picture of health and strength. When he laughs, his eyes are bright like those of a child.

Yang Hua began talking about land reclamation the moment I met him.

"For years, several of us young people had been discussing what we could do for our country. Then, one day, we read in the paper that there were nearly 200 million acres of arable land lying untouched near China's borders, and from Li Fu-chun's report* we learned that over five million acres were to be brought under cultivation during the First Five-Year Plan. At first, our only regret was that we had no wings to fly there. But then another idea struck us—what could we do, few as we were? How much better it would be to organize a group of healthy, strong, young people to go and work there! Young people don't have the cares and attachments that would keep them from picking up their bedding-rolls and starting on their way.

"The more we thought about the matter, the more we realized that it wasn't a simple matter at all. Where was the money to come from for travelling expenses, for draught animals, farm implements and seed? So we sat down with an abacus and calculated carefully. We came to the conclusion that, if every young person in Peking contributed only a few cents, a team of young volunteers could bring over five hundred acres under cultivation which would yield some three hundred thousand catties of grain. So the five of us very rashly sent a petition to the Peking municipal committee of the Youth League, outlining our proposal.

"We didn't expect anything to happen so quickly, but our idea coincided with the League's plans. So, the third day after we had sent in our petition, we were summoned for an interview by responsible comrades. Once we knew we had League backing, we felt we could move mountains and fill up the sea! Land reclamation seemed to be nothing by comparison. We were given the green light! Especially after our talk with the comrades of the League secretariat, we were filled with confidence and strength. Distance was no problem. We were ready for a Long March of ten thousand *li*. Cold weather was of course not con-

*Li Fu-chun, *Report on the First Five-Year Plan for Development of the National Economy of the People's Republic of China in 1953-1957*, published by the Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1955.

sidered an obstacle. Young people like us have enough fire in us to melt down ice and snow."

A ROAD'S BEEN MADE

In the evening, the scent of hay mingles with the damp smell of the freshly upturned soil and manure on the vast stretches of the great north. In the birch forests, the northwest wind rustles the dry leaves.

After a day's hard work the horses line up on both sides of a big trough, chewing their fodder energetically but leisurely in a pleasant rhythm.

The young volunteers for land reclamation chat around the camp fire whose flame is trembling under the gusts of a northwester. The fire warms their chests, while their backs freeze in the wind.

From inside a tent comes the sound of an *erh-hu*, the Chinese viola. Someone else is writing letters in the candlelight.

Now it is eight o'clock in the evening of October seventh. In Peking at this time, tram-cars are running and the streets full of people. But the young people from Peking here in the north are already sound asleep inside their tents. The wind roars like the tide of the sea and shakes the tents. But the volunteers snore so that nothing can wake them.

Weird sounds come from a distance. It isn't any human being crying, is it? The comrade on night duty says: "It's just Mr. Wolf paying us a visit." The howling sounds nearer and nearer, and now there is howling from two other sides. . . . Have the wolves surrounded the camp on three sides?

Suddenly, a shot is fired that wakes many of the people sleeping in the tents. But the comrade on night duty reassures them: "Nothing serious has happened, comrades, go back to sleep! We've frightened the wolves away."

After a while, the wind becomes less fierce. There is splashing on the tents, as if someone were scattering soya beans. It's raining! Water drips into the tents through holes and openings. Someone yawns loudly in the darkness: "Ah—yi! Here I've been longing for a drink of water, but this really quenches my thirst!" The remark makes the girls on the other side of the mat partition giggle.

In the great north it is broad daylight at half past three in the morning. The sun rises over the steppe horizon like a huge disk of gold. Its rays colour the clouds so that they look like burning flames. It is a fine day for ploughing. But how cold the dawn is in the great north! On the Soviet side of the Lesser Hsingan Mountains, the peaks are already snow-capped, and the materials used the night before in building are frozen. Without ceremony, winter sends its message: "Young fellows, plough the land as quickly as you can!"

The ploughing begins. There are nine ploughs in a row, each has eight horses harnessed to it, all ready to attack the land and make it arable. Voices become hoarse after shouting to the animals for long, and the cracking of whips wakes up the steppe from its deep slumber. Behind the ploughshares and the horses' hoofs, white vapour rises from the newly-made furrows. In a few minutes only, the water collected in the furrows freezes over.

I find the collar of a horse harnessed to one of the ploughs made of a padded jacket. I'm told that a wolf had torn the collar of that horse the night before, so the teamster put his own padded jacket on the animal instead. The person who handles the plough behind the team is a girl. At first, she had great difficulty to do this work because the draught animals were not used to her. They would not budge when they should have moved; but they would run when they shouldn't have, and once even threw her several yards. But she persisted, and after a few days she learned the trick. Now she appears to be quite an expert.

The brigade that cut grass for fodder are working in a marsh about two *li* to the southwest of the camp. Their plan is to cut three hundred thousand catties of grass in five hundred work-days. But the grass grows best where there is deep water. They have to stand in icy-cold water which reaches up to their knees and work even nine hours a day. Often their shoes and socks come off in the soggy soil.

Liu Kuei-feng is a girl in this brigade who has cut more grass than any other woman. Some days she cuts one hundred and twenty bundles. She is only seventeen, loves to talk and laugh. The story goes that, when she wanted to leave home, her mother wouldn't let her go, worrying over what she might have to suffer in such a far-away place. But Liu Kuei-feng said: "You don't want me to join the land reclamation scheme now, but you would let me get married some time, wouldn't you? All right, if you don't let me go now, I won't come to see you when I get married even if the distance between my home and yours is less than ten *li*. But if you let me go now, I'll come to see you as often as I can, even if I lived a hundred thousand *li* away!" After this, the girl was allowed to go with the land reclamation team, even though it was a heart-breaking thing for her mother to see her only daughter off.

It goes without saying that life in the great north is much harder than in Peking. Near the capital, the young people work the land which their ancestors cultivated for generations, they're cared for and protected by their parents. But in Heilungkiang they are all on their own, with nothing to rely on but their own hands. This is the reason why even the smallest product of their own labour becomes precious, an object of special love and care. The water drawn from the first well they have sunk themselves tastes especially sweet. The coarse steamed buns their own cook makes of corn flour are considered a delicacy, and the grass-covered ground they sleep on becomes a luxurious berth.

They are putting the roof on a new hut, the first housing built on the first farm of the Young People's Land Reclamation Area. But already they are pointing to various places from this roof and say here will be the main street, there we'll put a sports field. . . .

In the afternoon, dark clouds gather in the sky. There's the roll of thunder. The saying "Thunder in the autumn is always followed by a hailstorm" comes true once again. Soon, there's heavy rain mingled with hailstones as big as potatoes! The brigade that were cutting grass come back. Since there's no work for them to do in this weather, they take the time to read letters that come from all sorts of places and are written by all sorts of people: sailors, construction workers, government cadres, doctors, flyers, actors, students. . . . Some of the letters contain seed; some people send them books; some tell of their own experience, for instance, in tending cattle; some would like to join the land reclamation scheme. . . . Every day there are between twenty and sixty such letters.

Today, two letters interest them the most. One was written by a girl from Moscow named Kozireva who is working in the reclamation area of Kazakhstan. She would like to hear from the team of young volunteers from Peking about their experience in land reclamation. Now the team is discussing who among them is to answer her letter. The other communication is from one of their own team who has gone as their representative to attend the National Conference of Active Young Builders of Socialism in Peking. He tells his mates that the Central Committee of the Youth League has awarded their team the splendid radio set which was presented by the delegation of Soviet youth. The team cheers loudly over this piece of news.

The weather in the north is capricious and changeable. In less than half an hour, it is fine again. Two big rainbows that stand like triumphal arches on the green steppe appear on the horizon. The brigade that were cutting grass before, go out again to work, talking and singing.

Their songs fill the air. After the rain the steppe looks fresh and bright. Only a month ago, this was an expanse of primeval soil. Now, these young people have made a track across it.

CROPS MUST GROW HERE!

Even before October, these young people have to put on rabbit-fur caps, fur coats and boots made of *Wu-la* grass. They are felling trees in the dark pine forests in ten or more degrees below zero. This year they plan to build five hundred rooms to house three thousand new comrades due next spring, just to show how heartily they welcome these reinforcements. In their letters they say they don't mind working in such cold weather so that the newcomers will suffer fewer hardships when they arrive.

Next year, sixteen collective farms will be established on the steppe where formerly only the footprints of wild animals were to be seen, and there will be six thousand collective farmers. Fifty thousand acres of land will be opened up by these young heroes! The grain they will have produced for their country will be transported by trains then, instead of carts.

This is the spirit of the young people of New China. Their attitude is:

No more wild grass on arable land!
Every bit of soil must bear crops!

CHRONICLE

The Second Council Meeting of the Union of Chinese Writers

Not long ago the Union of Chinese Writers called their second council meeting in Peking—the first was in September 1953. As Mao Tun, the chairman of the writers' union, pointed out, great changes had taken place in China in this short time. The high tide of the socialist revolution had reached every part of our country, and things described by our writers two years ago as prospects for the future had already come into being. New events which were described for the first time two years ago had become common phenomena today. New young writers had come forward in large numbers, from different walks of life, and the heroes and heroines they depict are the men and women who are building socialism. Following the rise in the cultural level of the people as a whole, literature was in great demand. It is reaching more and more people all the time.

Such was the background to the second meeting of the council. This was an enlarged meeting, attended by over 230 people—council members, representatives of local branches of the writers' union, editors of all the important literary magazines and writers, critics and research workers. Discussion of the council centred round two matters: the need to raise the ideological and artistic level of literary works, and the need to work out a method by which more and better literary works will be forthcoming.

Chou Yang, a well-known critic, who is a vice-chairman of the Union of Chinese Writers, spoke on the first matter, in his report on "The Task Before Us Is to Create a Socialist Literature." He summed up the ideological fight in the field of literature in the past two years, and in particular the fight against Hu Feng's counter-revolutionary clique, and against the bourgeois ideology represented by Hu Shih. In these years many works reflecting the new life had come out. Chou Yang, while emphasizing the fact that achievements had been made by our writers, also pointed out that there were shortcomings in certain writings, particularly the tendency among some of the young writers to rely on stereotyped plots, abstract characters and naturalism. He urged writers to work hard so as to broaden their knowledge of the world around them, and gain a deeper understanding of life. They must improve their skill in artistic presentation, but most important of all, they must dedicate themselves wholeheartedly to serving the people, and, by their creative labour in the literary field, help to build socialism.

Mao Tun, the well-known novelist, and chairman of the Union of Chinese Writers, spoke on the need to bring forward new forces and enlarge the ranks of writers. He said that one of the important features which showed the successfulness of our society was the healthy development and speed of growth of our younger generation of writers. On the literary front, as on other fronts, large reinforcements from new sources had joined the ranks. Their appearance promised a bright future for Chinese literature. This thesis was illustrated with many examples, a telling one being the fact that even while the council was in session, *A Selection of Literary Works of Young Writers* was published. This Selection—ten volumes of it—includes

contributions from 188 new young writers, many, if not most of them, being people actively engaged in widely differing jobs. This meant that their work was imbued with the vitality of our life nowadays and reflected vividly the whole people's enthusiasm for the cause of socialism, consisting, as they did, of realist reflections of various phases of our changing social environment. Mao Tun also said frankly that the council had not paid sufficient attention to young writers, nor had a properly organized attempt been made to help them, and turn them into an effective, creative force. Criticism had either been too severe, in fact, or else the other extreme was reached and a few young writers were over-praised. Mao Tun appealed to literary critics to point out the shortcomings of young writers as well as extol their achievements, and to demand a high standard as a spur to further progress. Literary magazines, he said, should become centres of help and encouragement to young writers: the editors of such magazines must not fail to pay attention to this task. The continuous expansion of the ranks of young writers would be an important factor in ensuring more and better literary works.

A subject that attracted much attention during this council meeting was the literature of China's minority peoples. Following the general improvement in the living conditions of the whole people, and the spread of education, the cultural life of China's minority peoples is advancing by leaps and bounds. Nationalities which before produced no writers are now bringing them forward. Those without a written language have now founded one, so that the literature of the minority peoples has begun to play a significant role in the cultural life of our multi-national country. Novelist Lao Sheh, another vice-chairman of the Union of Chinese Writers, spoke on this subject. He pointed out that all our minority peoples had a rich literary heritage. The Tibetans, Mongolians, Uighurs, Koreans, and several others, possess an excellent classical literature, and those which had no written language often cherish magnificent tales, songs and poems, handed down by word of mouth—like the long epic poem of the Shani people, *Ashma*. Material like this should be collected and collated, and be added to China's written treasury. Translation from the literature of our many nationalities is an important task confronting us. Work in this connection had already started, Lao Sheh said, but much more, and better, work still remained to be done. And these translations should not be limited to classics, folk songs and tales but should include contemporary writings of all nationalities. To the writers from minority nationalities, he said that they must make a deep study of the literary heritage of their own nationality, and soak themselves in their peoples' lives and backgrounds. Only thus could they produce works which genuinely carried on their traditional style, which would be taken to their readers' hearts.

The second matter which the council discussed was the need to foster more and better creative writing. Liu Pai-yu, the famous novelist and chairman of the executive committee of the writers' union, reported on what the writers' union had done, under the title, "Strive to Bring Forth More and Better Literary Works." In our time, he pointed out, writers were greatly inspired by the rapid advance of the socialist revolution. This in turn made new demands on them. To meet the rising cultural requirements of the people, every writer must do his utmost to produce more and better literary works. Liu Pai-yu gave a few figures to illustrate the position. Membership of the writers' union now stands at 946; but quite a number of them work in the field of literature as editors, teachers or research workers, and so on, doing very little creative writing. The situation, therefore, is seriously at variance with the actual demands of our country.

Liu Pai-yu gave a resumé of the work done since the last council meeting, and outlined the important tasks which lay before them: to take steps to enable writers to get first-hand experience of

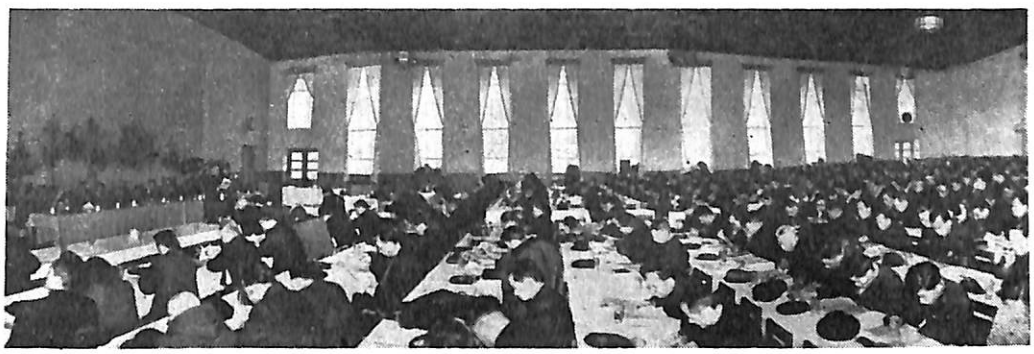
life, to raise their ideological level, improve their skill in artistic presentation, encourage more and more people to try their hand at creative writing—so that those who want to write, but are working full-time on various jobs can fully develop their latent literary talent—and finally, to make full use of literary magazines as centres to help bring forward large numbers of promising young writers.

The revolutionary struggles of the Chinese people in the past, and the present effort to build a socialist society provide rich and varied themes for creative writing. The writers' union, and its literary magazines, therefore should see that the widest possible choice of topics are covered, that all forms of writing—novels, poems, film scripts, reportage and so on—are given their due, and that the fullest possible emulation and discussion is encouraged among the ranks of writers.

Finally, Liu Pai-yu submitted a twelve-year programme to the council meeting for discussion. It included clear-cut measures to be taken, in order to develop the study of literary theory and literary criticism, bring on young writers, develop the literature of the minority peoples, work on international exchange of literature and improve the editing and publishing side.

The reports, speeches and twelve-year programme aroused great interest, and a lively discussion was held, with many contributions from the floor. Amongst these contributions were some from the novelists, Pa Chin and Wu Tsu-hsiang, the playwrights, Tsao Yu and Chen Chi-tung, and the poets, Yuan Shui-pai and Sayntsogt (the Mongolian poet) who spoke on the problems which they encountered in their creative writing. Their speeches, like all the speeches made during the council meeting, were characterized by a spirit of serious criticism and self-criticism.

After full discussion and amendments, the twelve-year programme of work for the Union of Chinese Writers was unanimously adopted. Two new members were elected to the council, N. Sayntsogt, and the Uighur playwright, Tsiya Samidit. At the close, the writers returned, full of confidence, to factories, mines, construction sites and villages, so that they will reflect, in their writings, the great work of socialist construction and transformation going on over the whole country.



Exhibition of British Graphic Art

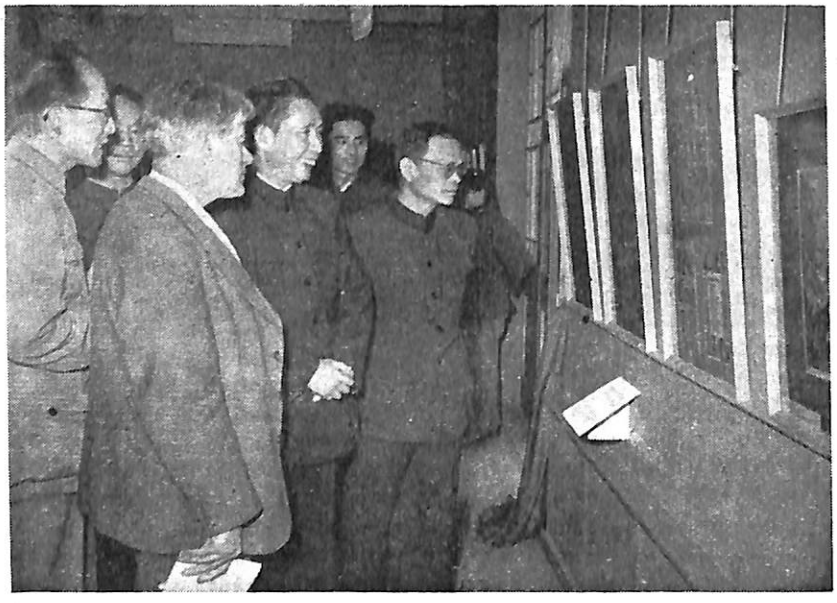
Soon after the exhibition of Chi Pai-shih's paintings in Britain, an Exhibition of British Graphic Art was opened in Peking, at the Chungshan Park Art Gallery. It is here under the joint auspices of the Chinese People's Association for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries and the Union of Chinese Artists, and was assembled by the Britain-China Friendship Association. It is the first time that such an exhibition has been shown here.

There are over 220 exhibits—woodcuts, etchings, lithographs, silkscreen prints, and book illustrations and examples of printing. From some of the earliest printed books in England (or Europe for that matter) to representative works of well-known young moderns, it spans 500 years of British graphic art.

The exhibition as a whole bore the attraction of being an epitome of the development of the reproductive arts in Britain. Here we can see the works of William Hogarth, the father of political satirical art. His "Destruction of the City" is one of his earliest satirical works, where Honour, strapped to the wheel, and Honesty in the stocks are publicly beaten by Self-Interest and Villainy. The Devil draws crowds to his shop, where honest dealing does not exist, and priests and school-masters are dicing. Another of his works, "Southwark Fair," is a very vivid engraving, in which his characteristic moral judgement of his times had full play. To the left is an open-air theatre—but the stage collapses; other performers are attracting an audience. To the right, a prize-fighter arrives on horseback. Beyond them jugglers, a quack doctor, a hat stuck on a pole (the prize for the best wrestler), a puppet-show and so on, are to be seen.

Thomas Rowlandson, like Hogarth before him, was an outstanding caricaturist.

Chu Tu-nan (middle), President of the Chinese People's Association for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, and Chang Chih-hsiang (right), Vice-Minister of Culture, at the exhibition of British Graphic Art. They are accompanied by Richard Carline (left).



His "Death and Napoleon" shows the French Emperor, long before his exile, facing his inevitable end, as foreshadowed by his defeat. Then there were some of James Gillray's drawings—another great political caricaturist. His "Tales of Wonder" is a parody on the craze for reading tales of horror, while his "Picnic Orchestra" is a satire on the fashionable amateur concerts organized by Lady Buckingham. These two caricatures miniature British society of his time. The highly-gifted caricaturist Richard Newton died very young, but his "Funking the Tax-gatherer" shows what heights he reached. John Tenniel's fame nowadays rests chiefly on his immortal illustrations of Lewis Carroll's "Alice in Wonderland." His lovely little Alice is a familiar image to the Chinese reader of children's stories. The delicate strokes in John Ruskin's "Two Plant Studies" seem to evoke the very dew on the flowers.

Among the modern works there are two by Paul Hogarth, who visited our country last year, "The Sweetshop" and "Spitalfield Market." The former describes the everyday life of a laundress. Her heaped clothes-basket by her, she is busily ironing in a dim light. Harry Baine's "Drilling Limestone" is of a worker in the rain, his knitted brows and obvious intensity of purpose showing clearly how he is battling with circumstances.

Richard Carline, the chairman of the Arts Committee of the Britain-China Friendship Association, introduced the exhibition. Europe owes a great debt to China, he said. Not only for her discovery of the art of wood-block reproduction, but for her discovery of paper-making. It was this that gave birth to the European art of reproduction early in the 14th century. We do not forget this, he said, nor can we forget the inspiration we have received from Chinese artists, which our artists have drawn so much on—such a famous artist as Aubrey Beardsley was directly influenced by Chinese art.

This exhibition, the first of its kind from Britain for many years, has aroused considerable interest, not only among artists but among the general public in the capital. The visitors have been deeply impressed by the wit and humanity of the British people, as expressed through the works of their artists.

Young Writers' National Conference

In March this year, 497 young writers came to Peking from every part of the country to exchange their experiences and discuss the problems they are confronted in their creative writing. Among them were Li Chun, who wrote the famous short story *Not That Road*; the 21-year-old young poet Wei Chi-lin of the Chuang people, author of the ballad *The Legend of the Rose* (see *Chinese Literature*, No. 4, 1955); the 29-year-old woman from poor peasant family Chen Kuei-chen who is now a well-known playwright; the 20-year-old lathe worker and poet Wen Cheng-hsun; the 26-year-old sailor and novelist Kuan Nien-yi; and the young critics Li Hsi-fan and Lan Ling famous for having started the great debate on the classic "Dream of the Red Chamber" (see *Chinese Literature*, No. 2, 1955, p. 169). The Conference, for which they all had come, enabled these young authors to meet in the same hall.

One of the main characteristics of New China's literature is the continuous swelling of her literary ranks. New writers are appearing all the time in the pages of the various literary magazines. Most of them are amateurs from all walks of life. And because they are working in a variety of fields, their works are moving and vital, reflecting the various aspects of our contemporary life. It is these writers who have brought new blood into the literature of New China. According to an investigation made by the Union of Chinese Writers at the end of last year, more than a thousand young writers had been frequent contributors to literary magazines.

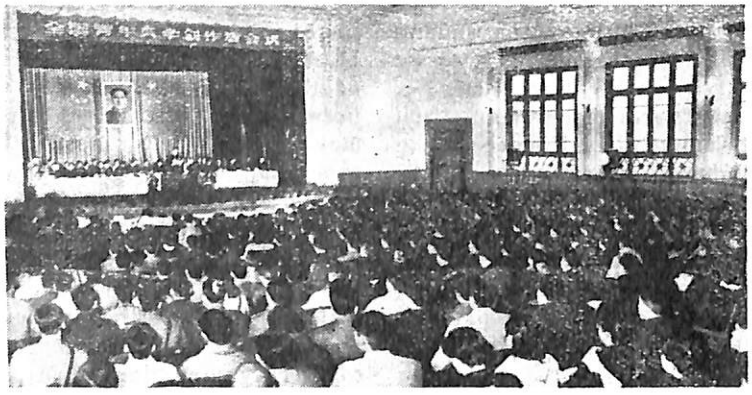
In the fifteen days of the Conference, young writers made acquaintance with the veterans. The most distinguished contemporary writers like Mao Tun, Lao Sheh, Chao Shu-li, the playwrights Tsao Yu and Hsia Yen, the poet Yuan Shui-pai, and others, shared with their young colleagues without any reservation all they had learned from tens of years of writing. Then the Conference split into groups for poetry, the novel, drama, children's literature, scenario-writing, literary criticism, ballad-singing, etc. Everyone of the young writers was free to join a group to his or her liking and discuss with others in the same line the problems of creative writing. Each group had one or several of the well-known veterans to help the young writers at any time.

In the group discussion, tendencies towards a formalistic and abstract approach and towards naturalism came under special fire. Some young writers had over-simplified the richness of life under the influence of formalistic and abstract ideas so that their portrayal became colourless and lacking in interest. This happened mainly because they did not understand the ever-changing, complex events of actual life, did not analyse them thoroughly and, at the same time, were hampered by insufficient skill in artistic presentation. Naturalism went to the other extreme. Trivial things were depicted in such great detail that the actual reality was distorted. Some young writers, although eager to rid themselves of formalistic and abstract tendencies, had yet been trying to solve the problem only superficially, and thus had often fallen into the pit of naturalism. Both the formalistic approach and naturalism run counter to the socialist-realist principles of creative writing. Through discussion and concrete examples, these harmful tendencies were rectified.

Another item of discussion at the Conference was the question of how to enrich one's literary knowledge and master literary technique. Young writers in the villages, mines, factories, the army, witness at their various posts the changes of every day, of which they are also participants in person. The express this rich life in the form of literature requires great artistic skill. During the discussions, they have all realized that to learn from Chinese and foreign classics is an education indispensable to the mastery of their craft.

After the Conference, the young writers returned from Peking to their own environment with new experiences and feelings that would serve to fill a new page with creative writing.

This Young Writers' National Conference was not only the first in the new China, but also in the history of China's literature. Similar conference will be held at regular intervals in the future. Apart from that, literary groups will be set up throughout the country in cities with a population of 100,000, in enterprises with at least 500 workers, in certain villages and youth organizations to foster literary talent among young amateurs.



Exhibition of Mexican Graphic Art

This spring, the Union of Chinese Artists sponsored an exhibition of Mexican graphic art in the Peking Art Gallery. The works executed during the past twenty years by more than thirty members of the Mexican Taller de Grafica Popular were on display, including those of L. Mendez, first-prize winner of an International Peace Prize. Among the 273 exhibits were woodcuts, lithographs, linocuts and large woodcut posters. There were also book illustrations, photographs of murals as well as of artists and their activities.

A Woodcut by L. Mendez

This was the first time that the works of Mexican artists were exhibited in China, hence they aroused tremendous interest and approval. All the leading papers in Peking—the *People's Daily, Daily Worker, Kuangming Daily, Peking Daily, Chinese Youth, the Fine Arts Monthly,* the fortnightly *New Observer* and *Picture-Story Magazine*—carried reviews about the Mexican artists' works together with some reproductions from them.

Well-known Chinese graphic artists like Chiang Tou, Ku Yuan, Li Hua, Cheng Yeh-fu, Li Chün and Ai Yen came to the exhibition time and again, so much did they admire the works shown. Some had even begun to study the pictures while preparations for the exhibition were still in progress. The woodcut artist Li Hua felt that "These works show the rich creative power of the Mexican artists." Li Chün, another woodcut artist, wrote a review of the exhibition in which he stated: "These works speak with the voice of the Mexican people, express for us Chinese their heroic, militant and selfless spirit." Professors teaching graphic art at the Central Academy of Fine Arts photographed most of the exhibits, to use them as material for their research work. While the exhibition was on, artists in Peking held discussions on the merits of the Mexican artists.

Many visitors, who noted down their impressions in the visitors' book at the exhibition, showed great interest in the

works of L. Mendez. This was not only due to his skilful ways of expression, but because his themes cover a wide range, maintain the realism traditional in Mexican art and are completely free from sophistication. Whether he treats of historical themes or present-day struggles, he manifests his intense dislike of the oppressors and his great love for the people. The visitors were particularly carried away by the picture "Rio Escondido," and the drawings for the film strips of "The Brutal Latifundist," "Paul Robeson," and "Advance." The simple but forceful lithographs by Pablo O'Higgins, in their apt portrayal of the lives and customs of the Mexican people, and the woodcuts and illustrations by Alberto Bertran and Andrea Gomez were also much admired.

The exhibition was a great success. It not only acquaints the Chinese people with the accomplishment of the contemporary Mexican art, but also helps to promote better understanding between the Chinese and Mexican peoples. After it had been closed in Peking, the exhibition was also shown in Shanghai.

Tunhuang Art Treasures

An exhibition of the art treasures of the Tunhuang caves was opened in the Peking Palace Museum last year in October. Among the great number of visitors that have crowded to the exhibition every day since, there are many artists and students of art from all parts of China who come specially to familiarize themselves with these invaluable relics of ancient art.

Tunhuang is a county in the extreme west of Kansu Province in Northwest China. During the Han Dynasty two thousand years ago, when the southern and eastern shores of China had not yet been opened to sea routes, Tunhuang was a staging post along the line of East-West communication, a fact that made the locality economically prosperous. It is against this background that we must see the flowering of art in that particular area.

History records that in A.D. 366 a monk came to the Mokao cliffs (about 13 miles southeast of Tunhuang) and repaired an old cave there that had murals and sculptured Buddhist images on all its walls. Many more caves were dug in the thousand years following, i.e. from the start of the Northern Wei Dynasty in A.D. 386 to the end of the Yuan Dynasty in A.D. 1368. At the height of its fame, Tunhuang boasted a thousand grottoes. When in the Sung Dynasty (960-1279 A.D.) the flames of war reached Tunhuang in the reign of Emperor Jen Tsung, people in charge of the cave temples placed scriptures, picture scrolls and documents in a small cave which had been left unfinished in the preceding Tang Dynasty and sealed it up, before they fled. Thereafter, only few visitors ever came to the Tunhuang caves which in time were blocked by shifting sands. So these treasures lay untouched for eight or nine hundred years.

In 1900, the secret, sealed-up cave was accidentally discovered by a Taoist priest. Seven years later this news reached an Englishman named Sir Aurel Stein who was then in the province of Sinkiang. He immediately went to Tunhuang and by one means or another extracted a great number of Buddhist scriptures and picture scrolls from the priest. Hard on the heels of Stein came the Frenchman Paul Pelliot, who also went away loaded with cultural relics. In 1924, an American adventurer by the name of Langdon Warner contrived to lift twenty-six murals from the walls of four caves. It was only through vehement opposition from the local populace that this imperialist brigandage was brought to an end.

With liberation, the art treasures of Tunhuang became the property of the Chinese people. The 480 caves in existence contain large numbers of murals and sculptures which constitute precious cultural relics of a thousand years, from the Northern Wei through the Sui, Tang,

the Five Dynasties, the Sung to the Yuan Dynasty.

Many of the Tunhuang murals are based on Buddhist legends. But they also touch on various aspects of human life, like hunting and farming, the building of houses, warfare, travelling, feasting and other amusements. Not only do they provide a rich heritage on which our artists can draw; they also form valuable reference material for our historians.

The Northern Wei murals, with their well worked out themes and dynamic presentation, convey a sense of vigorous symbolism. In many picture scrolls that tell a succession of stories, the various episodes are separated by landscapes—mountains, rivers and trees. In most cases, these landscapes do not play the role of background to the pictures, but are used to separate one episode from another, or to introduce a new one. The mural of a hunt in Cave No. 249 is typical of the works painted during the Northern Wei period. The movements of the various animals in the forest, the prowess of the two hunters shooting their arrows from galloping horses are portrayed with great vividness. This mural is a fine example of the spirit with which the artist approached his theme; it also marks the first attempt in the Buddhist art of China to depict real life.

The art of the Sui Dynasty (581-618 A.D.) is the precursor of the highly developed, national art of the Tang Dynasty. The sculptured images and characters in the murals of the Sui period mainly differ in their proportions from the works of the Northern Wei Dynasty (386-534 A.D.). In contradistinction to the Buddhist images of the Northern Wei Dynasty with elongated, slender bodies unlike those of human beings, the Sui images seem to be based on sturdy human figures with big heads and strong bodies. In addition to the dark greens, dark blues, opaque reds, blacks and whites of the Northern Wei period, the paintings of the Sui Dynasty also show light blue and reddish brown colours.

The Tang Dynasty (618-907 A.D.) is the period when the artistic form peculiar to China took shape and developed. This period saw great changes in themes and styles chosen by the artists. During the Northern and Southern Dynasties, murals mainly illustrated scenes like Buddha sacrificing his life to feed a hungry tiger, or cutting a piece of flesh from his arm to feed a vulture. But for the Tang artists Buddhism served as the background for depicting what they thought the human world should ideally be. They employed their power of imagination to present, in terms of the world around them, the splendour of the Western Paradise of Buddhism. The life depicted in the Tang murals arouses interest through its realism as seen in outstanding works like "Consulting a Doctor," "A Rest During the Trip," "Milking" and "Harpsichord Player Under a Tree."

Since liberation, everything about the Tunhuang caves has changed beyond recognition. Sand-drifts have been cleared away; damaged roofs, verandahs and pathways have been repaired; electric lights have been installed in the otherwise dark caves; and a great deal of facsimile work is being carried out in a planned way, so that the Tunhuang art treasures may be appreciated by more and more people through reproductions. The present exhibition of the art treasures of Tunhuang at the Peking Palace Museum, which is on quite a large scale, is the second since liberation. A large oil painting shows the site of the Tunhuang caves. Various sketches give an outside view of the caves. Over a hundred photographs reproduce in colour the sculptures made during different dynasties—of Ananda, Bodhisattva and the Heavenly King. There are also models of some of the sculptures, and some three hundred facsimiles of murals large and small. A life-size model of Cave No. 285 whose interior dates back to the Western Wei Dynasty arouses intense interest, since it gives a vivid idea of the caves to those who do not have the chance of visiting far-away Tunhuang.

More Books for Rural Areas

"We want all sorts of books: books on the natural and social sciences, but also on literature and art. . . . In fact, books are wanted on every phase of our life now. Please see that we get these books!" This wish is very common in letters addressed by readers in the countryside to the Popular Press of Peking. It shows that there is a thirst for knowledge among the Chinese peasants now that living conditions are so much higher than before. Culture is felt to be an essential part of rural life, too.

This does not mean that till now books were published in small numbers. In the period January to October 1955, for instance, the books published by the Popular Press specifically for rural readers came to a total of 19,000,000 copies. Of these, 62 titles, in 3,340,000 copies, contained elementary reading materials; 4 titles, or 2,060,000 copies, were books for beginners in literacy classes; 16 titles, or 1,871,000 copies, were Chinese readers; and 14 titles, 935,000 copies, contained stories from Chinese history. Books particularly liked by the public, like Chao Shu-li's novel *Sanliwan* about village life, sold 350,000 copies in a very short time; *Storming the Heavens*, which draws its theme from the classical folk-tale "Pilgrimage to the West," sold 440,000 copies; *The Use of Punctuation* sold 264,000 copies; and *The Illustrated First Five-Year Plan* was so much in demand that in one small place 150 copies were sold in just twenty minutes. However, in spite of the large number of books distributed, there are still not enough to meet the growing demand of the rural population.

To satisfy this need for books, all the publishing houses have increased their quota for publications for the rural areas in their plan for 1956. For instance, among the publications put out by the China Youth Publishing House during the first quarter of 1956, 70 titles (11,865,000 copies) were popular reading material for the young people in rural areas, including books on problems in the co-operative movement, books explaining how to run Youth League groups in the villages, and books on agro-technical methods. There were also books on the elimination of illiteracy, on tree-planting and afforestation, on the reclamation of waste land, on the Five-Year Plan, on the transformation of capitalist industry and commerce and books on popular philosophy. There were also a good many popular literary works.

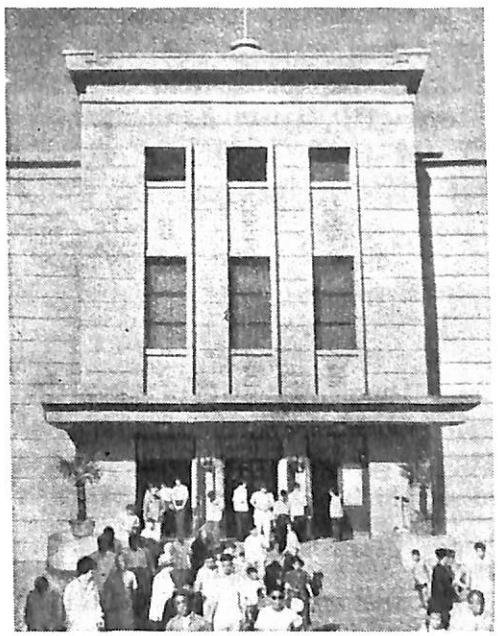
To meet actual demands, the Popular Press has also greatly increased the edition and variety of books to be published. In the first quarter of this year they put out 100 new titles and reprinted 144, a total of 18,129,000 copies. Among literary works there were new writings, folk literature, abridged editions of contemporary and classical literature, and new and old novels narrated in the story-telling style, altogether 48 new titles and 95 reprints. These were printed in a total of 4,431,000 copies. Furthermore, the Popular Press has issued books on agricultural co-operation, farming, the natural sciences and production techniques. The first edition of a book on raising pigs in agricultural producers' co-operatives ran into 250,000 copies.

Other publishing houses will likewise put out more books. The Association for the Dissemination of Scientific Knowledge, for instance, will publish more than 200 titles of popular reading material this year. Publishing houses specializing in art such as the People's Fine Arts Publishing House, plan to print more than 500 new pictures and reproductions of pictures liked by the peasants. The Hsinhua Bookstore, which deals with the circulation of books, plans to distribute 818 million books and pictures in the rural areas through its nation-wide network, which amount to 58 per cent of its total sales for the whole year.

The "Broad Harmony" Theatre

Not long ago, a new, state-owned theatre was added to Peking play houses. It is a modern structure and seats 1,400 people. Strangely enough, it is situated in the "Meat Market," off the commercial centre of Chien Men Street. The name of the theatre also sounds strange, like a trade-mark of the past—"Kuang Ho," Broad Harmony.

This new theatre really is one of the oldest of Peking. Peking residents in their thirties or forties probably remember the ancient, ramshackle Kuang Ho Lou, "Broad Harmony Building," which was the predecessor of the new Kuang Ho Theatre. Mei Lan-fang, the famous Peking opera actor, recalls: "The Kuang Ho Lou was built during the reign of Emperor Kang Hsi of the Ching Dynasty. It was first called Bright Moon Building and then the Cha Family Tea-House. It was in this Kuang Ho Lou that I first appeared on the stage as an amateur at the age of eleven. At fourteen, I joined the Hsi Lien Cheng Company and acted in the Kuang Ho Lou and other theatres in turn." Mr. Mei is sixty-one years now. Exactly fifty years since his first performance there, the Kuang Ho Lou in the out-of-the-way "Meat Market" became a new theatre of the people.



Speaking of the Kuang Ho Lou one must mention the Hsi Lien Cheng ("Happiness, Unity, Success") Company which was so closely connected with it. Later it was called the Fu Lien Cheng ("Richness, Unity, Success") Company and under this name became the biggest training school in Peking opera. This company has a history of forty-two years, during which time it had trained more than seven hundred actors, the major performers of Peking opera all over China. The biggest names, like Mei Lan-fang and Chou Hsin-fang, all had their training with the Hsi Lien Cheng Company. And many other actors familiar to the Chinese people today studied with this company. Apart from the first five years after its inception, the Fu Lien Cheng Company performed in the Kuang Ho Lou, a total of thirty-seven years.

The Kuang Ho Lou was a very shabby place indeed. At either side of the stage which protruded into the pit there was a big pillar. The audience loathed the seats near these pillars that made it impossible to see what was happening on the stage. The windows of the theatre were pasted over with paper in the winter, but it would be torn off in summer. Wooden benches were lined up for seats. Those at the back were so high that people had to hoist themselves on to them. Long and narrow tea tables were placed before the seats in the pit. All this was quite the usual thing in theatres of the past because theatres were actually places of amusement like tea-houses then. No tickets were sold for the play, but guests paid for their tea only. Performances were of secondary importance. There were seats behind the wings from where one could only see the backs of the actors. These seats were usually made available to guests of the theatre owner or the relatives of the

actors and theatre employees. From where they sat, these guests could nod or wave to their friends on stage when the actors turned around.

After a performance, the actors with faces painted in a variety of colours wiped the paint off with coarse paper. Then they washed their faces in a wooden bucket. This was done in the open air except in the coldest weather. The Fu Lien Cheng Company gave performances in the Kuang Ho Lou every day from half past twelve to six p.m. The apprentices who took part in a performance would be marched to and from the theatre by their teachers. No matter how exhausting the performance had been, these young actors would have to walk, summer and winter, wind or rain.

How different the new Kuang Ho Theatre is! The bookkeeper's office of the Kuang Ho Lou with its three rooms has been newly painted and is the general office now. The stage does not protrude into the pit any more and the audience can watch a performance from any seat. There are proper seats instead of benches in the pit. There are no more the tea tables now that the show is the most important thing. The seats behind the wings are also a thing of the past. The only thing that is still the same is that the green-room is still in the basement, but even so it has been extended and much new equipment has been installed. Naturally, actors need not clean their faces with coarse paper any more.

But the most dramatic change that has taken place in the theatre is in the actors' status. Instead of appendages to a teahouse they are honoured as people's artists now. All the changes in the theatre were made so that they can give their best for performances that afford the audience greatest enjoyment.

Artists in This Number

Hsu Shih-min paints as an amateur in the traditional style of Chinese painting. After graduating from the Hsin Hua Art School in 1931 at the age of twenty he had been at various times a primary-school teacher, a bank clerk, a bookkeeper in a shop and a commercial artist in an advertising agency. He is now working in the East China School of Civil Engineering and Architecture and a member of the creative art group of the Federation of Writers and Artists in Soochow.

As a graphic artist, Yang Ko-yang is a self-made man. He first took up woodcuts in the period of the Anti-Japanese War and he was also active in the movement of popularizing this form of art. His woodcuts have a traditional flavour about them. "Rafting on the River" is one of his recent works. At present, he is on the staff of the People's Fine Arts Press of East China in Shanghai.

Chen Shao-mei was born in 1908 in Hengshan County, Hunan Province. From his childhood he painted landscapes, people and animals and gained fame as one of the artists in the traditional style. At the age of thirty he organized a painters' club in Tientsin. He made a living by selling his paintings and teaching art. After liberation, he was appointed vice-chairman of the Tientsin branch of the Union of Chinese Artists. In 1953, he came to Peking and worked with the Institute of Traditional Chinese Painting. He died in 1954 in his forty-sixth year.

The painting by Chen Shao-mei in this issue is a colour wood-block reproduction by Jung Pao Chai, the famous stationers and printers of Peking (see p. 193 of *Chinese Literature* No. 1, 1956). This type of reproduction method uses the same paper or silk and colours as the original. Printing is done from several wood-blocks, which allow the accurate reproduction of the content and spirit of the original, with highly artistic results; in other words, this method of wood-block reproduction recreates the original by means of carving and printing.

The original name of Emperor Hui Tsung of the Sung Dynasty (1082-1135) was Chao Chi. He was made emperor in 1101 and gave

his throne to his son in 1125. The following year, the invading Tartars occupied the Sung capital, Kaifeng, and in 1127 took Chao Chi with them to the Northeast. He died in the city of Wukuo.

Chao Chi had no political ambitions. His interest was for art and the collection of antiques which prompted him to establish a system of examinations in calligraphy and painting and of studying these subjects, when he had become emperor. He himself was justly famous for his calligraphy and painting of flowers, birds, landscapes and human figures. Many of his works are still extant.

It was said that "Listening to the Lute" is a self-portrait of Chao Chi. Dressed in plain garb, he plays the lute under a pine tree. He is flanked by two officials, one dressed in red, the other in green, who are listening intently, attempting to grasp the meaning and feeling the music conveys. Gently swaying in the breeze the pine tree and bamboo grove seem to accompany the lute. The painting is so perfect in its expression that one seems to hear what the emperor plays. Chao Chi himself wrote the title for the painting and put his seal at the bottom left. There is also a poem on the painting written by his cabinet minister Tsai Ching who was his intimate friend.

This painting, done when Chao Chi was about forty years old, constitutes very valuable material for our study of 12th century art in China with its mastery of depicting humans and the world of nature.

SELECTED WORKS OF LU HSUN

Volume One

This is the first of the four volumes comprising the *Selected Works of Lu Hsun*. Volume One includes eighteen short stories, nineteen prose poems and nine essays. With the exception of two essays written in 1936, all the works in this book represent his best writing from 1918 to 1926.

Lu Hsun (1881-1936) was a great writer and thinker, who occupies a proud place in the history of Chinese literature as the founder of modern Chinese literature. He led the cultural front of the Chinese revolution, and struggled indefatigably against all that was decadent in the old society. His brilliant essays with their highly individual style, which reflect the social and mental conflicts of his generation, will shortly be published in the remaining three volumes of his works.

This volume contains five photographic plates.

THE TRUE STORY OF AH Q

by Lu Hsun

The short story of Ah Q reflects the failure of the 1911 Revolution and the lessons to be derived from it. Sharply and penetratingly, the story exposes the truth about social relationships in a semi-feudal, semi-colonial village. In his slave-like defeatism, Ah Q is a typical product of the forces of feudal rule, foreign aggression, class exploitation and oppression.

By centering all oppression on the person of this much-abused and humiliated hired hand, the author presented a comprehensive, realistic picture of social relationships and class contradictions between the peasant and his oppressor. The author thereby expressed his deep sympathy with the peasants who, in their poverty and distress, had no one to turn to in their sorrow; he also entertained great expectations in their final awakening.

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