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CHINESE LITERATURE



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LIU CHI

In the Mountains

It was a typical fine autumn day in the north. The azure sky looked so much like a blue sea, you expected to see fish jumping. I sat glumly in a telephone station listening to the distant gunfire. We were fighting off another enemy "mop-up," but in a very different manner than before. The cauldron was boiling on the other side of the mountain, but here everything was still cold. How I longed to get over there! Just then a telephone call came from headquarters telling me to go and have a look round so that I could write an account for the army paper when the campaign ended. I was overjoyed to regain my freedom of action.

There was one small problem, however. I was so short-sighted they had nicknamed me "The Bat." Although I had started with more than one pair of glasses, during the guerrilla fighting all had been lost or broken. Just imagine someone near-sighted trying, without glasses, to follow the twisting mountain paths during an anti-mop-up campaign! I might run slap into a Japanese soldier! Precisely for this reason, Wang Hsiu-hao of the quartermaster's department offered to find me a companion with good eyesight.

Liu Chi, born in 1919, is an essayist and novelist from Shantung Province. He did cultural work in the army before liberation, and took up writing after 1949. In recent years he has written a collection of essays *Good Prospects in a Good Year* and a novel *The Great Wall in the Flames of War*. His short story *A Village Elder* was published in *Chinese Literature* No. 1, 1958.

Soon he arrived. Old Wang, winking and arching his eyebrows gleefully, made the introduction:

"A good match! One near-sighted, the other with eyes like a hawk. Together, the two of you should be able to see everything clearly near and far. If you get any good Japanese booty, remember to let me share it. Shall I introduce him? This imp Chang Chih-tzu is known as Little Shantung. Both of you come from Shantung — you're fellow provincials."

I scrutinized my new companion. My first impression, judging by his thin, sallow, oval face, was that he was not too fit. But he had bright, twinkling eyes, while his pointed chin and the upward tilt of his lips hinted at a strong will and a sense of humour. He wore an old army cap with a flapping brim, a baggy uniform which hung down to his knees, and trousers rolled up as if he were ready to ford a river. I had seen quite a few boys like him. They hung on to your uniform and wouldn't let go until they were finally admitted to the army and allowed to wear a uniform too.

Old Wang was so eager to help, I couldn't very well object. Soon afterwards we set off.

The weather was fine and we were in high spirits. In shoes too big for him, Little Shantung plodded beside me. When I offered to carry his knapsack to lighten his load, he shot me a grateful glance. Then he wrapped strips of cloth round his feet, like someone accustomed to tramping long distances. Thus equipped, he bounded off ahead of me, looking quite a seasoned campaigner.

"I've forgotten your name," I remarked. "Mind if I just call you Little Shantung?"

"Of course not. And what shall I call you?"

"I'm older than you, you can call me Big Shantung! Or Comrade Li, or Old Li, whichever you please."

"All right then, Comrade Li!" Finding this form of address unimpressive, he asked, "Wouldn't you rather I used some official title?"

"I have no official rank. And since there are only the two of us, I'm no group or team leader either. Besides, there's no point in using a title."

"Oh, yes there is!" Little Shantung grinned. "A rank makes all the difference. Because then if you gave me a job I could



say I was acting on my officer's orders, and everything would go smoothly. That way, I'd get a share myself in anything good that was going!"

"You little imp!" I scolded. "At your age you should be learning about the revolution, not stuffing your brain with such rubbish."

"My brain's a general goods store," he called back, laughing. "It stocks everything, from revolutionary theory to rubbish!"

At midday we stopped at a mountain village for lunch. Knowing that the trip would be a hard one, I decided to test the lad's skill in managing. "You're a friend of the quartermaster's cook, aren't you?" I asked. "You must have learned how to cook. Suppose I leave lunch entirely in your hands? Let's see what you can do, Little Shantung!"

Was he pleased! His sallow face flushing, he cried, "I won't boast, but just you wait!"

I waited under a tree for an hour and more before he called me to lunch. Entering a hut, I saw four dishes on the small table on the *kang*, just like in a restaurant. I couldn't help admiring Little

Shantung's ability to turn out a meal like this at such short notice. Congratulating him, I popped a succulent roasted partridge chick into my mouth. The boy clapped his hands and exclaimed:

"Isn't it good? Want to tie a red thread to your tongue to keep you from swallowing it with the food?"

After a satisfying lunch, Little Shantung washed the dishes in the stream while I leisurely sized up the mountain ahead of us. High as it was, I felt we could take it in our stride. Just then someone outside called, "Report!"

Somewhat surprised by this formal request for admission, I called casually, "Come in!"

In came a pale-faced young soldier and saluted smartly. I recognized that up-tilted sharp nose and big mouth at once. This was Yang Chun, the orderly of the quartermaster's department. About ten days previously he had wounded himself while playing with a pistol. Unable to go off with the troops, he had been hidden by the clinic in this mountain village.

"Yang Chun, you young devil! What are you doing here?"

Yang Chun looked at me closely, then laughed and told me confidentially, "You've got a wildcat with you. Take care he doesn't scratch your face!" He pointed outside, showing that he meant Little Shantung.

"Why a wildcat?" I asked. "Whose face has he scratched?"

"Don't tell me you didn't know! All the rest of us do." Yang Chun grimaced ferociously. "He was born wild. Behind his back we call him Shantung Wildcat. Whose face has he scratched? Lots of people's! The face of everybody in the Eighth Route Army. He wears the uniform of the Eighth Route Army but he simply ignores the Three Disciplines and Eight Points for Attention.* He's broken the rules and damaged the army's prestige by

* The Three Main Rules of Discipline and Eight Points for Attention, observed by the Communist-led Eighth Route Army, have been taken over by the Chinese People's Liberation Army.

The Three Main Rules of Discipline are as follows: (1) Obey orders in all your actions. (2) Don't take a single needle or piece of thread from the masses. (3) Turn in everything captured.

The Eight Points for Attention are: (1) Speak politely. (2) Pay fairly for what you buy. (3) Return everything you borrow. (4) Pay for anything you damage. (5) Don't hit or swear at people. (6) Don't damage crops. (7) Don't take liberties with women. (8) Don't ill-treat captives.

stealing melons and fruit from the villagers. Worse still, he makes up to people for selfish reasons. He carries his few treasures about with him, so as to be ready to quit at any time. He loves fighting, though, and fights like anything. Don't you know it was only because of the Japanese "mop-up" campaign that they let him out of the lock-up?"

"Mind what you're saying, Yang Chun! Don't go telling fibs!"

"Why should I fib? What's the use? That weakness of mine has been cured for good and all. If I'm lying, may my tongue drop out! Ask others if you don't believe me. I'll fetch Young Chao, Young Ting and Fourth Booby. They'll all tell you he's a wildcat!"

At that moment I hopped Little Shantung himself. He counter-attacked Yang Chun fiercely:

"Wildcat yourself! Calling a fellow names behind his back, you louse!"

"Eavesdropper! You *are* a wildcat and everyone knows it!"

"You dirty liar!"

The quarrel ended at last, with both boys on the verge of tears. The lengthening shadows of the trees set me wondering where we should spend the night. Hurriedly we started out again.

Ahead was the road through the mountains used by the Japanese during their attacks. We trod it gingerly. At the foot of the hill in front, blue smoke was curling from the chimney of a lone hut, a sign that there was no enemy near by. We headed that way to ask for a drink of water and some news. Just as we reached the stone threshold, a bugle sounded from the top of the hill. The young woman who was cooking in the hut turned pale and cried:

"Hear that? The Japanese are coming. Go as fast as you can!"

She put out the fire, lifted the pan off the stove and hurried away. Soon there was no smoke to be seen, and the young woman had sped out of sight. Where was the enemy coming from? We did not know which way to turn. The whole valley was deserted. The only sound from the empty huts by the cliff was the twittering of sparrows. Perhaps the Japanese were fast approaching. We decided to make for the hill to the south, at the west end of which three valleys met. From there we could observe the

enemy's movements. Behind that hill were larger ranges affording ample shelter, and while climbing it we would not be much exposed. Even if the Japanese came, they would find us difficult targets.

We started the ascent. Like a true wildcat, Little Shantung bounded quickly to the top.

"Why, come here, quick! Look!" He pointed, gasping. "Such a large force of Japanese! See their big roan chargers! Lucky we were so quick. Dammit, look at all the bastards and their hounds!"

I peered in the direction he was pointing. I saw a little stream gleaming silently at the foot of the hill, but could not make out what else was there, whether men, horses, dogs or trees. I had to take the boy's word for it, since all I saw was a blur.

"Don't you see? Those red spots are the enemy's horses. Those glittering things are their bayonets. What, you still don't see? What eyes you've got!"

To forestall further criticism of my eyesight, I agreed, "Yes, that's the enemy. I see better now. All right, you keep an eye on them while I do some reading. As soon as they've gone, let me know, and we'll start down."

A long time passed. I finished half a book. "Haven't they gone yet, Little Shantung?" I asked.

"Not yet!" He poked out his head to reconnoitre. "The river banks and roadsides are full of troops. Looks as if they were resting. Maybe they're having a meal."

As dusk fell we descended the hill. Near the river we observed footprints, but they were not fresh ones. Actually, what Little Shantung had described as roan horses was reddish rocks, while his glittering bayonets were puddles or mica which had glistened in the sunlight. His troops were piles of hay, sandy dunes and strange-shaped rocks. In his nervousness, he had imagined enemies in the autumn mist.

That destroyed my faith in Little Shantung's "hawk-eyes."

We proceeded safely as there was no sign of danger. Little Shantung cheerfully remarked:

"I don't mind falling into the sea or into a fire, but not into the hands of Japanese soldiers! I did once, and they gave me hell!"

"I'll bet they did!" said I, longing to know more about the lad's past. "When did it happen? And how did you get away?"

"It happened in my home in Shantung one March, when the weather is warm and cold by starts. I got up just before dawn to sow beans. Well, some Japanese soldiers were waiting with machine-guns. They grabbed a dozen people from our village, said we were in league with the Eighth Route Army, tied us up, crammed up into a goods waggon, and shipped us to the Penki Coal Mine." A tremor came into his voice. "Call that a coal mine? More like being buried alive! They gave us rubber boots and forced us—at the end of a whip—to work in the water. The food they gave us doesn't bear speaking of. You don't have to tell me what hardship means—I've had it! Nowhere else on earth do they slave the way we were treated there. In a matter of days the other men from my village either died, were disabled or fell ill. My cousin fell ill too. I went to see him on his deathbed. Without a word he handed me a small parcel. After gasping for breath, he told me:

"I'm done for. I'll never get home. Don't bother about me. Fend for yourself. Better die on the barbed wire or be mauled by their dogs rather than finish like this! Take my advice and go, brother! I trust this package to you. I can't write, this will have to do for a letter home. . . ."

"A few minutes later he died. I opened his package and found a sewing kit, a child's vest, a tooth, a blood-stained towel and a picture drawn on a cigarette packet. Others might not understand this letter home, but I did, and I knew my cousin's wife would too. The vest belonged to their child, the sewing kit to her. My cousin was grabbed while taking these things to his wife, who, with the child, was visiting her mother. The tooth was one knocked out by the Japanese soldiers. One glance and my cousin's wife would understand. Impossible for his corpse to be sent home, so the tooth would have to take its place. But the towel I couldn't make out. We sweated and shed blood every day, so what did a blood-stained towel stand for? The drawing on the cigarette packet showed something like a barbed-wire fence and a sun. Probably it meant that he was trapped, too ill to get out, and that the sun only shone on the living and free. . . . Let the dead be buried, the living must live on! A patch of

field in front of their gate in the picture stood for the little plot, on which he wanted his wife to grow some maize."

Wiping his eyes furtively, Little Shantung continued:

"I was ready to risk my life to deliver that letter. Though we were cousins, we were as close as brothers. His last words put fresh energy into me. At midnight I jumped over the wire and ran away. We have a proverb in our parts, 'Seize a nettle hard enough and it won't sting you.' They fired their guns at me, but I wasn't afraid! I struck into the mountains and made my way to south of the Great Wall. I felt like a caged bird set free, with the whole world before me. Look, wherever I go I carry my cousin's letter with me."

He patted the Japanese rations box in his bag, saying, "Here it is. When there's time, I'll let you see it!"

"This is going to be a long war," I remarked. "Your home's so far away, it won't be easy to deliver that letter."

"I'll find a way, even if it means waiting till the Yellow River turns dry!" Fire flashed from his eyes. "We've all banded together against them — how long can they hold out? If only I had a gun, I'd make things hot for them!"

We were approaching another road through the hills. We had to cross it and find some remote village in which to stay. During this campaign, the scattered huts in the mountains were the best billets for soldiers travelling alone. The deeper in a valley a hut was, the more difficult of access, the better. There Eighth Route Army men separated from their units found warm *kang*, smiling faces and cordial handshakes.

After looking to right and left, we darted across the road. On both sides lay the corpses of peasants who had been bound and cruelly killed, leaflets to trick the people into surrender, and prints of many Japanese army boots. In my hurry to get up the hill I lost sight of Little Shantung. Turning back, I saw him standing by the road examining a sick grey colt abandoned by the enemy. Evidently he was considering taking it. The colt sneezed and limped forward. I shouted:

"Come on, Little Shantung! That's no booty for you!"

He lingered a while picking some fresh grass for the colt. Then he started after me, climbing as nimbly as a monkey. We walked along the ridge for some time, then scaled a rocky peak. A few

more turns brought us to a grove of trees where a gurgling spring could be heard. I took my bearings and realized that this was Leopard Valley, where I had been more than once with a small detachment. Here warm-hearted Ku Lien-shan, who was always smiling, had put his well-heated *kang* at our disposal. Yes, he was a splendid fellow. As we looked about for some lodging, a man stepped out from behind a boulder.

"I was watching to make sure that you were our people! Never expected to see you two. If you're not in a great hurry, come and stay at my place."

A long whip in his hand, the burly, ruddy-cheeked man was smiling rather diffidently. At one glance I recognized my old friend Ku.

"Ha, Old Ku, it's you!" I cried, quite overjoyed. "By all means, let's go to your place. It's a long time since I slept on your warm *kang*."

Ku Lien-shan was silent for a moment. Then he said with a wry smile:

"Yes, come on. But I warn you that the place has changed. You've come too late. The Japanese were here before you. You'll see what those swine have done."

We followed him to his home. The cottage which had sheltered us from wind and rain was a roofless, gutted ruin.

"This is the end of years of hard work and sweat! This is my home! I watched with my own eyes from the mountain top while the Japanese marched up the valley and set fire to our houses. I longed to topple the hill down to crush the brutes! There's one thing to be thankful for, though. You didn't come two days earlier and get caught in all the fires and bloodshed!"

Though his cottage was burned, he had a small shed near the cliff. The three of us went in and found just room enough to stretch ourselves out. "Sorry I've no better place for you," said Ku. "But after all, we're good friends. When poor brothers meet, even cold water tastes sweet." He spread a wolfskin for us to sleep on, then fetched water to cook some rice. After supper he made us lie down to rest while he took a rifle and went to keep watch on the hill.

Lying in that little shed on the thick wolfskin, we felt warm and relaxed. Outside, the sky was full of stars, insects were

chirping and the stream was gurgling at the foot of the hill. Instead of sleeping, we felt in the mood for talking.

Little Shantung was not averse to talking about himself, but it was best to let him ramble on as he pleased. For he was a sensitive lad, who, if you tried to draw him out, might retire into his shell. But that quiet autumn evening in the hills, as we lay snugly side by side in the shed, he told me most of his story.

I listened carefully. If asked to write Little Shantung's biography, I could put down briefly as follows:

"Chang Chih-tzu, from Yimeng District, Shantung Province, a tenant farmer, aged sixteen. Had no schooling but picked up a few characters. Last spring was captured by the Japanese and sent to work in Penki Coal Mine under the puppet Manchukuo regime in the northeast. Three months later he escaped over the barbed wire. Early this summer he joined the Eighth Route Army. Between his flight from Penki across the Great Wall until his arrival in the Shansi-Chahar-Hopei Border Region, he led a vagrant's life, the details of which are not clear. His posts after joining the army were: orderly, messenger, nurse, and bugler for a few days."

The autumn night grew cooler. Carried away by his recital, Little Shantung lit a cigarette.

"You've learned to smoke at your age?"

"I smoke, but I can do without," he replied. "It's something to do and cheers a fellow up."

"Homesick?"

"No. No use being homesick." He stood up. "What's the good of a home these days? Look at Old Ku's home—burned by those bastards! Do they care if you built it with your blood and sweat? The only language those brutes understand is force! They have a saying in our parts 'With the enemy, whoever's fist is tougher, who is the big brother.'" He hurried off to find Ku Lien-shan and was soon swallowed up in the darkness among the rocks.

Inside the shed it was warm and fragrant. Ripe dates kept plopping down on the roof. Apples, pears and mugwort filled the air with their spicy scent. This shed was the foundation upon which Old Ku once had built his home. I knew that he worked as a hired hand in a village at the foot of the hill. But

in the evening and during the slack season he cultivated the poor soil on this slope. He was a skilled mason and carpenter and a keen hunter. In the winter, rabbits, foxes and pheasants hung from his caves, the colourful game making his walls as gay as New Year pictures. His tables and benches as sturdy as their master, were all his own handiwork.

For all his skill, it had cost him years of hard work to build a house in Leopard Valley. The cottage had been completed two years previously in April, when a gentle spring breeze rustled the peach and plum trees. That was when we happened to stay in his new home. After drinking two cups of date wine, he confided:

"Very soon, I'll have a helpmate in the house!"

We wanted to know more about his "helpmate." He told us eagerly:

"Well, the name she's just picked for herself is Wang Liao-hung, after the red water peppers that grow in front of her childhood home. It's not much of a name, but there's nothing wrong with her. Rosy-cheeked, strong and capable, she gets through more work than most men. She can make a pair of army shoes in three days. Long ago she took pity on me, poor bachelor that I am! To tell you the truth, she made these clothes for me and bound that broom too. She's offered to give me her savings to help buy an ox."

We asked, "Where does she live? Is it far? Can we go and see her?"

"It's neither far nor near: about twenty *li* by the highway, less than five *li* by a short cut. But I'm the only one who knows that short cut. That's how I won the nickname Mountain Leopard."

"Better marry her soon to save you the difficult climb!"

"That's easier said than done. It's only since the Communist Party sent the Eighth Route Army here that we've begun to tackle feudalism. For a widow to remarry is not so simple. Folk still gossip. You have to give her plenty of time."

One year had passed since then. The wedding day was drawing nearer but still it had not arrived. Perhaps she would soon be here, but before her arrival the house had been burned down. What kind of woman was she? I imagined her trudging down

winding mountain paths, away from the old customs to the new. . . . Thoughts like this filled my mind as I fell asleep.

It was barely daybreak when low voices awoke me. I tiptoed out and saw Little Shantung and Ku Lien-shan feeding a colt by a small stone trough. It was the lame grey colt we had seen the previous day. But during the night Little Shantung had led it here. Combing its mane, he remarked:

"What a handsome colt! How quickly he's grown! He sneezed and swished his tail at me yesterday, otherwise I wouldn't have known him. What a good memory he has! When he saw me pass by, he looked ready to cry. He's not too badly hurt. He'll grow into a good horse and help you to get another house."

Mixing fodder, Ku Lien-shan said, "The colt has another owner besides me. He belongs partly to the Wangs of Upper South Green. Because I didn't hide him well enough, the Japanese got hold of him and messed him up. It was my fault." Feeding some corn to the colt and patting it, he went on, "There's a genuine Chinese horse for you! When the Japanese came to drag him off, he kicked and bit. So the brutes lashed out at him!"

Now that the colt had returned, Ku tended it, while Little Shantung searched the slope behind the shed for medicinal herbs. The close co-operation between them did not escape me. I asked Ku in secret:

"Have you known Little Shantung long?"

"Who's Little Shantung?"

"The imp that has come with me."

"Oh, him!" Ku laughed and, like the honest fellow that he was, readily informed me, "I met him way back. Before he joined the Eighth Route Army and had just come down from north of the Great Wall, he was ragged and hungry then, poor lad. He stayed with me for a while."

"If you're old friends, why didn't you say so?"

"He tipped me the wink not to."

"Why should he mind my knowing?"

"Can't say!" Ku thought this over. "Perhaps it's because of his bad record here. He got into a quarrel over a gambling game and beat up a sharper. Then he borrowed money and didn't pay it back, and he used to take people's fruit and vegetables. Maybe

he doesn't want you to find out. He doesn't want to lose face for the Eighth Route Army."

After this brief account, Old Ku added softly, "He knows this place inside out. And Upper South Green too — where she lives, you know. Wang Liao-hung's ten-year-old son Little Bean is his good friend. Young Wang's share in the lame grey colt makes it all the dearer to him."

I had thought myself so familiar with this valley that the very insects and grass must know the sound of my footsteps. But it seemed Little Shantung was far better acquainted with these parts. I was coming to appreciate my companion, with his fierce hatred for the enemy and his knowledge of the local geography. But Ku and I agreed to respect his "secret." For if the thin-skinned lad suspected that we had been talking about him, he might really run away.

At midday Ku decided to send the grey colt to the Wangs for safe-keeping, as the Japanese had never been there. Little Shantung had just volunteered to take the colt if I were not in a hurry, when to our alarm we saw approaching three men in uniform, carrying guns. Looking closer, we found that they were Eighth Route Army men also, and old acquaintances.

The leading man was bulky, with a square, sunburnt face and brilliant, deep-set eyes under thick eyebrows. This was Pi Hung-en, political instructor of a special detachment. The two young soldiers with him were Big Sung and Second Ugly.

When Old Pi saw me, he grasped my arm between sweating palms and shook me so violently by way of welcome that, had I been a date tree, the dates clinging hardest to the boughs would have been shaken down!

"Good to see you again, mate! How are you? Hungry? Want something good to eat?" He gave ringing instructions to his young companions, "Big Sung and Second Ugly, how about it? Don't you remember this honourable guest whom we entertained before? H'm, all you can do is grin like nitwits. Look sharp now, unwrap those bundles and see if there are any onion cakes left. Not much, eh? Well, go and forage for some eggs."

Big Sung and Second Ugly made off, chuckling. They knew that even if they had more hands they would not be able to cope with the demands of their hospitable instructor.

Old Pi went on shaking me until something like a date did fall to the ground. It was a button.

"Quick, a big needle!" he exclaimed. "The bigger the better! None of your fine embroidery needles for me!"

Clumsily Old Pi sewed the button on for me. Then he urged me to eat and drink something. I introduced Little Shantung. The two of them, face to face, made a strange contrast. One stood unmoving, pouting in sulky silence, while the other screwed up his eyes and made a face, chortling with laughter.

"So it's you, my fine onion eater! When did you put on that uniform? Hey, it doesn't fit you!"

"No business of yours!" said Little Shantung, his eyes bulging. "That year I followed your unit, you thought me too small, too short. I begged and pleaded with you. I showed you how I could run and jump! I climbed hills and crossed rivers to prove to you that I could keep up with the unit. But you wouldn't have me! Even when I cried, you just shook your head. Still, what did it matter? You weren't the only unit in the Eighth Route Army. You wouldn't take me on, but somebody else did. You wouldn't let me fight Japan, but somebody else did. You wouldn't issue me a uniform, but somebody else did. I'm not eating your rice, so just leave me alone!"

"Don't try to scare me with that big talk, my lad! The two of us must have a chat later on." Old Pi, far from being offended, seemed very tickled by Little Shantung's pugnacity. He shouted, "Big Sung! Second Ugly! Give your young friend something good! Stop his mouth, or he'll drown us in a flood of talk!"

I looked upon Old Pi as an old friend. Yet we had only been together for ten days at the most.

That was in the spring of 1941, when a special detachment was formed in Yihsien County in western Shantung, and I was given the job of writing about it. At our very first encounter, we both had the impression that we had met before. Old Pi swore that he knew my face. We started swapping experiences, but it did not look as if our paths had crossed. Later, the scar on his hand set me talking about a clash with the enemy at the top of a cliff when a badly wounded soldier exploded a bunch of hand-grenades and died with the Japanese who were charging us, saving

the rest of our unit. Old Pi's big eyes flashed and with a laugh he exclaimed:

"So you were there too! It was touch-and-go with us. No wonder I swore we had met before."

This experience was a bond between us. We did not stand on ceremony but talked freely. Knitting his thick eyebrows, he said:

"That battalion was my home. It may have been tough, but I was happy there. I've come here only because I had to obey orders. The leadership gives extra good treatment to the men who have surrendered and come over, and we enjoy the same comforts. Compare our mess with the food of the old units at the front! White flour in the morning, white flour in the afternoon. Even so, many of the men are full of complaints."

The soldiers in this special detachment had originally been part of the puppet Black Horse Army of the Inner Mongolian area. They had surrendered to the Eighth Route Army and were reorganized into a fighting force against the Japanese on the north front. Most of them were opium or morphine addicts. It was Old Pi's task to reform them.

Today's unexpected meeting had put Old Pi in high spirits. As soon as he had quieted down a little, I asked him how his detachment was getting on. Blinking and fingering his bushy eyebrow, he said:

"It's a long story. Our progress still has to be tested by time and actual battles. The fact is, although this is a small detachment, it's bristling with complicated problems! Far more than in our old units."

Then he asked me where I was heading and what task I had. I told him that I was looking round and had no fixed destination. My purpose was to get some stories, wherever there was material to write about, there I would go.

"That's splendid," he declared, so pleased that he began pacing up and down. "Plenty to write about in our detachment. Come on, it's not far from here. The place is tucked away and pretty safe. Not a blade of grass has been touched by the Japanese since they launched the first of their "mopping-up" campaigns. It's a jewel of a place, well guarded on the north and the south. You can sleep in safety there. I advise you to make it your base."

When I hesitated, he urged, "Don't shilly-shally!" He started to drag me off.

Little Shantung pouted as if unwilling to go. Old Pi grabbed his knapsack and said, "Come on, lad! If you're too tired to walk, I'll carry you too."

"You can carry a big stone tablet, but not me!" Little Shantung snatched back the pack, chuckling, and dashed forward to walk with Big Sung and Second Ugly. He was actually so pleased that he talked to the grey colt and imitated its neighing. For he knew well the place where we were going. He had promised Ku Lien-shan to take a message there to Wang Liao-hung.

After a pleasant journey we reached the ravine where the detachment was.

Not only was there beautiful scenery here, but the rough terrain made it an ideal hiding-place.

It so happened that the enemy launched a sudden fierce attack the very next day. Having occupied the valleys south and north of us, the Japanese made ready to mop up our forces all round. Although unnoticed by the enemy, this ravine with precipitous cliffs on the east and west sides was completely surrounded.

Old Pi apologized jokingly to me:

"You've been taken in! I led you into this bag, and now the enemy's sewn up both openings!"

I had only myself to blame for bringing myself and Little Shantung here. Now the bulk of the detachment moved away before the enemy took further action. Those left were mostly men suffering from dysentery and malaria. Since it was almost impossible to keep off the mosquitoes, very soon I fell victim to malaria myself.

Each night, weak with fever, I dragged myself on tottering legs after the other sick men to a new hiding-place. In the afternoon, if there was no sign of the enemy, we returned to our original billet. For some days we put up with the dews and autumn cold rather than risk being surprised.

One fine afternoon, as we returned from our hiding-place, the malaria suddenly left me — thanks perhaps to the eggs boiled with pepper which I had eaten. After supper, as it was still early, I climbed a small ridge to have a good look at the surrounding mountains. I wanted to be familiar with the terrain to be ready for further complicated situations. The ridge was dotted with



huts and a small red banner was planted in the grove of red-leaved trees where reed flutes and willow whistles could be heard. Children were merrily drilling, falling in and dispersing as the whistle sounded. Strange to find the Children's Corps* so active under these conditions! As I watched, a lean figure in uniform emerged from the grove — Little Shantung. He was acting as

* A children's organization first formed in the revolutionary bases during the Second Revolutionary Civil War (1927-1936). It was then called Communist Children's Corps. During the War of Resistance Against Japan, Children's Corps were set up in many anti-Japanese bases and were called Children's Corps of the Resistance. The children served as guides, guards, messengers and propagandists. They also studied and played together.

military instructor, and the children listened attentively as if he were telling some thrilling story. The autumn breeze carried me snatches of his talk.

"In guerrilla warfare, after fighting you run away. The enemy are as cruel as wolves, you mustn't let yourselves fall into their hands. They can stamp on our corpses, but we won't let them capture us alive. That's the idea, strike and then run away."

Little Shantung was summarizing his own experience. Before they broke up he led them in a song of the resistance.

The singing grew louder and louder until the whole valley rang with it and hawks flew up in fright. A man stepped out from the trees and shouted angrily:

"What's all this row? Why are you hollering? Remember where you are! If you give away our position, the Japanese will feed you to their dogs!"

This man was dressed like one of the Eighth Route Army, but his uniform was fairly new and clean. He had a gun slung across his back and a rifle on his shoulder. Stiff, waxy-faced and irate, he was standing on a big rock.

It was Chao Hsuan-teh, ex-company leader of the Black Horse Army. He hailed from Shansi and nobody knew what had made him go to the northern grasslands to join the cavalry in the puppet army. He had so many sworn brothers that he was considered the best liaison man among the surrendered troops. One of his good friends, Chou Yun-chang, was still on the Japanese side but had promised to come over when the time was ripe. It was hoped that Chao would help to persuade him. Usually this liaison man spoke circumspectly and walked slowly, as if considering grave affairs of state. But his manner today was very different. A clump of bushes screened me from him and Little Shantung, and I stayed where I was to watch what would happen next.

"Are you tired of living, you rebels? What are you up to, you traitors! Stop that caterwauling! Shut your dirty mouths!"

The children under the trees were bewildered, unable to understand how one of the Eighth Route Army could swear at them and forbid them to sing a song of the resistance.

Jumping on to a boulder like a fighting cock, Little Shantung retorted:

"The enemy's four or five *li* away on the other side of the mountain. They'd need keen ears to hear us!"

His small friends chimed in, "We're not afraid. Why should *you* be afraid when you have a gun. If you're a coward, don't join the Eighth Route Army!"

"Beggar! Pauper! Think I don't know you?" Chao glared at Little Shantung. "You've not been long enough in uniform to learn to show respect to your superiors. You're like a crow pretending to be a hawk."

"And you're a fox strutting around in a tiger's skin! It's not many days since you stripped off your traitor's clothes and put on the uniform of the Eighth Route Army. What right have you to bully me? Save your toughness for the Japanese!"

"Be tough with the Japanese? All right, just wait and see." Unable to gain the upper hand, Chao slipped away.

Because enemy attacks were fairly frequent, the detachment kept moving up and down the hills. The guns of the sick and wounded had to be carried by others. Old Pi summoned Little Shantung, Big Sung and Second Ugly.

"Listen!" he told them. "Each of you choose a good gun to carry with you. The rest you must hide in different places. We can't afford to be too heavily burdened when we're dealing with the enemy."

Little Shantung shouldered a carbine and hid three other guns in a dry, solid cave. The job was so much to his liking that he was absolutely overjoyed. When Instructor Pi inspected the place, he commended the lad's speed and resourcefulness.

We spent a few more days out in the open. The worst of the enemy attack seemed to be over. The Japanese north and south of this ravine were apparently unaware of our existence.

One afternoon, however, a pedlar suddenly appeared in the village with tooth-brushes, tooth powder, needles, thread and other daily necessities. People crowded around him and bought whatever they needed. But when Old Pi heard of this he glared and bellowed:

"What do I want to buy? A rope to tie him up! This ravine is blocked by the enemy on the north and the south. If this pedlar isn't a spy, he must have dropped down from the sky!"

Big Sung, Second Ugly and Little Shantung stamped their feet and exchanged swift glances, then went off with their guns in search of the pedlar. They searched high and low but in vain, and everybody began to feel uneasy. Suddenly machine-guns were heard at the north peak. Old Pi immediately led the sick men out of the village. But in the dark and confusion a few were lost. The next day, when all was quiet again, we discovered that Little Shantung and Chao Hsuan-teh were missing.

According to various reports, which were later on confirmed, we pieced together what had happened.

Little Shantung was running along a path through the hills, after making sure that his guns were safe in the cave. The detachment had already left and he was not too clear where the others had gone, so he ran on alone for some time in the gathering darkness. He slowed down when he saw some shadowy trees and a hut. As he approached, someone was knocking at the door. Then he heard Chao Hsuan-teh calling out in a low voice:

"Open up, friends! It's the Eighth Route Army!"

"There's nobody here to guide you. We're all women."

"The men? Where are the men?"

"Out on sentry duty."

"Let me in, good folk! The army and the people are as close as fish and water. Open the door and give me a light for my pipe. Then I'll go on."

The door opened, a light flickered. Then some women and children screamed. Little Shantung dashed into the hut with a roar of rage. There followed the sound of curses and blows. A rifle shot ended the fight.

Three days later Chao Hsuan-teh returned, his face and hands bandaged.

He was known to have raped women while in the puppet army. And now after only a couple of nights outside he was swathed in bandages! What had happened? Nobody had a look under his bandages. When Chao was told that Little Shantung had vanished without a trace, he said solemnly:

"Our Eighth Route Army wants men of good character, doesn't it? Very good. Shouldn't let any rotters wear our uniform. Take the case of Little Shantung. He used to be a beggar, everybody

knows. Even in the Eighth Route Army he didn't change. He stole the food stored up by the people. I had to uphold army discipline, didn't I? That young devil cursed me for a traitor in revolutionary uniform, and when I wanted to punish him he shot me."

Four days went by with no sign of Little Shantung. Rumour had it that he had gone over to the enemy with his guns. And when Big Sung and Second Ugly went to the cave and found the three guns missing, Old Pi was alarmed but dared not let Chao Hsuan-teh and the others know for fear they might get the former puppets on the sick list to demand their guns also.

Little Shantung had run away. It looked as if he had been scared when Chao Hsuan-teh shammed dead that night in the hut. But where could he be? Where had the guns gone? Had they been stolen or had he moved them away? We were all puzzled. Although Old Pi and I were friends, I was after all a guest of this detachment. I knew of Little Shantung's life before and after his time at the Penki Coal Mine. I knew his hatred for Japanese imperialism and had heard him say, "They can stamp on our corpses, but we mustn't let them capture us alive." I was certain he wouldn't surrender to the enemy, but the fact remained that after several days he still hadn't returned. What's more it was I who had brought him here. While distressed by his disappearance, I felt it reflected badly on me as well. I recalled Yang Chun's warning on the first day of our trip: "He's a wildcat. Mind he doesn't scratch your face!" Now he had done precisely that, before so many people too! And what should I say on my return to Wang Hsiu-hao of the quartermaster's department?

Enemy search parties were drawing closer. We shifted our hiding-places more frequently. So far we had never been to the big mountain on the east, but Old Pi returned from a reconnaissance trip to say it should be a good hide-out, for all morning the sunless mountain was shrouded in thick blue mist. Nettles grew deep there around secret hidden caves.

For two days in succession we breakfasted at midnight and marched through the dew towards these caves hidden deep among rugged boulders.

The second day dawned fine and windless, amid a clamour of bird song. Old Pi and Big Sung invited me to go downhill with

them to seek grain for the detachment. As we picked our way through the rocks and nettles, I felt an icy shiver run down my back and knew I was in for a bout of malaria. I hastily swallowed some pills made in the border areas, but I could not shake off the deadly chill that gripped me. I told Old Pi not to worry but to go ahead quickly with his job. He took all my things and covered me with a khaki blanket.

"This mushroom-shaped boulder is a good landmark," he said. "We'll pick you up on our way back." Then they hurried on.

The malaria did not pass as quickly as usual. I felt hot and cold by turns hour after hour. For a long time I lay in a daze. I seemed to hear two shots and dreamed that it was night and a watchman somewhere was striking his bamboo clapper. I woke up to discover that the sound came from further down the mountain.

I listened, trying to make out what it was. Soon I realized it was a whole medley of sounds. I struggled to sit up and peered down through the grass. The sight below made me gasp. Troops in yellow uniform were swarming up the slope. It was clear



from their glittering bayonets that these were Japanese soldiers searching the mountains. The sound I had heard was the tramp of their hobnailed boots!

Exhausted by fever I fell back in the grass, too weak even to crawl. Flight was out of the question. To make any movement at all would be sheer folly. I wondered what to do.

Just then I saw two bundles of hay on the right upper ridge inching forward. Two men, kneeling upright behind them, were taking aim. One of them was none other than my missing companion Little Shantung. I heard him cursing, "Take that, you swine!" as he fired. Light blue smoke floated in the breeze, and my heart exulted. In swift succession they fired twenty to thirty rounds at the advancing enemy.

The Japanese ranks wavered. Then, bellowing like wounded beasts, they charged towards their attackers, firing all the weapons they had. They dashed so quickly towards the ridge where Little Shantung was that they passed the mushroom-shaped boulder—behind which I lay—without a glance.

Fierce shooting continued for quite some time. The Japanese were searching the rugged boulders and wild undergrowth. The tramp of hobnailed boots and shouts in Japanese could be heard all over the slope.

The sun set in the west. The mountain was silent, except for the rustling of grass in the evening breeze.

The minutes slipped by as the autumn insects chirped. It would soon be midnight. The mountain shrouded in hazy moonlight looked like a dream world. The enemy must have gone. I should act quickly. For the rank smell of blood in the air might attract the wolves, and I had no weapon with me.

I struggled to my feet and looked around. I was all alone, not a living soul was in sight. Though weakened by malaria, I was still able to stand. But where should I go? Suppose I were to fall into an enemy trap? I was not wholly unfamiliar with the terrain, but the dreamy moonlight had changed it out of all recognition.

"Watch your step! Look out for the enemy!" I told myself as I goped my way downhill, clinging to brambles and tufts of grass for support.

I went on, now walking, now sliding, till I heard the welcome, refreshing gurgle of water and saw a mountain stream shimmering in the moonlight. There would surely be people living by the stream. The valley narrowed, however, as I walked up it. I gave up hope of finding a village but was confident of reaching a lonely stone cottage, humbly furnished, whose shabbily dressed inmates would greet me with tears of sympathy and a warm clasp of the hands.

In hopeful anticipation, yet alert to danger, I followed the brook in the moonlight. Its musical tinkling soothed, encouraged and led me on. So, all alone in a dream world, shrouded by the misty moonlight, I trudged that winding path through the mountains.

The sweet scent of fruit drifted through the air. Narrowing my eyes, I saw a little orchard of pear trees with ripe fruit lying here and there on the ground. I had heard that this valley was noted for its pears. Nevertheless, the sight took me by surprise. The wild mountains, the moonlight, the night mist and now this pear orchard seemed to me a fairyland. And, sure enough, in this fairyland there was a cottage. Did anyone live there? Could there be traitors or Japanese hiding inside? My head close to the ground, I listened for a while. Having made sure that nothing was stirring, I tiptoed towards the small cottage. The door stood open, but the place was empty. As I stepped inside I stumbled against something soft. At once a red glow flickered—I had trodden on a pile of embers. In their light I saw that the cottage was built of stone and heaped under the wooden bed were half-baked sweet potatoes, corn-cobs, peanuts and beans. Someone must have been here within the last half hour. Had my footsteps scared him away? Or had he left before that? There was no knowing. Anyway I must be on my guard against the enemy and against being shot by our own people by mistake. I retreated to the far corner of the orchard and made a pillow of some clods of earth where potatoes had been dug. There I rested, keeping watch.

The mist was thinning now and the moon shone all the brighter. The air was heavy with the fragrance of pears. There was no sound except for the plop of ripe fruit falling to the ground and the chirping of autumn insects. It seemed as if war had never

touched this place, as if no enemy had ever trampled this peaceful soil. As I looked round, marvelling, I wondered what tomorrow would bring. Peaks, streams and hilly paths flashed before my mind's eye.

Was it the roaring waves in my dream or the cry of a mountain bird that awakened me? I opened my eyes with a start. I should never have fallen asleep in such strange surroundings. I should have found a hiding-place during the night. To make any move now that it was light was too risky. Where should I hide for the day? I was sorry I had fallen asleep. Luckily all was still, there was nobody about. I must act quickly. When I sat up I found myself covered with a woollen blanket of the sort that shepherds use. It had protected me from the chill autumn night. But how amazing! I was far from my home and comrades, who could have covered me in the dead of night? Little Shantung? Had he not been shot, then, when he deliberately drew the enemy fire? Perhaps he was still stubbornly fighting, just as he had gone on fighting in the Penki Coal Mine. Perhaps he was active in the vicinity and had managed to keep an eye on me in secret. Poor lad! After shooting Chao Hsuan-teh he was afraid to return, knowing that the Eighth Route Army had strict discipline, but not realizing how fairly it was applied. He was a deserter who had done nothing wrong. He had known more ups and downs in his short life than all the hilly paths I had travelled. His feelings were probably more involved than my own present situation.

Slipping behind a rock, I looked around. I thought the boy might be hiding near by. If I caught sight of him I would grab him and tell him not to be afraid. I gazed about. From the bushes on the eastern slope, sure enough, a small head popped out. It was not Little Shantung but a boy in his early teens, who was wearing nothing but a ragged cotton-padded coat. After looking around alertly for a while, he waved to someone behind and imitated the cry of a bird. A slender woman appeared, a basket in one hand and a gun on her shoulder. They trod softly, keeping an eye on the hills far and near as well as on the pear orchard. The birds' chirping reassured them that all was well. They exchanged a few words in low voices and made their way

to the potato patch, picked up the blanket and headed towards the cottage.

I tiptoed after them. My sudden appearance took them by surprise. The boy cried, "Look, ma!" and the woman reached for her gun. I pointed at my uniform and said:

"Don't make a noise! Don't be afraid! I'm from the Eighth Route Army."

The woman sized me up. I did the same with her. She had ruddy cheeks, arched eyebrows and big eyes, a straight nose and lips like red petals. She looked the sort who might smile when she was angry and look angry when ready to smile. Standing there before the red water peppers, she herself was the prettiest of flowers.

"What is this place?" I asked.

"You've been here so long, yet you still need to ask. Lower South Green."

"What's your name?"

"Why d'you want to know?"

"That's a good gun over your shoulder. Where did you get it?"

"You ask too many questions!" She sounded half in jest and half in earnest. "The gun was taken from the Japanese. Don't you people always sing: 'Take guns from the enemy!' and 'We have no guns or cannon, but the enemy makes them for us!'"

"We're resisting the enemy's 'mop-up.' The Japanese are running wild, searching the mountains. How did you get hold of this gun?"

"You're not a greybeard yet, why act so backward? An Eighth Route Army man shouldn't look down on women. We belong to the people's militia. The women in our unit are as perky as sparrows! We go in for picking up things from the enemy."

"Did you pick up this gun yourself?"

"Are you a turnip raiser that you must go to the root of everything? So you don't believe that I picked up this gun? I suppose you think it must be one you lost."

The gun did look like one of those belonging to Old Pi's detachment. But for lack of a definite mark, I could not claim it. I was wondering how to answer when the boy asked:

"What's your name? Is it Li?"

"You know me?" I asked in surprise. "Have we ever met?"

"Maybe, maybe not. I guessed from your clothes and your face that your name was Li."

Little Shantung must have told him. The two of them must be friends. The woman's gun was probably one of the three he had hidden away.

"Have you seen a young soldier?" I asked. "Rather short and slight, in a baggy uniform. He has big eyes, a pointed chin, a sallow oval face."

"What's his name?"

"Little Shantung."

"We're natives of Hopei. What would a Shantung man be doing here?" The woman was mocking me. "Perhaps he's homesick and has gone back to Shantung."

"Don't run on like that, ma. Just say you don't know!" The boy tugged at her tunic. "Let's go. Don't let the Japanese spot us."

After hastily packing something, the woman bid me goodbye. "Forget your army discipline for once," she said. "These things belong to my brother. If you're hungry or thirsty, there are peaches and pears. If trouble starts, there are two paths behind the hut. The left one leads to Upper South Green where I live."

They disappeared among the rocks, grass, nettles and winding paths.

The sun was high now. I hastily swallowed a few pills and found a hiding-place. The attack came on time, and again I passed the day in a stupor.

By dusk the malaria subsided. I peeped out from the grass. Under a pine tree on the slope stood the boy I had met that morning. He had a gun and was signalling to someone on a distant ridge. There I saw another youngster signalling to somebody on a higher peak. They were relaying a message. There was no enemy near by and night was falling. As soon as I reached the winding path, the bare-legged boy ran up and said:

"We have been hunting for you high and low!"

He signalled again to the peak and bounded ahead of me, leading the way. For the third time I reached the stone cottage. Someone hurried out and grasped my hands, calling, "So we meet again! You didn't expect me, eh?"

It was Ku Lien-shan, radiant with happiness yet with the same diffident air. But this valley was blocked by the enemy at the north and south ends while precipitous cliffs bounded the east and west sides. Had he dropped down from the sky? When I asked him about this he replied with a chuckle:

"Didn't I tell you I'm nicknamed Mountain Leopard? I've hunted and cut wood all over these hills. I know my way about! Besides, I'm not here today just because of you. I have some relatives here. I think I told you about it before. The boy said you'd seen his mother . . . you spoke to each other. . . ."

Then I understood. The woman was the widow who had to be given "plenty of time," the one who had picked the name Wang Liao-hung for herself after the red water peppers growing in front of her childhood home.

"Have you met our people? Seen Little Shantung?" I inquired.

"I haven't seen Little Shantung this time. Only heard about him." He spoke slowly, a quizzical smile on his lips. "I heard that he disobeyed orders and wounded an officer in your detachment. I heard that if he hadn't opened fire and exposed himself to the enemy yesterday, losses wouldn't have been so heavy."

"Where did you hear all this? Who told you?"

"When the wind blows, the tree rustles. Of course somebody talked," he replied contemptuously. "Old Chao, Chao Hsuan-teh of your detachment, said he saw it with his own eyes. The Japanese caught him during their search, but he has a good friend there who helped him to escape."

"Where is he now?"

"With Instructor Pi."

"And where's Instructor Pi? How large a force has he?"

"What's the hurry? The moon's hardly up, it's early yet. You're eager to get back to them, but someone's still drinking dew on the peak alone!"

He meant Little Shantung. He must know where the lad was.

"Don't beat about the bush, Old Ku. Tell me, where is Little Shantung?"

"Didn't I tell you I hadn't seen him this time? I heard he's afraid of being disciplined and wants to win a merit to atone for his misdeeds!"

"What misdeeds? Who dares accuse him?" I was indignant. "If anyone wants to punish him, punish me first!"

"You say he's done nothing wrong. Well, you're an official too. Your words count, don't they? The boys may know." He called gently down the slope:

"Bean! Little Bean! Come here quickly!"

Little Bean was the bare-legged boy. With his round waist and sturdy legs, he did look something like a bean. When he came in, Ku asked:

"Bean, you've seen a young Eighth Route Army man, round-faced, short and slight, haven't you? Tell him not to be afraid but to come here, will you?"

Bean rolled his intelligent eyes and answered calmly:

"Yes, we saw him, but I don't know where he is at this moment. Small Ten may know. I'll ask him."

Small Ten was on sentry duty on another peak. They conferred together in the moonlight, and Bean came down to say:

"Small Ten doesn't know where he is just now. He'll ask Small Thousand."

I suspected that this was a plot. Small Thousand would not know and would ask Small Million. But Small Million would not tell me either.

The moon was now high in the sky. I asked where Old Pi was. We ought to rejoin him by moonlight.

"In Upper South Green." Ku pointed out the way. "Not far, you see, under the moon there."

Under the moon loomed a steep, massive mountain, the terraced strips of cultivated land on its side looking like ladders leading up to the moon. I recalled that in the daytime I had seen hawks flying in the blue mist beyond these terraces. From higher up a torrent cascaded down. I had thought that only hawks could live up in those heights. Yet there was a path to the top, and a little cottage whose mistress was the handsome woman who had refused to tell me her name. I was lost in admiration of this mountain, which sheltered our people in the bitter war of resistance and protected our country from the enemy.

"Bean! Little Bean!" Ku called gently through the moonlight. "Let's go to Upper South Green. Tell them they can go off duty."

Bean whistled. And answering whistles came from the surrounding peaks. Then, shouldering a gun, he led us along the grassy, winding path.

A shadow was flitting across the slope, and Bean whispered a message to someone. The shadow dashed uphill and two other shadows rushed down. I knew by their shapes and footsteps that they were Old Pi and Big Sung. They came nearer and nearer. Last time, Old Pi had grasped my arm and nearly shaken it off. This time we threw ourselves into each other's arms. He scanned my face in the moonlight and gripped my hand tight, then lowered his head and was silent for a long time. In silence Big Sung caught hold of me like a child. Before I could trust myself to speak, he said, in a choked voice:

"Second Ugly's gone! First Platoon Leader Hu Lin-hai too. His entire platoon was lost. . . . We mustn't grieve. They died like heroes. And you, we never thought to see you again."

"What?"

"Some said you were dead. And others said . . . the Japanese had given you good treatment."

"Who said that? Who saw it?"

"The assistant brigade leader Chao Hsuan-teh," put in Big Sung. "He said he would ask his friend to look after you."

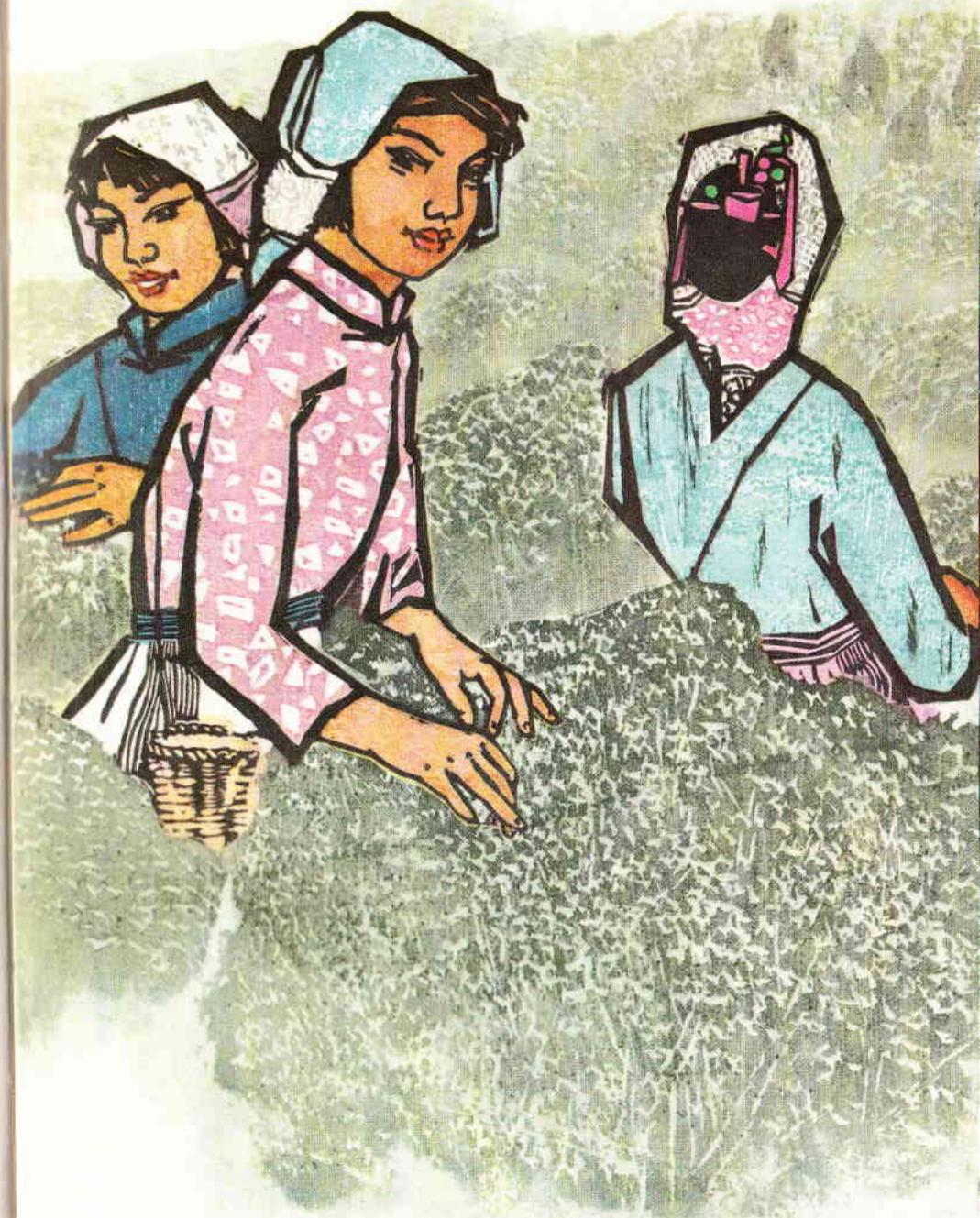
"A dog knows how to eat dung!" burst out Old Ku, voicing my fury too. "He knows how to get good treatment."

"Where is Little Shantung?" Old Pi asked. "That boy has guts! Li Teh-sheng said that the Japanese all rushed after him. If he hadn't drawn their fire, things would have been much worse. Where is he? Anyone seen him?"

Bean stepped forward and said, "Small Ten said someone saw him a while ago. We can find him. Let me go and look for him."

"Then go at once!" Ku ordered. "If you can't find him, leave him a message. And tell your mother to get a meal for the comrades before they leave the valley."

We were anxious to go, but could never have found the way without Ku the Mountain Leopard to guide us. Sometimes we came to a cliff with no way up. Ku would swarm up, remove some rocks and reveal stone steps beneath. Once we were up he replaced the rocks and it was an impassable cliff again. We admired



his skill as a mason, and even more the strength of his devotion! For these steps had cut the distance to his love from twenty to four or five *li*. These steps were the rugged mountain paths that led us out of the enemy's blockade!

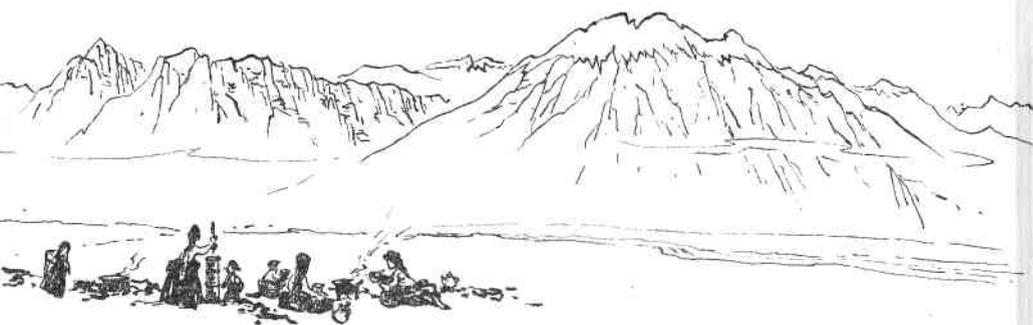
In the moonlight the nine of us marched on. I was next to Big Sung, who was carrying the packs of two men who had fallen. "Even if it costs me my life, I must take these safe to their destination," he murmured. When we rounded a bend and saw a slight figure ahead, he said earnestly:

"Little Shantung's the one who deserves these heroes' packs. Poor fellow, how unfairly he was treated! If he hadn't opened fire to attract the enemy's attention, where should we be now?"

The slight figure ahead attracted my attention too. Jumping and leaping in the moonlight as nimbly as a monkey, he looked like a figure in a shadow play. I was certain, from his movements, that this was Little Shantung.

Translated by Chang Su
Illustrations by Ab Lao

Hua To, whose coloured woodcut *Tea-pickers* appears on the preceding page, was born in a peasant family in 1939. He worked in a government organization after liberation and painted in his spare time. He started to learn wood-engraving in 1959 and is now doing this work professionally in the Shih Chu Chai Studio, Shanghai.



CHAO YEN-YI

Shearing Time

In the folds of the Chilian Mountains in northwest China stretch mile after mile of rich, well-watered stock farms. In summer, when hillsides and valleys are carpeted with golden buttermilk, the children run out from their tents to romp and play in the lush meadows. In their shrill treble they pipe up a lively song. And, hearing them, you know that shearing time has come round again for the herdsmen.

Two days before the shearing, all the members of White Cloud Stock Farm assembled outside their office for a meeting. Bursts of clapping and laughing comments enlivened the yard. They were choosing a shock brigade from the best herdsmen.

The first nominees, needless to say, were men and women known throughout the farm for their skill with the shears and lasso, or for throwing and tying up cattle. Their names, loudly proclaimed, were promptly swallowed up by applause and shouts of approval.

Chao Yen-yi is a young writer, most of whose stories deal with life among the Tibetans. His *A Short History of Old Gampo* was published in *Chinese Literature* No. 11, 1962.

Twenty people were wanted for the shock brigade. When sixteen redoubtable names had been written down, the atmosphere cooled rather perceptibly. Now that all the top-notchers had been nominated, a careful choice would have to be made from among the other farm hands. Rival merits were being seriously considered when tall Sodnam, a herdsman in his early fifties, stepped out from his place in the crowd. Not much of a talker in the usual way, when it came to a meeting Sodnam could be counted on to give well-weighed opinions. He always stepped forward like this with grave composure and spoke sensibly, to the point, gesticulating, pipe in hand, like a practised orator. So now all listened with interest.

"Friends!" boomed the herdsman. "We've already found sixteen champions for our shock brigade. Are those all White Cloud Stock Farm has? Why has everyone fallen silent all of a sudden — like a *pipawang* with broken strings? Picking horses, you don't expect all to be of the same height. Out of ten fingers some are shorter than others. I've a name to propose to you, friends. It's — ahem! — Comrade Sangchai Lhatso! . . ."

That caused quite a stir in the meeting. Girls raised long sleeves to hide their giggles. Young fellows pulled faces and stuck out their tongues in surprise. Not even the old folk could repress a chuckle. Akhu* Sodnam was a real caution! Sangchai Lhatso was his daughter-in-law, only come to his tent a few days ago as a bride. Yet here the old fellow was referring to her as "Comrade!"

Their laughter and quizzical glances brought a flush to the speaker's face. But after clearing his throat he went on calmly:

"That's my nomination, friends. She hasn't been here long, so a lot of you may not have met her. Let me introduce you. That's her sitting on that bench, our new workmate and a member of the Youth League, Comrade Sangchai Lhatso!" He pointed the bowl of his pipe to underneath the eaves of the south wing.

All eyes turned that way, to where a girl was sitting quietly. She was wearing a long gown of vivid purple brocade with an embroidered border two inches wide, and a green silk sash round her waist. She had an oval face, olive, satiny skin, eyes limpid

* The Tibetan for "Uncle."

as a fountain, tender and bright. Her ruddy lips seemed petals fresh with dew, and a faint smile lurked at the up-tilted corners of her mouth. Her lustrous black hair, parted in the centre, was braided into dozens of fine plaits drawn together low down on her back. She was wearing long ear-rings and a necklace of coloured beads and silver. Slim and self-possessed, she struck everyone there as a serious, beautiful girl. There was surely something missing, though. Yes, she hadn't the rough, free and easy air of most Tibetan girls brought up on the grasslands. She looked a shade too delicate and refined.

No doubt about it, Sangchai Lhatso was a charmer. But it would never do to thrust a tender blossom like this into the hurly-burly of the cattle enclosure. The very idea alarmed them.

At this point Chhoinyid, the chairman of the farm, smiled thoughtfully and called the meeting to order.

"Stop staring, comrades! You'll have plenty of chances later to take a good look at the bride. Let's get back to business. Any comments on the nomination of Comrade Sangchai Lhatso?"

Sumpa Tsering, head of the second production brigade, coughed a couple of times before voicing his opinion. He was a powerful man of thirty or so, burly as a bull, and had been the second put down for the shock brigade. He threw back his head to speak, not looking at the other herdsman, as if addressing himself to the distant blue sky.

"Here's what I think," he said gruffly. "No reason why the shock brigade should have exactly twenty people in it. We're not choosing this brigade for show but to get a job done quickly. If there aren't twenty, we'll make do with eighteen or sixteen. Why insist on a round number? If you ask me, the three women comrades we've chosen are quite enough. More would hold up the rest of us. Women aren't built for heavy work, we mustn't overstrain them. And we should be more careful still with a bride. That's how I look at it!"

Chairman Chhoinyid asked the others what they thought. A young man blinked a couple of times, then suggested, "Let's hear what else Akhu Sodnam has to say. He must have his reasons for proposing Comrade Sangchai Lhatso."

Once more the tall herdsman rose to his feet. He had overcome his initial embarrassment and recovered all his aplomb. He

gave his reasons gravely and forcefully, explaining that he had not nominated Sangchai Lhatso because she was his daughter-in-law, but because she struck him as a likely lass. . . .

"We're always complaining of our lack of technical know-how, folks," he said. "But do technicians drop down from the sky? If we don't train our young people, once our skilled old hands are dead, how are our sons and grandsons going to manage? I don't agree with you, Brigade Leader Sumpa! You're too swelled-headed! You talk as if only the few of you amount to anything — nobody else is up to herding cattle. Old Sodnam and Sangchai Lhatso had better keep away, so as not to hold you heroes back. Isn't that the gist of what you said?"

Under the old herdsman's bright, compelling gaze, Sumpa Tsering smiled sheepishly and protested, "Upon my word, Akhu! . . ."

"I'm not out to find fault, but it's a fact that you look down on women! 'We mustn't overstrain them,' you say. If you're really thinking of their welfare, fine. But as I see it you look down on them. Our women folk have done hard, heavy work for hundreds of years. They don't want to sit idle in their tents eating *tsamba!*"

Old Sodnam turned abruptly towards his daughter-in-law.

"Comrade Sangchai Lhatso!" he cried. "As a herdsman's daughter and a member of the Youth League, do you want to join our shock brigade?"

All eyes were fixed again on Sangchai Lhatso. She coloured up and smiled in some confusion, bending her head. In a low but quite audible voice she answered, "Yes!" It was clear from that simple but expressive "Yes!" that she thoroughly agreed with her father-in-law.

As if with one accord, the others started clapping vigorously.

The day after they celebrated the Double Fifth Festival, clipping started on White Cloud Stock Farm.

The twenty people elected to the shock brigade were divided into two teams according to their strength and skill. Old Sodnam found himself in the first team led by Gonpothar. His daughter-in-law was in the second team headed by Sumpa. Both teams had two girls and seemed fairly evenly matched.

Sangchai Lhatso was one of the first to arrive at the cattle enclosure that morning. She had changed her bridal finery for a tunic in natural coloured sheep's wool and a pair of old blue trousers. She had taken off her new calfskin boots as well, and her creamy feet were bare. Her hair was plaited today in two thick braids and tied up on the back of her head. Although this simple get-up did not alter her quiet, delicate air, it certainly made her look much more workmanlike than on the day of the meeting. A square woollen pouch with a shoulder strap hung at her waist.

Once in the shearing enclosure she set to work without a word, that faint smile on her face, helping the cooks to tend the fires, fetch water, brew tea and wash bowls, until the whole brigade had assembled.

In one corner of the enclosure three large fires of dried yak dung were burning, the first to brew tea, the second to heat water, the third to heat the brands. As the shock workers arrived, some took a bowl of scalding hot tea, added milk, and sat down on the ground to sip at it. Others squatted by the branding irons and produced handsome chased silver tobacco pipes with agate mouth-pieces. As they puffed clouds of smoke from their rank tobacco, they cracked ribald jokes with the men and women near by. Sangchai Lhatso stood a little apart, raising her long sleeve now and then to hide a smile.

A herd of yaks was driven into the enclosure. The great bulls, looking fierce as lions with their long, shaggy hair, eyed the herdsmen truculently and snored defiance.

They set to work. Sumpa Tsering roared out his orders to the second team, assigning jobs to each in turn till only Sangchai Lhatso was left. He glanced at her doubtfully, thinking to himself, "Ha! Akhu Sodnam gave his daughter-in-law a big build up! She's nothing but a slip of a girl, a yak could flatten her out with a single kick! What can I find for the poor child to do?"

"Well, sister," he said as kindly as he could. "You shall help me to catch the yaks. I'll lasso them, while you keep me supplied with ropes. That shouldn't be too hard for you. As soon as I've thrown one rope, you bring me another coiled ready. Look, this is the size the coil should be — understand?"

"Yes!" she answered, softly and clearly.



As they got down to work, the atmosphere grew tense in the large enclosure surrounded by a mud wall. With a thunder of hooves, the yaks stampeded to escape. A herdsman would pick out his yak and cast the lasso. Its noose hung for a second in mid air, and the next instant the yak's head was caught in it. A tug tightened the noose round the beast's neck. At once another strong fellow would rush forward and seize the yak's horns with his right hand, its dewlap with his left, to force it to the ground. Naturally the yak resisted. Sometimes the herdsman succeeded in tripping it up and a mate helped him to truss its four hooves together, ready for the shearer to demonstrate his skill. With shears over a foot in length, the shearsman quickly clipped the hair from the flanks and under-part of the yak's body. When it had

been branded and given an injection, the ropes were untied and the yak, shorn and docile, resignedly shook the dung and twigs from its sides and trotted back to join the herd.

Some of the yaks were so strong and unruly, though, that they could pull over the herder and make him wallow in the dust. They might even trample on the man trying to throw them. It took the combined efforts of half a dozen young fellows to master such an opponent, after a rough-and-tumble which left them with bruised noses and swollen faces, covered with mud and dung. After watching this struggle with the yaks, you could find a tiger hunt tame!

Sangchai Lhatso was still silent, the same faint smile on her face. Her bare feet flashed quietly through the clipping enclosure. When a yak had been sheared, she hurried to release it, then with the skill born of long practice coiled another lasso. As soon as Sumpa had cast one lasso and was looking for another, she would slip a neatly coiled rope into his hand. It was a clear, fine day, but there is always a breeze upon the plateau. School children, given a holiday for the occasion, were picking up the yak wool. But the wind blew odd tufts they had missed all over the place, and no more attention was paid to these than to the ears left in a field after the reaping. Each time Sangchai Lhatso crossed the yard, she kept stooping to pick up these clippings and drop them into the big pouch at her waist. No one had time to pay much heed to her. Only her father-in-law, shearing in the first team, looked up occasionally to see how she was doing.

"Ha, she's thrifty and nimble all right!" he said to himself. "She's picking up the odd clippings before the yaks trample them into the mud and dung. They'll come in handy for plaiting ropes. I can see she's a good manager. But won't this make people talk? They may think her mean, working for herself while the rest of us are clipping wool for the farm. . . . That's not so good. Why bother about those few handfuls of dirty wool? In our home we've whole bales of yak and sheep wool. . . ." He did not like to speak to his daughter-in-law in front of the others, but decided to tip her a wink when a chance arose.

At the noonday break, the man recording work-points announced that the second team had clipped eight yaks less than the

first. Sumpa indignantly blamed his team and ended up by saying:

"See now, if we don't put on a spurt, we're going to lose! This afternoon each of you must do a better job." He glanced at Sangchai Lhatso. "Don't go rushing in all directions any more. This really is the limit! . . ."

Perhaps because he was flurried by falling behind, when they started work again Sumpa bungled many of his casts. The dry lasso wavered in the air and kept missing the yak's head. That made him even more frantic. After another miss, when he turned to take the rope Sangchai Lhatso handed him, without even looking at it he stamped his foot and bellowed:

"Can't you make the noose a bit bigger? Do as I told you, confound it! . . ."

Angrily uncoiling the rope, he coiled it again more loosely. A group of yaks was being driven past, he picked out an old bull and threw with all his might. There was nothing wrong with his aim this time, but because the noose was too big it slipped over the charging bull's head and gripped it around the middle. Then the trouble really started! The bull tore off, dragging Sumpa after it. Seven or eight lads rushed up to help, but the yak was so powerful that with a few leaps and tugs it snapped the rope. It jumped over the six-foot wall, knocking a large gap in the top, and galloped off trailing the snapped rope towards the hills. Sumpa had to send men out on horses after it.

Drenched with sweat and fuming with rage, Sumpa rested for a couple of minutes before turning round to take another rope. To his surprise, Sangchai Lhatso had disappeared.

"Confound it!" he swore. "What does she think she's doing? No sense of responsibility at all! . . ."

Just then he saw her darting back on bare feet with four or five ropes which she had dipped into the stream outside. Running up to him, she deftly coiled a rope and handed it to him.

"What's the idea, comrade?" he roared. "How am I to cast a lasso that's so wet and slippery? For goodness' sake! A lot of use you are! All right, leave this to me. Go and help with the brands."

"Yes!" The smile left Sangchai Lhatso's face as with this soft reply she went off to the fire where the irons were being heated.

Meanwhile Sumpa started coiling his own lassos. To his surprise he found that the rope, after soaking, was much easier to use. In five throws he lassoed four yaks. "There's more to this than meets the eye," he thought. "That lass knows what she's about." He tried a dry rope again, only to find that it wobbled in the air, went less far, and was more difficult to aim. When the reason dawned on him, he felt rather ashamed of having lost his temper. But he could hardly recall the girl straight away. He eyed her admiringly as she deftly handled the irons and ran to and fro on her bare, twinkling feet. The shy smile was hovering on her lips again. And while the irons were heating, she went on retrieving odd tufts of wool and dropping them into her pouch. The team leader felt very taken by the girl. "Upon my word, she's a good lass! . . ." he thought.

By that evening the second team had caught up with the first and slightly outstripped it. For some reason, however, Sumpa was not too happy. Without a word to anyone, he trudged warily off towards his home. Half way, he discovered he had left his pipe behind and, cursing under his breath, started back for it. Most of the shock brigade and their helpers had left. The watchman was sorting out the wool in the enclosure. But as he reached the entrance Sumpa halted at the sight of Sangchai Lhatso. Her pouch bulging, she was still hunting for scraps of wool. When she had finished picking up all the stray tufts in the whole enclosure, she took them to the wool tent. Slipping the pouch from her shoulder, she held it up by one corner to empty out all her gleanings beside the big pile of wool.

"Hey, what's this?" asked the watchman in surprise. "You picked up those bits, you can keep them!"

With no reply but a smile, Sangchai Lhatso left with her empty pouch. Sumpa ducked out of sight round the corner, his cheeks burning, prey to a strange emotion. When the girl had gone, he murmured to himself, "Upon my word, that lass. . . ."

The next day Sumpa was his old confident self, assigning jobs to his team as loudly as ever. Sangchai Lhatso was left to the last, and to her he said rather sheepishly:

"Upon my word, Comrade Sangchai Lhatso, the two of us made a good team yesterday. You can help me again today. Go on, soak all the ropes for me, will you? 'Pon my word, that's a useful dodge!"

"Yes!" she answered as usual, with a smile, before running off with a dozen ropes or more.

That morning Chairman Chhoinyid came to lend a hand, working with each team in turn and comparing notes with the cadres as well as the team members. With the best will in the world, he urged Sangchai Lhatso to watch Sumpa carefully and to try her own hand with the lasso when she had a chance.

"Don't be afraid of being laughed at," he said. "Sumpa's one of our best herders. You can learn a lot from him, can't you?"

"Yes!" She gave a modest smile.

Presently word came from the office that a visitor had arrived from the county town, and Chairman Chhoinyid went off to receive him. He found Comrade Hsing from the Country Marketing Bureau come to discuss the contract for their yak wool. Old Hsing asked how long the clipping was likely to take.

"This year we've organized our labour better," replied Chhoinyid with considerable satisfaction. "That's speeded things up a lot. Our plan was to finish the clipping in twenty-five days, but judging by yesterday's progress three weeks should be enough!"

"Three weeks?" His visitor grinned. "A bit conservative, aren't you?"

"Conservative? It always took us a month before!"

"But things are different now — think I didn't know? You've got a new champion herder."

"What's that? A new champion? Who're you talking about?"

"Don't try to fool me, chairman. Isn't Gthar's bride, Sangchai Lhatso, working for you now?"

"Oh, yes. We've put her in the shock brigade."

"Well, and isn't she a marvel?"

"She's a fine lass, certainly. She's working as Sumpa's assistant and learning from him."

"What! Don't tell me you've made her somebody's assistant! Are you joking?"

"What d'you mean?"

"Why, chairman, what a wicked waste!" exclaimed old Hsing in genuine horror. "I tell you, I know that girl. She comes from the grassland over Heihotan way. I worked in the shop there for a good five years and I'm an old friend of her father, Lhundrub. He's a regular wizard when it comes to handling yaks. In fifty years of herding, he's developed such amazing skill that they call him the Lightning Lasso. He can throw so far, so fast and so accurately, his noose catches whichever part of a yak he wants — horns, neck or hoof. He never misses! But his skill in throwing yaks is even more uncanny. He downs the fiercest bull as easily as if it were a lamb. He knows the knack, you see, not like these young fellows who simply rely on their strength. Old Lhundrub has two sons and a daughter, and all three have learned his skill. Sangchai Lhatso may look a delicate little thing, but when she was no more than six or seven years old her dad taught her to lasso kids with a light rope. Later on he let her practise catching calves. By the time she was sixteen, she never missed her yak. . . . I tell you, Chairman Chhoinyid, you've passed over a champion! . . ."

Chhoinyid had been listening round-eyed. Now he slapped his thigh and exclaimed, "How was I to know? Heihotan is over 200 *li* from here, and she and Gthar got married in the county town. The girl's only been here a few days and she hardly says a word. Well, it seems we haven't given her a fair deal! Quick, let's go to the shearing ground and have a look."

As the chairman and his visitor neared the enclosure, excited yells carried to them over the wall. They ran to the gate and stood rooted to the ground in dismay. A huge shaggy black yak with a rope round its neck was charging after Sumpa, the long curved horns on its massive head lowered to strike. In every herd you will find a yak like this. The herdsmen have to be on their guard and take care not to provoke it, or this yak will gore them or toss them into the air — sometimes hurling them twenty or thirty feet away. That was the danger facing Sumpa now. Too panic-stricken to stand on his dignity, he had dropped his rope and was racing round the enclosure. The black yak thundered after, and seemed about to corner him! But in that instant, Sangchai Lhatso swiftly coiled a rope, calmly raised her lasso, whirled it round her head and let fly. Whistling through the air,

it fell neatly round the black bull's horns. With a sharp tug, she forced the yak to rear up and paw the air. Quick as thought, before its front hooves touched the ground, she raced up, seized it by one horn and its dewlap, pressed down with her right hand and up with the left, and then jerked its head sideways while with one foot she tripped the beast up. The whole brigade roared approval as the great yak was brought crashing to the ground, while the girl hardly seemed to have exerted herself!

During the midday break, Akhu Sodnam preened his brown moustache with gnarled, work-worn fingers, while he listened, beaming, to the chairman's public commendation of Sangchai Lhatso. His heart swelled with happy pride. As for Sumpa, his cheeks were burning. He could not find words for the strange feeling he had.

Sangchai Lhatso looked just as quiet and composed as ever. The same shy smile hovered on her lips. When Chairman Chhoinyid ended his speech by urging her to teach her skill to all the members of the shock brigade, the girl flushed and answered softly and modestly:

"Yes!"

*Translated by Gladys Yang
Illustrations by Chang Li*

Selections from the Classics

SHIH NAI-AN

Heroes of the Marshes

Chinese historical records note that at the beginning of the twelfth century due to the corruption of the government and unstable social conditions, peasants led by Sung Chiang and thirty-five others rose in revolt. They were so strong, the government troops at first were unable to halt their advance. Although this uprising was eventually crushed, its powerful spirit and gallant courage left an indelible impression on the minds of the people.

Several decades later, tales about the uprising of Sung Chiang began to be recounted by the professional story-tellers. In the course of many recitals the heroic personages involved gradually took on specific characteristics. By the latter part of the thirteenth century, during the Yuan dynasty, plays about the Sung Chiang uprising, rather crude in construction, and disjointed in plot, were being performed on the stage.

During the fourteenth century, the Yuan dynasty fell beneath the onslaughts of several large-scale peasant uprisings in various parts of the country and the Ming dynasty, with a highly centralized government, was founded. It was at this time that Shih Nai-an, a gifted writer, appeared. Living in an era of big peasant uprisings, he was able to observe them closely and study them thoroughly. Compiling the various depictions of Sung Chiang's revolt then current in legend, in story-teller's scripts and on the stage, he wrote *Heroes of the Marshes*, an epic of over one million words.

The author graphically depicts the cruel, dark rule of the Sung dynasty officials and the fearless battles against injustice waged by the heroes. The latter include Lu Chih-shen, Li Kuei and many others, totalling one hundred and eight in all. Although each major character is presented in a relatively independent episode, in total effect the book gives a profound and well-rounded picture of the times. The novel is couched in the vivid conversational style of the professional story-teller.

Chinese Literature No. 12, 1959 published a few of the chapters which deal with Lin Chung, an arms instructor of the Imperial Guards. Lin Chung is a man submissive by nature who always bowed to authority. Because he has a beautiful wife whom Marshal Kao Chiu's son covets, he is unreasonably persecuted and humiliated by Kao Chiu and son, and is finally banished to a distant part of the country. Even when his home is broken and he has become a prisoner, the Kao's are still not satisfied but send men to murder him to prevent future trouble. Driven beyond endurance, Lin Chung, a man of ability but with no way to serve his country, finally strikes back and joins the ranks of the peasant revolt.

Heroes of the Marshes has had a far-reaching influence. Later generations continued to portray peasant uprisings and new heroic images on the model of this great novel. Many plays based on the novel were also adapted and staged. Most important of all, this novel has continuously inspired the people to take up arms and struggle against their exploiters. Although until now little is known of the life of the author, Shih Nai-an, the novel he has left to posterity remains one of the masterpieces of Chinese literature.

Published below are chapters 14 and 16 of *Heroes of the Marshes*. They tell how a band of bold men capture a convoy of immensely valuable birthday gifts being sent by a corrupt high official to his father-in-law, an even higher official. Chapter 15, which is not included here, relates how the band is formed.

Because society was racked with unrest and revolts, the local magistrates were tense and worried and constantly sent out police patrols. Chapter 14 begins with Constable Lei Heng of Yuncheng County out on patrol with his men. On reaching Lingkuan Temple, they find a big naked fellow asleep on the altar table. Suspicious, they tie him up and take him to the house of the local ward chief.

XIV

Red-haired Devil Lies Drunk in Lingkuan Temple; Chao the Heavenly King Acknowledges a "Nephew" in East-bank Village

As I was saying, when Lei Heng entered Lingkuan Temple he saw this big fellow sleeping on the altar. The soldiers rushed forward, tied him up, and dragged him outside. It was only about the fifth watch — the sun had not yet risen. Lei Heng said: "Let's take the lout to the manor of Ward Chief Chao. We can get some breakfast there, then we'll turn him over to the county



magistrate for questioning." The company proceeded rapidly to the manor.

The ward chief of East-bank Village was surnamed Chao, his given name was Kai. Born of a well-to-do family native to these parts for many generations, Chao had always fought injustice and helped the needy. He liked nothing better than befriending gallant men, and put them up in his manor whenever they came to him, no matter what the circumstances. When they were ready to go, he gave them silver for travelling expenses. Extremely fond of play with weapons, Chao was very strong. He had never married and practised body-building exercises from morning till night.

Outside the East Gate of Yuncheng, the county seat, were two villages which the county administered. Separated by a large stream, one was called East-bank, the other West-bank. Formerly evil spirits had haunted West-bank. They lured people into the stream in broad daylight, laying in wait beneath the waters. No one could cope with them. One day a monk came by, and the villagers told him all about it. Pointing to a place, the monk instructed them to build a pagoda there of black stone; this would repress evil on the bank of the stream. The result was the spirits left the village of West-bank and moved over to East-bank.

When Chao Kai learned of this he was furious. Wading the stream, he picked up the black stone pagoda, carried it across single-handed and deposited it on the East-bank. From then on he was famed as Chao Kai, the Tower-shifting Heavenly King. He became the undisputed ruler of the village, and gallant men everywhere knew his name.

That morning Lei Heng and his soldiers took the big fellow to the manor and knocked on the gate. When the retainers found out who was calling, they reported to the ward chief. Chao Kai was still in bed, but hearing that Constable Lei had come, he ordered that the gate be opened immediately. The retainers complied. After the soldiers suspended the big fellow from a rafter in the gate house, Lei Heng took ten or so of their leaders to a thatched hall and sat down.

Chao Kai, who had left his bed to greet them, asked: "What business brings you here, constable?"

"On orders of his honour the magistrate, Chu Tung and I have led two patrols into the countryside to look for bandits," said Lei Heng. "Now we're tired and want to rest a while, so we've come to your manor. I hope we're not disturbing you."

"Not at all," replied Chao Kai. He told his retainers to prepare food and drink, and first to bring some tea. "Did you catch any thieves in our village?" he queried.

"Just now we discovered a big fellow sleeping in that Lingkuan Temple out front. I could see he was no gentleman. He evidently got drunk and fell asleep in there. So we tied him up. I was going to take him to the county magistrate straight away, but in the first place it was too early, and in the second place I wanted to inform you, ward chief. In case the magistrate asks you about it in the future, you'll be able to answer. I have the prisoner hung up in your gate house."

Chao Kai made a mental note of this. "Thank you for telling me, constable," he replied. A short time later, his retainers brought in wine and platters of food. Chao Kai said: "Talking out here is not very convenient. Let's sit inside." Ordering a retainer to light a lamp, he conducted Lei Heng to the porch of a rear building.

After they had both taken their places at a table — Chao Kai in the host's seat, Lei Heng in the guest's — a few retainers carried in platters of tidbits, while another poured the wine. Chao Kai ordered that wine also be given to the soldiers. The retainers led the soldiers to an esplanade and treated them as guests, serving large platters of meat and big bowls of wine, and urging them to eat their fill.

As he courteously plied the constable with food and drink, Chao Kai thought to himself: "What thief could he have caught in our village? I must have a look." After downing six or seven goblets of wine with Lei Heng, he summoned one of his stewards and said: "Keep the constable company. I'm going out to relieve myself. I'll be back shortly."

While the steward drank with Lei Heng, Chao Kai got a lantern and went directly to the main gate. None of the soldiers was around. All were inside, drinking. Chao Kai asked one of his retainers, who was guarding the gate: "That robber the constable caught—where have they got him tied?"

"He's locked in gate house," said the retainer.

Chao Kai pushed open the door and looked. The fellow was suspended high above the floor. His body was a mass of swarthy flesh, his dangling legs were black and hairy, his feet were bare. Chao Kai shone his lantern on the man's face. It was ruddy and broad. On the side of his temple was a scarlet birthmark from which reddish-brown hair sprouted.

"Where are you from, young fellow?" Chao Kai asked him. "I haven't seen you in our village before."

"Your servant is a stranger from a distant township. I came to offer my services to a man, but they've arrested me as a thief. I must get justice."

"Who did you want to join in this village?"

"A gallant man."

"His name?"

"He's called Ward Chief Chao."

"Why did you want to see him?"

"Chao Kai is famed everywhere as a champion of righteousness. There's a rare chance for riches I'd like to tell him about."

"Seek no further. I am Ward Chief Chao. If you want me to save you, pretend to recognize me as your mother's brother. In a little while when I come here to see off Constable Lei and his men, call me 'Uncle.' I will address you as 'Nephew.' I'll say that you were four or five when you left here. That's why I didn't recognize you when you came again, looking for me."

"If you can rescue me, I'll be deeply grateful," said the young man. "Please help me, champion!"

Carrying his lantern, Chao Kai left the gate house. He again barred the door, then hurried back to the building in the rear.

"Forgive me for neglecting you," he said to Lei Heng.

"I'm putting you to too much trouble," the constable replied. "It's really not right."

They drank several cups of wine together. Soon light began shining in through the window.

"It's brightening in the east," said Lei Heng. "Your servant must take his leave. I have to sign in at the county office."

"You have your official duties, constable. I dare not detain you. If business brings you to our humble village again, be sure to call on me."

"I certainly will pay my respects, ward chief. Please don't bother to see me off."

"At least let me escort you to the manor gate."

Chao Kai and Lei Heng emerged from the building. The soldiers, who had dined well, now took up their spears and staves and proceeded to the gate house. There they let down the young man they had suspended and led him out through the door, his hands tied behind his back.

"He's a big fellow!" Chao Kai remarked.

"That rogue is the thief we caught in Lingkuan Temple," said Lei Heng. Even before he had finished speaking, the young man shouted:

"Uncle, save me!"

Chao Kai pretended to peer at him. Then he cried: "Why, isn't that rascal Wang the Third?"

"Yes, it's me, uncle. Save me!"

Everyone was astonished. "Who is he?" Lei Heng asked Chao Kai. "How does he know you, ward chief?"

"He's my sister's son, Wang the Third. Why was the scamp resting in the temple? He lived here till he was four or five, then my sister and her husband moved to the Southern Capital. I didn't see him for ten years. He came again when he was about fifteen, accompanying a merchant from the city on a business trip. That was the last I saw of him. I've heard many people say the scoundrel is no good. What's he doing here? I'd never have recognized him if it weren't for that scarlet birthmark on the side of his temple."

"Little Third," he shouted at the young man, "why didn't you come to me directly? Why did you go into the village and steal?"

"But uncle, I didn't steal anything!" the young fellow protested.

"If you're not a thief, why have they brought you here?" Chao Kai demanded. Snatching a staff from one of the soldiers, he belaboured the young man about the head.

"Don't beat him," Lei Heng and the others urged. "Let's hear what he has to say."

"Uncle, don't be angry," said the young fellow. "Let me speak. Since the last time I came at the age of fifteen, ten years have gone by, isn't that so? Last night on the road I had one cup of wine too many. I didn't dare call on you drunk, so I went to the temple to sleep it off, first. How did I know they were going to nab me without a word? I'm not a thief!"

Chao Kai again rushed at him with the staff. "Animal!" he cried. "Instead of coming to me directly, you guzzled yourself full of yellow wine on the road! Couldn't you get all you want in my home? You've disgraced me!"

"Calm yourself, ward chief. Your nephew isn't a thief," Lei Heng said soothingly. "I got suspicious, finding a big fellow like him asleep in the temple. After all, I'd never seen him before. So I arrested him and brought him here. I would never have done it had I known he was your nephew."

Lei Heng ordered his soldiers to untie the young fellow and turn him over to the ward chief. They at once did so. "Please don't take it amiss," the constable pleaded. "Had I known he was your nephew, this wouldn't have happened. I hope you're not offended. We must go back, now."

"Just a moment, constable," said Chao Kai. "Please come into my small manor. I've something to say."

Lei Heng returned with the ward chief to the thatched building. Chao Kai handed him ten ounces of silver. "Just a paltry gift, constable," Chao Kai said. "Please don't score it for being so small."

"But you shouldn't be doing this!"

"If you don't accept, I'll know you're displeased with me."

"Since you're so generous, ward chief, I can't refuse. Some day I'll show my gratitude."

Chao Kai instructed the young man to thank Lei Heng. Then he distributed pieces of silver among the soldiers and saw the

company to the manor gate. Lei Heng bade the ward chief farewell and departed with his men.

Chao Kai took the young man to the rear building and gave him clothes and a hat. He asked his name and place of origin.

"Your servant's family name is Liu; his given name is Tang. My ancestral home is in the East Luchow Region. Because of this scarlet birthmark on the side of my temple, since childhood I've been known as the 'Red-haired Devil.' I've made this trip especially to inform you of a rare chance for riches, brother ward chief. Last night I fell asleep, drunk, in the temple, and those oafs nabbed me and tied me up. Fortunately, today, I've met you at last. Please be seated, brother, and accept my four kowtows."

When the young man had completed his obeisances, Chao Kai said: "You say you have a rare chance to tell me about. What is it?"

"Ever since childhood, your servant has drifted about. I've been to many places and made friends with many gallant men. Though I've often heard them speak of you, brother, I never thought I'd have occasion to seek you out. I've also met merchants from east of the mountains and north of the river who've served under you, brother. That's why I'm willing to tell you this: If there are no outsiders around, I'd like to put the whole thing before you frankly."

"You can speak freely. Only my most trusted men are here."

"It's said that Governor Liang of Taming, the Northern Capital, has bought jewels and art objects worth a hundred thousand strings of cash to send to his father-in-law Premier Tsai in the Eastern Capital as birthday gifts. Last year he also sent birthday gifts of the same value. But they were seized by unknown persons along the way; to this day the robbers haven't been caught. This year Governor Liang has bought another hundred thousand strings worth of jewels and art objects. The route by which they'll be sent has already been chosen. They must be delivered before Premier Tsai's birthday on the fifteenth of the sixth lunar month. In my humble opinion these things were purchased with unclean money; there will be nothing wrong in taking them. We've only to work out a plan for capturing them along the way. Heaven knows it will be no crime. I've often heard that you're a real

man, brother, and that you have a remarkable skill with weapons. Although I'm not very talented, I know a little about them myself. Not only can I deal with four or five men at a time, but if I had my spear I wouldn't be afraid even if two thousand men on horseback came at me together. If you don't despise me, brother, I'm more than willing to lend a hand. What do you think of the idea?"

"Excellent! We must plan carefully. But you've just come, and you've been rather battered about. Why not rest a while in the guest house? Let me give the matter some thought. We'll talk more about it later."

Chao Kai ordered a retainer to lead Liu Tang to the guest house. The retainer did so, then went off.

"I certainly was having a hard time," Liu Tang thought to himself. "It's lucky Chao Kai was able to get me out of that scrape. That lout Lei Heng grabbed me for a thief in broad daylight and suspended me all night from a rafter! The villain can't have travelled very far. Why not take a weapon and go after him? I can knock down all those rascals, bring Chao Kai back his silver, and work off some of my anger at the same time. A great idea!"

Liu Tang came out of the house, took a sword from the rack and left the manor. As he strode south, the sky was already light. Soon he could see the constable and his soldiers marching slowly ahead. Hurrying after them, Liu Tang cried: "Constable, stand where you are!"

Startled, Lei Heng turned to see Liu Tang advancing towards him rapidly, sword in hand. Lei hastily took a sword from one of his soldiers.

"What do you want, varlet?" he shouted.

"If you know what's good for you, you'll give me those ten ounces of silver. Then maybe I'll forgive you!"

"Your uncle presented me with that money. What is it to you? If it weren't for his sake, I'd end your knavish life! What gall to demand my silver!"

"I'm no thief, but you suspended me from a rafter all night and swindled my uncle out of ten ounces of silver to boot! Return it to me, if you've got any sense, and I'll let you off. If you don't, I'll spill your blood on the spot!"

Furious, Lei Heng pointed his finger at Liu Tang and swore: "Worthless lying thief! You're a disgrace to your family! Impertinent dog!"

"Dirty extortioner of the people! You dare to curse me?"

"You're a bandit to the marrow of your bones! Leave Chao Kai out of this! You're a bandit, heart and liver! Don't think you can pull that sort of thing on me!"

"I'm going to settle this with you once and for all!" Brandishing his sword, the enraged Liu Tang charged towards Lei Heng.

The constable raised his own sword with a laugh and strode forward to meet him. They clashed in the middle of the road and fought over fifty rounds, with neither vanquishing the other.

When the soldiers saw that Lei Heng couldn't defeat Liu Tang, they began closing in on the young man. But just then the fence gate of a nearby house opened and a man holding a length of chain in each hand emerged, crying: "You two bold men there — desist! I've been watching a long time. Rest a moment. I've something to say." He swung the chains between the contestants. Both lowered their swords, jumped out of the combat circle, and waited.

The man had the appearance of a scholar. He wore a cylindrical-shaped hat that came down almost to his eyebrows, and a wide flaxen gown with a black border that was gathered at the waist by a tea-coloured sash. His feet were clad in white socks and silk shoes. His handsome and refined face was adorned with a long beard. This was Wu Yung the Wizard. His alternate name was Hsueh-chiu. His Taoist appellation was Master Increasing Light. Since the earliest times his family had resided in this village.

Chain in hand, Wu Yung pointed at Liu Tang and said: "Stay where you are, young man. Why are you fighting with the constable?"

Liu Tang glared at him. "None of your business, scholar!"

"I'll tell you why, teacher," said Lei Heng. "Last night we caught this rogue sleeping naked in the Lingkuan Temple and brought him to Ward Chief Chao's manor. When we discovered that he was the ward chief's nephew, we released him for his uncle's sake. The ward chief invited us to have some wine and presented me with a gift. Unknown to his uncle, this scoundrel



chased after us and demanded that I return the gift to him. How do you like that for nerve?"

"I've known Chao Kai ever since we were children," Wu Yung thought to himself. "He's often discussed his private affairs with me, and I'm familiar with all of his relatives. But I've never heard of this nephew. Besides, he's the wrong age. There's something fishy here. I've got to stop this fight, first. Then I can question him."

"Don't be so stubborn, big fellow," he said to the young man. "Your uncle and I are friends. I know that he's on good terms with this constable. If you take back the little gift he's given him, it will make your uncle look bad. Have some respect for

me. I'll talk this over with your uncle later."

"Scholar, you don't know the facts," said Liu Tang. "My uncle didn't give the gift willingly. The rogue extorted that silver out of him! If he doesn't return it to me, I swear I'm not going back!"

"I'll return it only if the ward chief himself asks for it," said Lei Heng. "I won't give it to you!"

"You slandered me and said I was a thief. You extorted my uncle's silver. How can you refuse to return it?"

"It's not your silver! I won't return it! I won't! I won't!"

"You'll have to ask this sword in my hand whether you'll return it or not!"

"You two have already fought for a long time without either of you winning," said Wu Yung. "How much longer do you intend to fight?"

"If he doesn't return that silver, I'll fight him until only one of us is left alive!" cried Liu Tang.

"If I were afraid of you, I could have had one of my soldiers help me," Lei Heng shouted angrily. "But I'm too much of a man for that. I'm going to knock you head over heels all by myself!"

Liu Tang thumped his chest furiously. "Let's see you do it!" He came at him.

The constable also advanced, brandishing his arms and stamping his feet. Both men were spoiling to resume the fight. Wu Yung thrust himself between them, but his admonitions were in vain. Liu Tang waved his sword, just waiting for a chance to attack. Lei Heng, cursing the young fellow for ten thousand kinds of a thief, also held his sword at the ready. It was then that the soldiers exclaimed:

"Here comes the ward chief."

Liu Tang turned and looked. He saw Chao Kai, his unfastened tunic draped over his shoulders, running down the road. "Behave yourself, you young whelp!" shouted Chao Kai.

Wu Yung smiled. "Thank Heaven the ward chief has come. He's the only one who can stop them."

Chao Kai rushed up, panting. "Why are you two fighting?"

"Your nephew chased after me, sword in hand, and demanded my silver," replied Lei Heng. "I said: 'I won't give it to you. I'll return it only to the ward chief himself. This has nothing to do with you.' He fought me fifty rounds, then this teacher came and stopped us."

"That young animal!" said Chao Kai. "I didn't know anything about it. For my sake, constable, please continue on your way. I'll call on you another day and make my apologies."

"I knew the young rascal was talking rot," said Lei Heng. "I didn't take him seriously. I'm sorry you've had to come all this distance." He bade the ward chief farewell and departed. We'll say no more of him.

Then Wu Yung confided to Chao Kai: "It's lucky you arrived when you did, or something serious might have happened. That nephew of yours is remarkable! A splendid swordsman! I was watching from inside the fence. The famed duellist Lei Heng couldn't touch him. Lei Heng was on the defensive all the time. If they had gone another few rounds, he surely would

have lost his life. That's why I hurried out to stop them. Where is your nephew from? I've never seen him at your manor."

"I was just about to send a messenger to invite you over to my humble home for a talk, when I noticed that Liu Tang was gone and a sword was missing from the rack," said Chao Kai. "A little cowherd told me he had seen a big fellow, carrying a sword, running south. I hastily followed. Fortunately, you had already stopped the fight. Please come to my humble manor. There's a matter on which I need your advice."

Wu Yung first returned to his quarters and hung up the chains in his study. He said to his landlord: "When my students come, say that their teacher is busy today. Tell them they can take the day off." He closed his door and locked it, then proceeded with Chao Kai and Liu Tang to the ward chief's manor.

Chao Kai led them directly to an inner room in the rear building, where they took appropriate seats as host and guests.

"Ward chief, who is this person?" Wu Yung asked.

"A bold fellow in the fraternity of gallant men, Liu Tang, from a family in the East Luchow Region. He came especially to inform me of a rare chance for riches. Last night he fell asleep, drunk, in the Lingkuan Temple, and Lei Heng nabbed him and brought him here. I pretended he was my nephew, and was able to save him. He told me: 'Governor Liang of Taming, the Northern Capital, has bought jewels and art objects worth a hundred thousand strings of cash to send to his father-in-law Premier Tsai in the Eastern Capital as birthday gifts. They will soon be passing this way. Since they were purchased with unclean money, there will be nothing wrong in taking them.' His proposal happens to coincide with a dream I just had. Last night I dreamed that the seven stars of the Big Dipper settled on the ridge of my roof. Another small star just above the handle turned into a streak of light. I thought to myself: To have stars shining right on your own house — that must be an auspicious sign. I intended to invite you over this morning, teacher, and ask you what I should do."

Wu Yung smiled. "I thought there was something odd about the sudden appearance of brother Liu, and was able to guess seven or eight-tenths of what was up. His proposal is excellent, but there's only one thing — with too many people involved, we

can't succeed; with too few, we're bound to fail. Though you have many retainers here, not one of them is suitable. But can just the three of us accomplish our aim? Even though you, ward chief, and you, brother Liu, are remarkable people, the answer is no. What we need is seven or eight gallant men. More than that would be no use."

"Could that be the meaning of the number of stars in my dream?" asked Chao Kai.

"Brother's dream was no ordinary one," replied Wu Yung. "Can it be that north of here there are people who can help us?" Frowning he pondered for several moments. Then he understood. "There are, there are!" he exclaimed.

"If you know some courageous men you can trust, teacher," said Chao Kai, "invite them to join us and put this thing through."

XVI

Yang Chih Escorts a Convoy of Precious Goods; Wu Yung Captures the Birthday Gifts by Guile

But enough of idle talk. Let's get back to Governor Liang in Taming, the Northern Capital. After buying birthday gifts valued at a hundred thousand strings of cash, he chose a date to start them on their way. The following day, as he held court in the rear hall, his wife, Madame Tsai, asked him:

"When will the birthday gifts go off, Your Excellency?"

"Tomorrow or the day after. I've bought everything I want. There's only one thing that's troubling me."

"What is it?"

"Last year I bought a hundred thousand strings of cash worth of jewels and art objects and sent them to the Eastern Capital, but because I didn't pick the right men they were seized by bandits on the road. To this day the robbers haven't been caught. At present I don't know of anyone really competent in my retinue. That is what's troubling me."

Madame Tsai pointed to a man standing at the foot of the steps. "Haven't you often said that this fellow is quite remark-



able? Why not entrust him with the mission? He can see it through!"

The man she indicated was Yang Chih, the Blue-faced Beast. Liang hesitated, then summoned Yang Chih into the hall.

"I had forgotten you," Liang said. "If you can safely deliver the birthday gifts for me, I'll have you raised in rank."

Yang Chih clasped his hands together respectfully. "Since that is what Excellency wishes, I must of course comply. How shall the convoy be composed, and when shall it set forth?"

"I'm ordering the prefectural government to supply ten large waggons, and will send ten soldiers of the city guard to escort them. Each waggon will carry a

yellow banner reading: 'Convoy of Birthday Gifts to the Premier.' In addition, I will have one strong soldier follow each of the waggons. You can leave within the next three days."

"It's not that I'm unwilling, but I really can't do it. Please give the mission to some brave and skilful person."

"It's my desire to raise you in rank. Along with the birthday gift documents, I intend to include a letter to the premier, strongly recommending you for an official post. Why do you refuse to go?"

"Your servant has heard that the gifts were robbed last year, Your Excellency, and that to this day the bandits have not been caught. There are many brigands on the road these days. From here to the Eastern Capital there is no water route; you have to go entirely by land. Purple Gold Mountain, Two Dragons Mountain, Peach Blossom Mountain, Umbrella Mountain, Yellow Earth Ridge, White Sand Valley, Wild Clouds Ford, and Red Pine Forest — all must be crossed, and all are infested with ban-

aits. No merchant dares travel through them alone. If the bandits know we're carrying a precious cargo, of course they'll want to seize it. We'll just be throwing our lives away! That is why I can't go."

"In that case I'll simply provide you with a larger military escort."

"Even if you gave me ten thousand men, it wouldn't solve anything, Your Excellency. Those craven oafs would run as soon as they heard the bandits coming."

"Do you mean to say that the birthday gifts can't be delivered?"

"If you'll grant your servant one request, I will undertake the mission."

"Since I'm willing to entrust you with it, why not? State your wish."

"As I see it, Your Excellency, we shouldn't use any waggons. Pack the gifts into containers to be carried on shoulder poles. I will dress like a merchant and disguise ten strong soldiers of the guard as porters. I'll need only one more person, also dressed as a merchant, to go as my assistant. We'll travel quietly day and night until we reach the Eastern Capital and deliver the goods. That way we'll be able to do it."

"It shall be as you wish. I'll write a letter to the premier strongly recommending you for an official appointment."

"My profoundest thanks, Excellency, for your gracious kindness."

That same day Yang Chih made up the loads and picked his soldiers. The following day he was again summoned to the rear hall. Governor Liang came out and asked: "Yang Chih, when will you be ready to leave?"

"We would like to start tomorrow morning, Your Excellency. I'm just waiting for the official documents."

"My wife has some gifts for her family. I want you to take them along too. I'm afraid you won't know your way around the premier's residence, so I'm sending with you Chief Steward Hsieh, husband of my wife's former wet nurse, and two couriers."

"I won't be able to go then, Excellency."

"Why not? The gifts are all packed in containers."

"I was made responsible for ten loads of gifts, and the soldiers were put in my charge. If I told them to march early, they'd march early. If I said late, then late it would be. They'd spend

the night where I directed, and rest when I ordered it. Everything would be up to me. But now you also want to send the chief steward and two couriers. The steward is one of madame's men, the husband of a wet nurse in the premier's household. If he disagreed with me on the road how could I argue? Yet the blame would be mine if the mission failed."

"That's easy. I'll tell him and the couriers to do whatever you say."

"In that case, your servant is willing to accept the mission. May I be severely punished if I fail."

The governor was delighted. "I haven't decided to promote you in vain! You're a very sensible fellow!" Summoning Chief Steward Hsieh and the two couriers to the hall he gave them official orders: "Arms Instructor Yang Chih has accepted a mission to deliver birthday gifts — eleven loads of jewels and art objects — to the residence of the premier in the Eastern Capital. He is fully responsible. You three are to accompany him. During the journey he alone will decide whether to start early or late, where to spend the night, and when to rest. None of you is to cross him. You already know what madame wants done. Be cautious and prudent, leave soon and return quickly, don't let anything go wrong!"

The old chief steward promised to obey the governor's injunctions.

Before dawn the next morning the loads were lined up outside the main hall. The chief steward and the couriers brought another batch of valuables — making a total of eleven loads. Eleven strong soldiers of the guard were selected and disguised as porters. Yang Chih was wearing a broad-brimmed hat and a black silk tunic. His feet were shod in hemp sandals tied with laces of rope. In his waist was a dagger, and he carried a sword in his hand.

The old steward was also dressed as a merchant. The two couriers were disguised as lackeys. Each carried a sword and a rattan switch. Governor Liang handed over the official documents. After all had eaten their fill, they formally took their leave in front of the hall. Liang watched the soldiers raise the carrying poles to their shoulders and set forth. Together with Yang Chih, the old steward and the two couriers, a total of

fifteen men left the governor's compound. Marching out of the Northern Capital's city gate, they proceeded down the highway in the direction of the Eastern Capital.

It was then the middle of the fifth lunar month.* Although the skies were clear, walking was difficult in the broiling sun. Determined to deliver the gifts in time for the premier's birthday on the fifteenth of the sixth lunar month, Yang Chih pushed the march along briskly. During the first week after the convoy left the Northern Capital, they set out every day before dawn to take advantage of the morning cool, and rested in the heat of noon. By the sixth or seventh day, dwellings were few and far between, travellers had thinned out, and the road began climbing into the mountains. Yang Chih now started the marches well after sunrise and didn't stop until late in the afternoon. The eleven guards were all carrying heavy loads and the weather was hot. Walking was a severe effort. Whenever they saw a grove they wanted to rest, but Yang Chih drove them on. If they halted, the least he did was curse them, and often he flogged them with his switch, forcing them to continue.

The two couriers, although they bore on their backs only some light luggage, gasped for breath and kept falling to the rear. Yang Chih berated them harshly: "How can you two be so ignorant? I'm responsible for this mission. Instead of helping me beat the porters, all you do is drag behind. This road is no place to dally!"

"It's not that we want to go slowly," said the couriers. "We just can't move any faster in this heat. A few days ago we always set out early when it was cool, but now we march only during the hottest hours of the day. Can't you tell the difference between fair conditions and foul?"

"Idiots! A few days ago we were in a good part of the country; now we're in a very ticklish place. We must march in broad daylight. Who dares to set out while it's still dark?"

The couriers said no more. But they thought to themselves: "That rogue swears at people whenever he likes!"

His sword in one hand, his switch in the other, Yang Chih urged on the convoy. The two couriers sat beneath a tree and

* June by the western calendar.

waited for the chief steward to catch up. "That murderous Yang Chih is only an arms instructor of His Excellency's guard," they complained to the old man. "What right has he to act so mighty?"

"The governor ordered us not to cross him. That's why I haven't said anything. These past few days I too have found him hard to bear. But we must be patient."

"His Excellency was only trying to make him feel good. You're the chief steward. Why don't you take over?"

"We must be patient with him," the old steward repeated.

That day they again marched until late afternoon. Then they stopped at an inn. Sweat was raining from the eleven porters. Groaning and sighing, they addressed the steward:

"Unfortunately we're soldiers of the guard, and have to go where we're ordered. For the past two days we've been carrying these heavy loads in the burning sun, instead of starting early when it's cool. For anything at all, we're given a taste of the switch. We're flesh and blood too. Why should we be treated so cruelly?"

"Don't complain," the steward urged them. "When we get to the Eastern Capital, I'll reward you personally."

"Of course we wouldn't have said anything, chief steward," they replied, "if we had someone like you looking after us."

Another night passed. The following morning everyone rose before daylight, hoping to march early while it was still cool. But Yang Chih jumped up and roared: "Where do you think you're going? Back to bed! I'll call you when it's time to leave!"

"We don't set out early," muttered the guards, "and in the heat of the day when we can't walk, he beats us!"

Swearing, Yang Chih yelled: "What do you clods understand!" He threatened them with his rattan switch. The soldiers had no choice but to swallow their complaints and return to bed.

After the sun had risen and everyone finished a leisurely breakfast, the convoy resumed its march. Yang Chih pushed on at a rapid pace, with no pauses for rest in the shade. The eleven guards grumbled constantly, and the two couriers made no end of peevish observations to the chief steward. Although the old

man did not reply, in his heart he was very irritated with the leader of the expedition.

To make a long story short, after marching for fifteen days, there wasn't a man in the convoy who didn't hate Yang Chih. On the fourth day of the sixth month they again rose late and slowly cooked their own breakfast. Then they set out. Even before noon the sun was a fiery red ball on high. There wasn't a cloud in sight. It was really hot. Now they were travelling along winding mountain trails. Towering peaks looked down on them from all sides. After marching about twenty *li* the porters were longing to relax in the shade. Yang Chih lashed them with his switch.

"Move on," he shouted. "I'll teach you to rest before it's time!"

The guards looked up. There wasn't even half a cloud in the sky. The heat was simply unbearable. Yang Chih hurried the convoy along a path fringing the mountain. It was about noon then, and the stones were so hot they burned the porters' feet. Walking was extremely painful.

"A scorching day like this," groaned the guards. "You're killing us!"

"Hurry up!" Yang Chih urged. "First cross that ridge ahead, then we'll see."

The column of fifteen men hastened on until they mounted the earthen ridge. Then the porters lowered their carrying poles and threw themselves down beneath the pine trees.

"A fine place you've picked for cooling off!" Yang Chih ranted. "Get up, quick. We've got to push on."

"Even if you cut us into eight pieces, we can't move another step!" retorted the soldiers.

Yang Chih seized his switch and lashed them over the head and shoulders. But by the time he beat one to his feet another lay down again. He could do nothing with them. It was at this time that the old steward and the two couriers climbed panting to the top of the ridge and sat down beneath a pine, gasping for breath. When the old man saw Yang Chih belabouring the porters, he said:

"It's really much too hot to march, instructor. Forgive them."

"You don't understand, chief steward. This is Yellow Earth Ridge, a favourite haunt of bandits. Even in peaceful times

they robbed here in broad daylight, to say nothing of what they do in times like these. Stopping here is very dangerous!"

"That's what you always say," countered the two couriers. "You just use those stories to scare people."

"Let the porters rest a bit," the steward urged. "We'll start again after noon, what do you say?"

"Impossible! Where's your judgment? For seven or eight *li* around the ridge there isn't a single house. Who dares rest in the shade in a place like this?" Yang Chih retorted.

"You go on with the porters first, then," said the steward. "I've got to sit a while."

Yang Chih picked up his rattan switch and roared at the soldiers: "Any man who doesn't march gets twenty blows of this!"

They all noisily protested. "Instructor," one of them cried, "while you walk empty-handed we're carrying well over a hundred cattles apiece. You act as if we weren't even human! If the governor himself were in charge of this convoy, he'd at least let us say a word or two. You have no feeling at all! The only thing you know is to storm and rage!"

"What a sickening beast! A beating is all his kind understands!" Yang Chih rained blows on the man with his rattan switch.

"Stop, instructor!" shouted the steward. "Listen to me. In my days in the premier's residence I met thousands of officers, and every one of them treated me with deference. I don't mean to be rude, but it seems to me that an officer under sentence of death whom His Excellency has pitied and made an arms instructor of the guard—a post no bigger than a mustard seed—shouldn't be so pompous! Even if I were only a village elder, to say nothing of the governor's chief steward, you ought to heed my advice! Always beating the porters—what sort of conduct is that?"

"You're a city dweller, steward, born and raised in official residences. What do you know of the hardships of the road?"

"I've been as far as Szechuan, Kwangtung and Kwangsi, but I've never seen anyone who behaved like you!"

"You can't compare today with times of peace."

"Cut your tongue out! What's unpeaceful about today?"

Yang Chih was going to reply when he saw a shadowy figure poke his head out of a grove opposite and peer at them. "What did I tell you?" he shouted. "Isn't that a bad fellow over there?"

Flinging aside his switch, he seized his sword and charged into the grove, shouting: "Insolent villain! How dare you spy on our convoy?"

In the grove he found a line of seven wheel-barrow and six men, buff naked, resting in the shade. One of them, a fellow with a scarlet birthmark on the side of his temple, grabbed a sword when he saw Yang Chih advancing. The seven men cried in alarm: "*Aiya!*" and leaped to their feet.

"Who are you?" Yang Chih yelled.

"Who are you?" the seven countered.

"Aren't you robbers?"

"That's what we should be asking you! We're only poor merchants. We haven't any money to give you!"

"So you're poor merchants. And I suppose I'm rich!"

"Who are you, really?"

"Tell me first where you're from."

"We seven are from Haochow. We're bringing dates to sell in the Eastern Capital. At first we hesitated to pass this way because many people say that bandits often rob merchants on Yellow Earth Ridge. But then we said to ourselves: 'All we've got are some dates and nothing of any value.' So we decided to cross the ridge. Since the weather is so hot, we thought we'd rest in this grove till the cool of evening. When we heard you fellows coming up the rise we were afraid you might be bandits, so we sent this brother out for a look."

"So that's how it is—only ordinary merchants. I thought he was a robber when I saw him watching us, so I hurried in here to investigate."

"Please have some dates, sir," said the seven.

"No, thanks," replied Yang Chih. Sword in hand, he returned to the convoy.

"Since there are bandits around, we'd better leave!" said the chief steward, who was seated beneath a tree.

"I thought they were bandits, but they're only date merchants," Yang Chih explained.

"If it were like you said," the old steward remarked sarcastically, pointing his chin at the porters, "by now these fellows would all be dead!"

"No need to quarrel," said Yang Chih. "I only want everything to go well. You men can rest. We'll march on after it cools down a bit."

The guards smiled. Yang Chih stabbed the point of his sword into the ground, then he too sat down beneath a tree to rest and cool off.

In less time than it takes to eat half a bowl of rice, another man appeared in the distance. Carrying two buckets on the ends of a shoulder pole, he sang as he mounted the ridge:

*Beneath a red sun that burns like fire,
Half scorched in the fields is the grain.
Poor peasant hearts with worry are scalded,
While the rich themselves idly fan!*

Still singing, he walked to the edge of the pine grove, rested his buckets and sat down in the shade of a tree.

"What have you got in those buckets?" the soldiers asked him. "White wine."

"Where are you going with it?"

"To the village, to sell."

"How much a bucket?"

"Five strings of cash — not a copper less."

The soldiers talked it over. "We're hot and thirsty. Why not buy some? It will ease the heat in our bodies." They all began chipping in.

"What are you fellows up to?" Yang Chih shouted, when he noticed what they were doing.

"We're going to buy a little wine."

Grasping the blade of his sword, Yang Chih flailed them with its hilt and swore. "What gall! How dare you buy wine without asking me?"

"Always raising a stinking fuss over nothing! It's our money! What is it to you if we buy wine? He beats us for that, too!"

"What do you stupid bastards know anyhow? You see wine and all you can think of is guzzling! But not a thought do you give to all the tricks that are pulled on the road! Do you know how many good men have been toppled by drugs?"

The wine vendor looked at Yang Chih and laughed coldly. "You don't know much yourself, master merchant! I wasn't

going to sell you any in the first place. What a dirty thing to say about a man's wine!"

As they were quarrelling, the date merchants emerged from the grove, swords in hand. "What's the trouble?" they asked.

"I was carrying this wine across the ridge to sell in the village and stopped to cool off when these fellows asked if they could buy some," the vendor said. "I didn't let them have any. Then this merchant claimed my wine was drugged. Is he trying to be funny, or what?"

"*Pei!*" snorted the seven. "We thought robbers had come, at least! So that's what all the row was about. Suppose he did say it — so what? We were just thinking of having some wine. If they're suspicious, sell a bucket to us. We'll drink it."

"No, no! Nothing doing!" said the vendor.

"We didn't say anything against you, you stupid clod," cried the seven. "We'll give you the same price you'd get in the village. If you sell to us, what's the difference? You'll be doing a good deed, like handing out tea on a hot day, and quenching our thirst at the same time."

"I don't mind selling you a bucket, but they said my wine is bad. Besides, I don't have any dipper."

"You take things too seriously! What do you care what they said? We have our own dippers."

Two of the date merchants brought out two coconut ladles from one of the wheel-barrows, while a third scooped up a big handful of dates. Then the seven gathered around the bucket and removed its cover. Ladling out the wine in turn, they drank, while munching the dates. Before long the bucket was empty.

"We haven't asked you the price yet," said the seven.

"I never bargain," the vendor asserted. "Exactly five strings of cash per bucket — ten strings for the load."

"Five strings you say, then five strings it shall be. But give us one free scoop out of the other bucket."

"Can't be done. My prices are fixed!"

While one of the date merchants paid him the money, another opened the cover of the second bucket, ladled up some wine and started to drink it. The vendor hurried towards him, but the man walked quickly into the pine grove with the half consumed dipper of wine. As the vendor hastened after him, another

merchant emerged from the grove with another ladle. He dipped this into the bucket and raised to his lips. The vendor rushed over, seized the ladle, and dumped its contents back into the bucket. Replacing the cover, he flung the ladle to the ground.

"You look like a proper man — why don't you act like one?" he fumed. "Is that any way to behave?"

When the soldiers saw this, their throats felt even drier. All were longing for a drink. "Put in a word for us, old grandpa," one of them begged the chief steward. "Those date merchants drank a bucket of his wine. Why shouldn't we buy the other and wet our throats? We're hot and thirsty, and we haven't any other way. There's no place to get water on this ridge. Do us a favour, old grandpa!"

The old steward heard them out. He felt like having a drink himself. So he conferred with Yang Chih.

"Those date merchants have already finished a bucket of that vendor's wine. Only one bucket is left. Why not let them buy some wine and ward off heat stroke? There really isn't any place on this ridge to get water."

Yang Chih thought to himself: "I watched those birds finish off his first bucket, and drink half a ladleful from the second. The wine must be all right. I've been beating our porters for hours. Maybe I ought to let them buy a few drinks."

Aloud, he said: "Since the chief steward suggests it, you rogues can have some wine. Then we'll march on."

The soldiers chipped in and raised the price of a bucket. But the vendor refused them. "I'm not selling, I'm not selling!" he said angrily. "This wine is drugged!"

"Don't be like that, brother," the soldiers said with placating smiles. "Why rub it in?"

"I'm not selling," said the vendor, "so don't hang around!"

The date merchants intervened. "Stupid oaf!" they berated him. "What if that fellow said the wrong thing? You're much too serious. You've even tried to take it out on us. Anyhow, it has nothing to do with these porters. Sell them some wine and be done with it."

"And give him a chance to cast suspicion on me for no reason at all?" the vendor demanded.

The date merchants pushed him aside and handed the bucket to the soldiers, who removed the cover. Having no ladles, they apologetically asked the merchants if they could borrow theirs.

"Have some dates, also, to go with your wine," said the merchants.

"You're very kind!"

"No need to be polite. We're all travellers together. What do a hundred or so dates matter?"

The soldiers thanked them. The first two ladles of wine they presented to Yang Chih and the chief steward. Yang Chih refused, but the old man drank his. The next two ladlefuls were consumed by the two couriers. Then the soldiers swarmed around the bucket and imbibed heartily.

Yang Chih wavered. The soldiers showed no ill effects. Besides, the weather was hot and his throat was parched. Scooping up half a ladle of wine, he drank it while munching on a few dates.

"That date merchant drank a ladleful out of this bucket, so you had less wine," the vendor said to the soldiers. "You can pay me half a string of cash less."

The soldiers gave him his money. The vendor took it, then, carrying his shoulder pole and empty buckets, he swung off down the ridge, again singing a folk song.

Standing on the edge of the pine grove, the seven date merchants pointed at the fifteen men of the convoy and said: "Down you go! Down you go!" The fifteen, weak in the knees and heavy in the head, stared at each other as, one by one, they sank to the ground. Then the seven merchants pushed the seven wheelbarrows out of the grove and dumped the dates. Placing the eleven loads of jewels and art objects into the barrows, they covered them over. "Sorry to trouble you!" they called, and trundled off down the ridge.

Yang Chih, too weak to move, could only groan inwardly. The fifteen couldn't get up. They had only been able to goggle helplessly while the seven had loaded the barrows with the precious cargo. They were paralysed, bereft of speech.

Now I ask you — who were those seven men? None other than Chao Kai, Wu Yung, Kungsun Sheng, Liu Tang and the three Yuan brothers. And the wine vendor was Pai Sheng, nick-

named "Rat Who Steals in Broad Daylight." And how was the wine drugged? When the buckets were carried up the ridge, they contained pure wine. After the seven finished the first bucket, Liu Tang removed the cover from the second and deliberately drank half a ladleful so as to dull the others' suspicions. Next, inside the grove, Wu Yung poured the drug into the other ladle. Then he came out and spilled it into the wine while taking a "free scoop." As he pretended to drink, Pai Sheng grabbed the ladle and dumped the wine back in the bucket.

That was the ruse. Planned entirely by Wu Yung, it can be called "Capturing the Birthday Gifts by Guile."

Yang Chih had not drunk much, and he recovered quickly. Crawling to his feet, he could hardly stand. He looked at the other fourteen. Saliva was running from the corners of their mouths. None of them could move.

"You've made me lose the birthday gifts," he muttered in angry despair. "How can I even face Governor Liang again? These convoy documents are worthless now!" He tore them up. "I've become a man without a home or country. Where can I go? Better that I should die right here on this ridge!" Clutching his tunic, he staggered to the edge of the ridge and prepared to jump.

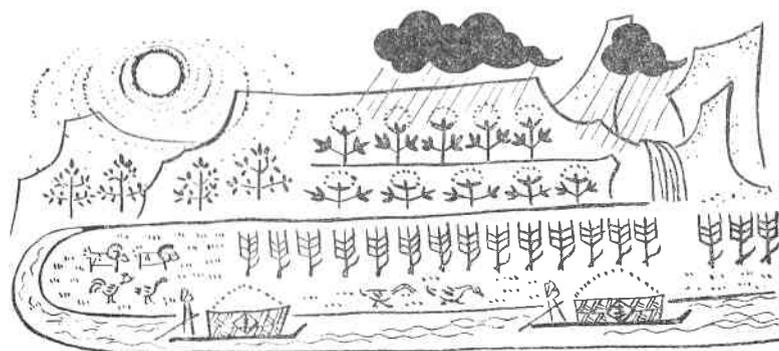
Truly: *Rains in the third month wash the fallen blossoms away, the last of willow tendrils the autumn frosts destroy.* Yang Chih sought death on Yellow Earth Ridge. What became of his life? Listen to our next instalment if you would know.

*Translated by Sidney Shapiro
Illustrations by Liu Chi-yu*

Dusk Is Falling by Fang Chi-chung ▶

Fang Chi-chung was born in Mien-hsien County, Shensi Province in 1923. He worked as managing editor of the *Northwest Pictorial* after the liberation in 1949. At present he is a member of the research department of the Sian branch of the Union of Chinese Artists.





SU CHIN-SAN

Poems

TWENTY-FOUR DRAINAGE DITCHES

Wherever she walked outside
her home, no matter which way
she went, at her back ever
followed twenty-four ditches
all dug under her leadership
by commune members; each ditch
as if flowing from her heart.

When Kuo Chiao organized
the higher form co-operative,

Su Chin-san, born in Suhsien, Honan in 1906, started writing poetry in 1932. Anthologies of his poems include *Outside the Window*, *Underground*, *Joining the Army* and *The Cuckoos*. The three poems in this issue are some of his recent work.

she shouldered the burden
of four thousand *mon* of swamp
where frogs croaked in summer
and autumn, where in spring
when snows melted, folk could
but catch eels and pick wild
water cress to stave off hunger.

Now the twenty-four ditches
make possible many kinds of food.
Over the countryside, bits of ground used
for threshing floors look like
little lakes in an expanse of grain
from which wheat flows into
commune granaries, then on
to cities of our motherland.

Twenty-four ditches that
tie the commune together
uniting the hearts of all
its membership, who now are
no longer scared of even
one hundred days of rain
or drought; says Kuo Chiao
"Who said man cannot change
his world?"

LISTENING TO SU TIEN-HSUAN SPEAK

Su Tien-hsuan stands up on
the platform, saying how poor
he is at making speeches
but throughout the commune
ears of wheat are full,
and everywhere is the sound
of carts coming to haul off
surplus grain, all talking
so loudly, though Su Tien-hsuan
himself is humble.

Su Tien-hsuan standing on
the platform, saying little
but with much in his heart
his words carry far, for each
irrigation lateral bears them,
each *mon* of land expresses his
wish; his experience like
a massive encyclopaedia
though his words are few.

Su Tien-hsuan stands on
the platform; is this one
of his many public speeches?
We have had several years
of drought, the worst for
a century, so that many fields
lay fallow, and there were those

who left front-line work,
forgetting tomorrow; but always
Su resolutely defended his right
to speak out; so many times
did he argue amongst us.

Su Tien-hsuan stands facing
the assembly, and we know now
he will speak more often
to us; though the stubble of his
beard shows white, yet he is
the first to speak from
the platform of a big mass meeting.
Next year his voice will be louder
for then there will be more grain,
more cotton in support of it;
each year new folk will come in
but he will continue to talk to us.

THE HEART OF WU CHIN

Each time Wu Chin returned home
from a meeting, no matter how late
when coming through the little lane
far from home, she would hear the
whirring of the spinning wheel,
then knowing her mother-in-law
waited for her, even if it was cold

or snowing; as soon as she heard
the sound of spinning, she felt that
someone was talking beside her;
mother-in-law was old, could
not walk well, so ever used
the sound of the wheel to welcome
her home, making Wu Chin feel her heart
like a shuttle was following
the thread back home.

“Mother, I tell you to go to sleep
but you never listen to me; the
whole family has enough clothing,
who really needs the little cloth you weave?”

Then the old lady answers her,
“How can I go to sleep when
you are not home? Anyway
I do want to know what everyone
said at the meeting!”

II

Whenever Wu Chin returned from
the fields, no matter whether
morning or evening, always there
was her mother-in-law outside
the door, leaning against the old
date tree, looking out for her; she

knowing that until she comes
they will not touch the food,
waiting even if it grows cold.

The women of the work team
laughed at her, saying, "See how
your mother-in-law loves you!
Go on home and feed on her breast
like a good girl! If she misses
you for a minute, she asks
all around for you, as if she
did not understand you were
our brigade leader!"

Then Wu Chin came back and said
to the old lady, "Mother, if I was
caten by a wolf, would you still
be waiting for me? Now, it is not
that I would not return home for
some eight or ten years! I'm late
simply because I stopped to listen
to the call of the pot-mender
and then looked longer at the cotton
our brigade has grown."

III

Should one ask why the old woman
loved Wu Chin so dearly, anyone can
give the answer; she treated Wu Chin

as her very own child, for her son
went to the Korean war and was
killed, so that Wu Chin swore
she would never leave his parents.

When the news came, the mother-in-law
cried day and night, refusing to eat;
almost unconscious too, Wu Chin cried
through sleeping hours, but by day
comforted the old one, saying, "Mother,
always will I be by your side, I will
give you everything you could expect
from your son."

At that time, she was but twenty-eight
with two small children, and parents
already old; yet steadily she refused
the help the commune offered, making
her two hands earn happiness for
the whole family; she saying that
the name of her husband she
would ever cherish, but would
never depend on that to
support her family.

IV

If you asked the mother-in-law
of Wu Chin, why she loved her
daughter so deeply, the answer

would come, "You all love her too, so why ask me?" Yet whenever she heard one praise Wu Chin, she felt very close to such.

Should you really want to know why all liked Wu Chin, you could ask, who leads on the road to collective living? For it was she who by her own hard work moved all to come together for production; and if there was a lazy one, when he saw Wu Chin he would feel so ashamed he would try to hide!

If you would still like to know why all love Wu Chin, it would be just as if you asked who would not love today's good life, with each *mou* producing one hundred catties of cotton, and such abundance of grain; to love Wu Chin means to love the Party and the commune, for the pulse of all the members runs through her heart.

*Translated by Rewi Alley
Drawing by Li Yu-hung*



Essays

CHIN MU

MASTER CRAFTSMEN AND BAMBOO

More bamboo, in a larger variety, is produced in China than in any other country on earth. And the skill of Chinese craftsmen in bamboo is surely unsurpassed. A vast literature exists on this subject in our country, including ancient works like treatises on the bamboo.

Regions like Kwangtung, which are noted for their bamboo, live up to the description by the eleventh-century poet Su Shih, who said, "We eat bamboo shoots, roof our houses with bamboo, carry things with bamboo baskets, use bamboo as fuel, wear bamboo clogs, make cloth out of bamboo bark and books out of bamboo paper. Not for a single day can we dispense with Master Bamboo!" In bamboo growing districts, bamboo is indispensable for food, clothing and communications. Bamboo shoots are eaten, houses are built of bamboo, wheel-barrows as well as a host of other daily necessities are made from it—they even make cool summer vests out of fine bamboo slivers!

But in the provinces of Szechuan, Fukien, Hunan, Chekiang and Kwangtung, where bamboo grows in greatest abundance and there is the richest tradition of bamboo folk art, we find markedly different styles of work.

Chin Mu is a well-known literary critic and essayist whose recent works include *Flower City* and *Gems from the Sea of Art*, collections of essays.

As regards the material, most places simply use the bamboo stems; but in parts of Szechuan they fashion fine boxes out of the roots as well. Most craftsmen only use round even stems, but in Hunan they often choose knotted, twisted bamboo to make pen-stands with an old-world charm.

As for the range of products, apart from mats, baskets, boxes, pen-stands and the like, craftsmen in the afore-mentioned provinces use bamboo to make octagonal boxes for sweetmeats, flower vases, calendars and pipes. Some even match it with metal, inserting a metal lining in a bamboo framework, for all the world like cloisonne work.

When it comes to plaiting baskets out of bamboo, in most districts neatness is the aim, and fine strips are closely plaited together; but the basket-makers of Chekiang and Fukien, in addition to a superfine weave, sometimes plait thicker strips of irregular sizes into unusual patterns, so that the overall effect is strikingly lively, yet neat and trim at the same time. This is achieved by adding daring touches to strict discipline.

I can never resist bamboo objects of this type. And I regard these folk artists as a fine example of brilliant originality based on mastery of a craft.

On the basis of this thorough mastery, they make bold improvisations and break with old conventions. They use material most people would reject, undertake tasks from which others would shrink, and bring off what others regard as "impossible" designs. They have such a magic touch that whatever they make is a genuine work of art.

It is clear that this outstanding craftsmanship is achieved little by little by dint of long practice and proficiency based on quite average aptitude. Without such proficiency, there could be no brilliant craftsmanship. But once this mastery is gained, no tasks however difficult need be feared. The striking facility in execution which makes it seem as if these craftsmen are a law to themselves is in fact based on rigid adherence to certain rules, combined with daring modifications of specific features. One might compare it to a train which seems to race along swiftly and wildly while keeping to its proper tracks.

Craftsmen who have progressed from proficiency to mastery, far from avoiding what are generally thought of as difficult as-

signments, sometimes delight in proving their skill in these. The same is true, of course, in other professions. The clown in a circus who makes the audience gasp by pretending to slip from a tight rope high in the air, is a champion tight-rope walker. Similarly, it takes the most skilful artist to paint lettuces with their leaves riddled by insects which are yet works of beauty.

This, then, is what we learn from the folk artists working in bamboo: supreme mastery is acquired on the basis of proficiency and summing up the experience of earlier artists. This supreme skill may be displayed in exquisite delicacy, or in a rough, dynamic simplicity. A master craftsman never shrinks from challenging contradictions or difficulties, and while exercising infinite originality abides strictly by the basic rules.

MINIATURE GARDENS

The miniature gardens I have been seeing in Canton have brought home to me the affinity between this art and landscape gardening. But whereas your landscape gardener is concerned with laying out extensive pleasure grounds to the best advantage, your miniature gardener lavishes all his skill on a pot less than one foot square. Yet within this small compass he achieves a perfect landscape.

In the past I paid little attention to this old art of miniature gardening said to date from the Tang dynasty, imagining it to be the hobby of landowners or gentlemen of leisure. In the last few years, however, most parks have held annual shows of several hundred miniature gardens which seem to become more varied and lovely each year. That is how I began to take an interest in them. And, my interest aroused, I started looking into the matter. It appears that Canton has a Society for the Study of Miniature Gardens, to which belong men from a wide range of professions, including teachers, doctors, gardeners and photographers. A fair number of them have taken up this hobby as a means of artistic expression in another form. It is comparable, in a way, to land-

scape painting, but the finished product is a three-dimensional picture, a living landscape. And it is quite remarkable how these little gardens express the personality and distinctive artistic style of the maker; for different people, given the same material, will produce extraordinarily different results. True connoisseurs maintain that even experts make no more than two or three first-rate gardens in a lifetime. Evidently every branch of art has its mysteries, which may take years to master.

The fact is, a good miniature garden may really lend wings to your fancy. In that small earthenware pot with its few handfuls of soil may grow a gnarled old tree that appears to have weathered the storms of countless winters. Or the autumn wind seems to be playing through the spreading foliage of two or three noble trees as they wait for a flock of crows to fly home to nest. You are reminded of beautiful mountain scenery. And no wonder, for the makers have reproduced here in miniature the essence of all natural beauty they have seen. It takes a true artist to make a really outstanding miniature garden.

The trees and plants in a good miniature garden generally have a look of natural wildness about them, and yet they owe something to the pruning knife too. If you let plants grow altogether naturally, that will not be a genuine miniature garden. On the other hand, too many marks of the knife, or a trunk too grotesquely twisted, would strike an unhealthy note. The ideal—and this probably applies to most forms of art—is to achieve a happy medium between nature in the raw and human cultivation.

Miniature gardeners also pay serious attention to creating an effect of spaciousness. Whatever the composition chosen, they make a point of leaving enough open space to give the sense of vast, far-stretching vistas. This avoidance of overcrowding and emphasis on clean, simple lines is another of their virtues.

The ability of a dwarf tree in one of these gardens to impress you as a hoary giant towering to the skies demands a high degree of skill on the part of the gardener in selecting and projecting salient features. A fair proportion of miniature gardeners also aim at achieving a bizarre effect, but this must not offend good taste or depart too far from reality. For example, one gardener who had cultivated a dwarf plum cut off all its leaves so that you could appreciate the stark thrust of its branches. The result

was extraordinarily impressive, putting the beholder in mind of those old trees in the bleak countryside when the north wind howls in winter. Creating something marvellous without sacrificing truth is the guiding principle of many outstanding miniature gardens.

*Translated by Gladys Yang
Drawings by Huang Chung-chun*



Notes on Literature and Art

HUA CHUN-WU

Some Thoughts on Cartooning

POETRY AND CARTOONS

I am a lover of Chinese poetry; the beauty our poets create gives me immense enjoyment. I often marvel at the conciseness with which our poets describe feelings and portray character in a line or two or sometimes in just one or two words.

The close relation between poetry and painting in Chinese art has often been remarked. I used to interpret this in a narrow sense, thinking that it was a particular requirement of Chinese painting and that other forms of pictorial art had no connection with poetry. Actually the relation between poetry and painting is a matter of the artist's general cultural understanding and not a question of the particular requirements of one kind of painting. Take the cartoon for instance; there is much that it can learn from poetry. For example, many poems speak about the moon: the

Hua Chun-wu, well-known cartoonist, was born in Kiangsu Province in 1915. Before the War of Resistance Against Japan broke out in 1937, some of his cartoons, satirizing the reactionary rule of the time, began to appear. He went to Yanan during the second year of the war and studied painting in the Lu Hsun Academy of Literature and Art. For more than twenty years he continued his work on current-affairs cartoons and developed a characteristic style of his own. Among his better-known cartoons are *Kill When the Knife Has Been Sharpened* and *Paying a New Year Call on the Weasel*. This article is an excerpt taken from his book *How I Think and How I Draw Cartoons*.



rising moon or the waning moon, the full moon or the crescent moon, the moon in spring or in autumn; poets describe them under different conditions with different feelings. The Northern Sung dynasty (960-1127) poetess Chu Shu-chen uses the moon image thus: "The moon rises to the tip of the willow branch, I have a tryst just after dusk." The tenth-century emperor Li Yu wrote after the fall of his empire: "In the moonlight, it is unbearable to remember the old country;" the difference in imagery evoked is striking. An understanding of such differences can be a tremendous inspiration to a cartoonist.

When the U.S. and British imperialists started their aggressive activities in the Middle East in 1958, world public opinion turned unanimously against them; they were completely isolated, and I thought I could depict this isolation in a cartoon. When I was considering how to do this, my thoughts turned to the images of loneliness in poetry and the first thing that came to mind was moonlight. In one of his poems, the eleventh-century poet Ouyang



With Our Shadows, Now We Are Four

Hsiu wrote: "Who would accompany me far this night, but the lonely moon by the wayside inn." In his poem *Drinking Alone by Moonlight*, the eighth-century poet Li Po wrote: "But the moon knows nothing of drinking, and my shadow only apes my doing." From here my thoughts turned to the moonlight in the Arabian deserts and the solitude of the American President Eisenhower and the British Prime Minister Macmillan with only their shadows following them in their march over the desert. In my cartoon, the waning moon and the shadows bring out the imperialists' isolation and loneliness. Li Po's lines, "I raise my cup, invite the moon; with my shadow, now we are three," provided me with a title for the cartoon: *With Our Shadows, Now We Are Four*.

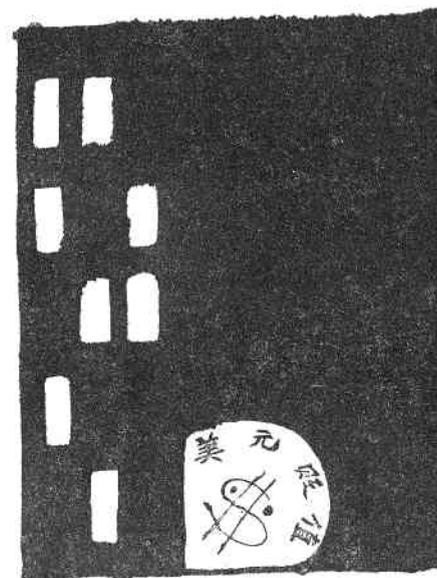
I read about the outflow of gold from the U.S.A. and the depreciation of the dollar in the papers and this set going an association of ideas. The U.S. dollar, the American moon: what power and influence it can exert in the so-called "free world." It has been able to enslave millions it has bought over many spine-

less rulers and so seized the sovereignty of whole countries. But now the golden age of the dollar is coming to an end; it is on the wane — this provided me with the theme of my cartoon. The opening lines of *Looking Towards Taibang*, a poem by the twelfth-century poet Tsao Hsun which reads: "The waning moon is like an old hag, hoary and colourless," gave me inspiration. Countless poets have rhapsodized about the romantic aura of the moon but Tsao Hsun alone compared the pale moon to an old hag. This method of depiction in poetry — the use of imagery — is just the method needed in cartoons. And since the image of a round U.S. dollar happens to fit the image of a round moon, I got the idea for my cartoon *The Moon Sinks into the Western Hills*.

GRASP THE SALIENT FEATURES

When I leaf through my old cartoons, I usually find quite a number which seem "dated" and I myself feel dissatisfied with them. What is the reason for these failures? There are, of course, various causes: the drawing might have been badly done and the whole thing merely a pictograph, lacking ideological content or sharp satire, or sometimes it may have been hurriedly done for a special occasion and so on. But whatever the cause, it really, I think, reduces to the failure to generalize properly; that is, failure to grasp the main contradiction of a situation and also to express in

The Moon Sinks into the Western Hills



the cartoon the opposing and contradictory relations and form of the contradiction concretely and in concentrated form. The result of such failure is a flat, unexciting cartoon which is of little interest once the event that occasioned it has passed. Even when a contradiction is clearly depicted, the cartoon will still lack vividness and originality if the specific features of the contradiction are not brought out. For instance, an irreconcilable contradiction exists between imperialism and the people, but if in every cartoon we simply show the imperialists running away in despair under the threat of the iron fists of the people instead of depicting the special features of each round of the struggle, then, though they do show correctly the two sides of the contradiction, such cartoons will still fail to move people or attract attention.

There are contradictions within the imperialist camp; the imperialists are cunning and tricky with one another, plotting and scheming to outwit each other and advance their own interests at the expense of the others, but in each particular struggle, both sides of the contradiction have their special characteristics. If each contradiction is expressed in a cartoon not merely in a sweeping generalization but in concrete, specific terms then there will be something original in each cartoon and it will not have that dated look.

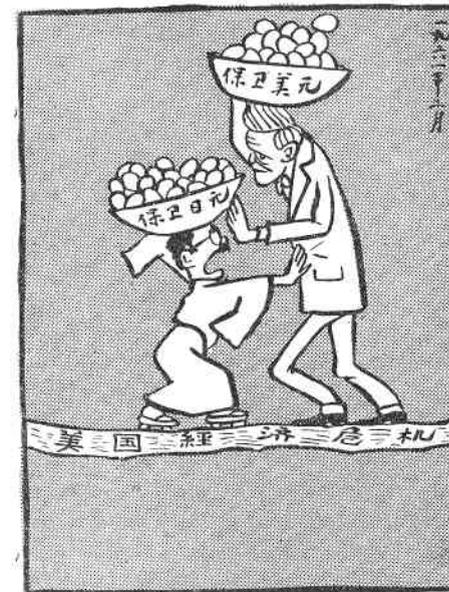
When an economic crisis hits the U.S., the American imperialists always try to shift the burden onto someone else. All the capitalist countries fear the appearance of an economic crisis like the plague and are always alert to the danger, ready to push the trouble onto others to protect themselves. If the start of an economic crisis is depicted in a generalized way such as a dark-robed skeleton with a dying capitalist in its grip, this may be interesting as a cartoon the first time it appears but it will fall quite flat the second time it is drawn that way.

In one cartoon I made depicting such a situation I showed a figure of "Uncle Sam" sneezing violently as he lies on the bed of the capitalist market while other capitalist states in the same bed, fearful of catching the crisis 'flu, shrink away from him.

Another crisis is now brewing in the U.S. and I read recently in the papers that the U.S. is casting around for means of shunting off the burden of the crisis onto others' shoulders. A most in-

teresting item in this connection was the conversation between Asakai the Japanese ambassador to Washington and Rusk the U.S. secretary of state. Asakai stressed that in the present situation it was more important to protect the Japanese yen than the U.S. dollar. An interesting picture! No sweet exchange between allies, this! I seemed to see in my mind's eye two men quarrelling vehemently in cracked, hoarse voices.

But when drawing, one must consider whether the advantages of visual images have been made full use of. Satirical literature can use trenchant language but a cartoon must make use of graphic images to depict the concrete struggle, and here is where the cartoonist has to use his imagination. But imagination must also conform with the actual features of the struggle described. This struggle between antagonistic capitalists is a life-and-death affair in which each one puts himself ahead of the other. The sharp development of this contradiction demands that the cartoon be so drawn that it is obvious there is no room for compromise, one or the other must fall. So, to bring out the acuteness of the struggle, the characters must be shown in a situation of deadlock: they have not yet fallen but the outcome is inevitable. By placing the two allies in confrontation on a single-plank bridge, I was able to show their relationship and the inevitable outcome. That was how I made my cartoon *Selling Eggs on a Single-plank Bridge*.



Selling Eggs on a Single-plank Bridge

“THE EYE-TEST” AND
“LISTENING TO A COMIC DIALOGUE”

These are the titles of two of my cartoons.

In our life today it sometimes happens that a thing is badly done although the persons who did it actually did it with good intent; the consequences are bad because the wrong method was used in a subjective way. A cartoon in that case can help by showing what it is that is wrong and the consequences this leads to. A timely analysis or exposure can set people thinking and considering how to right matters. One day I read a news item about a pencil factory planning to bring out a new brand of pencil which would carry on its sides reproductions of the picture-stories so popular among our children. That conjured up a vision of the crowds of children who cluster around any children's bookstall reading picture-story books. I could just imagine them squinting and straining their eyes to read the minute reproductions on those pencils, and the prospect horrified me. I am quite sure the workers and staff of that pencil factory had no intention of turning our

children into myopes. From a technical point of view, it was really rather clever to think of a way of reproducing a whole picture-story on a single pencil, this might even be called an invention; clearly, there were only the best of intentions behind all this, but all those good intentions failed to enable them to see the consequences of what they were inventing. So it occurred to me if I emphasized those consequences of short-sightedness for the children then the contradiction between the comrades' good intentions and the

The Eye-test



ridiculous pencil would be sharply brought out. In this way, instead of depicting anyone in particular, the cartoon only presents the consequences, so contrary to what was intended, and the reader is left to judge for himself.

A comic dialogue must be humorous. That is a truism. So I did three cartoons satirizing the sort of comic dialogues which aren't. Two of them depict performers in the midst of their act but the third does not show the performer at all and I think this last one deals best with the subject.

If a comic dialogue is not funny, is it the fault of the performers only? It may well be also a question of the script; then it would be unfair to single out the performers for satire in a cartoon. The reason I think *Listening to a Comic Dialogue* is better done than the other two is because it very simply but graphically points out the actual contradiction involved. In this cartoon of a family and its kitten listening in to a comic dialogue on the radio, the father looks dead serious while the mother wears an expression of helpless exasperation as she sits unwillingly by her husband's side, and as for the child and the kitten, they are sound asleep. The contrast between the listeners and the "comic" entertainment places the comic dialogue in a most awkward situation.

I think, satire like the other arts must leave room for reflection and trust the judgment of the reader. A cartoon should not try to say the last word; it should let the reader think and draw his own conclusions. There is a classical Chinese opera called *The*

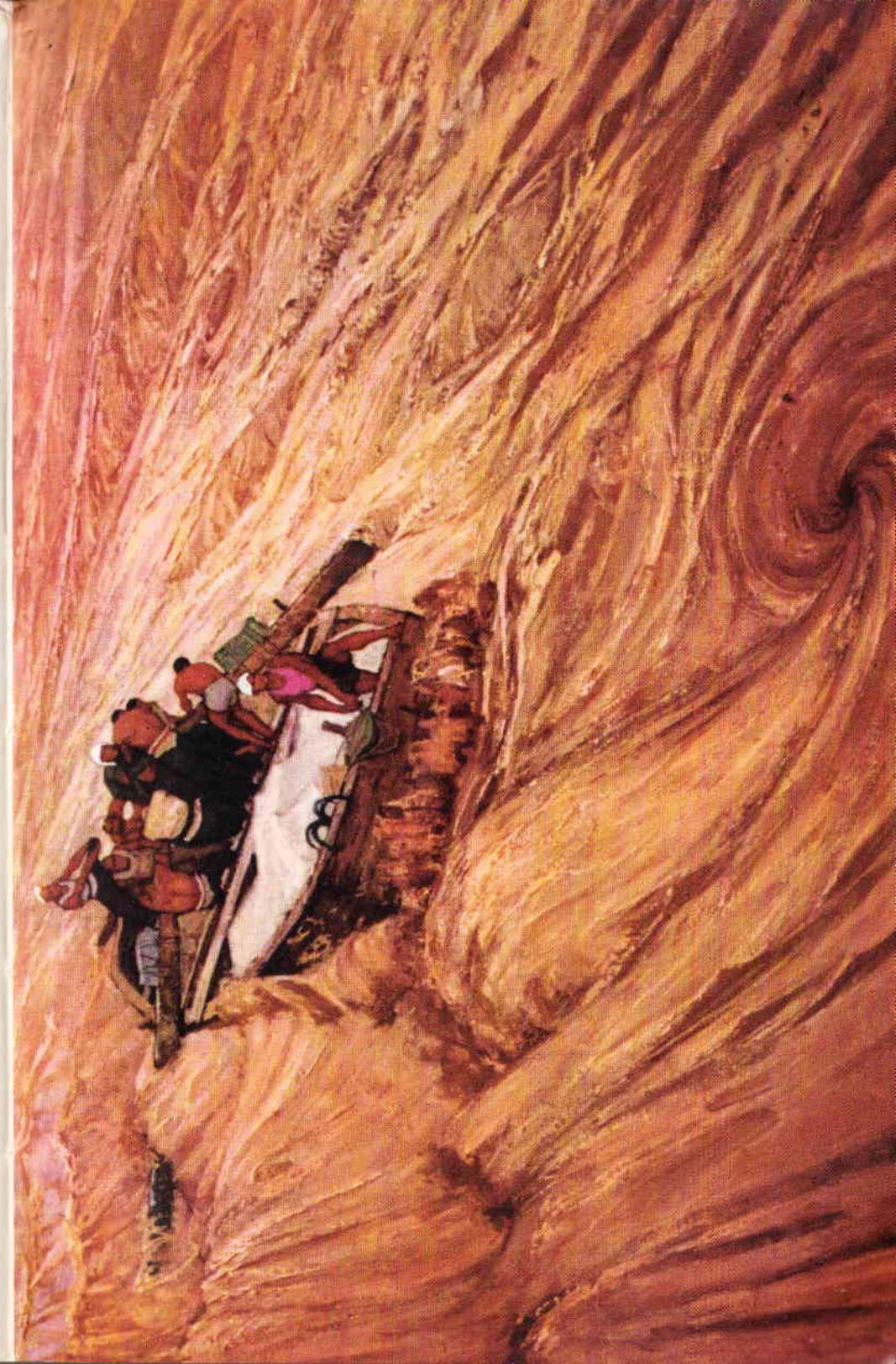


Listening to a Comic Dialogue

Ruse of the Empty City. It tells the story of how Chuko Liang, the great third-century statesman and strategist, used this ruse to avert danger when a huge enemy army marched on him in a city without troops. He had the city gates thrown wide open while he himself sat calmly on the ramparts playing the lute. The astonished enemy commanders suspected an ambush within the city and quickly withdrew. The actor playing Chuko Liang pretends complete composure in the face of the enemy army and does not express his anxiety in his speech. This restraint of the playwright shows his art. If Chuko Liang were to make everything very plain and give a detailed analysis of his inner feelings, the audience would have lost the sense of sharp contradiction in this scene and there would have been no drama at all to it.

Sailing down the Yellow River ▶
by Tu Chien

Tu Chien, born in 1933, was a graduate of the Central Academy of Fine Arts, Peking, then he taught for some time in the middle school attached to the Central Academy of Fine Arts. He has visited the Yellow River Valley twice. This painting is one of the results.



Japanese Literary Works in Chinese Translation

Active cultural exchange between Japan and China may be traced as far back as 1,200 years ago when the Chinese monk Chien Chen reached Japan by ship after four unsuccessful attempts in ten years. It was he who brought Chinese culture to Japan. Since then cultural exchange between Japan and China over the centuries has played an important role in the development of our respective cultures, enabling us to learn from each other. This has been particularly true in modern times. In the 30's of this century Lu Hsun, China's great writer and thinker, and many others translated into Chinese a considerable amount of progressive works by Japanese writers and critics. Since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, this work has been done on a much larger scale and improved in quality.

The translations cover a wide range representing different genres and schools in various periods of Japanese literature. They include, for instance, *Kojiki (Records of Ancient Matters)* of the Nara period 1,200 years ago. It is a compendium of myths, epics, folk songs, ballads and histories of royal families. Soon to be published are the complete translation of the anthology of ancient poetry *Manyosbu (Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves)*, which hitherto only appeared in fragments in Chinese, and an abridged

Li Mang, born in 1920, is a native of Fuhsun, Liaoning Province in north-eastern China. He is at present an editor of the monthly *World Literature*. He is the Chinese translator of Tokunaga Sunao's *Sunless Street*.

translation of *Genji-monogatari* (*Tales of Genji*), the earliest Japanese novel about ancient court life.

A *Selection from Kyogen* (comic interludes generally performed with the *no* plays) was published in 1955, giving the Chinese readers a glimpse of the light, humorous and pithy Japanese folk drama of the middle ages (1185-1568). Rich in satire and imbued with fighting spirit, these comic pieces have much in common with ancient Chinese comedies. *Ukiyo Bulo* (*Bath House*) by Shikitei Sanba is a collection of essays written in the early nineteenth century depicting the life of the lower strata of society at that time. Humorous and witty, but in no way vulgar, these essays have won warm acclaim from Chinese readers.

It is generally acknowledged that the publication in 1887 of the novel *Clouds* by Futabatei Shimai (1864-1905) marked the beginning of Japan's modern literature. This novel is included in the Chinese translation of the *Selected Works of Futabatei Shimai* published in 1962. The short stories *Childhood Playmates* and *New Year's Eve* by one of his contemporaries Higuchi Ichiyo (1872-1896), a woman writer, were published many years ago. In 1962 the *Selected Works of Higuchi Ichiyo* appeared in Chinese. The short and poverty-stricken life of this woman writer herself, her descriptions of the miserable existence led by the Japanese working people in a feudal society, and her effective exposure of the cruel ruling class, evoked a strong response in China.

Kokuchyo (*The Black Tide*), a novel representative of the writings of Tokutomi Roka (1868-1927), appeared in Chinese in 1959. This book shows deep sympathy for the labouring peasants and is a powerful attack against the corruption of the feudal ruling class of the Meiji period (1852-1912), exposing its corruption and decadence. *Breaking the Taboo*, a novel by Shimazaki Toson (1872-1943) that founded the naturalist literature in Japan, has seen two Chinese editions since 1949. Natsume Soseki (1867-1916), another accomplished writer of this period, is perhaps the one best known to Chinese readers. His famous *I Am a Cat*, *Young Master* and *A Trip* (originally known as *Kusamakura*) were included in a two-volume edition of his *Selected Works* published in Chinese in 1958. The poems of Ishikawa Takuboku (1886-1912), a revolutionary poet, and the short stories by Shiga Naoya of the White Birch School, were also published recently.

Contemporary writings have a dominant place in Chinese translations of Japanese literature. In 1959 *The Road to the Spring*, a post-war novel by the noted veteran writer Hirotsu Kazuro, was published. Set against the background of Tokyo and the famous summer resort Kamakura, it describes how Hatano Kyoto, a girl who was a child during the Second World War steps on to the path of revolution as she gradually matures. The author's moving tones and his vivid characterizations make the novel extremely convincing. The monthly *I Wen* (now called *World Literature*), a Chinese magazine which introduces foreign literature, published the translation of Hirotsu Kazuro's short story *The Ghost Train* in a special issue of Asian and African literature in September 1958. This story of a slavish deputy station master who makes up to the American occupation forces in Japan, is a bitter satirical exposition of the humiliations the Japanese are suffering under American occupation. A considerable part of Hirotsu Kazuro's works deals with women, who are usually kind-hearted and eager to find their ideals. But, they are always oppressed and deceived, with their hopes and yearnings shattered by the cruel, faithless upper-class men who dominate their lives. *The Trained Sentiments* and *A Small Town by the Sea*, both short stories, are examples of this. The former depicts an unfortunate geisha girl, the latter a hotel waitress. Vividly written, they are widely read in China.

Among contemporary writers, Inoue Yasushi is a novelist with a distinct style of his own. Coming to fame in 1950, he has written many works since then. His novel *Tenpyo-no-iraka* (*The Tiled-roof of the Tenpyo Period*) was translated and published in Chinese in the spring of this year. The novel relates the story of the Chinese monk Chien Chen who crossed over to Japan 1,200 years ago. In his foreword, the Chinese translator Lou Shih-yi has this to say: "The novel has truthfully recorded a great event in cultural exchange between Japan and China. It vividly presents many historical figures, taking the readers back into a world of ancient times. Not only does it increase our knowledge of history, it also betters our understanding of the long-standing cultural relations and traditional friendship between our two peoples, thus inspiring us to make further efforts, together with the Japanese people, to develop and carry on this relation and tradition."

These words appropriately reflect the sentiments of the Chinese readers and their appreciation of this work. Inoue Yasushi's short story *Forest of Walnut Trees* depicting a shrewd mercenary woman of the bourgeoisie whose spiritual life is very empty and lonely was also translated into Chinese and widely read.

The staging of Kinoshita Junji's *The Magic Crane* in China in 1960 created a great stir in Chinese literary and art circles. Recently the Chinese translation of his *Plays Adapted from Folk Tales*, including *The Magic Crane* and four other plays, was published. These plays, all favourites of the Japanese reading public, vividly portray the industrious and honest working people of Japan. In July this year a visit here by the playwright, at the head of a delegation of Japanese writers, enhanced the Chinese readers' interest in his plays.

The Japanese proletarian literary movement has a long and glorious history. Outstanding proletarian writers have turned out many fine works. Novels by Kobayashi Takiji (1903-1933), Miyamoto Yuriko (1899-1951), Tokunaga Sunao (1899-1958), Kuroshima Denji (1898-1943) and others were translated into Chinese as early as the 30's of this century. Not long after the liberation, the *Selected Works of Kobayashi Takiji* in three volumes, the *Selected Works of Miyamoto Yuriko* in four volumes, the *Selected Works of Tokunaga Sunao* in four volumes and the *Selected Stories of Kuroshima Denji* were published in Chinese. Chinese readers are particularly stirred by the scene of the hero's meeting with his mother in Kobayashi Takiji's famous novel *The Party Worker*. The author forcefully portrays the noble character of the Communist and the great love of a mother who understands that the revolution must come first. This section of the novel has been included in the textbooks of Chinese middle schools and has proved very educative to young Chinese students.

The writings of the well-known woman author Miyamoto Yuriko which depict the awakening and self-remoulding of Japanese intellectuals of the twentieth century, have a strong topical significance. Her well-known stories *Two Courtyards*, *Banshu Plain* and *Fuchiso* are very popular with Chinese readers, particularly women.

Tokunaga Sunao is a favourite writer with Chinese readers. His great novel *Quiet Hills* and many of his fine stories show the

growth of the Japanese working class and its Communist vanguard. One finds in them the awakening of the poverty-stricken peasants and workers, who strive consciously for a better future.

Kuroshima Denji, known in Japan as a writer of anti-war and peasant literature, has a marked individual style. His famous stories *The Swine*, *Two Cents* and *The Telegram*, which depict in pithy and humorous style the miserable life of the poverty-stricken peasants and their revolt, were introduced to the Chinese reading public as early as in 1956.

The Bride and a Horse by Eguchi Kiyoshu, a member of the older generation of proletarian writers who is still living and working today, will soon appear in Chinese. The Chinese translation of Ema Osamu's novel *Ice River* and short story *Bloody September* were published years ago. Takakura Teru, who lived for several years in China after the war, is well known to Chinese readers. His novel *Hakone Storms* was translated and published in China and the film adapted from it created a great stir among intellectuals when shown here in 1955. His short story *Song of the Pig* depicting an awakened peasant has also been published. *It Will Dawn Eventually*, the first part of Oda Seizaburo's trilogy *The Eastern Rainbow*, was translated and published in Chinese in 1958, winning immediate acclaim from the Chinese readers for its artistry.

In 1962 the Chinese translation of the veteran poet Tsuboi Shigeji's *Selected Poems* was published. The lofty ideas expressed in a fine artistic form made these revolutionary poems extremely popular with Chinese readers. Nakamoto Takako, who was cruelly persecuted by Japanese militarists, joined the people of Sunakawa Machi and Nijima in their struggles against U.S. military bases after the war. Her well-known prose sketches *The Runway*, *Fire-phoenix* and many others were written on the basis of her own experiences in struggles. *The Runway* and her story *A Tiny Lame Fly*, exposing the secret police system in Japan, have a wide circulation in China.

Tsudoi Sakae's writings are known for their compact construction and vivid characterization. Her beautiful language adds to the moving power of her stories. Her novel *Twenty-four Eyes* and her *Selected Works* including *Calendar* and *Tales of an Attic*, are popular with the Chinese readers. Another of her stories A

Sheet of Paper, collected in the *Selected Works of Contemporary Japanese Writers*, reveals the oppression the Japanese people are suffering. It describes how an intellectual is driven by necessity to serve as a cook in a lunatic asylum.

Matsuda Tokiko and her younger contemporary Yamashiro Tomoe are both progressive women writers. Matsuda Tokiko's novel *Those Who Work Underground* about the massacre of Chinese fighters resisting Japanese aggression at Hanaoka Coal Mine was published in Chinese in 1954. Her short story *To Yokota!* which pays tribute to the heroic struggle of a hundred thousand Japanese people against the Yokota base on October 21, 1962 was also published in Chinese. The Chinese translation of Yamashiro Tomoe's novel *The Song of the Cart* and her short story *Fuki-no-to* (*The Stalk of a Bog-rhubarb*) appeared in 1961.

Shimoda Masaji, together with other revolutionary writers such as Nishino Tatsukichi, both of whom are fighting for the national independence of Japan, have now become the pillars of Japanese revolutionary literature. Most of Shimoda Masaji's works deal with the struggle of the people of Okinawa against U.S. imperialist rule. His novel *Okinawa Island* appeared in Chinese early this year. In a review of this novel, the well-known critic Kurahara Korehito pointed out that this work revealed the great passion for struggle deep in the author's soul and that it gave a powerful panorama of what happened in Okinawa, presenting comprehensively and systematically the tragedy being perpetrated there by the American occupationists. Shimoda Masaji's stories dealing with the Japanese people's patriotic struggle against U.S. imperialism such as *Okinawa*, *Conscript Labour* and *An Oath* are also well known in China.

The *Selected Works of Contemporary Japanese Writers* in two volumes, soon to be published by the People's Literature Publishing House, is a collection of 34 stories by 31 writers. Written in a variety of styles they reflect the various phases of the life of the Japanese people and their struggles today. The selection includes the writings of Masamune Hakucho, Shiga Naoya, Sada Ineko, Tezuka Hidetaka, Abe Tomoji, Ibuse Masuji, Niwa Humio, Takeda Taijun, Nishino Tatsukichi, Handa Yoshiyuki, Kuroyanagi Humi, Tamiya Torahiko, Umezaki Haruo, Endo Shusaku, Kaiko Ken and Oe Kensaburo. One will find in this collection Ishikawa

Tatsuzo's *Miracle*, a trenchant and vivid satire on the hypocrisy of a clergyman; the talented young woman writer Ariyosi Sawako's *Mingyo Joruri*, a story depicting the poverty of Japanese puppet-show artists; Nishino Tatsukichi's *Tales of C Town* and *Campfire at Night*, stories depicting the patriotic struggle of the Japanese people against U.S. occupationists; and *Ghost Deputy Director*, a story about the life and struggle of workers by Kishi Akira, a progressive writer of working class origin who has come to the fore in the last two years.

More than 100 articles on Japanese progressive writers and writings, including forewords to Chinese translations, have appeared in Chinese journals and periodicals in the past few years. Quite a number of critical articles and reminiscences on Japanese literature including those by Miyamoto Kenji, Kurahara Korehito and other Japanese writers have also been published. These writings give comprehensive analyses of the special features of Japanese writers and their works in respect to their struggle and life, their thinking and art, thus helping the Chinese readers to know more about them and better appreciate their art. This helps stimulate more interest in Japanese literature.

Recent Publications

Our Land So Fair

Peking Publishing House

Our Land So Fair is a collection of twenty-one essays by different authors including poets, essayists, a literary critic, an artist, a historian and a general. They describe visits to mountains, rivers or lakes, well-known construction sites and cities, or the grasslands and the Gobi Desert. They offer readers stirring accounts of heroic construction work and enchanting descriptions of magnificent scenery, enabling them to share the experience of the writers.

In the long history of Chinese literature, each generation has had writers who paid their tribute to the splendid scenery and sights of our country. Many of these works are still popular today. But now that times have changed and with them our people's lives, some places famed in history have been transformed, while men are responding differently to nature. The beauties of mountains and rivers depicted in these essays are not simply serene portrayals of ancient sites or idyllic scenes, but breathe a passionate love for the new socialist China.

This is evident from the first essay in this collection, *A Visit to the Ching Kang Mountains* by the playwright Tu Hsuan, who writes stirringly of this famous district where the first revolutionary base was set up more than thirty years ago by Chairman Mao Tse-tung and where the Chinese Workers' and Peasants' Red Army repeatedly smashed up the encirclements and offensives of millions of Chiang Kai-shek's troops.

True, this mountain area underwent many trials in the bitter war years, but the traveller today sees instead of desolate ruins the revolutionary martyrs' memorial aspiring to the sky and new high buildings. Young people from all over China are working hard to build up a fine new life in this place where their predecessors shed their blood. The little town of Tzuping, once the Red Army's political and military headquarters and the centre of this region, has now become a sizable city. The historical relics here and the many revolutionary legends current among the local people add splendour to this famous mountain area and make people prize their present life even more.

A Visit to the Tarim Basin is an inspiring description of the Gobi Desert by General Kuo Peng of the People's Liberation Army, who knows this famous inland basin well and has a deep affection for it.

The Tarim Basin, the greatest of its kind in the world, was written off by western adventurers and scholars as "a place no living creature could traverse, a fearful sea of death," and it is true that no one had ever crossed the whole Gobi. But a miracle happened in 1949 when, to liberate the border regions in the west, fully equipped units of the Chinese People's Liberation Army crossed this inhospitable desert in seventeen arduous days. General Kuo writes, "Today I have truly seen here a 'sea,' not a 'sea of death' but a sea radiant with joy and life." He describes it as follows:

Gleaming canals, luxuriant forest belts and smooth, flat paths made by tractors run parallel straight to the distant horizon. Even the trees, row after row of them, whether jujube or poplar, run in long straight lines. It is as if a giant had taken the whole Tarim Basin as his canvas and saturated his huge brush with silver and emerald to make these countless straight lines from north to south, from east to west. For now like some vast coloured map, the whole desert is covered with large, regular, vivid squares, whose precision is very pleasing to the eye. Each measures about a thousand mou, and framed by green trees and silvery canals you see shimmering wheat, tender young cotton plants, blue spring water in readiness for the planting of paddy, or tractors like a formation of wild geese in flight, belching smoke and raising a tremendous din as people sow dry rice.

It took hard, back-breaking toil to transform the Gobi into fertile fields, and General Kuo intersperses his descriptions of exotic scenery with tales of men's heroic fight against nature in the Tarim Basin. In time of war, those men crossed the desert in pursuit of the enemy, but now they are hard at work to create a peaceful new world. Since the heroes of these tales are mostly former comrades-in-arms, the author writes with intimate knowledge of them and genuine feeling.

Some other moving essays in this collection deal with border towns and distant cities in regions once regarded as "the back of beyond" but now pulsing with new life and growth. *The City Among the Poplars*, by the poet Yuan Ying, is like a genre painting with its colourful account of Ining on China's northwestern border.

Under the poplars flows past a ceaseless, jubilant stream of people: Uighur girls in embroidered caps and flowered skirts, dashing Kazakh riders in high cavalry boots, Mongolian herdsmen with green, belted robes, Tatar boys in white shirts with coloured borders. . . . Their vivid costumes are bright as gold, red as pomegranate, blue as water in a mountain lake, green as grass in spring, purple as grapes. Dombas, tambours, accordions and other instruments blend with the full-throated singing of young people to make Stalin Avenue there incomparably gay.

Two Cities on the Tibetan Plateau by Fang Heh takes us to Kangting and Kantse cradled among snow-capped mountains several thousand metres above sea level. Monasteries and well-nigh mediaeval houses rub shoulders with new buildings, giving these cities shaded by green trees an air both ancient and youthful. The Tibetan people there, having successfully carried through democratic reform and abolished feudal serfdom for good and all, are building a new life. During their traditional spring festivals the liberated people put on their best clothes and camp in willow groves by the brooks to brew buttered tea and sing of their new happiness.

Other essays in *Our Land So Fair* are packed with interesting knowledge. In *A Visit to Ancient Sites in Inner Mongolia*, the historian Chien Po-tsan tells us the history of the Great Wall and describes the ruined ramparts, ancient relics recently excavated and the historical changes that have taken place on the Mongolian grassland. His style is concise but eminently readable.

The essays in this collection cover a wide range of places from Kunming in southwest China where spring reigns the whole year round, to Inner Mongolia's vast grassland, the coast of the Yellow Sea and the boundless Gobi. Magnificent scenery and the zestful life of men busy building up their land blend to form a colourful painting animated by the spirit of this age, and reflecting something of the heroism and industry of the Chinese people.

— Wu Shan-hsiang

Snowy Surf

Peking Publishing House

This book is a selection of essays written and published in 1961 under the title *Snowy Surf* after the well-known essayist Yang Shuo's piece of the same name, and includes twenty-one sketches by eighteen writers.

Some of them describe the life of the Chinese people today, some are reminiscences of the revolutionary struggles of the past, or are travel notes on the Chinese scenery, while others report what the authors saw and experienced during journeys abroad.

A Dedication to July, by the well-known writer Wei Wei, is the first in the collection. July 1, 1961 was the 40th anniversary of the Chinese Communist Party. The author writes: "How was the message of spring revealed to this ancient country of ours at a time when it was almost freezing to death? When did the sparks of hope start to flicker in the dim lamps of our humble homes in the slums? When did dreary sobs cease in rickety huts and red-tasselled iron spears burst forth? It was in July, that July forty years ago when our Party was born." It is in picturesque and pithy sentences such as these that the author pays tribute to the Chinese Communist Party, which pushed through the brambles and nettles clogging the long and rugged revolutionary road as it fought for the happiness of the people and the prosperity of the motherland. Wei Wei's essay reads like a lyrical song.

Fang Chi's *Waving Goodbye* depicts an important historical moment. After the surrender of Japan in 1945, Chiang Kai-shek was actively preparing for civil war to put down the people's revolutionary forces led by the Communist Party. But circumstances forced him to ask Chairman Mao Tse-tung to Chungking for a peace talk. This essay describes the scene of that early morning of August 28, 1945 when the people and the armed forces in Yen-an — the cradle of the revolution — saw Chairman Mao off at the airport. They were anxious about his safety. Chairman Mao Tse-tung, big in stature and strong, stands in the doorway of the plane, his firm gaze on the people seeing him off. In his big hand is a pith helmet of dark grey which "he raised bit by bit as if it were a thing of great weight. When he finally lifted it over his head, he waved it energetically, then stopped in mid-air." This was an unforgettable moment to the people of Yen-an who were reluctant to part with their beloved leader and comrade-in-arms.

Liu Pai-yu's two travelogues *Red Amber* and *Three Days on the Yangtse* were both written in the form of diary entries. The former tells of Liu's recent visit to Yen-an. More than twenty years ago when he was a young man in his early twenties, he trekked to the revolutionary base in search of truth. Now, twenty years later, seeing Yen-an again, he was stirred beyond words by the new sights: derricks, factory chimneys, school buildings, a new bumper harvest

just reaped, perspiring, dust-covered commune members. . . . Yenan is now a modern town busily engaged in socialist construction.

Three Days on the Yangtse is a record of a trip Liu Pai-yu made from Chungking to Wuhan down the dangerous rapids of the Yangtse gorges. The writer combines philosophical meditation with his description of the scenery, comparing the ship that braves the roaring waves and steams ahead through the dark night towards dawn to the life of the Chinese people.

Literary critic Feng Mu's travel note *By the Torrents of the River Lantsang* describes his visit to the sub-tropical area on the banks of the River Lantsang and cloud-wrapped mountains and lush green forests there. Poet Yuan Ying's *Long Flows the Gobi Streams* tells how the once dry desert is now teeming with life, with clear spring water supplied to each household situated in the midst of weeping willows. *The Olunchuns* by the Mongolian writer Malchinu portrays the brave hunters active in the Greater Hsingan Mountain Ranges of northeastern China. *After the Rain* by the novelist Tuanmu Hung-liang describes the new prosperous life on the Inner Mongolian grassland.

All these essays, informative in themselves, are at the same time imbued with poetry.

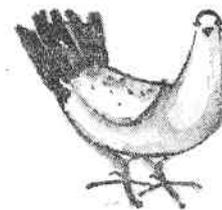
Snowy Surf by Yang Shuo begins with the sparkling ripples and waves at the seaside, but the focus of the author's pen is on an old fisherman who has weathered many a storm in the old society and who now works with diligence and enthusiasm for socialism. Another essay by the same writer included in this volume, *Camellias*, portrays a gardener who spends the whole year round cultivating flowers which bring beauty into people's lives. Chin Mu's *Flower Fair at the Lunar New Year* may be considered a sequel to Yang Shuo's piece. In Canton a flower fair at the lunar New Year is an ancient custom. Nearly all the flowers of the four seasons can be seen at the fair, which stretches a good ten *li*. Late on New Year's Eve, people flock there from all over the city. The laughter and lively chatter of the flower vendors and buyers fill the air. "I am deeply aware that joy of the masses of people is the only real joy on this earth," says the author.

The last two essays in the collection are the work of veteran writers Pa Chin and Ping Hsin, and describe their visits to Japan. They took part in the Tokyo Emergency Meeting of Afro-Asian Writers convened by the Permanent Bureau of the Afro-Asian Writers' Conference in the spring of 1961. Pa Chin's *Photographs from Kamakura* relates what he learned from the Japanese woman writer

Ariyosi Sawako about those suffering from the after-effects of the atom bomb dropped by the American imperialists on Hiroshima. Beginning with a photo he had taken with Ariyosi Sawako and others on a rainy day, the author takes the readers into the small lounge of the Wako Hotel to listen to Ariyosi Sawako's story. The piece is brimming with the deep friendship between the Japanese and Chinese peoples as well as their common hatred for the enemy and determination to stop the imperialists' crimes.

Ping Hsin in her *Ode to the Cherry Blossoms* sees in the clouds of Japan's national flower a vast rosy sea over which the canoe of friendship of the Chinese and the patriotic Japanese people now fighting against the American occupationists for national independence and freedom skims like an arrow towards the same bright future. This is an essay recording her visit to Japan in the spring of 1961. She concludes with these words: "Deep in the night my recollections filled me with warm feelings and gladly I took up my pen to write an ode to the cherry blossoms."

— Lo Hsin-chang



Chronicle

Meeting of Afro-Asian Writers

An Executive Committee Meeting of the Afro-Asian Writers' Conference was held from July 16 to 20, 1963 in Bali, Indonesia's famous Isle of Poetry. Its task was to prepare for the Third Afro-Asian Writers' Conference to be held in Indonesia in 1964. Present at the meeting were delegates from 17 member countries of the Executive Committee: South Africa, Japan, Guinea, Ghana, Kamerun, Kenya, Korea, Indonesia, Mongolia, Mozambique, South Rhodesia, United Arab Republic, China, the Sudan, Ceylon, the Soviet Union and Viet-nam. A delegation of North Kalimantan attended as the special guest of the Executive Committee.

The meeting discussed three items on its agenda:

1. The general report of the Secretary General;
2. The situation of the Afro-Asian people's literature and the role of writers in relation to the struggle of the Afro-Asian peoples:
 - a) The role of publishing houses in the Afro-Asian countries in relation to the struggle of the Afro-Asian peoples,
 - b) The role of poetry in the struggle of the Afro-Asian peoples;
3. The agenda and other matters concerning the Third Afro-Asian Writers' Conference in Indonesia, in 1964.

The well-known Indonesian poet Sitor Situmorang presided at the meeting. Mr. Senanayake, Secretary General of the Permanent Bureau of Afro-Asian Writers' Conference, delivered the general report entitled: "To Further Display the Bandung Spirit in Afro-Asian Writers' Movement." In his report, Mr. Senanayake paid warm tribute to the development of the Afro-Asian people's revolutionary movement and condemned the treacherous plots of imperialism and colonialism, old and new. He said, "The contradiction between the Afro-Asian people on the one hand and the imperialist bloc headed by the U.S. on the other is irreconcilable. . . . When we discuss the role of the Afro-Asian writers, we should be guided by the above-mentioned situation."

The delegates to the meeting discussed the situation in Asia and Africa today and the task of writers. They all agreed that writers

who are the mouthpiece of the people cannot but share the destiny, the loves and hates of their own peoples. For centuries the people of Asia and Africa have suffered under the enslavement of imperialism and colonialism. To develop the Afro-Asian peoples' literature, the writers of Asia and Africa must first of all concern themselves with the peoples' revolutionary struggle for national liberation and independence. In this connection the writers strongly condemned the aggression and oppression of imperialism and old and new colonialism against the Afro-Asian peoples and their suppression of Afro-Asian culture. They pointed out that neo-colonialism, as represented by U.S. imperialism, is the most dangerous enemy of the Afro-Asian peoples today and that only when imperialism and colonialism, old and new, are eradicated can there be genuine national independence, freedom of literary creation and the development of national cultures.

But there were one or two delegates who avoided discussion of the urgent tasks facing the Afro-Asian peoples at present and preached a general love of all mankind and humanism without distinguishing between oppressor and oppressed, between exploiter and exploited. The Soviet delegate, for instance, said: "Our moral motto is — A man is a man's friend, comrade and brother." The words of the Sudan poet Kheir can be said to represent the opinion of the majority of delegates present at the meeting when he pointed out, "Kennedy, the leader of bloodsuckers, Ngo Dinh Diem . . . and many like them are men. Can we be their friends, comrades and brothers?"

The meeting lasted four days. A general appeal, 23 separate resolutions on political questions, two resolutions on literary questions and a decision on the Third Conference were adopted unanimously. The last listed the three items of agenda for the Third Afro-Asian Writers' Conference to be held in Indonesia next year. They read as follows:

1. Summarize the role and contribution of the Afro-Asian writers since the Cairo Conference in the people's struggle against imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, for national independence, democracy and social progress and in defence of world peace, and establish a concrete basis for future development of our movement.
2. Further develop the national and democratic culture of Afro-Asian countries, opposing the infiltration of imperialist, colonialist and neo-colonialist reactionary pseudo culture.
3. Intensify cultural exchanges and mutual visits of Afro-Asian writers and promote mutual support and solidarity in developing national and democratic culture.

New Books for Children

Fifty new titles have been published in recent months by the Chinese Children's Publishing House in Peking and the Shanghai Children's Publishing House, two of China's largest publishers of books for children. They include poems: *To the Young* by the poet Tsang Ko-chia, and *Duckling Chases the Sparrow* by Chin Ching; novels: *The Young Hero Yu-lai*, by Kuan Hua, about a young guerrilla fighter's exploits during the War of Resistance Against Japan, and *The Song of Taiwan Youths*, by Liang Hsueh-cheng, a tale of the resistance movement among the young people of Taiwan and their struggle for the early liberation of Taiwan; *The Album*, a story by Yeh Chun-chien, about the comradeship of two lads, a Chinese and a Korean, and *The Thick, Thick Forest*, a collection of seven short stories about the life and struggles of young people by the young woman writer Liu Chen.

This latest list of new books by the two publishing houses also includes a number of folk tales. Popular among these is *The Stories of Avanti*, a lively collection of Uighur folk tales centred around the legendary Avanti whose clever and humorous satires against the ruling class, and mockery of evil customs are a mirror of the Uighur people's attitude to the old life. There is also a good selection of science novels and stories which enjoy enormous popularity among China's youngsters. Many well-known scientists now write specially for the children. The mathematician Hua Lo-keng has written a number of interesting stories involving maths and the chemist Wang Pao-jen has written *Our Age of Polymers* for the children. Both accurately introduce scientific knowledge to the young in a vivid and easily understandable way. The science novels, *The Breeding Ground for Whales*, *Lost Memories* and *Disappearance of the S. S. Heilung*, are imaginative stories with intriguing plots. Among the "straight" scientific books for the young are *The Young Insectologist*, *The Secret of Snake Island*, *Houses*, *Aeroplanes*, and other popular science manuals. The Shanghai Children's Publishing House has already brought out several volumes of the series: *Ten Thousand Why's* which ask and answer questions on natural science. It is now preparing a new volume answering questions on the social sciences.

An added attraction to these new editions are the illustrations by well-known Chinese artists. Many of these are fine works of art in themselves.

New National Art Gallery Exhibitions

The lovely new National Art Gallery built in Peking is now in constant use. Its last two exhibitions run simultaneously were of Kiangsu Wood-block Prints and the Tuo Yun Hsuan Studio's Reproductions of Calligraphy and Paintings. The former contained more than a hundred woodcut prints in black and white and colour done in the past two years by woodcut artists, art students and amateur artists in Kiangsu Province. These showed that the wood-engravers of Kiangsu have learned much from classical Chinese painting, folk wood-block prints and traditional stone rubbings and have learned to make versatile use of colour wash-printing and other techniques of wood-block art to depict the lives of the peasants in the waterside villages south of the Yangtse, of the fishermen along the coast of Kiangsu and the advance of industrial construction in the province. *Early Summer South of the Yangtse* by Huang Pei-mo, *A Stretch of Fresh Green* by Wu Tsun-fa, *Spring Morning South of the Yangtse* by Lu Ti, and *After the Second Month* by Chou Ta-ming are all memorable portrayals of the misty beauties of the rivers and hills of this region.

The second exhibition showed a number of the superlative reproductions made by the Tuo Yun Hsuan Studio in recent years by the method of coloured zylography (coloured wood-block prints). These include nearly two hundred reproductions of outstanding works of art by calligraphers and painters from the third century to today. Among these are *Rubbings from the Tsao Ngo Tablet*, a famous work of calligraphy of the Tsin dynasty (A.D. 265-420); *Murmuring Pines in the Hills* by Chu Jan and *Birds on the Snow-clad Trees* by Li Ti, both great artists of the Sung dynasty (960-1279); as well as outstanding works by the Yuan dynasty (1279-1368) painter Chao Meng-fu; the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) painters, Lin Liang, Lu Chi, Tang Yin, Wen Chen-ming, Chou Shih-chou and Chen Lao-lien; the Ching dynasty (1644-1911) painters Chu Ta, Shih Tao, and Jen Ponnien and modern painters, including the late Chi Pai-shih, Hsu Pei-hung, Huang Pin-hung and others. These rare and famous paintings are a representative selection of the various schools of paintings of different historical periods in China.

In its reproductions, the Tuo Yun Hsuan Studio of Shanghai, like the Jung Pao Chai Studio in Peking, uses the same kind of paper, silk and colours as the originals and so closely reproduces their brushwork and colouring that its replicas can sometimes be distinguished from the originals only with great difficulty.

Exhibition of Modern Japanese Realist Paintings

The selection of modern Japanese realist paintings hung in the Peking Exhibition Hall this summer was not large — 89 oil paintings by 30 artists — but it showed the very high level of artistry attained by contemporary Japanese artists and their wide range of style. The themes and subjects too were very varied but, as the title of the exhibition indicates, they were mainly reflections of the contemporary life and landscape of Japan. Among them *History*, a large canvas by Nagai Kiyoshi depicting an historical peasant uprising, is a dramatic evocation of the people's spirit of revolt as they march at night by torchlight. Nakamura Takuzi's *Women of Seto Naikai* is a lyrical picture of the working women of the Seto Sea speeding across the water in their light craft. Takamori Shozo's *A Work Break* portrays a group of men and women peasants resting from their labours.

In their reviews of the exhibition carried in the Peking press, both Hsu Hsing-chih, the Chinese oil painter and art critic, and Chang An-chih, associate professor of the Peking Art Institute, noted the success achieved by Japanese painters in applying the techniques developed by modern western schools of art in the realm of colour, texture, line drawing, brushwork, etc., in their treatment of the special features of Japanese life and in developing different styles in modern Japanese oil painting. This aspect of the exhibition aroused much attention in Chinese art circles.

The exhibition was well attended and many canvases drew delighted comments. After being shown in Peking, the paintings were taken to Shanghai for a further showing.

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