

# Chinese Literature



JULY 1980

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**Qin Zhaoyang**

## **The Writer Wang Meng**

I made the acquaintance of Wang Meng one summer more than twenty-three years ago, so I ought to have a fair understanding of him. But actually I know very little about him. This seems strange yet is not really so. In a nutshell, it is difficult to gain a true understanding of anyone, and still more difficult to grasp the outlook and character of such a gifted writer as Wang Meng, especially as I myself lack insight.

We get to know a writer mainly through his works. Unfortunately I never had the time to read many of Wang Meng's writings. Moreover, during the twenty years when we were both under a cloud, he was far away in Xinjiang in northwest China (I learned that only recently), while I was in Guangxi in the south. Being several thousand kilometres apart, I had no news about him.

In the summer of 1956 when I was working as an editor of a literary journal, I received a short story by Wang Meng entitled "The Young New-comer in the Organization Department". It reflected the bureaucratic way of doing things in a district Party committee in a certain city through the experience of Lin Zhen,

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Qin Zhaoyang is a writer and a member of the secretariat of the Chinese Writers' Association.



Wang Meng

a young cadre. I was so struck by its profundity and artistic appeal that I had it published that September. During that period I met Wang Meng twice. I was surprised to find him a young man around twenty, with a thin plain face. He could not express himself in conversation as fluently and intelligently as in writing. I forget what we talked about then, but remember I had come to the conclusion that he was a promising new literary talent. I would have been all the more surprised and delighted had I known that his maiden work, the novel *Long Live the Youth*, would soon be published in the *Wenbui Daily*.

"The Young New-comer in the Organization Department" created a sensation. But then it aroused an unexpected debate in a certain literary magazine. Some critics denounced it while some others praised it. The basic reason was that, at that time, we were allowed only to eulogize life in China but not to criticize it; nor could we intersperse our praise with comparatively acute and profound criticisms. That approach to literature and art had become deep-rooted in literary circles and in society at large.

So pressure was put on Wang Meng and on me because I had published the story. Both of us must remember what it was like, though we have never discussed it.

About a year later, Wang Meng was blacklisted. Less than a year after that the same thing happened to me, due in part to "The Young New-comer in the Organization Department".

After that, for twenty years, we had no word of each other. "Will this young new-comer in the literary field spend his life under a cloud like me? It's too bad!" I often thought.

But then, in the autumn of 1977, we met each other again in Beijing. It was Wang Meng who suddenly came to see me. He looked unchanged with the same thin plain face, lean medium build and black hair. Only the rims of his spectacles had become darker. As to his mind, it struck me that over the years he had gained in experience and knowledge, in the depth of his thinking and powers of observation. I discovered that he had stayed in the adobe cottage of a Uygur peasant in Xinjiang for six years, had learned to speak, read and write in Uygur and so had gained a good understanding of the working people there. He told me that an educated young man born and brought up in the city like him could never have had such a chance to live with the labouring people if not for his "misfortune" in 1957. He had also worked in the Xinjiang branch of the China Federation of Literary and Art Circles, translating some works by Uygur writers into the Han language. He was not embittered by the hard times he had been through, as he felt he had gained so much from them. That was how he summed up the experience of those twenty years. He reached a conclusion about me too, for later he told a friend, "Of all those I've seen who have shared the same fate, the most spirited is Qin Zhaoyang." This was based, I believe, on the topic we had discussed most enthusiastically: the conviction we shared all those long years that the people, China's people, are really fine, really splendid!

Then he read and copied with great interest my poem on a scroll hanging on the wall:

The vast sea has surged through the ages,  
The long river flowed from time immemorial;  
And life is perpetual,  
All things go round and start again.

Greatest of all are the people,  
Strong is the scent of the soil;  
High in the sky hang sun and moon,  
A brave spirit fills the land.

These disjointed lines which I wrote after the Tiananmen Incident,\* before the downfall of the "gang of four", not only summarized my life of the past twenty years but also of a longer period. . . .

It was actually at this meeting that I began to understand Wang Meng. I realized that he was not the sort of man he had so long been labelled. It was not because he was "black-hearted" that he wrote to expose abuses. In fact, "The Young New-comer in the Organization Department" was written by a man with fine aspirations, out of his deep concern over the defects of the Party and of certain Party members, out of his love for and his trust in the Party. Otherwise, instead of risking exposing these defects in public he would have turned a blind eye to them or even made use of them to better his own position. Lin Zhen's frame of mind in the story must have been that of Wang Meng. In the end Lin Zhen went to knock at the door of the Party secretary, intending to tell him what was worrying him. It was probably Wang Meng himself who knocked at the Party secretary's door and confided in him. How deplorable that he was locked outside for twenty years just because he knocked at it! However, hasn't the twenty years' test of history proved that his short story was needed, a very apt one that struck home? The door of our Party should always remain wide open for those who are concerned for and loyal to her.

I can see that in his recent works Wang Meng shows more concern for and trust in the Party, and more faith in the people, because our Party and all our work were sabotaged by the "gang of four", and our people suffered so much that their wounds are not yet healed. All this Wang Meng has experienced for himself. Naturally many of his works are filled with pain. When I read "A Night in the City", it seemed to me that the hero was none

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\* On April 5, 1976, during the traditional *Qingming* Festival, Beijing citizens flocked to Tiananmen Square in the centre of the city to mourn the death of Premier Zhou. They were suppressed by the "gang of four".

other than Wang Meng, who had returned from Xinjiang to attend to some business for a friend at night. With a heavy heart he observed and pondered over certain things he had seen and heard which escaped most people's notice. In "The Barber's Tale" Wang Meng seemed to identify himself with the narrator. In "A Spate of Visitors", the director of the paste factory appeared to be another reflection of the writer. And when he said at the end, "Unless we get down to business, our country's done for!" it seemed to me as if this were Wang Meng speaking.

Now after twenty years, I think, with his new works Wang Meng is once more knocking at the door of Marxist-Leninist truth and the fine tradition of the Party, the door of our country's future as well as of its past. He is open and honest, having complete faith in the Party and the people. He can be said to have expressed the views of the rank-and-file Party members and ordinary people. He really gets down to business!

Perhaps this is one reason why his works make such an appeal to readers.

However, I still don't fully understand him. For instance, how can he write so many works in such a short time? Why can't I do the same? Because "I'm busy" or "too old"? Hardly a satisfactory explanation.

In the last few years I have read a couple of his essays dealing with literature and art and heard him talking at meetings of writers. He did not quote the classics, resort to claptrap, or get carried away. But his style was convincing, combining logic with apt metaphors and incisive language. And this is the style that we find in his stories. The only difference is that his stories seldom expound his theories outright but express his views and experience by means of images and plots. He is a sensitive, thoughtful and intelligent writer. I was told some time ago that his father had taught in the department of philosophy in a university. Perhaps this stems from his family background.

It is evident that to be a successful and popular writer, one must have passion, keen powers of observation and an analytical mind. Not one of these qualities can be dispensed with.

At the end of last autumn, he sent me a copy of his novel *Long*

*Live the Youth*, which had just been formally published after more than two decades. Through the life of a group of girls in the graduating class of a Beijing high school, it portrays how the young students of the fifties looked forward to a glorious future for China and longed to dedicate themselves to their country. It describes their growth, their exuberant stirring life and their pure and ardent nature. It is obvious that the writer retained a strong impression of his own schooling.

I have come to realize that, as a young man, he profited deeply from the training he received in New China. In one sense he is still a young man though over forty, for his works continue to display the youthful ardour and fine aspirations we find in *Long Live the Youth*. He is full of vigour and steadily maturing. But he has not realized his full potential yet. In some years he may look back on his present achievements and probably find them as slight as his past achievements now seem. So I say he is now still in his youth and this is my way of expressing my high hopes of him.

Wang Meng

## A Spate of Visitors

### Who Was He?

**H**E was so keen on efficiency and saving time that after going to the liberated area he changed his name to Ding Yi (丁一), three strokes in all. However, during the Cultural Revolution he, too, came under fire.

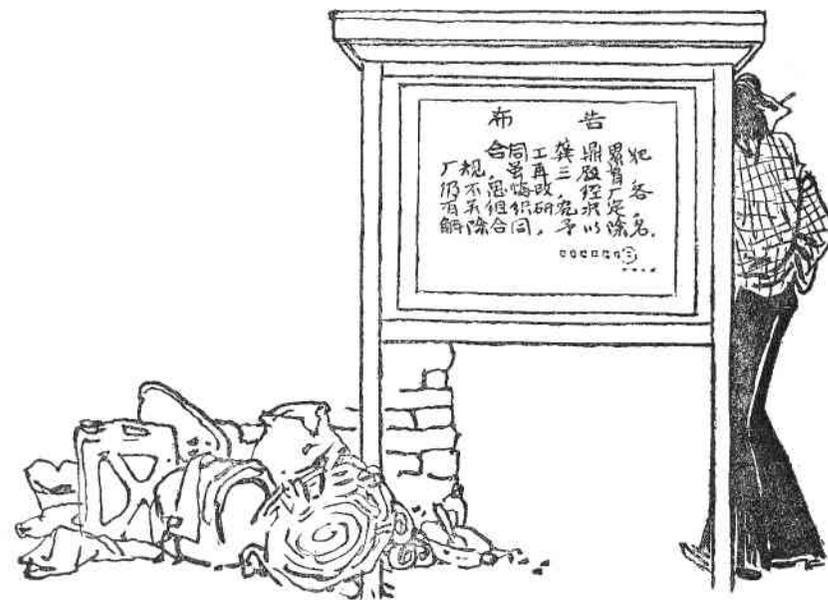
There was nothing special about his appearance or voice, and he wore his cadre's blue gabardine jacket all the year round. So some people were afraid that even his wife would find it hard to spot him in the crowd of customers in a department store. Fortunately he had two minor characteristics — it seems no one can be quite free from distinctive features. One was the bulge at the back of his head, the other his frequent frown. His critics had attributed the bulge to “a reactionary skull”, the frown to his negative outlook.

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In this issue we publish three short stories by Wang Meng (王蒙). “A Spate of Visitors” (《说客盈门》) has been taken from the *People's Daily* (《人民日报》) of January 12, 1980, “A Night in the City” (《夜的眼》) from *Guangming Daily* (《光明日报》) of October 21, 1979, and “The Barber's Tale” (《悠悠寸草心》) from *Shanghai Literature* (《上海文学》) No. 9, 1979.



He was bull-headed. In the countryside it was the unwritten rule to keep two separate accounts. That for the beginning of the year contained a plan, quota, guarantee and grandiose statements; that for the end recorded the yield, the amount of grain stored and sold to the state and the value of output. The two accounts were never compared or checked to see if they tallied. But this was not Ding Yi's way. He insisted on comparing them and investigating any discrepancies. It wouldn't have mattered if he had just ticked off the cadres in the production brigade and commune, but he took the accounts with him to the Party committees in the county and prefecture to protest. This happened in 1959. All of a sudden the situation grew tense as everyone there woke up to a sharpening in the acute, complex class struggle. Not only was he denounced and labelled a "Rightist", but all the ex-landlords, rich peasants, their children and grandchildren as well as those Rightists who had been sent from the provincial capital to



do physical labour in the countryside were reinvestigated and forced to make a clean breast of their relations with him.

Ding Yi's position went from bad to worse.

However, a settlement always comes in the end. In January 1979, Ding Yi was rehabilitated, and in June that year, thirty years after he joined the revolution, when he was more than fifty, he regained his Party membership and was appointed director of the county's Rose-fragrance Paste Factory.

Many people congratulated him, but he frowned and asked, "What for?" Others told him they thought he deserved a higher position; but without hearing them out he turned away. Yet others said that he had grown cocky again, having never really tucked his tail between his legs.

He made his rounds in the small factory day and night, his jacket often smeared with paste which smelt quite unlike the scent of roses. When his wife called him a poor wretch he only smiled.

So, he had very few visitors.

## Ding Yi Stirs up a Hornet's Nest

At his new post Ding Yi discovered two big problems. Here, the word "discover" is hardly appropriate, because these two problems were as obvious as lice on a bald head. They made him frown and rack his brains every day. First, there was no proper control of the by-product of paste, gluten, which the workers divided among themselves to sell, give to friends or exchange for other goods. This was scandalous. Secondly, the labour discipline was so lax that the foreman sometimes tripped over people sound asleep during their work shifts. So, after consulting everyone concerned, Ding Yi drew up a set of regulations and a system of rewards and penalties. In fact, these were nothing new, just standard practice.

A month went by. In May, Ding Yi decided to make an example of a contract worker named Gong Ding. For one thing, this young man had stayed away from work for four months without asking for leave. For another, he came bold as brass to the factory to demand gluten, and if given none cursed or beat the man in charge. Furthermore, he turned a deaf ear to reprimands. So Ding Yi asked the Party branch committee, Youth League committee, trade union, personnel office and all the other departments to discuss Gong Ding's case. Though he prodded them three times a day, it took them a month and a half to agree to his proposal that this recalcitrant worker should be dismissed. On June 21, an announcement was put up in the factory: In accordance with regulations, Gong Ding's contract is terminated.

Some people knew that Gong Ding was a distant relative of the first county Party secretary Li and felt it was a mistake to fire him, but they did not like to say so. After all, he was only a distant relative. So, the decision was finally reached and announced.

## Psychological Warfare Breaks Out

Three hours after the announcement was put up, Ding Yi began to have callers. The first was Old Liu from the county Party committee office. Fifty-seven years old, with an affable expres-

sion, he prided himself on his diplomacy and good relations on all sides. Smilingly, he put one hand on Ding Yi's shoulder. "Listen to me, Old Ding," he said. "You've worked hard and run the factory well. But as for Gong Ding's case..." Lowering his voice he explained Gong's relationship to the first county Party secretary. He added, "Of course, this has no bearing on his case. You're right to take disciplinary action. Secretary Li would be grateful to you if he knew. It's you I'm thinking of. You'd better not fire him. He'll still have to stay in China, in our county if he's kicked out. We'll still be responsible for him, and he's bound to ask Secretary Li for help. So, better let him off with a warning." He reasoned so earnestly and patiently that Ding Yi began to waver. Just then, however, Zhou, head of the county industrial bureau, rang up.

"What's come over you?" he bellowed. "Why pick on a relative of the county Party secretary to make an example of? What are people going to think? Hurry up and revoke your decision!"

"No, the decision stands!" replied Ding Yi loudly as he hung up the receiver. His face grim, he turned to Old Liu and said, "Outrageous!"

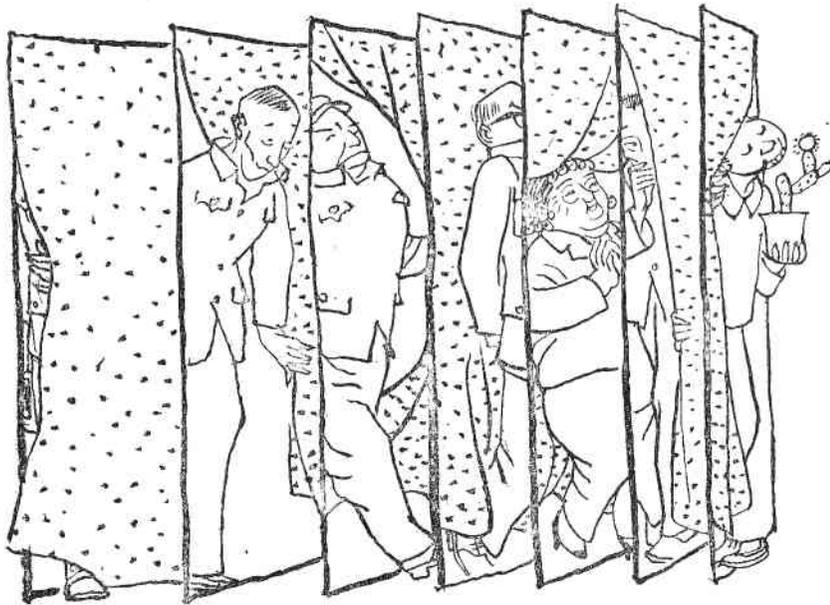
However, visitors kept coming. At dusk, Old Zhao, chairman of the county revolutionary committee, arrived. Zhao had worked in the county since land reform. He was most influential and strongly entrenched. With a certain reserve he shook hands languidly with Ding Yi, then paced the room while issuing his instructions, not even glancing at Ding.

"We must be prudent, mustn't oversimplify issues. Nowadays people are very sensitive. Gong Ding's dismissal would cause general dismay. In view of this, it's more judicious not to fire him."

He said no more, thinking this directive sufficient. He had paced the room slowly enunciating each word, as if weighing and savouring it. Yes, to him his words were as tasty as spiced beef.

When Ding Yi went home after dark, his wife also poked her nose into his business. Of course, she scolded him out of wifely concern.

"You perishing old fool! Don't you see what you've gone and



done? Has messing about with paste all day made you soft-headed? You stick to principles? Why aren't you a member of the politburo? Remember the bashing you got in 1966? Your principles not only got you into trouble but me and the children too."

This outburst stemmed from bitter resentment and love. And the tears she shed were more eloquent than words. Ding Yi sighed, and was just about to reason with her when in came another visitor. It was Young Xiao, who had befriended Ding Yi when he was in disgrace. Young Xiao had studied in the Philosophy Department of Beijing University where he was labelled a Rightist. Later he had managed to get a job in the county's electricity company. Recently, after his name was cleared, he had been promoted to be a buyer. He was short, big-nosed and extremely ugly. But the more pressure put on him, the more cheery, quick-witted and engaging he grew. His motto was: If someone slaps your face, turn the other cheek. He reckoned that this tactic succeeded three times out of four.



Young Xiao's arrival filled the house with laughter. The first thing he did after taking a seat was to finish up the dumplings left by Ding Yi and his wife who had lost their appetite. Then he asked after everyone in the family, saying admiringly, "How lucky you are to have so many relatives." Next he told them that he would soon buy and send over the TV set, a real bargain, they had long wanted. Finally he related various funny stories about their county, China and other countries till the whole family was roaring with laughter.

"Why aren't you a cross-talk actor?" Ding Yi asked.

"I don't want to do Hou Baolin\* out of a job. He's my uncle on my mother's side, you know."

There was another roar of laughter.

Young Xiao took advantage of this to launch his offensive. "Why, there's a small matter I nearly forgot," he said. "It's about

\* One of China's most popular comedians.

that young rascal Gong. He's a real shit! I'll dress him down next time I see him. But Old Ding, you mustn't go too far. You and I haven't got much footing here. Nor do we have powerful backing or commodities that other people want. We depend entirely on keeping in with others. Big shots rely on their power, we nobodies on our connections. With power they can get anything they want; by keeping on good terms with others we can make do. So don't be so bull-headed. If you haven't learned anything else all these years, you should have learned how to veer. . . . I know, you needn't explain it to me. The decision has been announced; still, it can be changed. Even the Constitution can be changed, and Chairman Mao made revisions in his writings. You're only a small factory director. Think you're more infallible than Chairman Mao and the Constitution? Go on! Get Gong Ding back. I must make myself clear. It's not the county secretary who sent me here, I came on my own initiative, having your interests at heart. Of course, Gong Ding did ask me to come and I told him, 'Don't you worry. Old Ding will do me a little favour like this.'

He certainly had the gift of the gab, able to range from the sublime to the vulgar, to crack jokes or to scoff.

Originally, Ding Yi had not known that Gong Ding was a distant relative of the county's first secretary, and he was not unwilling to reconsider the case. But all these visitors put him on his guard. If it hadn't been the first secretary's relative, would so many people have come to urge him to "be prudent", "not to oversimplify issues" and to "consider the consequences"? This question preoccupied him, to the exclusion of other considerations.

In his annoyance he sent Young Xiao packing.

Two days passed. June 23, Sunday, was a hot, long mid-summer day. Mosquitoes had kept Ding awake the previous night, and he had no appetite. At half past four that morning, a visitor arrived by bus. He was Ding Yi's brother-in-law. Tall, bespectacled and bald, he had studied in the Marxist-Leninist Institute in the 1950s and was now teaching in the prefectural Party school. He was the best known theorist in the prefecture and enjoyed great prestige. When listening to his lectures, grassroots cadres kept

nodding their heads just like chickens pecking millet from the ground. He was the seventeenth visitor in the past two days. As soon as he set foot in the room, he began to talk from a theoretical point of view.

"Socialist society is a transition period in which there exist the scars of capitalism and pre-capitalism. They are inevitable and independent of man's will. This society is superior but not yet mature or perfect. It's only a transition. . . ." After this abstract preamble, he continued:

"So we say, leaders' power, their likes and dislikes, their impressions, are of vital importance. They cannot be overlooked and very often play the decisive role. We are realists, not utopian socialists like Owen and Fourier." (Ding Yi thought: Am I a utopian socialist? This label doesn't sound too bad.) "We are not children or pedants. Our socialism is built on the ground under our feet, which, though beautiful, is rather backward and undeveloped." (Ding Yi thought: Have I ever wanted to fly to paradise?) "So when we do any work, we must take all factors into consideration. To use an algebraic formula, there are 'N' factors, not one. The more complicated the world is, the larger the 'N'. . . . So, brother, you were too hasty in handling Gong Ding's case. You didn't use your brain." (Ding Yi thought: A fine brain *you* have, holding forth like this!) "Don't make a gross error, brother. Be statesmanlike. Cancel your decision and invite Gong Ding back."

Ding Yi's wife hastily put in, "That's right, that's right!" A pleased smile appeared on her face. It dawned on Ding Yi that she had asked her theorist brother to talk him round.

While listening, Ding Yi had felt as if his chest was stuffed with hog bristles. His face looked as if he was swallowing a worm. After he had listened attentively for forty minutes, he simply asked, "Did you teach these theories in your Party school?"

Within the twenty-one hours from the arrival of the theorist till 1:45 the next morning, visitors kept coming and going. Some let loose a flood of eloquence, as if they could bring the dying back to life. Some blustered as if they would swallow up the whole world. Some bowed and scraped like swinging willow branches. Some had a well-thought-out plan which they enunciated

a word or two at a time, determined not to desist till their goal was reached or, failing that, to hurl Ding Yi over a cliff rather than leave his family in peace. Some brought with them presents ranging from flowers to rancid bean curd. Some promised him a flat with a southern exposure or a brand-new bicycle. Some warned him that he was isolating himself and would come to no good end. Some spoke of the need to protect the Party's prestige — to save the first secretary's face. Some worried about his safety and the fate of his family, some about preserving unity in the country, yet others about human rights, democracy and freedom.

These visitors included Ding Yi's old colleagues, schoolmates, superiors, subordinates, comrades-in-arms, fellow patients in hospital, fellow sufferers, "wine-and-meat" friends and the descendants of his late friends. Some of them were aged people with high prestige, others were promising young ones. Even those who had been in favour of his decision in the factory came over to state that they had changed their minds. Although their motives and manner of speaking differed, they agreed on one point: Gong Ding must not be fired.

Ding Yi had never thought he knew so many people and was known to so many. He could not understand their keen concern for Gong Ding or why his disciplinary action against a contract worker, a hooligan and a distant relative of the county secretary had stirred up such a hornet's nest. He was fast becoming a public enemy! He could neither eat nor rest, nor do any chores. His Sunday was spoilt. He wanted to scream, to smash things, to beat someone up. But instead he gritted his teeth and listened impassively warning himself, "Keep cool and you'll win through!"

Among the visitors was a star whom Ding Yi had admired when young. Forty years ago, she had been the best known actress in the province. And Ding Yi in his teens was infatuated for a spell with this woman thirteen years older than himself, although they did not know each other. He had never told anyone of his romantic dream. It was only in the Cultural Revolution when he was undergoing "labour reform" that he had the luck to meet her, an old lady who had retired and now weighed more than eighty kilograms. Due to his oriental, old-fashioned devo-

tion, Ding Yi had always had a special affection for her. To his surprise this "queen" of earlier times also arrived by a donkey cart that day. Sitting on the bed, she prattled through the gaps in her teeth:

"I should have come to see you earlier, Young Ding. Look at me, aren't I an old witch? I don't know why I've aged so suddenly. Why do so many things come to an end before they've really started? It's like the stage: you're still making up when the music for the final curtain sounds. . . ."

Her lamentation over the transience of life made Ding Yi's eyes moist with tears. Of all his visitors that day she seemed to him the only one who had called on him out of pure friendship. But what she went on to say took him aback:

"I hear you're a real martinet. That's no way to run a factory. It turns people against you, doesn't it? Do unto others as you would be done by. Haven't you learned anything from your own experience? You'd better not be too hard on young people."

Still, Ding Yi was grateful to her, recalling his youthful dreams. Among the visitors that day, she was the only one who made no mention of Rose-fragrance Paste Factory, Gong Ding and the county secretary.

## Some Statistics

I hope readers will excuse me if now I depart from the normal narrative style to publish some correct but well-nigh unbelievable statistics.

In the 12 days from June 21 to July 2, the visitors who came to plead for Gong Ding totalled 199.5 (the former actress didn't mention his name but had him in mind, so she is counted in as 0.5). 33 people telephoned. 27 wrote letters. 53 or 27% really showed keen concern for Ding Yi and were afraid he would run into trouble. 20 or 10% were sent by Gong Ding; 1 or 0.5% by Secretary Li. 63 or 32% were sent by people approached directly or indirectly by Secretary Li. 8 or 4% were asked by Ding Yi's

wife to talk round her "die-hard" husband. 46 or 23% were not sent by anyone and did not know Ding Yi but came on their own initiative to do Secretary Li a service. The remaining 4% came for no clear reasons.

Ding Yi refused all his visitors' requests. His stubbornness enraged 85% of them, who immediately spread word that he was a fool. Ding Yi's petty appointment had gone to his head, they claimed, making him stubborn and unreasonable, and cutting him off from the masses. They asserted that he was fishing for fame and credit, that he had ulterior motives and was taking this chance to vent his spite because the county Party committee had not promoted him to a higher position. Some said he was crazy and had always been reactionary, that he should never have been rehabilitated. Assuming that each of them spoke to at least ten people, 1,700 heard talk of this kind. For a while public opinion was strongly against him. It seemed all were out for his blood. His wife fell ill and her life was only saved by emergency measures. Even the nurse in charge of the oxygen cylinder took the chance to ask Ding Yi to change his mind.

Incidents of this kind happen quickly and end quickly too. They are like the breakfast queues in restaurants, which form as soon as fried cakes and porridge are served and disperse immediately after the food is sold out, no matter how angry those balked of fried cakes are. By August there was no further talk of the case, and by September it had escaped people's minds. Meanwhile, the production in the paste factory had gone up each day. By October, great changes had taken place. When talking together, people stuck up their thumbs saying, "Old Ding Yi really knows a thing or two!"

By December, the fame of the paste factory really had the fragrance of roses. It had become a model for all the small enterprises in the province. The Rose-fragrance Paste it produced was consistently of first-rate quality. Ding Yi went to attend a meeting in the provincial capital at which he was asked to report his experience. He went on to the rostrum, his face flushed, and said, "Communists are made of steel, not paste. . . ."

This caused a general sensation.

He added, "If we don't get down to business, our country's done for!"

He broke off there, choking, and tears ran down his cheeks.

There was a solemn silence for a moment in the auditorium.

Then, thunderous applause!

*Illustrated by He Youzhi*



Wang Meng

## The Barber's Tale

**F**OR thirty years since 1949 I've been a barber in the provincial Party committee's No. 1 Guest House. I was seventeen when New China was born and I started my apprenticeship.

Surrounded by glittering mirrors and fluorescent lamps, the fragrance of brilliantine, shampoo, toilet water and face cream, the sounds of scissors, clippers, hair driers and running water, I passed thirty years without even realizing it. Life seemed simple, uneventful yet happy. As I look back over the years, remorse, satisfaction and bewilderment overcome me.

My tiny barber's shop was also a reflection of the vicissitudes of life, especially since most of my customers were people of importance. During the first seven or eight years after Liberation, life was wonderful. All who came for a haircut and shave were comrades or army pals, very friendly to each other. One day, the other barber Xiao Wang was sick. While many customers were waiting their turn, a tall man in an army overcoat came over and addressed me as "Master" as he would a qualified barber. This made me blush for I was only twenty. Pointing at the vacant chair he asked, "May I help? I know something about haircutting." Then he turned to the customers, saying, "Which brave man dares to take a risk?"

A fat man in a grey uniform stood up. "I'm at your mercy."

The tall man proved extremely good. Later, I learned that he was the newly-appointed commander of the military area, while the fat one was a vice-minister. I came to know more people in leading positions as time went on. Secretary Zhang encouraged me to join the Party. Political Commissar Li bought me some ointment when I had an eye infection. Provincial Governor Zhao cleaned our wash basins and Department Head Liu repaired our broom while he was waiting his turn. Sometimes lower cadres and ordinary citizens, looking for these people, traced them to our shop. Several Young Pioneers and their instructor, a girl with two long plaits who spoke rapidly like a machine-gun, came once to look for the first secretary of the provincial Party committee to beg him to take part in their Children's Day activities on June First. They finally talked him round and made him promise to go.

In those years, leaders were close to the people. I fell in love with the new society, the revolution, and esteemed the international Communist leaders whose portraits we carried in the May Day parades. I deeply loved Marx, Mao Zedong and the Party leaders in my province and I believed in every word printed in the *People's Daily*, the provincial paper, the reports of the Party branch and our statutes and laws.

In the late fifties we celebrated the construction of new factories, electric power stations, bridges and the victory of the socialist reformation. But at the same time many unusual things happened. One day we'd hear that a certain high-ranking person was a wolf in sheep's clothing; the next that one-fourth of China's arable land would be growing flowers. Or that China would realize communism very soon. Incredible announcements, inferences and deeds were all too frequent. Though we were often shocked and amazed, we were nevertheless excited and encouraged and threw ourselves into our work. We felt that we were advancing, overcoming one difficulty after another. We were bold, full of enthusiasm and spared neither labour nor money.

During this period, some of my old customers disappeared. People whispered that they were in trouble. Those who came frowned, sighed and looked serious, the muscles on their faces

taut. As they became busier and busier, no one had time for a barber like me. Not knowing what exactly were the problems of those customers who never came any more, nor being in a position to find out, I still had to join in denouncing them in political study sessions.

When the Cultural Revolution started, quite a few of my regular customers were severely criticized and persecuted — “bombarDED” or “smashed”, to use the jargon of the time. When the guest house was taken over by the so-called Leftists, the barber’s was turned into their headquarters, with loudspeakers and machine-guns. It was often attacked by other Leftist factions. Though I didn’t work, I collected my monthly salary just the same. I felt like a thief, taking money from a wallet I had picked up in the street.

In 1974, a “new revolutionary political power” was set up, the headquarters was transformed again into the barber’s. It was littered with fragments of mirrors, fluorescent lamps, bullet shells, spears and clubs. We cleaned up the place and spent a large sum of money restoring it. That took four months. When iron railings were constructed around our guest house, two guards posted at the gate, and the hotel renamed the Worker-Peasant Guest House, real workers and peasants no longer had access to it. Special rooms with better beds and bathrooms and special food were prepared for the provincial and army leaders who had replaced those “capitalist roaders”. But the quantity and quality of meals for ordinary guests went down. The new VIPs who came to my shop never condescended to give me a smile, to say nothing of bringing me eye drops or helping to repair a broom. . . . People’s ways and morality had changed. Lonely and unhappy, I felt lost.

In the summer of 1975, a couple moved in. The man, in his fifties, was going grey. He had a large head and full lips. His eyes were lively and he always wore a half smile, which was both proud and sad. His wife was a small woman, tidy, trim and quick in her movements, but her face with its large eyes was devoid of all expression as if chiselled out of stone. They moved in with their belongings to a room in the corner of the top floor, the sixth floor,

which had once been used as a storeroom, because there was no sunlight. They went to the dining room only when most people had left and the waiters had begun clearing up. Then they would eat whatever was still available. They never spoke to anyone and, apart from a young man in overalls who came to see them every Saturday evening, they had no visitors. Every morning at dawn the man came downstairs to do exercises under a big silk tree and then take a little walk. In the evenings he and his wife would stroll for exactly one hour and ten minutes. Other than that, they shut themselves in their room. A few times I heard the man’s loud, resonant laugh. Although the lift was often unoccupied and the girl operator smiled at them, they never used it. That made a very good impression on me, perhaps because few of those then in positions of power ever troubled to use their legs.

That morning I went as usual to the backyard to stretch my legs before work. The man was not there. Under the big silk tree, I began my Chinese boxing exercises, lifting my right heel, stepping forward, breathing deeply, bending my right knee and stretching the left one, when I suddenly heard a soft groan, as if someone was being throttled. The sound made my hair stand on end. Following it, I skirted a fountain, made my way through a row of cedars and saw a man prone on the ground outside the boiler room. I ran over. It was him. His face was bleeding, his upper lip gashed and the blood at his mouth was clogged with coal dust. I helped him up, but he was so weak that I had to carry him on my back to the drivers’ office. The driver on duty was still dozing. I said to him, “This man’s been injured or is ill. Take him to the hospital, quick.”

Xiao Bu was the son of one of my colleagues, a young man whose hair and shoes shone, his shirt and pants always well-pressed. He examined the man, shook his head and said, “He’s a counter-revolutionary. Don’t bother about him.”

“A counter-revolutionary?” I was startled, but the man’s helpless and pitiable state touched me. “Nonsense! A counter-revolutionary wouldn’t be staying here.”

“Don’t you know? He’s Tang Jiuyuan!”

So that was him! In 1967, in all the streets, on pillars in res-

taurants and walls of public latrines, slogans written in tar, white-wash and paint read "Resolutely suppress...!" "Exercise dictatorship over...!" "Send ... to his doom!" and "Smash the head of that dog...!" with Tang Jiuyuan's name written upside-down or crooked. Three red crosses over his name meant that he deserved to be condemned to death. Opposing factions, fighting over our guest house and killing each other while striving to be the most "revolutionary", printed leaflets with pictures denouncing Tang as the Machiavelli behind the other faction. In 1970, it was officially announced that Tang had been sentenced to fifteen years in jail, his crime being that he had attacked the Central Cultural Revolution Group.\* Now, this man, his eyes closed, groaning and bleeding, was in my arms.

The blood, groaning, limp body, pale face and closed eyes brought back to my mind his bright eyes, which were both melancholy and proud, and his unobtrusive behaviour. For some reason, I became agitated. "You've got to help a dying man! Even a counter-revolutionary must go to hospital in an emergency. You idiot! If anything happens to him, you'll be held responsible!"

Xiao Bu was the sort of youngster who'd argue with his own father. But now, gaping at me, he muttered, "Well, what...?"

"Blame me. I'll use the car. I'll take the responsibility. Don't just stand there like a fool! Get the car started!"

Even now I cannot explain why I was so sympathetic to a "counter-revolutionary" who was a total stranger. Sometimes a thing has the opposite effect of that intended. When, in the past, indiscriminate emphasis was placed on drawing a clear line between classes, the line vanished; when struggling against each other was stressed, people realized the value of friendship and loyalty; when politics was over-emphasized, people became tired of it; and after the movement to sweep away all old ideas, customs and habits, people clung to these things even more.

We took Tang to the hospital in a jeep. He was ill with Ménière's disease and had become dizzy and fainted, cutting his lips. The doctor stitched up his wound and then he was hospitaliz-

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\* An organization in the hands of Jiang Qing and Zhang Chunqiao.

ed for slight concussion. A few days later he was well enough to be discharged.

One evening, Tang and his wife dressed themselves up and came to my shop, inviting me to dinner to show their gratitude. They opened many tins of expensive food, prawns, Beijing duck, fungus, mushrooms and so on. Unable to buy things which were difficult to get in the market, they spent a lot of money on tinned food. After a few cups of wine, Tang began to talk in his resonant voice. And he was a good talker!

"I'm fifty-four this year. In 1938 I joined the Eighth Route Army. I was just seventeen. I was the regimental commander of an artillery unit in 1949. After being demobbed, I was the Party secretary of N — Prefecture for more than seventeen years. I thought I'd be there for life. But in 1967 I was thrown into prison for eight years..."

His indignant wife butted in, "He was shut up with high Kuomintang officials. When I took his meals to him, their wives looked at me with such hatred..."

A chill went down my spine.

"Come on, help yourself. We've nothing good to offer you now. But some day I'll give you a really good meal to thank you properly," said Tang.

"He would have died if you hadn't helped him, Old Lu. The driver didn't want to take him. Such people are so short-sighted! One day..."

"Now, now, enough of that," Tang insisted, changing the topic. "When I was in solitary confinement, before I was thrown into jail, I nearly kicked the bucket. I was put in a room by myself, since I was an 'important criminal'. The room was fairly warm. But the young man who guarded me felt that a counter-revolutionary mustn't be too comfortable, so he broke my door panel with a rifle butt. The piercing wind blew in, and I got pneumonia. They debated heatedly about whether or not I should be sent to hospital. My guard didn't want to waste penicillin on a counter-revolutionary. Thank goodness one of his leaders stuck to our humane policy..."

He was a tough man, telling such a horrible story casually and sprinkling it with humour.

But his wife hissed, "You're an old comrade too, Old Lu. Tell me, what's going on? We fought to liberate the country and build New China and we are now being persecuted by landlords, bad elements and counter-revolutionaries. I call this class vengeance!"

Tang downed a few more cups of wine. When I tried to stop him, his wife said, "He never lets himself go. Let him drink so that he doesn't bottle everything up inside him."

With tear-filled eyes, Tang continued, "I didn't waste the eight years I was shut up. I went back over my life and analysed myself. It was better than spending a few years in the Party school. I recalled all I'd done since I joined the revolution, especially when I was the prefectural Party secretary. I reviewed every one of my successes and mistakes. Great wrongs had been done to me, but hadn't I ever wronged anybody? I was framed, but hadn't I blamed people unjustly when I was in power? Why are prisoners maltreated? Even if they are real counter-revolutionaries, they should be justly dealt with according to the law. Why insult and persecute them unlawfully? How had my young guard become so ultra-Left, ignoring policies and the law? We were to blame!" He banged his fist on the table and cried in a hoarse voice, "Time and again I've told myself, if ever I'm cleared and resume work, first, I'll be very careful when dealing with people. Second, I'll improve the conditions in the prison and guarantee that the prisoners get proper treatment. Third, I'll never promote or rely on any ultra-Leftists!"

My heart, contracted and numbed by the many sudden changes and the unfathomable savagery of the world around me, revived a little with his sincere and frank words, like rain moistening the parched, cracked earth. Tears coursed down my face though what he had said had nothing to do with me. For years, the bragging in the newspapers, on the radio or TV, on the stage and in meeting rooms had jarred on my ears. When I heard this sensible talk from the former prefectural Party secretary, I knew that not all the good people had died. Faith, sincerity, seeking truth from

facts and reason, all of which had been buried for a long time, still remained. How could I check my tears?

We became great friends. Friendship gave warmth to my lonely heart. Awake at midnight, I was happy to know that I had a respected friend, in whom I could confide and whom I could support and protect for the time being. After that my existence had more meaning. I wanted to do all I could for Old Tang to make his life easier. I had some connections with grocers and salesmen and could often get him things which were rare in the market like cucumbers in May, famous wines and live carp. Since my son worked in a bookstore I got him hard-to-get books too. During the Spring Festival, I invited him and his wife over for a meal of dumplings, pork stewed with distillers' grain, and preserved eggs. My son set off fireworks. When I built a little storeroom in the backyard his son, the young man in overalls, came to help and became friends with my son. They went swimming, learned to play the guitar together and lent each other banned books. . . .

"Old Lu, do Provincial Secretary Zhao and his family have their hair done at your place? When he comes again, will you let me know? I want to have a word with him," Old Tang said to me one night.

"Talk to him?" I was amazed. It was no secret that Zhao was a notorious careerist, who went along with the new mandarins.

Mrs Tang twisted her mouth disdainfully. "Talk to him indeed! Who do you think he is?"

"What else can I do? Keep on doing nothing just because I was framed? He represents the Party at his level." Turning to me he said, "I was accused of attacking the Central Cultural Revolution Group. I'd never have dared to do that. I've never attacked anybody. It was a complete frame-up. I don't even know what I was supposed to have said or done! But a Communist must work for the Party. . . ."

"Oh, forget it. It sounds marvellous — work for the Party!" His wife was in a rage. "All you want is an official post, that's all. What's so special about a leading post? The Organization Department talked to me today, appointing me deputy-secretary of a factory. I went straight to the hospital and got myself sick

leave for three months. I worked for the revolution all my life. Then I was persecuted for eight long years. . . . Now I'm given such a low official post."

As we were intimate friends, his wife's outburst didn't embarrass Tang, who explained to me, "It's wrong to view things in this light. A Party member should be able to be tested. Besides, I have a son and a married daughter. My grandchildren aren't allowed to become Red Guards because of me. How can I sit still and not look up Secretary Zhao?"

I had heard many such arguments and knew that Mrs Tang was not happy with her post. She had mentioned before that, according to her rank before the Cultural Revolution, she ought to be the vice-director of the light industry bureau at the very least. She had also said that since Old Tang was still under a cloud, she could not get a suitable job. Although people who had never been in leading positions were not familiar with this kind of thinking, I didn't find it too odd, for they were her honest thoughts. Even a barber or his apprentice could imagine the discontent of a leading cadre demoted from a high position in a bureau to a lowly one in a small factory. I was at first disgusted with the importance some people placed on official posts, but I soon realized that many charlatans and thugs had climbed up in the world by treading on others. Why should veterans like the Tangs be expected to accept demotion and be satisfied with a low post, while those scoundrels threw their weight about? After all, the Tangs had done valuable work for the revolution, and during the Cultural Revolution they had reviewed their past work and become wiser. Moreover, I was a supporter of his three-point platform. If he was not in a leading post how could he carry it out? His concern over the future of his grandchildren called for sympathy too. So I pinned my hopes for the future of our country, Party and myself on old comrades like him.

Breaking my rule of keeping my nose out of everything, I began to look for Secretary Zhao. I don't know how they finally met and talked. Anyway, soon the news came that Tang was to be the eighth deputy director of the supply and marketing co-op, much to the indignation of Mrs Tang. "Huh! A prefectural Party

secretary put in such a position," she sneered. Old Tang smiled and said nothing, apparently just glad to work again. But the political atmosphere changed once more by the end of that year. The "gang of four" and their followers criticized the return of the old, disgraced cadres. So Tang was unable to take up even that small post.

In January 1976, Old Tang, his wife and I mourned deeply the loss of Premier Zhou. They went to the People's Square with the masses. Tang told me agitatedly, "It's more than mourning. It's a political demonstration!" His eyes burned with the fury of the former artillery commander. I felt that he was planning a battle. We discussed affairs of state with great concern, but he clammed up after the Tiananmen Incident was declared a counter-revolutionary act on April 7. He warned me when I sometimes let off steam, "You must be careful! This is a serious matter!" I was disappointed and bewildered, but knowing his situation I understood how he felt.

In October 1976, the "gang of four" was overthrown. The following February, Secretary Zhao was transferred, owing to his connection with the gang. The committee was reshuffled. In March, the new provincial Party committee called a big meeting to reinstate Old Tang. The news media claimed that he had been persecuted for opposing the gang and that he had withstood the test. He was compared to a lofty pine, battling against snowstorms. A week later, Tang was appointed secretary of the Party committee of S — city, a municipality directly under the province. As he was busy, I didn't go to see him but drank his health with my family. Before he left for his new post he, his wife and son came to say goodbye, inviting us to visit them. Old Tang assured me that if I ever needed help, I could count on him. He wanted to stay and talk, but his wife, who was happy now, reminded him that a certain political commissar was giving them a farewell dinner. He held my hand tightly when the car started, begging me again to visit him. I was very touched. But one thing marred the occasion. As soon as they had walked in, my son left on some excuse and didn't turn up again until bedtime. When

I questioned him about it, he said between his clenched teeth, "Don't befriend the high and mighty!"

Furiously I reproved him, "That's no way to talk! We're comrades and friends, whatever his situation, I'll never ass-lick just because he's a high official. You know your father. But I can't give him the cold shoulder either." My son smiled nonchalantly. That was how he always reacted whenever I tried to lecture him. Feeling insulted, I demanded in a loud voice, "What are you smiling at?"

Avoiding my eyes, he replied in a tired voice, "I feel you're so naive!" Imagine a son calling his father naive! "Did he really fight hard against the gang? Was he really so lofty? Did he have the correct attitude towards working at a lower post?"

Stumped by his questions, I flared up at once. "You've no class feeling! The gang persecuted old comrades, and now you try to find fault with them. It's dangerous if you go on like this!"

My son turned away. Despondently, I thought to myself, the arguments and ways of reasoning which had proved extremely effective, moving and powerful with my generation didn't wash with my son's.

New Year, 1978. Old Tang wrote and sent me a parcel of crisp sweets flavoured with cassia, a speciality of S — city, and invited my family to visit them again. I couldn't make up my mind. A busy man's time was precious. My wife urged me to go, while my son protested, "You mean to go? Don't forget, he's the municipal Party secretary."

My head drooped. But did a distance between our positions necessarily mean a distance between our two honest hearts? I couldn't believe it.

My mind made up, I asked my wife to prepare some of Old Tang's favourite dishes. Two days before the Spring Festival, the day before I planned to leave, Xiao Bu, the driver, called. He brought a box of cakes and two bottles of wine and chatted away. He offered to place his car at my disposal whenever it was needed. Then he remarked, "Your table would look much better if it had

a plastic cover. I've one just about the right size. You can have it. Your bicycle needs to be rechromed. I'll have it done for you."

As we had never had much to do with each other, I wondered why he had called. After beating about the bush for a long time, he finally came to the point. "I admire you, Old Lu. An older man has more experience. You have foresight. By looking after Old Tang while he was in difficulty, you made a useful friend. But you and I are just ordinary blokes. I'm twenty-eight and still a bachelor but at last I've found a girl friend. To tell you the truth, she's a doll! She doesn't demand a wardrobe or a TV set. She only wants to be transferred from the suburbs to the centre and have her work changed from weaving to spinning. So I've come to ask you a favour. I heard that you're going to S — city tomorrow." He pushed the cakes and wine to me.

"I . . . what can I do?" I was perplexed.

"That depends on you. Old Tang's your friend. You've done him many good turns."

I flushed. "What . . . are you talking about?"

He was going to press his point when my son came over, handed him back the cakes and wine and firmly showed him the door. "Go and ask somebody else. My father isn't going there."

"You can't do that to me. You may need me some day. . . ."

Shutting the door, my son shot me a reproachful look.

I let out a deep sigh and told my wife, "Better cancel my ticket!"

June that year, the financial and commercial bureaux called a conference in the provincial city to learn from Daqing and Dazhai, the models in industry and agriculture at that time. I attended and had the opportunity to meet the representatives from S — city. I took pains to find out what they thought of Tang.

Although newspapers and documents had stressed many times that inside the Party we should address each other as comrades, most people still called their leaders by their titles. "Secretary Tang has done well. The city's clean and tidy. He's set up traffic regulations, planted trees . . . and investigated what the followers of the 'gang of four' did. He has guts."

They told me an anecdote to show how strict Tang was. He

had gone to investigate a grocery during the Spring Festival without revealing his identity. The manager sold large quantities of rationed food to his friends and wouldn't admit his mistake when it was pointed out. Tang had criticized him severely. It was like a story about a just official in history. My heart rejoiced at what I heard, as if I had something to do with it.

"Did he improve the conditions in your prison?" I inquired. No one answered. They all looked at me strangely. Asking or replying to such a question was suspicious. I smiled wryly. "Is there anything against him?" I asked again.

"Well. His wife's a bitch, lashing out at her inferiors and superiors. She scolds everyone. I'm scared to death as soon as she walks into my store!"

"He's exaggerating," another piped up. "She's hot-tempered, that's all. If you rub her the right way, she's all right."

But others had different views. "They live in a luxurious flat. Their son isn't married, but he's got another big flat. Their daughter's being transferred to our city from another town. Mrs Tang's also applying for a flat for her and her husband."

We spoke in low voices. Although the room wasn't bugged, people naturally whispered when talking about their superiors.

Their complaints gave me food for thought and kept me awake that night. What was wrong with her? They had suffered and people had sympathized with them. If she thought only of making up for their losses caused by the 'gang of four', this was not the way. People had put their trust in them. . . . If they should isolate themselves from the people. . . . It was unthinkable!

I felt the urge to go to S — city, to see Old Tang and his wife and tell them what I had heard. Now that they were high officials, not many people would speak honestly and openly to them. I was on tenterhooks until the conference ended. The last two days were set aside for the representatives to go sightseeing, see some shows, have banquets and take photos. I gave up these and asked for leave to visit Old Tang.

It took me four hours by overnight train. On my arrival, I was eating my breakfast in a restaurant when I came across one of my former fellow apprentices, whom I had not seen for years.

Surprise was clearly written on his face when he learned that I had come to see Old Tang.

"You've come to complain to Secretary Tang? I always thought you were a cautious character. Never went looking for trouble."

"But, we know each other. He asked me to visit him."

"Visit?" His eyes popped. Then he seemed to see the light. "Good for you. It never occurred to me that a simple man like you had learned the necessity of having connections with important persons. Well, well. That's the style!" He stuck up his thumb. Then he whispered to me, "Tomorrow, the provincial Party committee is calling a work conference in this city. The best chefs and performers have all been told to report and rare goods in the city have been commandeered for the conference. Even the cold-drinks stores are closing. You must stay in the hotel for VIP's. If you see any good buys, please think of me. Have you brought enough money? My home's not far away. . . ."

My uneasiness increased. Without stopping to rest or find a room, I hurried to the office of the provincial Party committee and was told that Tang was at the No. 1 Guest House, the VIP hotel. Two hundred metres from the gate, I caught sight of a policeman and a soldier on duty, who were there specially for the conference. Fifty metres from the gate they questioned me. "Where're you going?" They didn't even say comrade. Then I had to show my identity card, before I was allowed to approach the gate.

I was told to go to the gate-house which was closed, its windows screened with white paper, to prevent outsiders from looking in. How could I get admission? On the other side of the gate-house, a small window was open. Those who wanted admittance were grilled first.

The small window was very high, as if for basketball players over two metres tall. A board shut off one-third of it. On tiptoe, I stretched my neck and shouted, "Comrade!" My neck ached. I saw only the back of a burly man.

"Comrade! Comrade!" I shouted several times before he half-turned his head, threw me a glance and then turned back again.

"Comrade!" I yelled.

"Can't you speak?" His question hit me like a bullet. Speak? I was not dumb. I spoke Chinese. My face fell and turned scarlet.

"I want to see Old Tang. I want to see Tang Jiuyuan."

The soldier cried, "Don't shout!"

The name and the way I uttered it had borne weight. The gateman turned around, moved forward and looked me up and down, giving me the shivers. I'd rather face an enemy than the scrutiny of this comrade. Then he began to ask questions. When he knew who I was, he said coldly, "No guests are received during the conference."

"But it doesn't start until tomorrow. The provincial Party committee sent me here."

"No guests!" he mumbled and showed me his back again. Then at the sound of a woman's voice he leapt to the door, a different man. The voice had wrought a miraculous change over him as if a Bodhisattva had sprinkled him with some magic water. Charming and warm, he turned the lock and opened the door.

"A few of my son's friends are coming to see the film tonight. Please admit them." It was the voice of Mrs Tang.

"Certainly. No problem. I know Young Tang. When he comes with them..."

"They might not come together."

"That's alright! Tell them to mention Young Tang..." I was amazed at how obedient and affable he could be.

"But he won't let *me* in!" I protested. Mrs Tang's voice had made me bolder.

"Oh, Old Lu? What a pleasure to see you!" Mrs Tang greeted me. At a wave of her hand the gateman, all smiles, gave me a pass. His smile was more detestable than his sizing me up from head to toe. I quickly turned and entered the gate.

I complained to Mrs Tang about the manners of the gateman and the heavily guarded entrance. "This VIP hotel of yours is too distinguished," I commented.

She laughed and retorted, "Cut it out! One can't get into your Worker-Peasant Guest House so easily either! What can we do? So many people come with their complaints. There'd be no work

done if everyone were allowed in." Cordially she drew closer to me and said, "You're always in our thoughts. We hoped you'd join us for the Spring Festival. I told Old Tang you were our true friend and a good comrade. Now he's the city Party secretary so many people come to see him. Old colleagues, former subordinates, schoolmates, relatives — people who've had nothing to do with us for years! I wonder why they didn't show up before. When I was taking meals to Old Tang in the prison, none of them said a kind word to me." She was indignant.

I consoled her, "Things are different now."

She cheered up again. "Yes. Stay a few days. Don't go back in a hurry. I'll show you around. I'm careful not to work too hard now, so I can help you shop, or arrange for you to see a special doctor. Any medicine you want? What I can't do, Old Tang can. There's no problem." She was then interrupted and called away. As she left she told me, "Old Tang is in Courtyard No. 3. Go and see him." She added, "Stay here tonight. We're showing a foreign film."

I went in the direction she had pointed. Passing by a store, my attention was caught by an advertisement: Fur, wool, televisions, leather shoes — most sought-after commodities — sold at bargain prices! I frowned. There was also a cold-drinks kiosk. I walked in to get an ice lolly to cool myself down after the scene outside the gate-house. It was better and cheaper than what was available in the market. I'd never enjoyed such luxury in all the years I'd worked in the big guest house in the provincial city. The ice lolly chilled my mouth and stomach. Then the cold spread to my heart.

"I must talk to Old Tang. Why should a conference have so many perks? People will talk no matter how carefully they guard the gates. I must ask him how he's going on with his three-point platform." I came to the No. 3 courtyard where there were a few cars including a Red Flag, a Datsun and a Mercedes Benz, apparently belonging to high officials. A happy Old Tang was directing them like a capable traffic policeman to a cool, breezy, shaded place near the gate. In a new good-quality suit, which showed the edge of the starched collar of his very white shirt,

he shook hands with every driver and told the attendants to take them to their quarters. When he turned around, his eyes fell on me.

I was on the point of greeting him, when a bespectacled man came over and handed him a document.

While reading the document Old Tang said to another, "Check the bath tubs of No. 1 courtyard again. The attendants are too lazy! When I inspected them yesterday, my hands got dirty. The showers didn't work properly either. I gave those boys a talking-to..."

More people came over. Old Tang told them one by one:

"You go and check the auditorium."

"You look over the kitchen. They must get some vinegar from Shanxi."

"You check the store."

"You go to the clinic..."

"Publish a bulletin two or three times a day. What? You've nothing to write? Well. For today you can say something like, 'The people of our city are most honoured to have the conference held here.' You don't want me to teach you that, do you!"

"Tell him he must attend. This conference comes before everything else. Tell him I expect to see him here."

"We'll look into that later. Tell him to wait. I spent eight years in prison. What's his hurry?"

"No. I'm too busy. Tell them to go to the education bureau."

After these people had left, others came with more documents and questions. All were honoured to have a few words with Secretary Tang.

Half an hour passed and then an hour. The people around him finally dispersed. Exhausted, he turned to leave.

I addressed him, "Old Tang."

He turned to me. Overcome with fatigue, he looked at me vaguely. Suddenly his eyes lit up. "Why, it's Old Xu. So you've arrived?" He walked over and took my hand listlessly.

I looked at him sadly. There was a hint of reproach in my voice when I said, "You don't remember me?"

"Sorry. Old Li. No. You're Old Lu. I'm really getting on,"

he complained and lowered his head. He had more lines on his forehead and more grey hairs.

"How are you? Do you still have your dizzy spells?"

"Oh, I'm all right. Only too busy. Much too busy. Can't get anything done."

Several older men came out. The most distinguished one, dressed in a grey jacket, which was undone, had on a pair of Chinese cloth shoes. In an even voice with a southern accent he asked, "Hi, Old Tang! Will you join us for a walk?"

They were the leading cadres of the province. Old Tang gave me a brief handshake, urged me to stay for a few days and turned away. I stepped nearer, as if afraid of losing him. "But I want to have a word with you, Old Tang." My voice quivered. He turned and looked at me with concern.

"Your store..." Before I could finish, he beckoned to a young man and told him, "Give him two ration cards and find him a room."

He left. I almost collapsed. As the young man reached out to help me, I pushed him away and shambled off.

Back home, I told my friends about my experiences. Many of them criticized me arguing, "You shouldn't have left like that. He's old and busy. You should have waited until he had the time to talk to you." But my son, the rotter, said only three words, "Serves you right!"

During last year's Spring Festival, Old Tang and his wife again sent me a letter and a package of preserved fruit. My name was written correctly on the envelope. He again invited my family to visit him, regretting that we couldn't be together the last time. It was in Old Tang's handwriting. I was very touched by his sincerity and warmth, treating me like his equal. I blamed myself for the unpleasantness caused by the last visit. I had been too impatient, too subjective. Old Tang could not be blamed for being so busy. And there was nothing wrong about looking after the drivers of his superiors. His wife's bad temper was not his fault either. All in all, what I had against him was only the low price of the various goods and the ice lollies, one of which I'd

eaten myself! The Central Party Committee had been issuing many documents on this problem and commissions for inspecting discipline had been set up at various levels. So I presumed they wouldn't do that any more. What society could do away with its officials? Who should be the officials? I was opposed to Zhao and those rebel commanders who bashed down all officials. I myself had neither the ability nor wish to be one. Since I supported Old Tang, why be so hard on him? I should allow him time to carry out his three-point platform. I shouldn't persecute officials like the rebel commanders, nor should I make use of them like Bu the driver and my fellow apprentice. I would neither fawn on them nor avoid them like my son, nor be antagonistic. Too much blood had been shed. Many lives were sacrificed overthrowing the Kuomintang and the "gang of four" and their followers. Our old comrades were once again in power and running things. If everyone avoided them, not telling them what he thought, what would happen to our country and the Party? My tears fell. I made up my mind to make another trip to see Old Tang and his wife and take them some fine dishes cooked at home.

**Wang Meng**

## **A Night in the City**

**A**LL the street lamps were switched on, of course, at the same time. However, Chen Gao felt as if there were two streams of light shooting out in opposite directions above his head. There seemed to be no end to them. Locust trees cast their simple, yet stalwart shadows on to the pavements, as did people waiting at the bus stop, each having more than one shadow.

Everywhere, there were heavy vehicles, cars, trolley-buses, bicycles, and the hooting, voices and laughter typical of a big city at night — full of life. He saw occasional neon lights and barber's poles. Also permed hair, long hair, high-heeled shoes and frocks. In the air hung the fragrance of toilet water and face cream. Though the city women had just begun to pay a little attention to their appearance, they had already outraged certain people. This was interesting.

Chen Gao had left this city more than twenty years before, to live in a remote small town, where one-third of the street lamps were never lit and the rest had no electricity for part of the month. Nobody knew whether this was through neglect or lack of coal. However, it did not matter much, because people began their work at dawn and finished at dusk, like peasants following the customs of their ancestors. After six o'clock when all the offices, factories,

shops and halls were closed, people stayed at home, looking after their children, smoking, washing or chatting.

Along came a blue bus. The conductress was speaking into a microphone, while the passengers jostled to get off. Chen Gao and some others squeezed their way on to the bus. It was packed. However, Chen felt pleased. The conductress, a rosy-cheeked girl, had a clear, resonant voice. She could have been the announcer for the song and dance ensemble in his remote town. After she had switched on a small light, she began selling tickets. Then she switched the light off. Outside the window, street lamps, trees, buildings and people flashed past. The bus approached another stop. Once again, as the conductress announced the name of the next stop, the light was switched on and passengers began to elbow their way to the doors.

Two young men in workers' overalls got on, continuing their heated discussion. One of them said, "The key question is democracy, democracy. . . ." Though he had only been a week in this city, Chen realized that democracy was a very popular topic, just like legs of mutton to the people where he lived. Here, perhaps, there was a good supply of meat, so people did not have to worry about trifles like joints of mutton. This was wonderful, Chen thought smiling.

But there was no contradiction between democracy and legs of mutton. Without democracy, the mutton on your plate would be snatched away. A democracy which could not bring more succulent legs of mutton to his townfolk was empty talk. Chen was in the city attending a writers' conference on short stories and plays. After the fall of the "gang of four", he had published five or six short stories. Some critics said that he had become more mature, more versatile. But most people held that these works were not up to his earlier standard. One who paid too much attention to legs of mutton could not produce good stories. Knowing the importance of and need for mutton, however, was progress. On his way to the conference, he had been delayed for over an hour by a train accident in a small railway station. In a hurry to sell his mutton, a black-marketeer had risked crossing the railway tracks underneath a stationary train. Unfortunately, the brakes failed and the train

had moved, killing the poor fellow. This was still preying on Chen's mind.

In the past, he had always been the youngest at such conferences, but now he was among the middle-aged, looking a provincial, with a dark, weather-beaten face. The young participants expressed fresh, bold, shrewd and lively ideas in their speeches, which were thought-provoking, stimulating and inspiring. No one seemed very interested in literary and art problems, though the chairman did his best to make them keep to the main subject. What they discussed most were the conditions responsible for the emergence of the "gang of four", feudalism, democracy, the law, morality and so on. More and more youngsters, for example, were dancing to the music of electric guitars and fooling about in parks. They talked about what the parks administrators were doing to control them. Chen also gave his view which, comparatively speaking, was low-keyed. "We must begin gradually," he said, "starting from ourselves." It would be a wonder if half or one-fifth or even one-tenth of the good suggestions raised at the conference were realized. Chen was excited yet perplexed.

The bus reached the terminal, but it was still quite full. Everyone seemed rather relaxed and paid little attention to the conductress, who was asking to see their tickets with a note of irritation in her voice. Chen, like all those from the provinces, held high his ticket, but the girl did not even glance at him. Then he politely held it out to her, but she did not take it.

Having got off the bus, he took out his address book and leafed through it for the one he wanted. When he asked a passerby where the place was, several others volunteered the information. So in this respect, at least, city people still showed their traditional courtesy. Having thanked them, he left the brightly-lit terminal. After turning a few corners, he found himself lost in the labyrinth of a new housing estate.

It was not that the layout of the buildings was complicated. It was too simple! All the six-storeyed blocks looked identical. Each balcony was crammed with all sorts of things. From each window shone a yellow lamp or a white fluorescent light. Even the sounds coming from them were similar. A football match between China

and some other country was being shown on television, and probably the Chinese team had just scored a goal. The boisterous cheers of the spectators and the football fans sitting before their TV sets mingled with the familiar voice of Zhang Zhi, the sports commentator. From other windows came the sounds of hammering, chopping, children yelling, or adults scolding.

All these noises, lights and the profusion of things packed into those blocks as identical as matchboxes struck Chen as rather strange and unfamiliar, even rather ridiculous. And the trees, as tall as the buildings, added a touch of mystery. In his little town, one heard mostly dogs barking at night. Chen knew them all and their masters. And lorries rumbled along the street, their headlights blinding people.

Chen regretted getting into this maze. "I shouldn't have turned off that brightly-lit street," he thought. "I shouldn't have left that crowded, cheerful bus. How wonderful it was riding with so many people along a wide boulevard!" But now he was all alone in the dark. He should have stayed in the hostel, where he could have gone on discussing with some youngsters how to solve the problems resulting from the years of misrule of the "gang of four" or talked about other countries, over plates of lobster crisps, boiled peanuts and some cool, refreshing beer. Instead, he had travelled all the way by bus to this outlandish place to ask a favour of a perfect stranger. There was nothing strange about the favour itself, which was routine, necessary. The problem was that Chen was not the right person for the job. He would rather go up the stage and dance the role of the prince in *Swan Lake*, despite his limp, which, hardly noticeable, was a reminder of the Cultural Revolution.

His depression brought back sad memories of the day he had left this city over twenty years ago. He had parted company with his friends for publishing several short stories which were condemned as "going too far". In fact now they were considered not sharp enough.

According to what people had just told him, the building ahead, not too far away, was the one he was looking for. Unfortunately there was a ditch for laying sewage pipes barring his way, too wide to jump across. He searched for a plank to cross it, but to his

annoyance found none. To skirt round it or jump over? "I'm not that old," he said to himself. He backed a few paces and then ran forward. Confound it! Just as he took off, one of his feet stuck in the sand and he tumbled into the ditch. Fortunately, there was nothing hard or sharp at the bottom. Still, it took him more than ten minutes to recover from the shock and pain. Smiling, he dusted himself down and climbed out — into a puddle! He hurriedly withdrew his foot. But too late! His shoe and sock were soaked through. He felt as uncomfortable as when you eat rice with grit in it. Looking up, he saw a lonely orange-coloured lamp hung on a slanting pole, like a big exclamation mark on a big blackboard.

As he approached the building he again heard cheers and whistles from its windows. Perhaps the foreign team had scored. Reaching an entrance, he looked closely at the number and decided that this was the place. However, he still hesitated. He waited, hoping someone would pass by to confirm it.

Before he had set off for this city, the head of his organization had given him a letter of introduction and asked him to look up a certain company manager. "We were pals in the army," he told Chen. "The letter explains everything. Something's wrong with our Shanghai car. The driver and some comrades in our administration office have tried everywhere to get it repaired, but no one can fix it because they've no spare parts. Now this friend of mine is in charge of motor maintenance and he once assured me that if I needed our car repaired, I should go to him. So you go and find him. Send me a telegram when it's settled."

There was nothing unusual in asking a friend, a comrade-in-arms, to do a favour. Why shouldn't someone in authority ask someone else with power and influence to repair his unit's car, which was, after all, state property? There was no reason to refuse, and Chen, who knew the importance of legs of mutton, never doubted the necessity of the errand. On the contrary, he ought to help his colleagues who needed something from the big city. However, after accepting the mission, he felt a bit uncomfortable, as if wearing a pair of shoes which did not quite fit or a pair of trousers with different coloured legs.

His chief, noticing his hesitation, had phoned him several times

since his arrival, urging him to see to this business. "Well, I'm not doing this for myself," he encouraged himself. And so he had come all this way and, covered with mud, had now reached his destination.

Luckily, he met two children who confirmed that this was the place he was looking for. He quickly climbed to the fourth floor, found the flat door, and, having calmed down, knocked gently yet loudly enough to be heard.

No response. After a while, there was a slight noise from inside. Chen listened, his ear against the door. Probably music. He was somewhat relieved, as it would have been disappointing not to find the man. He knocked loudly at the door again.

After the third knock, there came the sound of steps and then the turning of a lock. The door was opened to reveal a young man with a mop of unkempt hair, in a pair of underpants and flipflops. The lines of his body with its bulging muscles gleamed white. "Who are you looking for?" he asked impatiently.

"Comrade X," Chen stated the name on the envelope.

"He's not in." The young man turned to close the door.

Chen stepped forward and, trying to speak in the standard city accent, introduced himself and then asked, "Perhaps you're his relative? May I leave a message?"

It was quite dark in the doorway, and Chen could not make out his features clearly. However, he felt instinctively that the young man frowned. After a momentary hesitation, he said, "Come in then." With that, he turned to go in, like a nurse leading a patient in to see the dentist.

Chen followed him in. It was quiet except for their steps. They passed more doors than Chen had ever seen before in one flat. As one of them was pushed open by the young man, Chen was assailed by the smell of liquor.

Inside, the lamplight was soft. On the bed lay a crumpled silk-covered quilt. There was a fashionable, shining floor lamp. The door of a bedside locker was ajar revealing a new sophisticated lock, just the kind many of Chen's friends had asked him to buy, but which he had not seen in any store. Then he shifted his eyes to the rattan chairs, chaise-longue and a round table. A stereo

tape-recorder from abroad was playing a song, by a Hongkong singer, soft, clear and sentimental. It sounded ridiculous. If this was played in his little town, people would be scared stiff. The only familiar object in the room was a half-filled glass on the locker, like a friend in a strange place.

Chen spotted a rickety square stool by the door and, pulling it over, sat down despite his dirty clothes. He began to explain why he was there. After two sentences, he paused, hoping the man would take the hint and turn down the volume of the recorder. As he failed to do this, Chen had to carry on. He found it difficult to express himself and could only stammer incoherently, unable to find the right words. Instead of "Please tell Comrade X to arrange this," he said, "Could you do me a favour?" as though he wanted to borrow money. When he should have said, "I've come to make contact with you," he said humbly, "I need your help." Even the voice was not like his, but like a blunt saw on wood.

Then he produced the letter, but the young man did not stand up from his chaise-lounge to take it. Though much older than he, Chen had to go over and hand it to him, getting a closer look at the pimply face, which wore an impatient, ignorant, conceited expression.

The young man flicked open the letter, glanced at it and smiled contemptuously, his left foot beating time to the music. Both the tape-recorder and the Hongkong song were new to Chen. Though he did not exactly dislike the singing, he did not admire it. Unconsciously, a frown flitted across his face.

"Is this boss of yours really my father's old comrade-in-arms? I've never heard of him."

Chen felt insulted. Unable to check his anger, he retorted, "You're too young! Your father may not have mentioned him to you."

"My father says everyone who needs his car repaired claims to be his old army buddy."

Chen's face grew burning hot, his heart beat faster and beads of sweat stood on his forehead. "What do you mean? He went to

Yanan in 1936! His elder brother is the commander of C — military region!”

Chen was in such a fluster when mentioning that commander, he suddenly felt dizzy and perspired profusely.

But all he got was a sneer, even more contemptuous.

Chen lowered his head, utterly ashamed of himself.

“Let me put it this way,” the young man said, standing up as if about to make a report. “Nowadays, you’ve got to have two things to clinch a deal. First, goods. What can you give us in return?”

“Goods?” Chen asked himself. “What do we have? Legs of mutton?” he muttered as if talking to himself.

“That won’t do!” The young man smiled again. His contempt had turned into pity. “Secondly, to be frank, you need to know a trick or two. . . . Why do you have to see my father? So long as you have goods and someone able, you can put through the deal in anyone’s name.” After a brief pause, he added, “My father’s away at the seaside on business.” He avoided saying “convalescing”.

Chen’s head was swimming. As he got to the door, he suddenly cocked his ears, for the recorder was now playing a familiar Hungarian classical waltz. It was good music. He imagined a leaf dancing over an azure lake surrounded on three sides by snow-capped mountains. And his home town was on the other side of one of them. A wild goose alighted on the water.

Chen, as though drunk, rushed down the dark stairs. He heard something thumping, but could not tell whether it was his heart or footsteps. He left the building and looked up. The pale orange-coloured lamp on the slanting pole had turned scarlet like a monster’s eye!

What a frightening eye! Chen dashed forward, easily jumping over the ditch. The football match must have ended, for there was the announcer’s bland voice reading the weather forecast. He hurried to the bus terminal, where many people were waiting. Some young women workers, apparently on night shift, were animatedly discussing the bonus system at their place of work. A young couple were talking intimately, arms round each other. Having got on the

bus, Chen stood close to the door. This conductress was no longer young. She was very thin and her sharp shoulder-blades showed through her blouse. During the past twenty hard years, Chen had learned a lot at the expense of certain things to which he should have been entitled. However, he still loved lamplight, night-shift workers, democracy, bonus systems, legs of mutton. . . . The bus bell went and the three doors closed one after another. Outside, the shadows of trees and lamps began to recede. “Fares, please!” called the conductress. But before Chen could fish out his money, she had switched off her light, thinking all the passengers were night-shift workers.

**Ai Zhongxin**

## The Art of Wu Zuoren

A leading contemporary Chinese artist, Wu Zuoren paints well both in oils and in Chinese ink. In blending western painting with Chinese painting he has succeeded in breaking new ground.

Born in 1908 in Anhui Province, Wu Zuoren studied in his early youth under the well-known artist Xu Beihong (Ju Péon) (1895-1953). In 1930 he went to France, where he entered the Ecole nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts. Soon afterwards he went to Brussels, studying under Alfred Bastien at the Académie royale de Belgique. Returning home in 1935, he taught at the Central University in Nanjing and, after the outbreak of the War of Resistance Against Japan in 1937, he moved with the university to Chongqing in Sichuan.

In 1943, he left Chongqing because he wanted to extricate himself from the oppressive atmosphere there.

He was then 35, and this marked the beginning of the golden period of his art. He travelled widely over the Qinghai-Tibet

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Wu Zuoren

Plateau, the “roof of the world”. Deep in the Gobi desert, he lived with the Tibetan herdsmen, who treated him like a brother. They slept in the same yurt and drank from the same milk-pot. The vast grasslands in summer and the snow-capped peaks in winter widened his horizons immeasurably. Inspired, he portrayed, in oils, water colours and charcoal, different aspects of Tibetan life. Works from this period include *The Karakorum Mountains*, *A Stream in the Gobi*, *Serfs* and *Women Carrying Water*. Though originally Wu Zuoren had specialized in oils, he started experimenting with ink and wash. His free-style paintings of galloping yaks and camel caravans won the immediate acclaim of art lovers for their new themes and vivid expression. Since then he has painted more and more in the traditional style. Now it is difficult to say which are better, his oils or his ink and wash paintings.

The subject of a traditional Chinese painting, be it a landscape or whatever, embodies the painter’s understanding of life and his aspirations; in other words, it reflects his philosophical vision. Wu Zuoren has said, “Ancient Chinese painters stressed the *yijing*

(literally, idea and situation) of landscapes. In fact *yijing* is essential to all types of paintings. *Yi* refers to the ideal, and *jing* to reality. In my understanding, a good Chinese painting is a combination of both." He has also said, "Having lived for some time on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, I felt that the vastness of nature and its poetic and musical charm required a special mode of representation. I began to study and seek a way to develop traditional Chinese painting so as to convey my impressions and aspirations." During that trip, Wu Zuoren became one of the first artists to study the murals in the Dunhuang Caves of Gansu, which strengthened his resolve to paint in Chinese ink.

Wu Zuoren started by depicting yaks, camels and eagles. He chose these as his subjects because he wanted to convey through them his ideals, express life's vigour and impress the viewer with a sense of beauty. No artist had ever painted yaks in the traditional style before and only a few had portrayed camels. He deserves credit for introducing these new themes. More important is that he was induced to paint them because he was deeply impressed by what he had seen on the plateau. Wu Zuoren said, "I was fascinated by herds of yaks galloping in the stillness of the snow-covered wilderness, throwing up clouds of powdery snow as they went. The galloping yaks are a symbol of strength, courage and energy." He added, "Whereas the camel symbolizes a different kind of strength. Bearing its heavy burden on a long journey, it displays a persistent and dauntless spirit." Both the yak and the camel are widely used in farming and in transportation on the plateau and in the desert. Wu Zuoren has personally seen how, during a storm in the desert, camels lie on the ground, using their huge bodies to shield the travellers. This fact explains why he is never tired of painting these animals and eagles, which are also a symbol of courage and strength, and why people keenly appreciate his works. Just as we can listen to Beethoven's Symphony No. 6 over and over again, we can return frequently to Wu Zuoren's *Galloping Yaks* without feeling bored, because each time it reveals something fresh. As Wu Zuoren has said, for a serious artist every portrayal of the same subject is a new creation. Some Chinese painters often produce variations on a certain theme. The



Boatmen

viewer takes pleasure in examining them, because these convey the artist's feelings and ideas, just as poetry or music. This is a salient feature of traditional Chinese painting.

Apart from the importance of ideals, traditional Chinese painting also pays attention to the portrayal of images, like any other art. The ox, a robust animal, was probably the first to be depicted by man, both in China and abroad. The bison in the Altamira cave paintings, Spain, and the ploughing ox in the Han and Weidynasty murals (206 BC-AD 265) are undoubtedly exquisite works of art. Wu Zuoren paints the yak in the free style with "splashed ink". Many people judge a work of art by whether or not it bears a resemblance to the real object. But art transcends life, because artistic images are more generalized, refined and typical than their prototypes. The truth of this theory is obvious and simple to understand, but it is not easy to put into practice and to create artistic models. According to Wu Zuoren's experience, to do this one must "learn from nature and surpass it". He explained that to learn from nature one must respect objective reality, excluding the subjective, and that to surpass it, one must have ideals and judgement, bringing in the self. This shows the dialectic relationship between form and spirit. Wu Zuoren explained in an article, "To learn from nature, an artist must gain a thorough understanding of the things objectively existing in it; otherwise he cannot speak of artistic creation. But in observing objective things, he must distinguish between the principal and the secondary, the important and the unimportant and the true and the false. He must first have a general view of an object and then examine the details and their connections with the whole. He should portray the form in order to bring out the spirit. On the other hand, in conveying the spirit he must not neglect the form. He must know how to express great ideas in simple ways before he can refine the raw material from life and select the essential and discard the dross." Wisdom and imagination elevate the artistic image above the natural form of an object, making it resemble the real object not only in appearance but in spirit.

Wu Zuoren knows how best to refine his raw material. Succinctness is the chief characteristic of his style. Take, for example,

his paintings of pandas. (He was also the first to paint them.) He often deliberately leaves out details of the eyes, only drawing the black circles around them. But when he comes to paint the eagle, he fills in all the details of its glowering sharp yellow eyes. In leaving out the eyes of the former and painting them in the latter, he wanted to create different impressions.

Wu Zuoren told me an amusing story about pandas. One day, when he went to the zoo to observe them, he saw a mother panda carrying her newly-born baby in her arms to breast-feed it. By mistake, she held her baby upside-down, so that it could not find her breast. Wu Zuoren saw something human in the panda's funny, clumsy posture. So when painting it, he uses his imagination to make it seem human, instead of portraying it in a naturalistic way. Through pandas he expresses his joy of life.

Similarly, in painting the yak he presents its body and tail in simple, bold brush strokes, while paying meticulous attention to depicting its head and legs. For the camel, he uses heavy ink to portray its huge body covered with thick hair, accentuating its stalwartness and tenacity. The strong artistic impact of Wu Zuoren's animal paintings originates from his ability to be succinct.

Wu Zuoren also displays originality in brush-work. For instance, the goldfish he paints are different from those of other artists. He can paint the transparent caudal fin of the fish in three or four strokes, so that it seems to come to life. His complete mastery of the brush and skilful use of ink and colour have something to



*Baskets and Carrying-pole*

do with his training in calligraphy. He can write seal characters and the cursive script equally well.

The sense of beauty of form in traditional Chinese painting is in some degree due to the unsized paper used. Wu Zuoren sets strict demands on his brush strokes. Every stroke must help to give shape to the object he paints. In depicting the head of a yak, or the fine hair on a camel's neck and legs, or the feathers of a vulture, he takes full advantage of the absorbent quality of the paper, so that the ink he applies diffuses slightly. When he paints, he seems to wield his brush freely, without any effort, yet he produces a work of rare beauty. This is due to his keen observation of life, his rigorous training in sketching, his mastery of the brush and ink usage and his varied accomplishments as an artist.

Wu Zuoren writes good poetry in the classical style and has a profound knowledge of literature, which add to the lyrical quality of his paintings. "There is poetry in his painting," as the saying goes. Wu Zuoren is also a lover of music, which gives him a fine sense of rhythm in painting. Many of his friends still remember that the flute and the violin were his inseparable companions during his student days.

When Wu Zuoren studied in Belgium, his works of that period reflected the life and scenery of northern Europe. *Boatmen* is one of his representative works. A long painting, with a unique composition, it shows the boatmen's heavy and yet steady steps, burdened by life. The robust figures are well portrayed, with a few simple strokes. Early northern European still-life paintings were carefully and neatly executed. With great attention to detail, they were very realistic. Assimilating this fine tradition, Wu Zuoren tried to infuse his still-life paintings with his feelings. Fresh and beautiful, his Chinese peonies delight the eye with their exuberance.

Wu Zuoren has dedicated himself to developing a Chinese style of oil painting. He said, "If an artist does not seek the source of art in the life of his own nation, carefully observe reality and study and portray his country's subjects, but merely imitates foreign works, he will be seriously hampered in his artistic career." Two of his paintings from the fifties, *A Portrait of the Painter*

*Qi Baishi and Harnessing the Yellow River at Sanmenxia*, show his early success in this respect.

*A Portrait of the Painter Qi Baishi* is a remarkable likeness of the sedate great master (1863-1957). The blue-black long gown contrasts with the artist's white hair and warm complexion. It shows the accomplished old painter having both rich experience in life and still maintaining a childlike innocence. All his life, Qi Baishi had devoted himself to art, in spite of the great hardships he had suffered. He received recognition only late in life. Wu Zuoren also shows originality in executing the details. In the painting, Qi Baishi is wearing a velvet cap. The atmosphere is relaxed and tranquil. His observant eyes shine with wisdom. The peculiar shape of his mouth resulted from his habit of sucking his brush while painting. His right hand is half closed as if holding a brush, and his thick palm is evidence of the years of

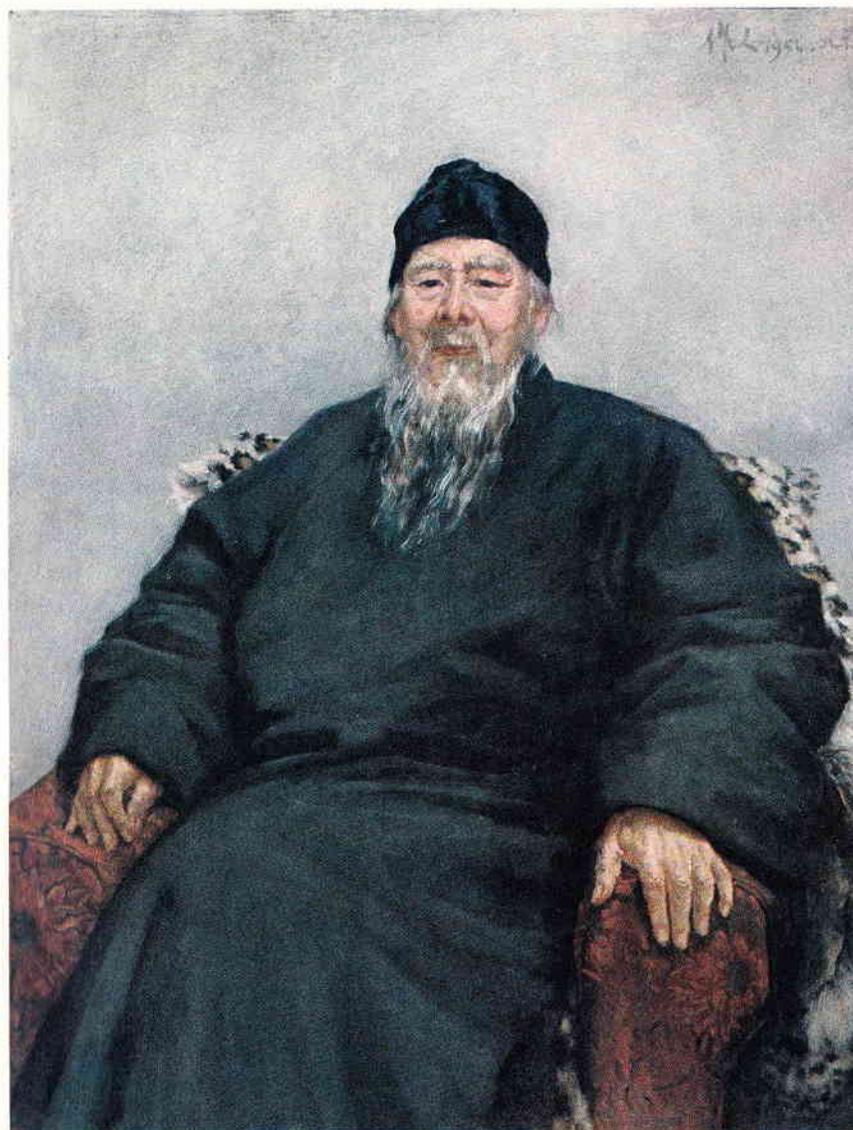
Wu Zuoren and his artist wife Xiao Shufang



toil when he was a carpenter in his youth. All these details help to convey the spirit and habits of the old painter. Although Qi Baishi is not shown in his studio, this portrait successfully brings out his qualities as a great artist.

Wu Zuoren is good at expressing his emotions. This is obvious in his *Harnessing the Yellow River at Sanmenxia*. Sanmenxia is a famous gorge in the middle reaches of the Yellow River. With ease and grace he has painted a panoramic scene, full of vitality. The torrential waters, the winding muddy river, flow with tremendous momentum.

Wu Zuoren is patriotic and democratic-minded, a champion of the cause of the people. When China was under the Kuomintang, he took an active part in the democratic movement. After 1949 he became the dean, later president, of the Central Academy of Fine Arts, as well as vice-chairman of the Chinese Artists' Association. He is now vice-chairman of the China Federation of Literary and Art Circles and a deputy to the National People's Congress. Despite his age, he is still very active.



Portrait of the Painter Qi Baishi (oil painting)

## Paintings by Wu Zuoren

藏原牧犛  
一九九九年  
作



Herding Yaks (traditional Chinese painting)



高瞻  
一九九九年  
作



Looking Afar (traditional Chinese painting)



**Bi Shuowang**

## Three Poems

*The first two poems were written on the occasion of the “Chinese Weekend” held last September in Iowa City, Iowa, U.S.A., which I attended with Xiao Qian under the auspices of the International Writing Program, of which Nieh Hua-ling and her poet-husband Paul Engle were the co-directors. During the weekend, about thirty Chinese writers and scholars from Beijing, Taipei, Hongkong and university campuses in the United States met to discuss literature and other topics. And, of course, there was also a lot of fun, such as a visit to the art collection of John Deere & Co. The last poem, dated earlier, was also read at several poetry gatherings in American universities during the tour.*

## Thoughts on the Iowa Meet

IS the Great Wall as distant  
As seen from a spaceman's cabin?  
A line of Yu Dafu's poem shames one,  
Saying his path was easier  
Than that of his ancestors.  
Then he died without a name.  
Here in Iowa, I long  
For a full pushing pond of lotuses  
That in rain would swell the chorus of happy sounds.  
And I marvel at the cold cedars  
Watching over the rapids,  
Probably the Mississippi itself.  
We meet beside the great waters of Mark Twain,  
The season when the hills back home  
Are also reddening,  
The year's best.  
I know that not all these charming people  
Are passing strangers.  
Come and sail on Lake Taihu  
One night in the moonlight.

Iowa, September 1979

## The Mississippi and Us

PEN in hand,  
With wind-ruffled hair and a deep voice  
You come to greet me,  
And I, you.  
The Mississippi twilight deepens,  
Making images even closer;  
We can feel each other.  
Springtime, greening bamboos rattle  
By the side of lonely pavilion.  
In the fall, we are stunned  
By the rushing stream defying everything  
That stands in its way.  
We can understand each other  
Now that an innocent John Deere painting  
Can move us to tears.  
The Han-dynasty men tilled the land my way.  
So easily my heart is caught  
By the twinkling lights  
Seen from a September showboat.  
What this first dreamy evening  
Will bring tomorrow, none can tell.  
Still this much is there:  
We are in the same boat;  
We both have a pen.

Iowa City, September 1979

## A Rose in Beijing

YELLOW rose, sweet and tender,  
You remind me of the hue  
Palace robes were dyed.  
This fine morning in Beijing  
The summer harvest approaches after a rain.  
You look at the soothing green  
Not without a touch of pride.

Many a spring was wasted.  
For thirty years the Yellow River in sunset  
Was a faint dream.  
At the Golden Gate we waited,  
Till one day dawn broke anew  
On your backyard flowerbed.

The widow of a former G.I.  
Brought you here from across the Pacific.  
We sit and think once more  
Of the old Yanan days,  
When great things were achieved  
Without the world knowing.

A few brave Americans too  
Did their part and shed their blood,  
Under the northern China sky,  
Frozen in terror in 1945.  
Since then I have longed to see roses.

The rose still smelled of love for many.  
The roses once meant war  
That drove thousands to their death.  
Yet you are here on a simple table  
To warm the hearts of a few veterans,  
Multi-star generals and I and a billion followers.  
You are sole, single, unique,  
Never alone.  
And hidden deep behind long blonde hair  
I see young cheeks\* blushing;  
For they know that every year  
There will be roses!

Beijing, June 1978

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\* In the spring of 1978, a group of U.S. ex-servicemen, who were in Yanan in the mid-forties, came to Beijing and were received by Marshal Ye Jianying and Madame Deng Yingchao as well as many other old acquaintances. Mme Deng brought a yellow rose from her own garden, from a bush which was presented to Premier Zhou Enlai several years ago by the widow of a U. S. airman, who was killed in action in China's War of Resistance Against Japan. Among the group were some young Americans. Hence the "young cheeks".

*Fan Ning*

## Ming-Dynasty Fiction

**A**NCIENT China had fiction in embryo in the form of legends and parables, while in the Six Dynasties (3rd-6th century) there began to appear tales of ghosts and spirits and anecdotes about men. In the Tang Dynasty (7th-9th century), scholars began to write fiction — short romances written in the classical language — as an independent literary form. These were replaced by story-tellers' scripts in the vernacular in the Song and Yuan Dynasties (10th-14th century). The Ming Dynasty (14th-17th century) saw a rapid development not only of the short story but also, for the first time in Chinese history, of the novel divided into chapters. This flourishing of fiction was, of course, closely connected with the development of the economy and the politics of that time.

In the mid-14th century, Zhu Yuanzhang (1328-1398) took advantage of the victory of the peasants' uprising in the late Yuan

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Dynasty to found a feudal empire called the Ming. To consolidate and strengthen his rule, he carried out a series of reforms, encouraging land reclamation, reducing levies and taxes, improving water conservancy, curbing the local gentry and fostering handicrafts. So during the first hundred years of the Ming, production expanded and the social order was gradually stabilized. As commerce developed, towns prospered and the urban population increased rapidly. To meet the cultural needs of the towns, a great variety of entertainments was provided. As early as in the Song and Yuan, there had been many entertainers including acrobats, singers, dancers, actors and story-tellers. These latter were very familiar with the life of craftsmen and merchants, so, apart from relating folktales and historical legends, they also told stories about the joys and sorrows of such people. These stories were later transcribed. However, their scripts which served as story-tellers' prompt-books were usually simple, for they existed largely as a form of oral literature. They were gradually improved and artistically perfected by later scholars. Their themes and contents were richer than those of the Tang romances, and they were written in everyday speech instead of the classical language; hence their popularity. During the Ming Dynasty, some scholars began to write original stories in this form, and these "imitation scripts" marked the start of stories written by individuals unlike the oral literature of the Song and Yuan Dynasties. This literature in the vernacular was popular for a time.

The "imitation scripts" reached their heyday in the mid and late Ming Dynasty. In the early sixteenth century there appeared three collections entitled *Stories to Enlighten Men*, *Stories to Warn Men* and *Stories to Awaken Men*, all edited by a scholar named Feng Menglong (1574-1645). Feng, from Wuxian County in the province of Jiangsu, was a county magistrate, who died of grief after the Ming Dynasty fell. He made a great contribution to China's popular literature. A versatile man, he read widely and had a broad range of interests. He wrote good poems and essays, as well as plays, in addition to editing stories and collecting folk songs. The three collections he edited comprise one hundred and twenty short stories, two-thirds dating from the Ming, the rest

being Song and Yuan scripts. They also include tales written by scholars like Feng Menglong himself and "imitation scripts" which he had improved or rewritten. Later, there came out two other collections, *Amazing Tales* and *Second Series of Amazing Tales*, edited by Ling Mengchu (1580-1644). All the seventy-eight stories in those two collections were either written or recast by him. Those five books, later known as the "three collections of stories" and "two collections of amazing tales", embody the best Ming short stories in the vernacular and are outstanding representatives of the fiction of that time.

The contents of the Ming stories varied greatly. The theme of most in those collections was love. This may have been because love was the traditional theme in the Song and Yuan scripts. However, certain changes were introduced. Whereas the Song scripts dealt with love between human being and spirits, to attain things actually unattainable, the Ming "imitation scripts" integrated descriptions of love with the complex vicissitudes of real life. Love was realized in life instead of after death. "The Oil Vendor and the Courtesan" is a well-known "imitation script" about the love between the oil vendor Qin Zhong and the courtesan Shen Yaoqin. When the girl first meets Qin, she simply likes his sterling qualities. Only when she is insulted by a profligate does she realize that Qin would make an ideal husband and decide to marry him. The whole plot develops realistically, and there is nothing supernatural about it.

Apart from love, the Ming stories also mirror all aspects of life, particularly the life of hard-working and honest craftsmen and tradesfolk. They not only reflect their activities but also their urge to raise their social status.

As corruption increased in the late Ming Dynasty, there appeared a number of tales about frame-up cases. Examples are *Stories of Cases Dealt with by Magistrate Hai Rui* by Li Chunfang, *Stories of Cases Tried by Ming Magistrates* by Yu Xiangdou, *Bright Mirror Cases* and *Fair Verdicts*. Ming writers described many frame-up cases and how they were set right. Most such stories were very popular because of their intricate plots; however, artistically, they were relatively crude. *The Old Gardener* in this issue is an ex-

ception. There is no upright official to exonerate the old gardener; instead, fairies come to punish his tormentors. This was a new departure in stories of this genre.

*The Second Series of West Lake Tales*, *Nodding Rock*, *Making the Drunkard Sober* and *Bell at Night* are other Ming works containing many fascinating stories.

What is particularly noteworthy is the appearance of the Ming novels. The birth of the novel with each chapter headed by a couplet giving the gist of its content was a break-through in Ming fiction. Novels of this kind grew out of the Song and Yuan scripts of historical romances dealing mostly with the rise and fall of earlier dynasties. These stories were told as a series, since one session was not enough to cover the rise and decline of a dynasty; and later each part naturally became a chapter. At the start of each session, the story-teller would give the new instalment a title. This genre developed until finally it cut loose from the scripts of historical romances though still retaining traces of their form.

*The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, the earliest historical novel in China, was written in the early Ming Dynasty. Luo Guanzhong (1330?-1400?), the author, was not a high-ranking official; indeed his social position was rather low, so that little is known about his life. According to some records, he was from Taiyuan, Shanxi Province, and lived in the late Yuan and early Ming Dynasties. He was said to have written dozens of works. Of these, apart from *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, *The Romance of the Sui and Tang Dynasties*, *The Romance of the Five Dynasties* and *The Sorcerer's Revolt and Its Suppression by the Three Suis* are still extant.

*The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* is based on the history of the late Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220) and the subsequent warfare between the three kingdoms of Wei, Shu and Wu. It covers the main events in almost a century from 184 to 280. The work comprises one hundred and twenty chapters, with over 700,000 words all told. The first eighty chapters describe the contention between various warlords; the rest, the conflicts between the three powers and the final unification of the country.

Stories about that period had long had a strong popular appeal.

Luo Guanzhong's *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* was based on Chen Shou's (233-297) historical work *The History of the Three Kingdoms* and folk legends. Thus about seven-tenths of it is historical, the rest is imaginary. By describing the confrontation between the three powers, the author exposed the seamy side of society, mirrored the people's sufferings in that period of upheaval, and at the same time expressed his longing for a stable, unified country. The novel depicts endless intrigues and struggles of all kinds between political cliques, but the principal means they resort to is armed struggle which naturally constitutes an important part of the book. The vivid description of battles, big or small, shows that Luo had a profound knowledge of war and a superb mastery of artistic expression. A fine example of this is his detailed account of the battle of the Red Cliffs in the year 208 when Cao Cao, the founder of the kingdom of Wei in the north, leads 200,000 troops south in an attempt to conquer the southern warlords and unify the whole country. They are stopped by the joint forces, 50,000 strong, of Sun Quan and Liu Bei, who make use of the Yangtze River as a natural barrier. Taking advantage of Cao Cao's miscalculation, they strike a telling blow at the enemy at the Red Cliffs by means of fire. This battle famed in Chinese history greatly weakened Cao Cao's force, hence the struggle between the three powers was protracted. Making use of historical records, the author, resorting to exaggeration, presents a fascinating account of a battle, one of the best in all Chinese classical novels.

There are more than four hundred characters in this novel, and most of the main ones appear in the battle at the Red Cliffs. The author was good at depicting their character through intricate conflicts. Men like Cao Cao, Liu Bei's military counsellor Zhuge Liang, and Sun Quan's commander-in-chief Zhou Yu are drawn to the life.

Zhuge Liang, the ingenious strategist, is so well portrayed that he is known all over China. On one occasion he tricks 150,000 enemy troops into withdrawing, although the city he is in has only 2,500 defenders. He has the main gates thrown open and twenty men disguised as civilians are sent to each to sweep the roadway while he himself, attended by two boys, plays a zither in full view

on the city wall. He appears so utterly at ease that the enemy commander Sima Yi concludes that troops must be ambushed there. So he pulls back his army without delay. There are quite a few episodes like this attesting to Zhuge Liang's skill as a strategist.

The original script of *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* is no longer in existence. The version most popular today was re-edited by Mao Zonggang in the Qing Dynasty. A great achievement of Ming literature, this work marked the maturity of the historical novel. It was an important milestone in the history of Chinese fiction.

*Outlaws of the Marsh* is another magnum opus which appeared in the early Ming Dynasty. During the many centuries of feudal rule in China, there were peasant revolts in almost every dynasty. *Outlaws of the Marsh* is the first panoramic novel to have portrayed the full course of such a revolt from its beginning down to its defeat. It was based on stories about the peasant uprising at Liangshan Marsh led by Song Jiang at the end of the Northern Song Dynasty, in the 1220s. Some of the characters and events are taken from actual life, but most of them are fictitious or adapted from the story-tellers' "prompt-books" which appeared in the Song Dynasty.

The novel depicts the different forms of its characters' resistance to oppression, and how their desire for personal revenge led them to join forces in a great uprising. When Old Jin and his daughter are driven to desperation by Butcher Zheng, Lu Zhishen goes to their rescue out of a strong sense of justice and beats the bully to death. Lin Chong, an arms instructor of the Imperial Guards, has originally no thought of revolt. But he is framed and attempts are made to kill him because the adopted son of his immediate superior has designs on his wife. Goaded into a fury, he kills the villains sent to murder him. Wu Song is a hero who has killed a tiger. He brings a lawsuit against the murderers of his elder brother, but the accusation is rejected and he himself is persecuted by the accused, in collaboration with the local officials. Unable to bring the criminal to justice, he kills him. Xie Zhen and Xie Bao are two hunters who are falsely accused by a despotic landlord. The

outlaws break into the jail to save them, then kill that local tyrant. . . .

All these victims of injustice from all parts of the country are driven to rise in rebellion. They join forces at Liangshan Marsh, raise the standard of revolt there, kill venal officials and set themselves against the emperor and his court. The stories of the rebels form the major part of *Outlaws of the Marsh*, which is one of the most brilliant Chinese novels because it combines profound ideological content with great skill in its portrayal of the outlaws. There are at least twenty heroic characters with distinctive dispositions, such as Li Kui, Wu Song, Lu Zhishen and the three gallant brothers of the Ruan family, and all of them are vivid and lifelike.

We have little reliable information about the life of Shi Naian, author of *Outlaws of the Marsh*. He is said to have been a native of Xianghua County, Jiangsu Province, who joined the rebel army led by Zhang Shicheng, but there is no evidence to prove this. It sounds plausible because he certainly knew a great deal about warfare. He was probably a contemporary of Luo Guanzhong. There are three popular editions of *Outlaws of the Marsh*: the 100-chapter, 120-chapter and 70-chapter editions. The last, abridged by the Qing-dynasty scholar Jin Shengtan (1608-1661), has been the most widely circulated version in the past three hundred years. As this novel was so popular, many later romances and operas were based on it.

After the appearance of *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* and *Outlaws of the Marsh*, little good fiction was written for more than a hundred years. But after the middle period of the Ming Dynasty, in the early 16th century, all kinds of popular literary works were produced again. Some influential scholars began to pay equal attention to fiction as to orthodox literature, commending its role and giving it a higher status. By writing commentaries on popular novels or revising them, they gave fresh impetus to the creation of fiction both then and later. At the same time, the development of printing techniques and the increase in printing houses provided favourable conditions for the publication of books. In this new

heyday of Ming fiction appeared *Pilgrimage to the West*, one of the famous romances about gods and demons.

After the middle of the Ming Dynasty, the government became more corrupt and the ruling class more decadent. But while living in luxury they hankered after immortality, prayed to spirits, worshipped Buddha and sought high and low for immortals. Emperor Wan Li (1573-1620) was a devotee of Taoism, and the alchemist Li Zi and the Buddhist priest Ji Xiao were appointed to high official posts thanks to their skill as magicians. Therefore, talk of magic and the miraculous was in vogue. It was no accident that *Pilgrimage to the West* came out at such a time.

*Pilgrimage to the West* tells the story of Xuan Zang (Hsuan Tsang) (602-664), a Buddhist monk of the Tang Dynasty, who was sent to India to search for Buddhist scriptures. He travelled some ten thousand miles in seventeen years, experiencing all kinds of hardships and perils, and brought back over six hundred volumes of Buddhist sutras — a major event in the history of Buddhism in China. But the more his story spread, the more miraculous it became and the farther from the facts. It was during the middle of the Ming Dynasty that Wu Chengen (1510?-1582?) wrote the novel based on the legend. Wu Chengen was a native of Huaian County, Jiangsu Province. "Intelligent, witty and well-read", he was "fond of a jest" and liked to collect "fantastic stories and anecdotes". He was appointed to several minor official posts and was dissatisfied with the malpractices in official circles. The purpose of his novel was to satirize the social reality by relating miraculous tales.

*Pilgrimage to the West* has a hundred chapters. The first seven describe how the chief protagonist Monkey King, Sun Wukong, comes into the world, attains magic powers and plays havoc in heaven. The five chapters from Chapter Eight onwards describe the start of the pilgrimage to find Buddhist sutras. The remaining eighty-odd chapters deal with the whole pilgrimage and Sun Wukong's triumph over the monsters and demons which the pilgrims encounter on the way. Sun Wukong is the most brilliant figure in the novel and "Monkey Plays Havoc in Heaven" is one of the most fascinating chapters, a story known to every household

in China. Other episodes such as "Pigsy Gets Married in Gaolao Village", "Sun Wukong Subdues the White-bone Demon" and the battles of the Gold-rhinoceros Mountain and Flaming Mountain are also vividly written and breath-taking, full of suspense and magnificent fantasy.

The plot is highly intricate. For example, when Xuan Zang and his disciples come to the Flaming Mountain, they have to borrow Princess Iron Fan's palm-leaf fan to put out the blaze. But because Sun Wukong has hurt her son Red Boy, this is very difficult for them. Sun Wukong changes into a gnat and slips into Princess Iron Fan's belly, so terrifying her that she lends him a fan. But it turns out to be a fake one which makes the flames even fiercer. Monkey gets the true fan from the princess by taking the form of her husband, the Ox-Demon King, but he forgets to ask her how to make it contract to its original size. Then the Ox-Demon King gets the fan back from him by a ruse. . . . There are endless complications of this kind.

Because *Pilgrimage to the West* circulated widely and had a strong influence, it further aroused people's interest in gods and demons, so that a large number of such novels appeared afterwards. Among them, there are *A Sequel to the Pilgrimage to the West*, *The Supplement to the Pilgrimage*, *Canonization of the Gods* and *Expedition to the Western Ocean*.

Apart from novels dealing with gods and demons, romances about historical characters and events occupied a dominant position in Ming-dynasty fiction. These included *The Romance of the States of Eastern Zhou*, *The Romance of the Northern Song Dynasty*, *The Romance of the Western Zhou Dynasty* and *The Romance of Ming-dynasty Heroes*.

In the later period of the Ming Dynasty, the ruling class became more decadent and moribund and the social morality declined. Thus there appeared works reflecting loose life in feudal society and the novel *Jin Ping Mei* (*The Golden Lotus*) belonged to this category. Describing the rise to wealth and power and the sudden death of a local despot Ximen Qing, the novel portrays that decadent society with its evil rulers and urban ruffians. *Jin Ping Mei* is thought to have been completed in the Wan Li period (1573-1620)

and the author's name was given as Lan-ling-xiao-xiao-sheng (a Laughing Scholar from Lanling). It is the first novel composed entirely by a scholar, and the first taking family life as its theme. Though it contains some pornographic passages, it makes a fairly comprehensive exposure of the seamy side of late Ming society and the dissipated life of the ruling class. It also has many original artistic features and exerted a strong influence on the fiction of later periods.

Fifty to sixty novels written during the century after the mid-Ming Dynasty have been handed down to us. They reflect the social life of that time directly or indirectly, and various of the people's ideas and wishes. Furthermore, the many themes for novels they provided and the experience they accumulated prepared favourable conditions for the flowering of fiction in the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911).

## The Old Gardener

**T**HROUGH wind and pelting rain all night,  
My wooden door was bolted tight;  
Today the dark red flowers are gone,  
The willow's green is left alone;  
And, come to sweep the moss away,  
I stay my broom here in dismay;  
For, starrng all the steps near by,  
The crimson, wind-blown petals lie.

This verse was written by a flower-lover.

During the Tang Dynasty there lived east of Luoyang a gentleman named Cui Xuanwei, a devotee of Taoism and a bachelor who passed his life like a hermit. In the spacious grounds of his house, planted with flowers, bamboos and trees, he built a hut where he lived by himself; and his servants, whose quarters were outside this garden, could not enter without a good reason. For more than thirty years Cui never left his garden; and in springtime when the trees were in bloom he loved to stroll there day and night.

One fresh moonlit evening, unwilling to leave his flowers and go to bed, he was sauntering alone among the blossoms when he saw the dark figure of a girl slipping through the shadows.

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This story (《灌园叟晚逢仙女》) has been taken from *Stories to Awaken Men* (《醒世恒言》) edited by Feng Menglong. (冯梦龙).

"Who can she be, and what is she doing at this time of night in my garden?" he marvelled. "I will watch where she goes."

The girl went neither east nor west but came straight up to Cui and dropped a low curtsey.

Bowing in return, Cui asked, "From whose house do you come, young lady? And what brings you here so late at night?"

Parting her red lips in a dazzling smile, the girl answered, "I live near by. I am going with some friends to the east gate to see my aunt, and we would like to rest for a while in your courtyard. May we?"

Odd as he found her sudden appearance, Cui gave his cordial consent. And the girl, after thanking him, went back the way she had come, to return presently leading a group of maidens through the flowers and willows. As each in turn greeted Cui, he saw in the moonlight that they were exquisitely dainty and ravishingly beautiful. Some were magnificently attired, while others were simply dressed; even the maids attending them were quite bewitching. He could not imagine where they had come from. After they had exchanged greetings, Cui invited them to his room and they sat down.

"May I ask your names?" he said. "And what relatives are you calling on, that you come to my humble house?"

"My name is Yang," a girl in green told him. "This is Miss Li and this Miss Tao," she went on, pointing to two other girls, one in white and the other in red. And so she introduced them all, the last being a young girl in scarlet named Shi Acuo.\*

"Though we have different surnames, we are all cousins," said Miss Yang. "Several days ago, our eighteenth aunt whose name is Feng\*\* said that she intended to call on us, but she has not come; and we thought since the moon is so bright tonight, we might pay her a visit. Another reason for our coming was that we wanted to take this opportunity to thank you for all your kindness."

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\* Yang means willow, Li plum, Tao peach. Shi and Acuo are two names for the pomegranate.

\*\* Feng means wind.

Before Cui could answer, one of the girls announced, "Here is Aunt Feng."

Surprised and pleased they trooped out to meet her, while Cui stood to one side to watch.

"We were on our way to see you, aunt," declared the girls when they had greeted the new-comer. "But our host asked us to sit down for a few minutes, and now you've come! This shows how we have been thinking of each other!" They all curtsied to her.

"I have often wanted to come to see you," replied their aunt, "but some business has always prevented me. Today I took advantage of a free moment."

"It is such a lovely night," said the girls, "won't you sit down, aunt, and let us drink to your health?" They ordered the maids to fetch wine.

"Is it all right to sit here?" asked their aunt.

"We have a good host and the place is quiet," replied Miss Yang.

"Where is our host?"

When Cui stepped forward to greet Aunt Feng he noticed that her manner was rather breezy and fresh. He felt slightly chilled in her presence. Inviting her to his hut where the maids had set the table and chairs in order, he asked her to take the seat of honour. The girls sat in order of seniority, and Cui himself took the place of the host.

In no time the maids had brought wine and food and heaped the table with rare fruits and delicacies. The wine was strong and sweet as honey: nothing in that feast resembled earthly fare. By now the moon was so brilliant that the room was as bright as by day, and a heady fragrance filled the air. Guests and host drank to each other and, after a great deal of wine had been drunk, the girl in red filled a big goblet for her aunt.

"I would like to sing to you," she said.

"My cheeks are lightly rouged,  
My crimson robe is stained with crystal dew;  
My beauty fades so fast,  
But, cruel wind, I speak no ill of you!"

Tender and clear, this song made all who heard it sad. Then the girl in white presented another goblet to Aunt Feng. "I have a song too," she said.

"My jade-clear skin was whiter than the snow  
Beneath the moonlight of a bygone spring;  
I dare not blame the breeze for my distress,  
But mourn my beauty slowly vanishing!"

This song, even sadder than the first, upset Aunt Feng, who had drunk a little too much and was ready to flare up at a trifle.

"In these lovely surroundings and at a good feast like this, why sing such depressing songs?" she demanded. "If they are aimed at me, I must ask you to remember your manners! Both the singers must drain a big cup of wine by way of punishment and sing another song."

She filled a cup and prepared to pass it over; but because she was tipsy she did not hold it firmly. Her sleeve caught on her chopsticks and all the wine was spilt. With anybody else it would not have mattered, but the wine went over Acuo, a pretty young girl who loved fine clothes and was wearing an embroidered scarlet gown. A single drop would have left a mark on this scarlet silk, let alone a whole cup! The wine had gone to Acuo's head too, and when she saw her dress ruined she flushed with anger.

"They may have a favour to beg," she declared. "But I'm not afraid of you!" And she swept out.

"How dare she defy me, the drunken chit!" retorted Aunt Feng angrily, and prepared to flounce off too.

"Acuo is so young," pleaded the other girls, as they followed their aunt down the steps. "The wine has made her forget her manners, but please don't take offence. We shall bring her tomorrow to apologize to you."

In vain, however, did they urge Aunt Feng to stay. She blustered off eastwards. The girls then said goodbye to Cui and scattered among the flowers. Eager to see where they were going, he hurried after them; but he slipped on the mossy ground and fell, and by the time he scrambled to his feet the girls had disappeared.

"It couldn't have been a dream," he mused, "because I didn't go to sleep. And they can't have been ghosts, because they were dressed properly and spoke clearly. But if they were human, how could they vanish so suddenly?" In his bewilderment he speculated wildly.

In his room, the table and chairs were back in their usual places. Not a cup or dish remained from the feast, yet the air was filled with fragrance. While he marvelled at this, Cui realized that it could portend no evil, so he was not afraid. The next evening he was strolling again among his flowers, and came once more upon the girls, who were urging Acuo to go to apologize to her aunt.

"Why ask that old witch?" demanded Acuo, still angry. "Why not ask the gentleman here?"

Delighted with the idea, they said to Cui, "We all live in your garden, sir. Every year we are troubled by bad winds which will not leave us in peace, and in the past we always asked Aunt Feng to protect us. But since Acuo offended her yesterday, she may not be willing to help us any more. If you will protect us, we shall repay your kindness as best we can."

"What power have I to protect you?" asked Cui.

"All we ask," replied Acuo, "is that every New Year's Day you should set a crimson banner painted with the sun, the moon and the stars on the east side of the garden. Then we shall be safe. New Year's Day is past now; but if you will set up a banner on the twenty-first of this month at dawn when the east wind begins to blow, we shall have no trouble that day."

"That is easy," said Cui. "I will certainly do that for you."

"Thank you so much!" they cried together. "We shall never forget your kindness." Then, with a waft of fragrance they were gone so swiftly that Cui could not follow them!

The next day, interested in knowing what would happen, Cui prepared the crimson banner. When he got up at dawn on the twenty-first there was, sure enough, a slight east wind; so he hastily set up the banner on the east side of the garden. Almost immediately a sand-storm swept down upon the city, and many trees south of Luoyang were blown down; only the plants in Cui's

garden came through unscathed! Then Cui realized that the girls were flower spirits, Acuo in her scarlet frock being the pomegranate, while Aunt Feng was the spirit of the wind. The next evening these flower fairies brought him several pecks of peach and plum blossom to express their gratitude.

"Thank you, sir," they said, "for saving us. Our only way to repay your kindness is to bring you these flowers. If you eat the petals you will live to a great age and regain your youth; and if you will continue to protect us in this way we shall enjoy long life too."

After taking their advice Cui did indeed appear younger and younger, until he looked like a man in his thirties. And later he became an immortal.

The Luoyang gardener who loved his flowers  
Set up a crimson banner every year;  
By eating petals he avoided death,  
Became immortal and was freed from fear!

Pray do not imagine, gentle readers, that this tale about the wind and flower spirits is pure fantasy. In the Four Seas and Nine Continents are many marvels which men's eyes have never seen, men's ears have never heard, and scholars have never recorded in histories or classical lore.

It may be argued, though, that since Confucius avoided mentioning the supernatural, we would do well to shun these subjects too. And yet it is a fact that people who love flowers enjoy good fortune, while those who harm flowers shorten their own lives. Since the hand of Providence is manifest here, tales about flowers cannot be dismissed as foolish talk. If you do not believe me, gentle readers, let me tell you another story about a gardener who met a fairy in his old age. Flower-lovers will show even greater respect to flowers after hearing this story, while if there are any among you who do not love flowers, I hope by means of this tale to make flower-lovers of you too. Although not all can become immortals, everyone can find enjoyment in a garden.

You ask when and where the events in this story took place? The answer is: during the reign of Emperor Ren Zong (1023-1063),

in Changle Village, outside the East Gate of Suzhou. In this village, which lay only half a mile from the city, lived an old man named Qiu Xian. Coming of a line of farmers he owned a small plot of land and a thatched cottage. His wife had died and he had no children.

Since boyhood Qiu had loved growing flowers or cultivating fruit trees. He had, in fact, neglected farming to concentrate on gardening, and whenever he came upon some rare plant he was happier than if he had picked up a jewel. Even when out on urgent business, if he happened to see some flowering trees in a house he would slip in with a conciliatory smile, regardless of whether he was welcome or not. If he found only common plants or trees which were then blossoming in his own garden, he would leave quickly enough; but if he discovered some rare plant which he did not possess, or some plant which, even though he possessed it, had ceased to bloom in his garden, then he would set aside his business and remain there all day unable to tear himself away. So he came to be called The Flower Maniac.

If Qiu met a flower-vendor with a good plant, he would insist on buying it whether he had money with him or not — if he had no money he would pawn the clothes off his back. Some flower-vendors, knowing him, always raised their price when dealing with him, for he could never resist buying. Wastrels too, who had lost all their money, knowing his passion for flowers would break branches off rare plants they had discovered and stick them in mud as if they had roots, to deceive him. And he would always buy. The strange thing was, however, that when Qiu planted such shoots they always grew. And so, day by day and month by month he built up a fine garden.

Around this garden Qiu had raised a bamboo fence on which he trained rambler roses, briar roses, banksia, dog roses, hibiscus, cherry and broom; while at the foot of the fence he grew hollyhocks, balsam, cock's comb, mallow and poppies, as well as winter sweet, lilies, spring and autumn lychnis, cyclamen, anemones, rhododendron, wild ginger, white butterfly, elecampane, convolvulus and other flowers. They looked like a bright silk screen when in bloom. And a few paces from the fence he set other

rare plants, so that before one flower had faded another was in blossom.

Inside the old gardener's double wicker gate, which faced south, was a path fringed by bamboos and shade-giving cypresses. This led to a three-roomed cottage which, although it had only a thatched roof, was high and spacious with large windows. In the hall hung a small painting by an unknown artist, and the plain wooden couch, table and chairs there were spotlessly clean; there was not a speck of dust on the floor either. Behind the hall were two fine rooms, one of which was the old man's bedroom. He had every kind of flower under the sun and they all grew well, so that each season there seemed like spring.

Proud plum, so arrogant and stark,  
Shy, fragrant orchids dear,  
Cool, elegant camellia blooms,  
And greengage dark are here.  
Chrysanthemum that braves the frost,  
Sweet apricot in rain,  
Narcissus like translucent jade,  
Prim peony's disdain.  
Magnolia glimmers by the steps  
With pomegranate rare;  
And golden lotus by the pool  
Is cool and fresh and fair.  
Hibiscus dazzles by the stream  
Near perfumed cassia spray;  
The pear tree shimmers in the night,  
At dawn the peach is gay.  
The winter plum is sweet to smell,  
And bright as silk the rose,  
And spring seems ever present  
While each season comes and goes.

That garden held more flowers and aromatic herbs than you could count!

Qiu's wicker gate faced the great Chaotian Lake which joined Wusong River in the east, Zhenze Lake in the west, and Pang-

shan Lake in the south; so the view was delightful in all seasons, in bright or rainy weather alike. Here Qiu built an embankment which he planted with peach and willow trees, whose red blossoms and green leaves in spring rivalled the beauty of the famous West Lake in Hangzhou. He planted hibiscus along the bank and lotus of different colours in the water; and when these were in flower the whole lake seemed covered by a silk canopy and the air was filled with fragrance. Water-chestnut gatherers sang as they paddled their small craft, and sailing boats raced each other when there was a wind, while under the willows fishermen who had moored their boats spread their nets to dry. Some fished, others mended their nets, lay drinking on the prow, or challenged each other to swimming contests. Their laughter could be heard all day.

On painted barges came pleasure-seekers, attended by musicians, to see the lotus, and when they turned home at dark, thousands of lanterns mingled with the light of glow-worms and the reflection of stars in the water till you could hardly distinguish one from the other. In late autumn, when cold winds blew and turned the maple leaves red or yellow, the withered willows and hibiscus on the bank contrasted with the white duckweed and red smartweed at the water's edge; and the mournful cries of the wild geese among the rushes pierced the sky. In the depth of winter, when snow clouds massed and snowflakes fell, all was white. The pageant of the four seasons defied description.

Across the huge expanse of Lotus Lake,  
While boys pluck lotus, merry fishers sing;  
A host of flowers unfolds a small thatched hut,  
Whose master mid the blooms is slumbering.

But enough of this.

The old gardener's first care every day was to sweep away the fallen leaves from under his flowers, then water each plant in turn. And at night he would water them once more. Great was his joy whenever a tree was about to blossom. He would heat wine or brew a pot of tea, then bow low and pour a libation while he uttered three prayers for the tree's longevity. This done

he would sit under the tree to sip his drink slowly, and once under the influence of wine he would sing. When he was tired, he would lie under the tree with a rock as his pillow, remaining there from the time when the buds began to open until the tree was in full blossom. If the sun was strong, he would sprinkle the flowers with water from a whisk. If the moon was bright, he would stay up all night. If a storm sprang up, in his straw hat and coir cape he would make a tour of inspection; and wherever he found a branch battered by the wind he would prop it up with bamboo. In bad weather he would get up several times at night to inspect his charges.

When blossoms faded the old man would sigh or even shed tears, but unwilling to part with the fallen petals he always swept them up gently with his whisk and put them in a dish so that he could enjoy them until they were withered, when he would place them in a clean vase. As soon as the vase was full, with a look of inexpressible sadness he would offer libations again of tea or wine, then carry the vase to bury it in the embankment. This he called "Burying the Flowers". If any petals were spattered with mud during a shower, he would carefully wash them clean and scatter them in the lake. This he called "Bathing the Flowers".

The old gardener could not bear to see branches or flowers plucked. He reasoned, "A plant blossoms only once a year, and for a few days only during one of the four seasons. It puts up with three seasons of neglect for the sake of these few glorious days when it dances in the breeze and smiles at all around like a true favourite of fortune. But then all too often it is cut off in its prime. These few days are hard to come by, but to destroy a plant is easy. If flowers could speak, wouldn't they complain? Flowers first bud, then bloom and quickly fade; thus their blossoming time is very short. Then think of all the butterflies, bees, birds and insects which attack a plant, and of the hot sun, bitter wind and pelting rain. Men ought to protect flowers from all this — how can they have the heart to pluck them instead?"

"Think of the time it takes a seedling to put out roots, branches and tender twigs before it can blossom for men's delight. Isn't the tree lovely enough? Why must people pluck the flowers?"

For plucked flowers and broken sprays can no more be restored to the branch than dead men can be restored to life or severed limbs rejoined to the body. If plants could speak, wouldn't they speak with tears?

"Some folk cut beautiful sprays for their vases just to divert guests for a moment while they feast, or pick rare flowers for their concubines to wear in their hair for a day. It never occurs to them that guests can be entertained in the garden itself and women can use artificial flowers for their hair. One twig broken means one twig less on the bough, and one branch cut this year means one branch less next year. But why not lengthen the life of a plant so that we can enjoy it year after year? There are unopened buds, too, which are plucked with the flowers and doomed to wither on the broken bough. Isn't that the same as when children die? Some people don't love flowers, but pluck them just for a whim, giving them to anyone who asks for them or tossing them carelessly away by the roadside. Isn't this the same as when men are unjustly done to death and have no one to avenge them? If flowers could speak, wouldn't they voice their hatred?"

With this philosophy, Qiu never broke a twig or hurt a bud all his life. When he admired flowers in other gardens he would willingly linger there all day, but if the master of the house offered to pluck a spray or a blossom for him, he would decline in horror. If he saw men picking flowers he would beg them to stop, and if they paid no attention he would gladly go down on his knees to them to save a flower's life. Although people called him The Flower Maniac, they were often moved by his sincerity to desist, and then he would bow low to express his thanks.

Some boys who picked flowers in order to sell them were paid by Qiu to stop doing this. But if a flower was plucked in his absence, he would be most distressed when he discovered it, and seal the broken stem with mud. This he called "Doctoring the Flowers".

For the reasons already given, Qiu tried to keep people out of his garden. If relatives or friends wanted to come in and he could not very well refuse them, he would make this clear before

admitting them. He also warned them that he did not like human breath to contaminate the flowers and that they must not go too close to the plants. And if some oaf picked a flower or bud behind his back, the old man would flush with anger and never admit him again, not even if the fellow cursed or struck him. So later on, when people learned what he was like, they dared not touch so much as a leaf of his.

Now wherever there are shrubberies or plantations birds will come to nest, especially if they find fruit or berries. If the birds would content themselves with feasting on the fruit, little harm would be done, but they invariably injure the buds too; so the old gardener scattered grain on the ground for the birds and prayed to them to be merciful. And the birds were sufficiently intelligent after eating their fill to fly low, warbling among the flowers, without injuring a single bud or swallowing a single seed. Hence Qiu's garden bore more fruit — larger and sweeter too — than any other. When the fruit ripened, he would gaze heavenward and sacrifice to the flower god before presuming to taste it, and offer some to all his neighbours before selling the rest. Yet every year he made enough money from his fruit to live on.

Since the old man found happiness among his flowers, he tended his garden for more than fifty years — from boyhood to old age — without wearying of it. In fact, he became healthier as the years went by, taking pleasure in his rough clothes and simple fare. When he had money to spare he would help the poor and destitute in his village; so all the villagers respected him and addressed him as Master Qiu, though he always called himself The Old Gardener.

From dawn till dusk he dug and trenched and hoed,  
Till with a thousand blooms his garden glowed;  
And such a loving vigil did he keep,  
He could not bear to leave his plants to sleep.

We come now to the second part of our story. There was in Suzhou a cruel, crafty, mean young fellow named Zhang Wei who, coming from an official family, took advantage of his position to lord it over his neighbours and ruin innocent people. And

woe betide anyone who offended him, for Zhang would not rest content until he had ruined the unfortunate man's family. His attendants were as savage as tigers or wolves, and some young vagabonds were always with him to help him in his evil deeds. They stirred up trouble wherever they went, and those injured by them were past counting. The time came, however, when Zhang crossed a man more powerful than himself who had him beaten within an inch of his life; and, when sued, this enemy pulled strings at court so that Zhang lost his case. Then, accompanied by four or five servants and his usual group of young ruffians, he went to the country to live down his humiliation; and his country house happened to be in Changle Village, not far from the old gardener's cottage.

One day, strolling half drunk in the village after his morning meal, Zhang passed the old gardener's gate and was struck by the fresh and pretty flowers on the fence and the cool groves of trees around.

"This seems a pleasant place," he remarked. "Whose is it?"

"This is the garden of old Qiu, The Flower Maniac," replied one of his servants.

"Ah, yes," said Zhang. "I did hear there was some old fool here called Qiu who grows very good flowers. So this is where he lives. Suppose we go in to have a look?"

"The old man is rather eccentric," answered his servant. "He won't let people look at his flowers."

"He may refuse others," retorted Zhang. "But he can't treat me like that. Go and knock. Don't keep me waiting."

At this time the peonies were in full bloom and the old gardener, who had just finished watering them, was enjoying himself beside the flowers with a pot of wine and two dishes of sweetmeats. He had not finished his third cup when he heard knocking and put down his drink to open the gate. When he discovered five or six men standing there smelling strongly of liquor, he feared that they must be wanting to see the flowers.

"What brings you here, gentlemen?" he asked, standing in the gateway.

"Don't you know me, old man?" demanded Zhang. "I am the

celebrated Lord Zhang. That estate over there belongs to me. Hearing that you have good flowers in your garden, we have come specially to have a look."

"Why, sir," replied Qiu, "I haven't any rare trees, only common varieties like peach and plum which have finished blossoming. There isn't much else."

"You old scoundrel!" roared Zhang with an angry glare. "How can it hurt you if we just have a look? How dare you say you haven't any? Are you afraid we'll eat your flowers?"

"It's the truth I'm telling," insisted Qiu. "There really isn't much."

Zhang paid no attention to him, however, but stepped forward and pushed the old man aside so roughly that he staggered. Then they all rushed in. When Qiu saw how fierce they were, there was nothing he could do but close his gate and follow them in. He cleared away his wine and sweetmeats, then stood watching the intruders.

They saw that the garden was well stocked with plants, and the peonies were blooming in all their splendour. These were not just common varieties like "Jade Pavilion in Spring", but included the five famous species: "Yellow Pavilion", "Green Butterfly", "The Melon", "Dark Beast", and "Red Lion". The peony is the king of flowers, and the peonies of Luoyang are the best in the world, one plant of "Yao Yellow" or "Wei Purple" from that city costing five thousand cash.

Do you ask why Luoyang has the best peonies? It is because Wu Zetian, the wanton Tang empress who had two favourite ministers named Zhang, thought she would like, one winter's day, to stroll in the palace grounds, and issued the following edict:

"Tomorrow I shall walk about my park;  
Send word at once to let the Spring God know.  
Bid all the flowers blossom in the night,  
Before the morning wind has time to blow."

Since the empress was a sovereign ordained by Heaven, the plants dared not disobey her. They all began to bud and blos-

som that night; and on the following day, when she went to her pleasure grounds, she saw red and purple flowers blooming in all their fragrance. The peony alone, too proud to flatter the empress and her favourites, had not put forth so much as one leaf. Then Empress Wu in anger had the peony banished to Luoyang, since when the peonies of Luoyang have become the best in the world. The following verse, set to the air "Jade Pavilion in Spring", praises the peony:

This flower, graceful in the breeze,  
Takes pride of place in May;  
But fears its beauty in the rain  
May soon be washed away.  
The pretty girl has sighed all day  
And now, before her glass,  
Blushes to think that peonies  
Her loveliness surpass.

The peonies, planted opposite the old gardener's cottage, were surrounded by rocks from the lake; and around them he had erected a wooden frame with a cloth awning to keep off the sun. The plants ranged from six to over ten feet in height and the magnificent blooms, large as platters and of variegated colours, presented a dazzling sight. Zhang's party exclaimed in admiration and he himself stepped on to a rock the better to inhale the fragrance. But Qiu was very particular about this.

"Stand back, sir," he said. "Don't go up there."

Annoyed as he was with the old gardener for not admitting him more promptly, Zhang had been waiting to find fault.

"You live so near my house, don't you know who I am?" he cried. "With this gardenful of fine flowers, you coolly told me you had none. And now, instead of being thankful that I didn't take offence, here you are telling me what I can do! Does it spoil a flower to sniff at it? Just to show you who is master, I'll smell some more." Pulling the blossoms to him one by one, he started burying his nose in them.

Old Qiu was furious, but dared not say anything. He thought

that Zhang would be leaving almost at once; but the scoundrel intentionally assumed the air of a connoisseur and said:

"Flowers like this call for a celebration. Let's have some wine and enjoy ourselves." He ordered his men to fetch wine quickly.

When the old gardener saw that Zhang meant to stay and drink there, he was even more alarmed.

"My cottage is too small," he said, stepping forward. "There is no place to sit. You had better just look at the flowers, sir, then drink your wine in your own house."

"We can sit here," retorted Zhang, pointing at the ground.

"The ground is dirty," protested Qiu. "How can you sit there?"

"Never mind," was Zhang's rejoinder. "I'll have a carpet spread over it."

Food and wine were brought in, a carpet was spread on the ground and they sat in a circle to play the finger-game and drink. Long and merrily they caroused, while Qiu sat on one side fuming.

Then the loveliness of the flowers made Zhang conceive a wicked plan. He determined to make this garden his! Looking tipsily at Qiu, he said, "I never thought an old fool like you could grow flowers. That is to your credit. Here, drink a cup of wine with me."

The old gardener was in no mood to answer politely. "I never drink," he growled. "But don't let me stop you."

"Will you sell this garden?" demanded Zhang.

Qiu realized that this meant real trouble.

"This garden is my life," he answered fearfully. "How can I sell it?"

"Nonsense!" cried Zhang. "Just sell it to me. If you have nowhere to go, you can come to my house. I won't ask anything else of you but that you grow flowers for me. What do you say?"

"You are in luck, old fellow!" chorused Zhang's followers. "His lordship is being very good to you. Hurry up and thank him!"

As they began to put pressure on him, the old gardener, numb with rage, turned his head away.

"What a surly old fool!" cried Zhang. "Why don't you answer?"

"I've told you I'm not selling. Why do you keep asking?"

"Curse you! If you still refuse to sell, I'll send you to the yamen with my card."

Old Qiu, who was furious, wanted to answer back. Then he thought, "Zhang is a powerful man, and he is drunk. Why should I take him seriously? I had better give him a soft answer."

So swallowing his anger he replied, "You must give me a day in which to consider, sir. How can this be decided so quickly?"

"That's right," said the others. "You decide tomorrow."

By this time they were very drunk. Zhang and his roughs got up to go while the servants packed up the remains of the feast. Afraid that they might pluck the flowers, Qiu stood before the peonies to protect them; and when Zhang stepped forward to climb on the rocks, Qiu pulled at his sleeve and said, "Though a flower is a trifle, a lot of work has to be put in every year to raise these few blossoms; so it is a pity to hurt them. And if you pluck them, they will wither in a couple of days. Why commit such a crime?"

"Crime? You are raving!" shouted Zhang. "Tomorrow the whole garden will be mine, so even if I pick all the flowers, it is none of your business!"

He tried to push the old gardener aside, but Qiu seized hold of him and would not let him go.

"Even if you kill me," he insisted, "I shan't let you pluck the flowers!"

"Curse you, you old fool!" cried the others. "What does it matter if his lordship takes a flower? Why make such a fuss about nothing? Do you think you can frighten us out of picking them?"

Then they began to pluck blossoms at random. Crying out in despair, the old man let go of Zhang and made a desperate attempt to stop the others; but when he barred the way on one side he could not protect the other, and soon many of his peonies had been plucked.

"You bandits!" cursed Qiu, whose heart was bleeding. "Swag-

gering in to play the tyrant here! I'll make you suffer for this!"

He charged so hard against Zhang, who was drunk, that the bully lost his balance and fell over backwards.

"Help!" cried the others. "His lordship is hurt!" And throwing down their flowers they rushed up to beat the gardener.

One of them was sober enough, however, to realize that since Qiu was an old man they might easily kill him, so he stopped the others and helped Zhang up. But angry and ashamed because of his fall, Zhang proceeded to tear up all the plants so that not a bud was left, strewing the ground with flowers which he trampled underfoot. Unhappy flowers!

Torn down and crushed by wicked hands,  
The tender plants lay dead,  
As if a storm had scattered all  
The petals soft and red.

The old gardener rolled on the ground in his rage, calling on heaven and earth. Neighbours who heard the uproar rushed in and, shocked to see the garden being laid waste, they urged the cruel men to stop and asked what had happened. Some of the neighbours who were Zhang's tenants apologized to him on Qiu's behalf and bowed to him obsequiously till he reached the gate.

"Tell that old scoundrel," ordered Zhang, "if he hands over the garden quietly, I'll let him off! If he refuses again, let him beware!" Then he stalked furiously off.

Because Zhang was drunk the neighbours did not take his threats seriously, but came back and made Qiu, who was still weeping bitterly, sit up on the steps. Then after trying to comfort him, they left, closing the gate behind them. Some of them, who felt Qiu had been wrong in the past not to let people in to see his flowers, said, "The old fellow is a bit queer in the head: that's why this happened. It should be a lesson to him."

But others with a sense of justice protested, "How can you say such a thing? You know the proverb: Spend a year on growing a flower, enjoy it for ten days only. People who simply enjoy the sight of the blossoms don't know what trouble the gardener has had. Heaven knows to what pains he has been to raise these

wonderful blossoms. How can you blame him for being fond of them?"

Meantime old Qiu, still grieving for his mangled plants, set to work to pick them up. But the sight of them, trampled, scattered and mud-stained as they were, made his tears fall anew.

"My poor flowers!" he groaned. "I loved you too much to injure one petal or leaf on any plant. Who could have thought that you would come to this?"

As he was weeping, he heard someone call, "Why are you crying so bitterly, Master Qiu?"

The old man turned to see a beautiful girl of about sixteen, simply but tastefully dressed. He had no idea who she could be and dried his tears to ask, "Where are you from, young lady? What brings you here?"

"I live near by," said the girl. "I came because I heard your peonies were in bloom. I did not expect to find them withered."

At the mention of peonies, Qiu broke down again.

"What is the matter?" asked the girl. "Why are you crying like that?"

Then the old gardener told her how Zhang had destroyed his flowers.

"So that is the reason," said the girl with a laugh. "Would you like the flowers to return to their boughs?"

"Don't make fun of me, young lady. How can fallen blossoms return to the boughs?"

"In our family we know how to restore blossoms to the bough. Our method always succeeds."

"Can you really do that?" Qiu's sorrow began to turn to joy.

"Of course," said the girl.

"If you will perform this miracle," said Qiu with a bow, "I have no other way of thanking you, but whenever my flowers blossom I shall invite you here to enjoy them."

"Stop bowing to me," replied the girl, "and fetch a bowl of water."

As Qiu hurried in for the water he was thinking, "How can she work such a miracle? Could she be making fun of me because she saw me weeping?" But then he reflected, "No. I have never

seen this young lady before, so there is no reason why she should make fun of me. It must be true."

Returning to the garden after hastily filling a bowl with water, he discovered that the girl had disappeared. The flowers were back on their stems, however, not a single petal remaining on the ground. But whereas one plant bore one colour only before, red and purple were now mixed and pale and dark intermingled, with the result that the peonies looked more magnificent than ever.

Saint Han, we know, could colour flowers afresh,  
The fairy maid restored them to the bough;  
Since miracles are worked by honest faith,  
Do not despise The Flower Maniac now!

Surprised and delighted, Qiu exclaimed, "I never thought the young lady could really do this wonderful thing." Thinking she was still among the flowers, he put down the water and stepped forward to thank her; but although he searched the whole garden she was nowhere to be found.

"Where can the young lady have gone?" he wondered. "She must be at the gate. I am going to beg her to teach me this art." He ran to the gate but found it closed, and when he opened it and looked out he saw two old men sitting there. These were his neighbours Yu and Shan, who were watching fishermen hang out their nets in the sun. They stood up to greet the old gardener.

"We hear Zhang Wei was here making trouble," they said. "But we were in our fields and so could not come to ask what was the matter."

"Yes," said Qiu. "I had a great deal of trouble with those scoundrels. Luckily a young lady came who knew a good way to save the flowers; but she left before I could thank her. Did you see which way she went?"

"If flowers are spoilt, how can you save them?" asked the two old men in surprise. "How long ago did this girl come out?"

"Just now," replied Qiu.

"We have been sitting here for some time," said his neighbours, "but no one came out. There can't have been any girl."

Then Qiu realized the truth. "In that case, she must have been a fairy!" he cried.

"Tell us how the flowers were saved," requested the old men.

And when the old gardener described what had happened, they declared, "What an amazing thing! Let us go in and look."

They went in, and Qiu barred the gate behind them.

"This must be the work of a fairy!" exclaimed Yu and Shan after seeing the peonies. "No mortal could do such a thing!"

Then, while Qiu burnt his choicest incense and bowed to Heaven to express his thanks, the two old men said, "Your single-minded love for flowers must have moved the fairy to come down to earth. Tomorrow you should let Zhang's ruffians see this, to make them feel thoroughly ashamed."

"No, no," replied the old gardener. "Such men are like mad dogs. The best thing is to avoid them. Why should I ask them back?" And the two neighbours agreed that there was reason in this.

Since Qiu was very happy, he warmed up the wine he had been drinking and invited Yu and Shan to enjoy the flowers till it was dark. After they left they spread the news, so that by the next day all the villagers knew it and wanted to see the peonies but were afraid the old gardener might not let them. Qiu was, however, an intelligent man. The apparition of the goddess had filled him with a desire to leave the world and search for truth. He did not try to sleep that night but sat by his flowers, deep in thought, until it dawned on him that he had been to blame for the trouble with Zhang.

"I brought it on myself by selfishness," he decided. "If I were like the gods, who are kind to all, it would never have happened."

So the next morning he opened wide his garden gate to all who wished to come in. The few villagers who ventured in first found him sitting facing the flowers.

"You can come and see the plants whenever you like," Qiu told them, "so long as you don't pluck them."

And when this news spread, all the men and women in the village flocked to his garden.

The next morning Zhang Wei told his followers, "Yesterday

that old ruffian knocked me down. Do you think I can let it go at that? Come on now. Let's demand his garden. If he refuses, we'll get some more men to smash up the place completely."

"His garden is next to your house," said Zhang's friends. "You need not be afraid that he will refuse. But it was a mistake to spoil the flowers yesterday. We should have kept a few to enjoy ourselves later."

"Never mind that," said Zhang. "They will grow again next year. Let's go quickly before he has time to get up to any tricks."

They had not gone far when they heard that a fairy had appeared in Qiu's garden to restore all the broken flowers to the boughs, and that all his peonies had different colours now. But Zhang did not believe this.

"What good deeds has that old thief done to deserve a visit from a fairy?" he demanded. "And this fairy turned up just after we spoilt his flowers — as if she were his housekeeper! Depend upon it, the old man has made up this story and spread it because he is afraid we will go back. He wants to make out that he is protected by divine power, so that we will leave him alone."

Zhang's followers agreed with him. But when they reached the garden they found the double gate wide open and men and women streaming through, all of whom told the same story.

"It looks as if it really happened," said Zhang's men.

"Never mind!" retorted the bully. "I don't care if the fairy is sitting there — I'm going to ask for the garden!"

As they walked along the winding path to the thatched cottage, they saw that the news was true. And the flowers, strange to say, looked more splendid than ever now that so many people had come to see them, and seemed, indeed, to be smiling.

Though Zhang was very much taken aback, he did not abandon his scheme to obtain the garden; but after looking around for a short time he conceived another wicked plan.

"Let us leave now," he said to his men.

When they had gone out of the gate, his men asked, "Why didn't you demand the garden?"

"I have a good plan," said Zhang. "There is no need to argue with him: the garden will be mine tomorrow."

"What is your plan?"

"Wang Ze who practised black magic in Beizhou has recently revolted," replied Zhang, "so the Ministry of War has ordered all prefectures and districts to prohibit sorcery and arrest all magicians. Our district has offered three thousand strings of cash as a reward for information about sorcerers. Well, tomorrow I shall send Zhang Ba to the yamen to accuse Qiu of sorcery, on the grounds that he has restored these flowers to their stems. The old man will admit his guilt under torture and be thrown into jail; then the garden will be publicly auctioned, but who will dare to buy it? It is sure to fall to me, and I shall pocket the three thousand strings reward as well."

"This is a fine plan," said his men. "We must lose no time in carrying it out."

They went straight into the city to write the charge, and the next morning Zhang Ba was sent to the prefectural yamen to inform against the old gardener. Zhang Ba was Zhang Wei's ablest lackey and he knew the yamen officials well.

Since the city prefect was anxious to discover magicians, when he heard that the whole village had seen this miracle he naturally believed the charge and sent officers and constables with Zhang Ba to arrest Qiu. Zhang Wei, who had paid all the necessary bribes, told Zhang Ba and the constables to go ahead while he and his men followed. The constables marched straight into the garden, but the old gardener thought they had come to see his flowers and paid no attention. They rushed forward with a shout and bound him.

"What have I done?" asked Qiu in terror. "Why have you arrested me?"

Cursing him as a magician and a rebel, they dragged him away without a word of explanation. And when the neighbours gathered round in consternation to ask what had happened, the constables said, "Why do you ask? He is guilty of a great crime. How do we know you haven't had a part in it?"

At this the villagers were afraid and slipped away lest they

become involved. Only Yu, Shan and a few other good friends followed the old gardener at a distance.

After Qiu's arrest, Zhang came with his men to lock up the garden. First they had a good look round to see if there were any people left inside, then they locked the gate and went back to the yamen. The constables had already ordered Qiu to kneel on the platform, and the old gardener noticed that there was another man kneeling beside him but did not recognize the informer. The runners, all of whom had been bribed by Zhang, had prepared the instruments of torture.

"Where do you come from?" shouted the prefect. "How dare you practise magic here to deceive the people? What followers have you? Tell the truth now!"

This was like a cannon-shot in the dark — the old gardener did not know who had attacked him.

"My family has lived for generations in Changle Village," he said. "I am not a magician from other parts. I know nothing about magic."

"The other day by means of black magic," declared the prefect, "you caused fallen blossoms to go back to the boughs. Can you deny that?"

Then Qiu realized that his accuser must be Zhang Wei. He told the prefect how the bully had demanded his garden and trampled the flowers, and how a fairy maid had appeared. The prefect, however, was too prejudiced to believe him.

"Many men practise religion all their lives in the hope of achieving divinity," he scoffed, "yet even then they cannot meet a fairy. Why should a fairy appear to you just because you weep? If a fairy did reveal herself to you, she would leave her name so that people should know her, instead of disappearing without a word. Who do you think you are fooling? No doubt about it, you are a magician! Put him to torture!"

With a shout of assent the runners rushed forward like tigers or wolves, threw Qiu to the ground, caught hold of his ankles and were just about to torture him when the prefect was seized by such dizziness that he nearly fell off his seat. Too faint to

preside over the court, he ordered that Qiu be pilloried and imprisoned until the next day when the trial should continue.

As the jailers led Qiu away weeping, he saw Zhang Wei.

"Lord Zhang," he said, "I have done you no wrong. Why should you do this cruel thing to destroy me?"

But Zhang turned away without a word and went off with his lackey Zhang Ba and the other young vagabonds.

By now old Yu and Shan had arrived and learned the charge.

"This is gross injustice!" they said. "But never mind. Tomorrow we shall get all the villagers to bail you out."

"I hope so," responded Qiu tearfully.

"Fuck you, you bastard!" shouted the jailers. "Stop sniveling and get a move on!"

With tears in his eyes Qiu went to the jail, where his neighbours sent wine and food for him. The jailers did not give them to him, however, but enjoyed the gifts themselves. And at night they chained the old man to his pallet so that he became a living corpse, unable to move an inch.

"I wonder what fairy it was that saved my flowers but gave that bully a chance to slander me," he sighed. "Ah, fairy! If you will pity me and rescue me, I will give up my home and practise religion."

As he was musing, the fairy who had visited him the previous day appeared again.

"Mercy, fairy!" cried Qiu desperately. "Save me!"

The fairy smiled.

"Do you want me to end your agony?" she asked. And stepping forward she pointed a finger at him, whereupon his chains were loosed and fell to the ground. The old gardener knelt down and kowtowed.

"May I know your name, fairy?" he requested.

"I am the Keeper of Flowers and I serve the Heavenly Empress in the Western Paradise," she replied. "Because you loved your flowers so well, I made them whole again, little thinking this would give that bully a chance to slander you. Fate must have decreed that you should suffer this trial; but tomorrow you will be set free. As for Zhang Wei, the flower spirits informed

the Heavenly Emperor how the wretch injured flowers and plotted to kill you, and he has died. The hangers-on who abetted him in his evil courses have been visited by calamities too. If you devote yourself in future to religion, in a few years I shall come to carry you to Heaven."

The old gardener kowtowed again.

"Please tell me, goddess, how to practise religion," he begged.

"There are many ways," replied the fairy. "It depends upon a man's nature. Since you started by loving flowers, you will achieve divinity through flowers. If you feed yourself on blossoms, you will finally be able to fly."

After she had informed him how to draw nourishment from flowers, Qiu kowtowed again to thank her; but when he stood up she had vanished. Raising his head he saw that she was standing on top of the prison wall, whence she beckoned to him saying, "Come up and leave with me."

But when the old man had climbed half way up he felt exhausted; and as he reached the top he heard the crash of gongs below and men shouting, "The magician has escaped!"

Terror made him lose his grip and fall headlong, to wake in a cold sweat on his pallet. Remembering clearly, however, what had passed in the dream, the conviction that all would be well gave him comfort.

A man who's free from selfish imperfection  
May rest assured of heavenly protection.

Zhang Wei, meantime, who had seen that the prefect was convinced of Qiu's guilt, was exulting.

"The gardener is a cunning old rogue," he said, "but now let him spend a night on a prison pallet, leaving his garden for us to enjoy."

"The other day when the garden was still his we didn't have too good a time," said his men. "Now that it is yours, we can enjoy it to our hearts' content."

"That's right," said Zhang.

So they went out of the city together and ordered the servants to prepare wine and food. They marched to Qiu's garden, open-

ed the gate and went in; and although the neighbours felt indignant, they were too afraid of Zhang to protest. But when Zhang and his men reached the thatched cottage, they found all the peonies scattered on the ground again — not a single flower remained on its stem!

They marvelled at this, and Zhang said, "It does look as if the old scoundrel is really a magician. Otherwise how could these peonies change back again so quickly? Could there really have been a fairy?"

"He knew that your lordship wanted to enjoy the flowers," suggested one young fellow, "so he has played this trick to make us feel foolish."

"Well," said Zhang, "since he has played this trick, we can enjoy the fallen blossoms."

With that they spread the carpet and sat on the ground as before. They drank heartily, and two extra bottles of wine were given to Zhang Ba as his reward. They caroused till the sun was sinking in the west. When they were half drunk, a great wind sprang up.

Flung to the winds the courtyard grass!  
Muddied and spoilt the pond!  
Borne in the air the roar of beasts,  
Tempest-torn pines beyond!

Caught up by this swirling wind, all the flowers on the ground were transformed in a twinkling into girls about a foot high. But before the men had finished crying out in amazement, the girls shook in the wind till they attained the size of human beings. They formed a bevy of beauties in magnificent clothes, and the men were dazzled by their loveliness. A girl in red began to speak.

"We have stayed here for many years," she declared, "and been well looked after by Master Qiu. We never thought to see the day when ruffians would pollute us with their foul breath and savage us with their cruel hands, nor that they would bring a false charge against Master Qiu and plot to seize this place. Now we have our enemies before us! Let us fall on them to re-

quite the kindness of our friend and to avenge the cruel insult to ourselves!"

"You are right," replied the rest. "We must lose no time, otherwise they may run away."

Then, raising their arms, they swept forward; and their long sleeves, fluttering like pennons in the wind, sent cold shivers down the men's spines.

"Ghosts! Ghosts!" cried the men. And throwing down their cups they fled in confusion with no thought for each other. They stumbled over rocks, grazed their faces against the branches of trees, slipped, fell, and staggered to their feet only to fall again. When this confusion had lasted for some time they counted their number, and found that Zhang Wei and his lackey Zhang Ba had disappeared. By now the wind had dropped, and with lowered heads they ran home like rabbits through the gloaming, thankful to escape with their lives. After the servants had recovered from their alarm, they asked some bold young tenants to go back with torches to search for the missing men. Returning to the garden they heard groans issuing from under a great plum tree, and when they raised their torches to look they discovered Zhang Ba, lying with a broken skull against the trunk of the tree, unable to rise. Two of the tenants helped him home while the rest searched the garden; but they found everything quiet and still. The peonies under their awning were blooming as before — not a blossom was broken — but cups and plates littered the cottage, where wine had been spilt everywhere. Gaping in surprise, they gathered together the utensils and started searching again. The garden was by no means large, yet they went round it three or four times without finding any trace of Zhang Wei.

"Could he have been blown away by the wind or eaten by the fairies?" they wondered. "What can have become of him?"

After hanging around for some time, since there was nothing they could do, they decided to go home for the night and make a fresh search the next day. As they reached the gate, however, they met another group of men with lanterns coming in. These were old Yu, Shan and a few other neighbours who had come to see whether it was really true that Zhang Wei and his men

had met ghosts, that he had disappeared and that a search party was looking for him. When the tenants declared that this was indeed the case, the old men were amazed.

"Don't go yet," they said. "We'll help you to look once more."

They made another careful search, only to be disappointed again; and the tenants were making for the gate, sighing, when Yu and Shan said, "If you won't be coming back tonight, may we lock the gate? It is our duty to keep watch here."

By this time, having lost their leader, Zhang's men were like a snake without a head. All their swagger gone, they answered, "Of course! Of course!"

Just as they were leaving, however, a tenant called out from the east corner of the fence, "I've found the master!" And they all rushed over.

The worker pointed up.

"Isn't that the master's gauze cap with soft flaps hanging on the locust bough?" he asked.

"If the cap is here, its owner must be near by!" cried the others.

But they had not groped more than a few paces along the fence when one of them exclaimed in horror.

The legs of a man were sticking out of the cesspool at the east corner, and from his shoes and socks and pants they could tell that it was Zhang. In spite of the filth the tenants dragged his body out, while Yu and Shan, secretly thanking the gods, left with the other neighbours. Some of Zhang's men carried his corpse to the lake to wash, and others went home to inform his family, who wept and wailed as they prepared clothes for the funeral. That same night the fracture in Zhang Ba's skull proved fatal, and he died just before dawn. Thus retribution came to the two evil-doers.

Two knaves have bid the world farewell,  
Two wicked ghosts have gone to hell!

The next day the prefect felt well enough to preside over the court; and he was about to try the old gardener again when a constable reported how the informer, Zhang Ba, and his master, Zhang Wei, had both died the previous night. The prefect could

not believe in this new miracle until more than a hundred of the local peasants and elders arrived with a joint petition which stated that Qiu was no magician but a flower-lover who did good deeds, and that Zhang Wei had been punished by Heaven for accusing the old gardener falsely. They explained and accounted for the whole affair.

The prefect's dizziness the previous day had made him suspect that injustice might have been done, and now he saw the truth. After ordering the immediate release of Qiu, who had fortunately not yet been tortured, he gave him a notice bearing the official seal to hang outside his garden gate, in order to prevent people from injuring his plants. The villagers expressed their gratitude to the prefect and left the court, and when Qiu had thanked all his neighbours, he went home with them. Yu and Shan unlocked the garden gate and went in with their friend; and when the old gardener saw his peonies blooming as before, he was very moved. Then there was merry-making for several days, for the neighbours gave feasts to celebrate Qiu's return, and he prepared feasts to thank all who had helped him.

After that the old gardener accustomed himself to feeding on flowers until he was able to do without cooked food; he also gave all the money from his fruit sales as alms. So in a few years' time, his hair, which had been white, turned black again and his cheeks became as ruddy as those of a young man.

On the fifteenth day of the eighth month one year, Qiu was practising yoga under his blossoms beneath a bright sun and cloudless sky when a holy breeze sprang up and coloured clouds rose like vapour. As clear music sounded in the air and rare incense was wafted from above, blue phoenixes and white storks alighted in his courtyard and the Keeper of Flowers appeared in the sky, surrounded by pennons, canopies and fairy maids making music. When the old gardener saw her, he prostrated himself on the ground.

"Qiu Xian, your time has come!" said the goddess. "I have requested the Heavenly Emperor to appoint you Protector of All the Flowers on Earth, and you are to go to Heaven now with your house. Your task will be to bless those who love and

cherish flowers and to punish those who neglect and destroy them."

When Qiu had thanked her by kowtowing towards the sky, he ascended the clouds with the fairies, while his thatched cottage and garden rose slowly from the ground and floated southwards. Old Yu, Shan and all the villagers who witnessed this knelt down and saw the old gardener raise his hand in farewell to them from the clouds, where he remained in sight for a long time. After this the village was renamed Fairy Village or Flower Village.

It was the gardener's love for flowers  
That made the goddess intercede;  
His garden soared with him to Heaven,  
And no elixir did he need!

Ge Baoquan

## "The Effendi", a New Cartoon Film

THE familiar name Effendi reminds us of many funny anecdotes. Listening to these, we seem to hear his merry laughter ringing out down the centuries.

The Effendi is one of the best loved heroes in the world's folk literature. Tales about him have spread throughout the Muslim world, in north Africa, the Balkans, Asia Minor, Central Asia and Xinjiang in China.

The Turks called him Nasreddin Hodja and affirm that he lived in the thirteenth century. His grave is in the city of Aksehir, where the Nasreddin Festival is observed every year to honour his memory. When anecdotes about him were translated into Arabic in the seventeenth century, he was named Joha of Rumelia and immediately became popular among the Arabs. In Central Asia he is called the Effendi, Apandi or Nasreddin.\* Actually "Effendi" was not his name but a title of respect like "master" or "sir" in English.

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\* Other names used in *Chinese Literature* are Avanti and Atainde.

The Tajiks believe that the Effendi lived in Khozhent (now Leninabad), where many places are still linked with his name. The Uzbeks say that he visited the two famous towns Bukhara and Samarkand. Quite a few of the tales about him are associated with those places.

At the turn of the present century, stories about the Effendi began to be translated into many different languages. In the first German edition he was named "Hodscha Nasreddin". In the early thirties there was a Russian translation which ran into several editions. In recent years three collections of tales were published in Britain, in which he is called "Mulla Nasrudin". A French translation published in Istanbul named him "Nasreddin Hodja". Not long ago I came across a book published in the United States in the sixties. It was about a high-energy physics conference, but included many tales of Nasreddin Hoja. On its cover was a portrait of him riding a donkey backwards to indicate his protest that the world was retrogressing. A Japanese friend has given me a collection of Hoja's tales translated from Turkish into Japanese. Thus the Effendi is a figure in world literature, who continues to delight his readers.

The Effendi is a household word in Xinjiang, particularly among the Uygur people. He was probably introduced to China by way of the Silk Road. Today in many parts of Xinjiang, people allege that their forefathers met him. There is no denying the fact that those transplanted foreign tales have taken root and flourished in the fresh Uygur soil. Over the centuries they have been tinged with local colour, and the Effendi has become an important character in Xinjiang's folk literature.

In the Uygur people's eyes, the Effendi was a clever and resourceful figure, with the fine qualities of the working people, being industrious, brave, optimistic and humorous. His tales have a lasting appeal because they denounce the oppressive feudal rule, ridicule stupidity and ignorance, and satirize hypocrites, reflecting the toilers' love and hatred and their longing for a better future.

The people whom the Effendi held up to mockery range from bais, beks, cadis, imams to viziers and padishahs.

Take, for example, this tale about a padishah:

A padishah, who was eager to know if there was anyone stronger than him, sent for the Effendi and asked, "You've been to all our villages and cities riding on your donkey. Have you met anyone among my people who is stronger than me?"

"Of course. Many, Your Majesty," replied the Effendi. "The peasants who till the land are much stronger than you. If they didn't give you grain, what strength could you have?"

Another tale explains that when the Effendi's reputation spread abroad, a padishah of a foreign state was not convinced. He asked his ministers, "I've been told that there's an Effendi in our neighbouring country who is able to fool even the padishah. Can such a thing be true?"

"Yes," answered one of them. "We've also heard that he is a very clever and learned man. No one dares provoke him."

The padishah retorted, "I don't believe that a common man can be so formidable. How can the man in the street be wiser than a padishah?" He decided to go to play a trick on the Effendi.

When he arrived, the Effendi was working in the fields and he sensed the reason for the padishah's visit.

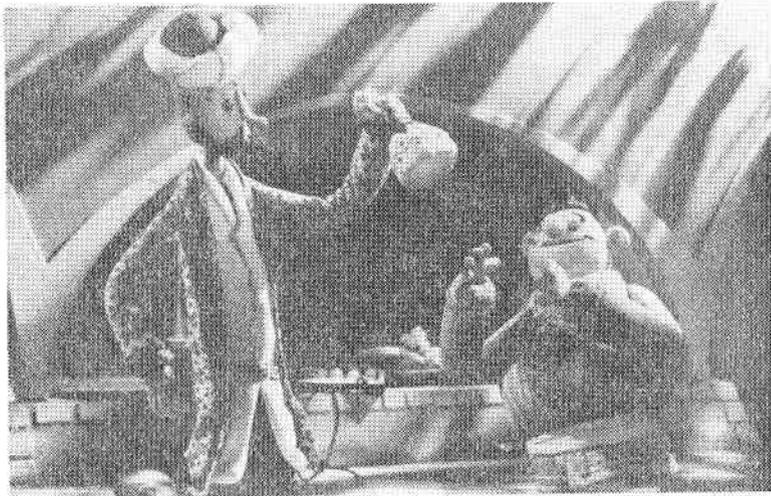
"Effendi," the padishah said, "I've heard that you're full of tricks. Do you think you can cheat me? I'm telling you, no one can fool me."

"Of course I can!" answered the Effendi. "But you must wait here till I fetch my bag of tricks. Lend me your horse so that I can come back quickly."

"Even ten bags don't worry me," said the padishah. "Go and fetch your bag at once." He handed over the reins to the Effendi.

The Effendi galloped off like the wind. The padishah waited and waited until the sun was setting, but there was no sign of the Effendi. Only then did the padishah realize that he had been deceived. Unable to do anything about it, he slipped away under cover of darkness.

Tales of the Effendi, circulating widely among the Uygurs, have been published in China in several collections. In 1979 a cartoon film was produced by the Shanghai Animated Film Studio. Titled *The Effendi*, it has been a big hit in China.



The Effendi shakes the purse before the bai

It was not easy to make short, separate anecdotes into a film. The tale "Sowing Gold" has been made the central plot, interspersed with others like "The Devil", "The Chicken-bearing Egg", "The Pregnant Pot" and "Payment for a Meal". By this means the film depicts the conflicts between wisdom and stupidity, beauty and ugliness, and good and evil, which, needless to say, are represented in a humorous and exaggerated way.

As soon as we see the lean Effendi on the screen, riding backwards on his donkey while singing to the accompaniment of a *rewafu* zither, we feel transported to Xinjiang among the Uygurs.

One day a dumpy rich bai is wolfing down a leg of mutton as he calculates on an abacus and thumbs his account book. Suddenly he decides to ride to the fair to dun his poor debtors. He meets the Effendi and asks, "Why don't you go and pray in the mosque, Effendi? Allah will punish you."

"No," retorts the Effendi. "I've just been to see Him. He is too busy to deal with me now."

"Perhaps you've been keeping company with the Devil," the bai says. "By the way, tell me what the Devil looks like."

Picking up a mirror from a stall, the Effendi asks the bai to



The bai asks the Effendi for his gold

look in it, saying, "The reflection will tell you."

Next come the stories "The Chicken-bearing Egg" and "The Pregnant Pot". In his best clothes, the Effendi rides his donkey to the bai's door. The bai is eating a chicken.

The Effendi remarks, "How delicious that chicken smells! Even Allah has smelt it." At this the bai demands payment for the smell. The Effendi fishes out a money bag and dangles it before the bai, saying, "The smell is a part of the chicken. The jingling of these coins is a part of my money. Now that you've heard the jingling, it means I've paid you for the smell!" With this, the Effendi takes out a dollar, tosses it up and puts it back in the bag. . . .

Presently the film switches to the tale "Sowing Gold". The bai is envious of the Effendi when he learns that the latter knows how to grow gold, reaping ten dollars from one. Several times he stealthily follows the Effendi home and overhears him chanting incantations over a sand patch before "planting" his silver dollars. The Effendi first digs a hole in the sand and puts five silver dollars in it, then asks his friends secretly to bury fifty dollars there. The bai, taken in, asks the Effendi to plant gold for him,

giving him a box of gold ingots. Soon he comes furtively to harvest the gold, trying hard to repeat the Effendi's incantations. But he fails to find any gold though he digs to the bottom of the hole, because his ingots have been carried off by the Effendi and his friends. With these they have bought new clothes, food and household utensils, distributing them to the poor. On his way home, the Effendi finds the bai still digging. He tells him that as he did not chant the incantations correctly, they have not worked. "Chanting incantations is no joke. Because you muddled them, Allah got angry and took away the gold."

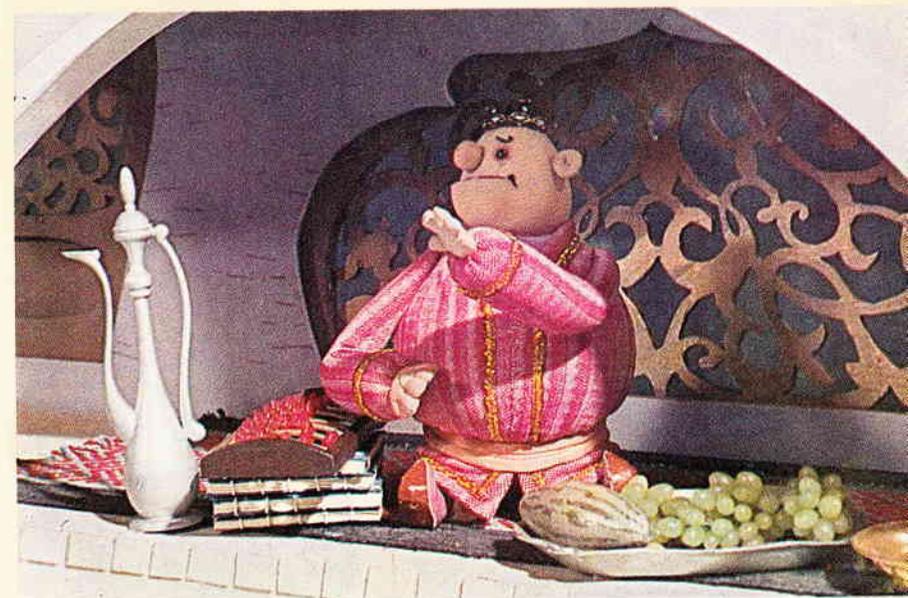
The bai beats his breast and stamps his feet. With a deep sigh he collapses on the ground, like a pricked balloon. The Effendi rides away on his donkey singing in triumph.

This puppet film has been adapted by Ling Shu and directed by Jin Xi and Liu Huiyi. To create the image of the Effendi, the puppet designer Qu Jianfang went with the cameramen to Kashi in Xinjiang to visit the local people. After talking with Uygur elders, he visualized the Effendi as a thin figure with a shrewd expression. His high forehead and turned-up, sausage-like nose show his sense of humour. A pair of mischievous eyes under arched eyebrows and a tiny mouth over a curled-up beard symbolize his sharp wit and ready tongue. In contrast, the bai is a fat fellow with a big mouth, barrel-like body and short legs, the picture of a crafty, foolish and greedy man. Though exaggerated, the seven-inch high puppets look lifelike with typical Uygur characteristics. The witty dialogue, Uygur music and dancing and good photography all add to the film's success.

Now that *The Effendi* is being shown abroad, I am glad to introduce this film to all the Effendi's fans.



The Effendi



The greedy bai enjoys his meal

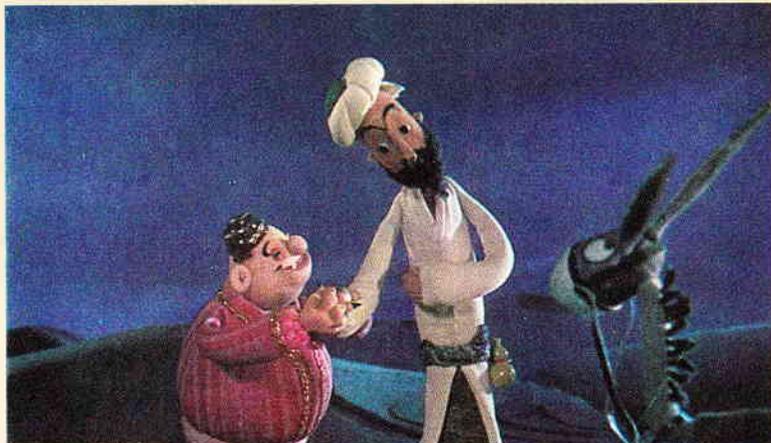
## Scenes from the Film *The Effendi*



The bai looks in the mirror



The Effendi and his friends



The Effendi tricks the bai into planting gold

## Tales of the Effendi

### The Padishah Looks in the Mirror

ONE day, while chatting with the Effendi, the padishah looked in the mirror and saw he was very ugly. Angrily he said to the Effendi, "I am so ugly! I'll never look in the mirror again!"

"Your Majesty," remarked the Effendi, "you've only seen your face once and yet you're complaining? We, your subjects, see Your Majesty's honourable face a dozen times every day, yet still we manage to put up with it!"

### Women's Opinions

A *cadi* often admonished people, "You mustn't listen to what women say."

One day, the Effendi came to him and asked, "Your Honour, may we listen to what women say?"

"No! You can't!" the *cadi* answered.

"Good!" the Effendi remarked. "I've a sheep. My wife suggests that we give it to you as a present, but I don't agree. Thank you for solving our problem." And he turned to go.

Hearing this, the *cadi* hastened to stop him, saying, "Hey, Effendi! Respected Effendi! What's your hurry? Listen, it's also

written in the Scriptures that sometimes women's opinions can be accepted."

## Also a Wolf

A bek saved a sheep from a wolf, so the sheep willingly followed him home. As soon as he got back, the bek started to kill the sheep, which struggled and bleated so pitifully that it attracted the attention of the Effendi, the bek's neighbour, who came over to find out what was going on.

"I saved it from a wolf," explained the bek.

"Then why does it curse you?" asked the Effendi.

"What's it saying?"

"That you're also a wolf!"

## Who Doesn't Feel Well

The Effendi went to visit a stingy bai who always pretended to be hospitable. To entertain the Effendi, he brought out a bowl of honey and some pancakes.

Without standing on ceremony, the Effendi picked up a knife, cut a pancake and spread it with honey. The bai was afraid lest the Effendi finish everything. With a beaming smile he flattered his guest, "My dear Effendi, I'd like you to eat more, but the honey isn't good and the pancakes aren't fresh. If you eat too much, you won't feel well."

Munching away, the Effendi answered, "Thank you for your concern, my lord, but I think they taste good. As to who doesn't feel well just now, probably you know best."

Unable to answer, the unhappy bai had to watch the Effendi eating all his honey and pancakes.

## Dyeing Cloth for a Bek

The Effendi opened a small dyeing shop. One day a bek asked him to dye a piece of cloth for him.

"What colour do you want?" the Effendi asked.

"I want to dye it a 'non-existent' colour." The bek deliberately made things difficult for him.

"What is 'non-existent'?"

"That's neither red, nor black, nor blue, nor green, nor white. Do you understand?"

"Yes. I'll do as you say."

"When shall I get it back?"

"On a 'non-existent' day," the Effendi answered. "That's neither Monday, nor Tuesday, nor Wednesday, nor Thursday, nor Friday, nor Saturday, nor Sunday. Do *you* understand?"

## I'll Die Two Days Earlier

Once the Effendi cracked a joke with the padishah's favourite minister, saying that the minister would die the next day. By coincidence, the next day, the minister fell from his horse and died. When the padishah heard this, he flew into a rage and sent his men to arrest the Effendi at once.

After the Effendi had been brought to him, the padishah demanded angrily, "Effendi, since you knew when my favourite minister would die, you must also know the date of your own death. Out with it, or you'll die today!"

Casting a glance at the executioner's sword, the Effendi answered calmly, "How can I know? I'll die two days earlier than you. That's Allah's will."

Fearing that his own death would follow if the Effendi were executed, the padishah thought it prudent to keep the Effendi alive as long as possible. So he let him go.

## I Shall Know Later

After the Effendi had become a *cadi*, many people vied with each other in making friends with him.

A fawning bai praised him, "Effendi, how wonderful you are! You've so many friends!"

"I'm not sure of that," answered the Effendi. "I can't tell yet who are my friends. I'll know when I am no longer a *cadi*."

Li Jinyan

## Qian Xuan's Scroll Painting "Playing Football"

**F**OOTBALL is one of the world's most popular sports. In China the game has a history of more than two thousand years. Originally called *cuju*, Chinese football differs in many respects from today's sport. It was first played as a sort of military training. The leather surface of the ball was stuffed with wool or hair. In the Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220), some emperors and generals liked the game, and it even became very popular among women in the Tang Dynasty (618-907). The scroll painting, *Playing Football*, by the celebrated artist Qian Xuan (1235-1299) is an illustration of a court game in the Song Dynasty (960-1279) when the sport was still favoured.

In the background, the figure in the centre is Zhao Kuangyin, the first Song emperor. Wearing a blue headband and a pale yellow robe, he is rolling up his sleeves watching the game. On his right, in a green gown and wearing a black headdress is Zhao Pu, his prime minister and a co-founder of the dynasty. On his

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Li Jinyan is an art specialist at the Shanghai Museum.

left is his trusted follower Chu Zhaofu, who, like Zhao Pu, is leaning towards Zhao Kuangyin. In the foreground, the man in a pale lilac robe and blue headband kicking the ball is the emperor's younger brother and successor Zhao Guangyi. The man hitching up his gown to receive the ball is Shi Shouxin, a famous general who suppressed rebellions and helped to unify the country. Another of the emperor's followers, Dang Jin, in light blue, with both arms hanging down, is leaning forward watching the game.

Each of the six figures has his own characteristics and expression. A stout man, Zhao Guangyi is full of vigour. In contrast to him is Shi Shouxin, who is much thinner, yet seems shrewd and circumspect. Zhao Pu has a kind, smiling face, which reveals his taciturn and decisive character, without any sign of obsequiousness. Dang Jin shows a different bearing from the rest. He is a simple and honest fellow, whose tense concentration is wonderfully expressed. Somewhat affected in manner, Chu Zhaofu is portrayed as an unbending but clever character. With one hand before his chest, he seems to be explaining something to the emperor.

A distinguished and versatile artist of the Song Dynasty, Qian Xuan was born in Wuxing County, Zhejiang Province. He was skilful in portraying figures, landscapes and flowers. There is strength as well as grace in his brush strokes. The colours he used are fresh and elegant. Besides, he was adept in poetry, music and seal-engraving. Many of his contemporaries in Wuxing learned painting from him, including the renowned artist Zhao Mengfu (1254-1322). After the Southern Song had been overthrown by the Yuan Dynasty, Qian Xuan did not want to serve the new regime. He despised those intellectuals who curried favour with the new ruling class and remained aloof from them. Instead, he immersed himself in painting and poetry. His noted painting *Settled in the Fuyu Mountains* reflects this period of seclusion.

According to the colophon, which is in the painter's own hand, *Playing Football* was copied from a work by an artist of the Northern Song period. The original painting was stored in the imperial palace, but during the chaos resulting from the warfare of changing dynasties it was removed and became accessible to

Qian Xuan. Though an imitation, Qian Xuan's work represents his accomplishment and style. The figures are depicted in fine, flowing lines. The brush strokes are soft without being feeble, and the expressions and postures are graphically depicted. This painting conveys Qian Xuan's nostalgia for the fallen Song Dynasty. His integrity was praised by later men of letters.

*Playing Football*, painted on rice paper, is 26.8 cm high and 56.3 cm wide. Now it is housed in the Shanghai Museum.

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**Playing Football** by *Qian Xuan*



*Yang Xianyi*

## Sunshine — Festivity — Friendship

— Chinese Writers Visit Australia

IN March 1980, three Chinese writers visited Australia at the invitation of the Australia/China Council and the Literature Board of the Australian Council, to take part in the activities of Writers' Week during the Adelaide Festival of Arts. This was the first delegation of Chinese writers to visit Australia, and it met everywhere with hospitality and friendship in weeks of warm sunshine.

Our delegation consisted of Yu Lin, a novelist from Jiangxi Province; Wang Zuoliang, professor of English literature at the Foreign Languages Institute; and myself. In addition, my wife Gladys Yang from England was also invited by the Australia/China Council as a translator of Chinese literature.

The Adelaide Festival was held this year between March 7 and 29, at a time when the late summer sun was mellow, the sand on

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Yang Xianyi, a well-known translator of Chinese classics, is an associate editor of *Chinese Literature*.

the beaches was warm and the grapes were ripe. For three brilliant weeks, visitors to that delightful city enjoyed music, dramas, dancing, exhibitions and a non-stop carnival.

When we reached Adelaide Airport on March 7, we were met by reporters who plied us with friendly questions. Driving through the city to our hotel, we found the streets festooned with Festival flags and gay banners made by hundreds of community groups and individuals. As a spectacular opening to the Festival, there was a fireworks display after dark over the Torrens which flows through the centre of the city. After watching this we strolled to the Festival Plaza to meet Australian and international writers who had come for Writers' Week. We were warmly greeted by our hosts, Dr Bob Brissenden, chairman of the Literature Board of the Australian Council, Andrew Taylor, chairman of the Writers' Week Committee and others. We were introduced to many visiting writers, and to excellent South Australian red and white wines.

On March 8, we lunched in Hardy's Winery, McLaren Vale. Under a giant Moreton Bay fig tree, the Minister for the Arts of South Australia, Mr Murray Hill, announced the winners of the 1980 Biennial Literature Prize. We were then interviewed by Michael Davic, correspondent of the daily *The Age*, who was at Oxford about the same time as I was some forty-odd years ago and who studied under the same tutor Edmund Blunden. We spoke of the old days and the pubs we had visited with him.

On March 9, Writers' Week was opened by the Governor-General Sir Zelman Cowen, himself a writer. Before his opening speech, Sir Zelman Cowen received our delegation, spoke warmly of the friendship between the Australian and the Chinese people and wished us a successful and happy visit. Dr Brissenden also spoke. This was followed by a book launching at the Festival Theatre, and that evening some Adelaide poets gave readings of their poems.

Writers' Week, a festival within the Festival, is devoted specifically to literature and to the problems and issues facing writers. It was held in a large red-white-and-blue-striped marquee on the lawn opposite the Festival Centre. Near by, under

two huge plane trees, refreshments and books were on sale in other tents. We heard that this marquee had been nicknamed the "Marquee de Sade" on account of the acrimonious debates sometimes held there. However, Writers' Week 1980 went off smoothly and pleasantly. This was in large part due to its organizers: Andrew Taylor, Sue Higgins, Colin Horne, Brian Matthews and Rosemary Wighton. The sessions were most efficiently conducted, with a minimum of empty talk and an atmosphere of informality. By comparison, meetings in China are very long-winded.

Writers' Week in the Adelaide Festival has an important position in the cultural life of Australia. It provides a gathering place for the country's writers who live so widely dispersed, and brings together most of the country's literary editors as well as representatives of all the publishers. The general reading public takes a keen interest in the week's activities, and most sessions are attended by more readers than writers, some of whom raise questions and contribute to the discussions. The writers range from international celebrities and leading Australian authors to young or yet unknown writers.

Overseas writers figure prominently in the discussion sessions, always on the same platform as Australians. This year all but two of the twenty-nine foreign writers invited from nineteen countries were able to attend. They included Alan Ross and D. J. Enright from England; the well-known novelist Chinua Achebe from Nigeria; poetess and novelist Elisabeth Plessen from Germany, whose recent novel about her aristocratic father sold over a hundred thousand copies; the Canadian novelist Marian Engel, best known for her novel about a woman who had a love affair with a bear; the American poet Robert Bly who recited his poems to a dulcimer accompaniment; the Swedish woman writer Heidi Von Born; Joan Aiken, daughter of the American poet Conrad Aiken and herself the author of twenty books for children and ten for adults; the Indian writers K. C. Das and Professor P. Lal; the Indonesian writer Darmanto Jatman; the Czech writer Jiri Mucha who took an active part in the events of spring 1968 in Prague as a contributor to the weekly

*Literarni Listy*; the Japanese poetess Kazuko Shiraishi and others.

The Australian writers numbered over one hundred, including such well-known names as John Bray, Don Dunstan, Colin Horne, Dorothy Hewett, Barry Hill, Brian Kiernan, Christopher Koch, Ian Reid, Judith Rodriguez, Colin Thiele, Rosemary Wighton and Judith Wright.

We attended most of the sessions during Writers' Week, two of which were devoted to a review of current Australian writing. There were others on "Literature and Cultural Identity", "Women Writers", "Literature and the Child" and "Myth, Symbol and Fable". One session celebrating the life and work of Henry Lawson was presided over by Don Dunstan, the former Premier of South Australia.

The Chinese delegation's session, fitted into Writers' Week as a late "extra", was a success. It ran forty minutes beyond schedule because of the barrage of questions, most of which showed friendly interest in the present situation in China. Many Australian writers had complained that, owing to inflation, it was impossible to live on what they earned by writing. When we told them that because of China's huge population, books are published sometimes in millions, this caused a sensation. One local paper published an article entitled "Imagine the Royalties!" We had to explain that the royalties paid to Chinese writers are relatively small, because they all get monthly salaries.

According to another newspaper, this session was the highlight of Writers' Week and "turned out to be the most interesting so far. . . . There were a few tricky moments — like when someone wanted to know what Chinese literature had to say about the invasion of Tibet, and another asked what had happened to the flowers that bloomed on Peking's democratic wall — but the charm of the Chinese and the general friendliness of the occasion smoothed them over".

Kazuko Shiraishi wrote these lines at the end of Writers' Week:

A week passed  
but yesterday was  
already an eternity.

For us, too, it was an unforgettable experience.

After this week of sunshine, festivity and friendship, our delegation went on to Melbourne, Canberra and Sydney, meeting many old friends and making many new ones. In Canberra we were presented with copies of an Australian translation of our veteran novelist Ba Jin's *Frosty Night*. In Sydney, during a party held in honour of the Chinese delegation by the Sydney Centre of the International P.E.N. Australia, Dr Stephen Kelen, the president of this centre, spoke highly of our Chief Editor Mao Dun's long novel *Midnight*, describing it as one of the world's great novels and comparing it with Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooke*.

We attended many performances in Adelaide and other cities. Apart from some new films and a lively Australian puppet show, we saw the American playwright Paul Foster's avant-garde pageant *Elizabeth I*; and *The White Devil*, a modern punk version of Webster's drama of tragic revenge and horror. What we enjoyed more, however, was Gisela May's "Brecht Through Four Decades". Gisela May, leading actress of Brecht's own theatre, The Berliner Ensemble, is the greatest living exponent of his songs and theatre. We also appreciated a dress rehearsal of the Australian Ballet at the Sydney Opera House, and the play *Carboni* to which we were invited by Dr Jocelyn Chey, director of the Australia/China Council.

Our visit was made more enjoyable because we were escorted by David Dukes from the Department of Foreign Affairs, who had studied in Beijing. He helped us to see as much as possible of Australian life: botanical gardens, art galleries, libraries, universities, historic homesteads, surf-riding, and excellent restaurants run by immigrants from many different lands. . . .

It is impossible in this short article to mention all the interesting things we saw and all the warm hospitality we received. We were given many books by Australian writers and hope to have a number of these translated into Chinese. We also hope to be able to entertain some Australian writers in China.

Australia, for all her affluence, is not without problems. During our visit we heard about growing unemployment, the rising cost of living, and the oil strike. Some friends expressed concern about

the external threats to the tranquillity of this region, the horror stories told by Vietnamese refugees, the growing Russian menace in the Southern Pacific and in the Middle East. It is in the interests of both Chinese and Australians to preserve stability in this region. We hope that Australia will solve her internal problems and that, together with other peace-loving countries, we shall succeed in thwarting the warmongers, so that the Adelaide Festival of Arts may continue to foster international friendship.



### Fiftieth Anniversary of Left-Wing Writers' League Commemorated

The fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the League of Left-wing Writers was celebrated in Beijing and Shanghai in March this year. Founded in 1930, the league was the most influential organization in the Left-wing cultural movement in the Kuomintang-controlled areas during the early 1930s. It was dissolved in the spring of 1936 when the movement to resist Japanese aggression gained ground.

In Beijing, a commemoration meeting was jointly sponsored by the Ministry of Culture, the China Federation of Literary and Art Circles and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. Zhou Yang, chairman of the CFLAC and a former leader of the Left-wing cultural movement, addressed the meeting. In his speech, which was published later in the *People's Daily*, he recalled the inception and growth of the movement and discussed its historical achievements.

Other commemorative activities included an exhibition of woodcuts, books and periodicals of that period. Poems and songs of the early 1930s were featured in recitals. The literary quarterly *Historical Records of Modern Literature* celebrated the occasion in its first issue this year, in nearly 20 articles.

In Shanghai, the *Wenbui Daily* republished Lu Xun's speech at the founding meeting of the league, "Thoughts on the League of Left-wing Writers", as well as reminiscences and commemorative articles.

## Best Short Stories of 1979

The best short stories of 1979 were announced and awarded prizes in March this year. The first 5 of the 25 top short stories were: "Manager Qiao Assumes Office" (See *Chinese Literature* No. 2, 1980) by Jiang Zilong, "The General and the Small Town" (See *CL* No. 6, 1980) by Chen Shixu, "Li Shunda Builds a House" by Gao Xiaosheng, "A Traitor" by Fang Zhi and "A Wrongly Edited Story" by Ru Zhijuan. As in last year, the prizes were awarded by a special committee of well-known writers after a poll among a representative section of readers.

Jiang Zilong, an amateur writer of 39, is now a deputy workshop director at the Tianjin Heavy Machinery Plant. His story won the largest number of the 250,000 votes. Gao Xiaosheng and the late Fang Zhi from Jiangsu Province were professional writers who became known in the 1950s. After being wronged in the Anti-Rightist Movement in 1957, they remained silent for more than twenty years. In recent years they published many new works. Chen Shixu, 33, works in the Jiujiang County Cultural Centre, Jiangxi. "The General and the Small Town" is his first story. Ru Zhijuan is a professional writer from Shanghai. One of her stories was published with an article introducing her in *Chinese Literature* No. 3, this year.

Among the other twenty authors on the list there were two women writers and two minority-nationality writers. This is the second year running that the stories of Wang Meng, Zhang Jie, Deng Youmei, Kong Jiesheng and Liu Xinwu have been chosen.

These 25 best short stories, rich in content and varied in style, depict the new people in China today and deal with their struggle against the ultra-Left line pushed by Lin Biao and the "gang of four", as well as other aspects of life. They are to be published in book form by the Shanghai Literature Publishing House.

## Chinese Translation of Herzen Published

A book of reminiscences, *My Past and Thoughts* by Alexander Herzen, Russian revolutionary democrat and writer in the nine-

teenth century, is being translated by the noted Chinese writer Ba Jin and the first volume with 300,000 words has come off the press.

These reminiscences, as the translator says, are "records of social life and the revolutionary struggles in Russia and western Europe, from the 1820s down to the eve of the historic Paris Commune in 1871". Ba Jin had long wanted to translate this work which includes diaries, letters, notes and political essays. He started his translation in 1974 and expects to complete all five volumes in 1984 when he is eighty.

## Selected Essays of Lu Xun Published

*Lu Xun's Selected Essays* edited by Qu Qiubai in 1933 was re-published recently by the Shanghai Literature Publishing House. It contains 76 essays written from 1918 to 1932.

Qu Qiubai (1899-1935) was a major figure in China's new literature movement, a celebrated writer, literary theorist and translator. He was also one of the early leaders of the Chinese Communist Party. In the preface, written on the basis of his profound study of the Chinese revolution and the development of Lu Xun's thinking, he made a scientific appraisal of Lu Xun and his writings.

## New Film *Cherry Blossom* on Show

*Cherry Blossom*, a colour feature film reflecting the friendship between the peoples of China and Japan, was released not long ago in Beijing and other Chinese cities. It tells how a Japanese girl who was brought up by a Chinese woman comes back to China in 1975 to visit her foster-mother and brother, after being separated for over twenty years. But the Chinese mother and brother dare not acknowledge her for fear that they will be accused of having illicit relations with foreigners. It is only in the spring of

1977, when cherry blossoms are in bloom, that she returns a second time for a happy reunion.

This is the first colour feature film produced by the Youth Film Studio of the Beijing Film Academy.

### **Land Aflame Re-shown**

The feature film *Land Aflame* directed by Zhang Junxiang and Gu Eryi, which was condemned during the Cultural Revolution, was recently re-shown in all parts of China.

Produced in 1962 the film takes the strikes of the miners in Anyuan, Jiangxi, in the early 1920s as its background. It shows how the spontaneous resistance to oppression of the miners, with Yi Mengzi as their representative, developed into a well-organized fight under the guidance of the Party representative Lei Huanjue. Because the late Chairman Liu Shaoqi was one of the main leaders in the strike, the "gang of four" asserted that the film "glorified" him. The film was banned, and its directors, actors and actresses were persecuted. Recently, after Liu Shaoqi's name was cleared by the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, this popular film was released again. At the same time the new documentary *The People Miss You, Comrade Shaoqi*, which records his life, was shown in all parts of China.

### **The Play Camel Xiangzi Re-staged**

The play *Camel Xiangzi* (also known as *Rickshaw Boy* adapted from the novel of the same title (See *Chinese Literature* Nos. 11 and 12, 1978) by Lao She (1899-1966) has been re-staged by the Beijing People's Art Theatre.

Lao She wrote the novel in 1935. By depicting the life of the rickshaw puller Xiangzi, it shows the bitter suffering of the labouring people and their mounting discontent in the old society. This novel was adapted into a popular five-act play in 1957. This new stage version has been revised and improved.

### **U.S. Photographic Exhibition in China**

"Glimpses of America", an exhibition of over 150 colour photographs of the United States, toured Beijing, Shenyang, Hefei and Shanghai early this year. This was the first exhibition of American colour photographs ever held in China. The displayed photographs were chosen from many works by Mr J.W. Canty and 18 other leading American photographers. They showed scenes and life in the cities of New York, Washington, Chicago, San Francisco, as well as Hawaii and other states.

### **Pakistan Pucar Cultural Troupe Visits China**

The Pakistan Pucar Cultural Troupe visited China in March this year and gave performances in Beijing and Xi'an. Their programme included dance drama, classical dancing, vocal solos, folk-songs and music. They reflected the life and customs of the Pakistani people.

Founded in 1975, the Pakistan Pucar Cultural Troupe is made up of leading dancers and other artistes from Punjab Province.

Pakistan Pucar Cultural Troupe performing in China



Their performances won warm applause from the Chinese audiences.

### Stuttgarter Ballet Visits Beijing and Shanghai

The Stuttgarter Ballet from the Federal Republic of Germany, consisting of more than one hundred artistes, paid their first visit to China in March and April this year. During their tour the German artistes performed in Beijing and Shanghai the classical ballets *Eugene Onegin* and *Romeo and Juliet* to the delight of the Chinese audiences.

Founded in 1961, the troupe has dancers from 15 countries. They have performed many classical and modern ballets and evolved their own unique style.

*Eugene Onegin* performed by the Stuttgarter Ballet



#### CORRECTION

In our June issue, 1980, page 101, paragraph 1, line 1, "a British scholar Bonnie S. McDougall" should read "an Australian scholar Bonnie S. McDougall".



Gold Fish (traditional Chinese painting)

by Wu Zuoren



中国文学

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