



A Young Pathbreaker

AND OTHER STORIES

THIS collection of short stories is mostly about young people's life in new China, written in the main by the youth who have been tempered in the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. They have studied, worked and lived at the forefront of the three revolutionary movements (class struggle, the struggle for production and scientific experiment). The characters and events they have met and witnessed encouraged and attracted them so intensely that they must write about them. Each story may record one or two characters or events, but together they provide glimpses of the new thinking and new social behaviour of China's younger generation.

Ten short stories with illustrations.

A Young Pathbreaker

AND OTHER STORIES

by Hsiao Kuan-hung and others

FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS
PEKING 1975

OCTOBER BOOKS
4B TEMPLE COURT
LIVERPOOL 2
A C.P.B.M.L. BOOKSHOP

Contents

OUT TO LEARN Chou Yung-chuang	1
WOMAN FORGE WORKER Liu Jung-ken	19
THE SHARP CUTTER EDGE Liu Shu-chen	32
A YOUNG PATHBREAKER Hsiao Kuan-hung	46
A SCREW Shen Hui-min	62
HIDDEN REEF Shih Min	77
MORNING SUN Shih Han-fu	112
PUPIL EXCELS MASTER Sheng Hua-hai	138
RE-EXAMINATION Huang Pei-chia	148
A STEEL WORKER'S ASSISTANT Yu Ping-kun and Wu Sheng-hsi	161

Out to Learn

Chou Yung-chuang

ON the dark asphalt road shining in the golden sunlight, Yao Chih-ming, Party secretary of a generator plant's cold-shop, cycled swiftly with the autumn breeze towards the general tool factory.

In 1958, the year of the Great Leap Forward, Yao Chih-ming was already a model worker. Stout, sturdy and in his fifties, he wielded his hammer with such skill and power that a much younger man would stare at him astonished. It was during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution that he became secretary of the workshop's Party branch, after which his mates pointed to him as a good example of the integration of old and new — old worker become new cadre. Conscious of his heavy responsibility, Yao kept constantly in mind the instructions of our great leader Chairman Mao that **“we should be modest and prudent, guard against arrogance and rashness, and serve the Chinese people heart and soul. . . .”**

In the campaign to repudiate revisionism and rectify the Party's style of work, the workshop Party branch

laid emphasis on clarifying the correct ideological and political line. Management was also improved and soon production soared. Several giant generator frames had been made in the previous few months. Though it was only early October, the quota for the year was already finished. The plant's Party committee asked the Party branch to make a good summing-up of their experience so that it could be applied in the other shops. For this purpose, Yao called a Party branch committee meeting at which he told the others: "As we all work on generators we know that the greater the capacity of a generator the greater the need for cooling. The same goes for our work. The greater our success, the greater our need to remain coolheaded, able to see the contradictions before us and the road ahead. Otherwise we may mark time or even lose ground." Everyone approved Yao's revolutionary spirit, his lack of complacency and his determination to keep forging ahead.

Yao was attending a short-term political study course sponsored by the district Party committee to repudiate revisionism and rectify the Party's style of work. This helped him to see many problems in a new light.

A couple of days previously Old Wang, who was taking the same study course, had entered Yao's room, a newspaper in his hand.

"Your workshop's in the news again, Yao," he said as he plunked himself down on a stool, spread the paper over his knees and started reading aloud:

"The cold-shop at the generator plant, spurred on by the campaign to repudiate revisionism and rectify the Party's style of work, has not only overhauled its inspection system, ensuring a steady rise in both quality and quantity, but has introduced a new method of

verifying measurements before cutting, so as to eliminate rejects. This was done by giving full play to the enthusiasm of the masses and has greatly improved the quality of their work. . . ."

The others in the room urged Yao to tell them about his shop's experience. Yao walked up to Wang, his eyes on the paper as if deep in thought.

"Here, have a look at this first," said Wang, handing him the paper.

But Yao just passed it back to him, unread.

"When the papers print our experience it's an encouragement as well as a spur to our work. But look at the upper part of the page: 'The leadership of the general tool factory aroused the masses to disclose contradictions and develop their productive potential. By cutting the material in a more rational way they are able to economize on steel.' Compared with them we are lagging far behind. The tool factory often sends men to our cutting department to collect scrap, which they use as raw material. Their thrift and drive, the way they utilize scrap and exploit their potential to the full are a fine example for us — yet we've been blind to it. What does this show? It reveals our conceit and complacency."

Yao meant what he said, and was not just trying to be modest. Some of his mates looked down on small factories and there had been friction between his shop and the tool factory on several occasions. Although Yao had pointed out that this was wrong, the idea of learning from such a small factory had never occurred to him either. So as soon as the study course came to an end he cycled over to the tool factory, determined to pick up some tips there.

Entering the factory gate he noticed big-character posters all over the walls. They read:

"The generator plant has forged ahead. What must we do?"

"Explode the fallacy that our production's reached a peak and we've no more potentialities to exploit!"

"The management must overcome its complacency!"

Beside these posters was an article put up in the name of the Party branch — with the title: "How Right You Are!"

Yao was very stirred. A throng of thoughts raced through his head. Contradictions ought to be exposed by encouraging the workers to air their views in posters. That was how things should be done in a factory. Why was it that in his own workshop announcements of achievements often appeared but never posters like these? Yao quickened his steps as he headed for the office of the factory revolutionary committee.

The sole occupant of that office was busy reading. He looked up, recognized Yao and then stood up to shake hands. "So it's you, Old Yao. Take a seat. You're a busy man and don't pay courtesy calls. You must have some urgent business on hand."

"I've come to learn from you. I didn't come before not because we were busy but because I had a swelled head," said Yao tapping his forehead.

"How can you say that, Yao?" protested the other. "Your plant is like a big brother to our small outfit. You're a go-ahead unit. We've a lot to learn from you. It's too bad you've come just now when our key men are out learning from other factories. . . ."

Light dawned on Yao. "I see . . ." he said springing to his feet. "Well, I mustn't take up your time. I'll

just have a look round your workshop." With that he walked out.

2

Yao arrived "home" at noon. After leaning his bike against the wall, he looked eagerly round the shop, and chatted amiably with the workers.

Red flames danced under the workers' hands; acetylene torch cutters sputtered fire; a clear blue arc hovered over the electric welder; machines roared, hammers clanged . . . this was where Yao felt most at home. Drawing a deep breath of satisfaction, he took off his coat and made for the cloak-room where he put on overalls and gloves. He then went to the cutting department, where he had worked originally and to which he often returned after his appointment as Party secretary to work and sweat with his old mates. Everyone said, "If you're looking for our secretary, don't go to his office, go to the cutters. You'll find him there hard at work."

When Yao arrived there, he saw checker Li Chun-hua squatting on a sheet of steel, her measuring tape extended. She was wearing a man's cap at a rakish angle. And the black smudges on her plump rosy cheeks made them seem like red apples which had been rolled in the mud.

Chun-hua was the only daughter of Li Cheng-kuei, a member of the shop's Party branch committee. She was high-spirited and open as the day, her face reflecting every passing mood, but she had a very quick tongue. Her father called her Tomboy. Since the im-

provement of the inspection system, their shop no longer sent out sub-standard products, to the satisfaction of everyone except Chun-hua. She said, "We may have stopped rejects from slipping out, but we still throw too many on the scrap heap. It's a crying shame!" This thought was at the back of her mind when she initiated a check-up on the dimensions drawn as a guide for the cutters. She wanted to eliminate mistakes at the early stage.

Yao saw a sudden shadow cross Chun-hua's face. Something must be wrong. He stepped behind her to peer over her shoulder.

The girl pulled out her tape in his direction and, without even looking at him, ordered, "Hold that!" Yao quietly did as he was told.

Chun-hua leapt to one side, bent down for a closer look, then burst out angrily, "What's happened to you, Little Chang? We've just undertaken to save twenty tons of steel this month, yet you're still working irresponsibly. Do you think you're entitled to do a sloppy job because we make a check-up just before cutting?" She made a fresh mark on the steel with her crayon.

Yao was delighted with their idea of saving twenty tons of steel. The masses always look ahead, keep pressing forward. As soon as one contradiction is resolved, never satisfied, they find new targets. We cadres must be on our toes, he thought, in order to keep up with them.

"Say, are you dumb or deaf? Why can't you admit your mistake and correct it?" Chun-hua scolded, when her first volley of reproofs met with no response.

She was so comically serious that Yao chuckled. Chun-hua whirled round so quickly that her cap fell off. A flush spread over her face and she grinned sheepishly. "Oh, it's you, Master Yao. I thought it was Young Chang."

Yao smiled, picked up her cap and planted it squarely on her head. "Well, Chun-hua, what's cooking in that head of yours lately?" he asked.

"I was just going to look for you, Master Yao. You see, I've been trying to figure out how to put every single inch of steel sheet to good use."

"Oh, we've hit upon the same idea!" cried Yao.

At the tool factory that morning, Yao had pitched in with the workers there and benefited from their method of rational arrangement of designs to get the maximum number of parts from each steel sheet. He had intended to discuss this with the experienced cutters in his own shop but hadn't expected Chun-hua to bring up the question. He was naturally overjoyed to know that she had been thinking along the same line as himself.

Chun-hua longed to know what ideas Yao had, but his evident delight reminded her of something else.

She had gone to see her father the previous day, and found him in his office reading the newspaper, a broad smile on his face.

"Dad, I've a proposal to make," she announced as she entered.

"Oh, another proposal? All right, shoot," said Li without even putting the paper down.

"Our people say we can cut down twenty tons on steel sheets this month."

"What? How? Listen, Tomboy, this is no laughing matter. I don't want you to lower the quality of our products. We have a reputation to keep up . . ." Li said waving the paper.

"Is that all you can think about, dad — reputation? . . . All over the country, socialist construction is going full speed ahead. So much steel is needed everywhere, we must economize on material. The successes we've scored recently seem to have gone to your head. You just sit in your office holding forth on our experience, hardly ever going into the shop to work. . . ."

Just then the telephone rang. Li picked it up, signing to his daughter to be quiet.

"Hullo . . . is that Yao? Li speaking."

"Listen, Old Li, our course's finished and I could be back tonight. But I'm thinking of visiting a few other plants, so don't expect me today. . . ."

"That's a good idea, Yao. I've had my hands full these last few days, giving 'press conferences' every day to comrades from other plants. If you can stop them coming here it'll be a help. Go right ahead." He hung up and turned to his daughter. "See how it is? What time have I to work in the shop? Since the papers gave us that write-up, people have been flocking here to learn from us. Now Yao's going out to introduce our experience. . . ."

This way of talking so upset Chun-hua that she stalked out indignantly, her plaits swinging.

Recalling the incident, Chun-hua asked Yao, "Why weren't you back earlier?"

"Oh, I've been out visiting other factories," Yao answered offhandedly, staring at the steel sheet at his feet.

This answer confirmed what Chun-hua's father had said. She could hardly believe it. Was it possible that Yao too was growing complacent? To test her misgivings, she asked, "What do you think of our work here, Master Yao?"

"Just fine!" he exclaimed, patting the girl on the back. Chun-hua was stunned. This wasn't like Master Yao. Before she could overcome her bewilderment, he drew her on to the steel sheet. "Look, if you draw the dimensions that way," he explained, gesticulating as he talked, "you'll save both time and material, and kill two birds with one stone. Won't that be fine?"

Now Chun-hua saw what he meant. Far from feeling smug, Yao had tackled the very problem that was worrying her. In her excitement she jumped up and whooped, "Wonderful, really wonderful!"

Just then two girls entered carrying a pail of paste and a roll of paper. One of them said, "We've copied out the poster, Chun-hua. Here it is."

Yao unrolled the poster. Its bold title caught his eye, "How to React to Success."

*Drums roll, gongs crash, in pour congratulations;
Some of our cadres are dizzy with satisfaction.
Expounding their experience here and there,
They walk on air, swell-headed with success.
Too smug to hear suggestions from the masses,
They fail to see how much there's still to do.
We hope the Party branch will think this over —
The revolution must be carried through!*

The big-character poster is a weapon to debunk the enemy as well as a scalpel to dissect oneself. Yao rejoiced at the way these youngsters were racing ahead, helping the leadership by sounding this warning. This was particularly valuable.

Then a question arose: what was meant by "expounding their experience here and there"? Remembering his telephone conversation with Li the previous day, he thought harder.

Was this a simple case of misunderstanding? No. What looked like a casual happening showed the arrogance and complacency of some leading cadres. It also reflected the mistakes in his own style of work.

He turned to the three girls and said, "You're right! Let's go and paste it up in front of the exit door."

3

People packed the workshop office where Li Cheng-kuei was holding forth. Introducing his shop's experience from a thick stack of papers, he had now come to the last few sheets.

With unconcealed pleasure he concluded, "In a word, we gave full attention to the management of production, and our output has been going as quickly as a winged charger. Our quality is up to standard too. We've already overfulfilled the year's quota."

The room was seething with excitement and there were many approving comments.

"Old Li," put in one of the visitors as he stood up, "could you tell us what your Party branch committee

has learned about ideological leadership and your plans for the future?"

The hum of conversation died down abruptly. Li, the focus of dozens of pairs of eyes, was at a loss. The fact was that since their experience had been published in the newspaper, Li had felt too happy for words. For several days he had been on the go, too busy to give any thought to a possible question like this. He was in a quandary, and quite stumped for an answer. To admit it would make people think that the ideological level of his advanced unit was too low. How he wished Old Yao were here! He was cudgelling his brains for a reply when the door banged open and in came Yao Chih-ming. At last! Li beamed with relief.

But Yao was so eager to meet the comrades from the tool factory that he did not even stop to greet Li. Hurrying over to shake hands with them, he exclaimed, "What luck, finding you all here! I've just been to your factory to pick up some tips from you but of course didn't find you. We've got so much to learn from you!"

After all were seated, Yao told them what he had been doing that morning. People's faces lit up; but Li Cheng-kuei looked glum. He was thinking: So Old Yao went out to learn from them. Why didn't I ask him on the phone what he was up to? . . . Li knew his daughter very well. How awkward it would be if she questioned Yao about this.

After a while, Li handed a slip of paper to Yao. "Here's the question a comrade from the tool factory raised. It's for you to answer."

Yao glanced at the slip and after a moment's thought said, "All right. Come along, comrades, let's all go to the workshop."

Assuming that Yao was about to give their guests an on-the-spot lecture, Li cheerfully followed them.

Yao stopped before a bulletin board. Li expected him to point out an announcement of new achievements, or draw attention to an honours roll. When he spotted a sheet of white paper with a verse on it in the middle of the board, he supposed it must be the work of some "poet," for announcements of good news and honours rolls were usually written on red paper. As he came closer to the board, however, he saw that this was a poster to criticize the Party branch; what's more, the first signature that caught his eye was that of his daughter Li Chun-hua! His heart missed a beat and the characters blurred before his eyes. . . .

Yao, standing beside him, was calmly telling the visitors, "See, the workers have raised the question you want us to answer. This is the best answer I can give you."

Li was very vexed. He felt a sharp sting on his lips. His hand involuntarily went to his mouth and he then realized that his cigarette stub was burning out. He could not bear to stay there any longer, and said biting, "Old Yao, I've got some business to attend to. You can answer any other questions." This said, he strode away.

Yao stood silent, watching his companion's back recede and recalling the past. Li had headed the workshop for more than ten years and the two of them had always hit it off well. During the Cultural Revolution,

Li was elected a member of the Party branch committee. Experienced and hard-working, he had been Yao's righthand man. But, Yao thought, since we stopped criticizing each other in a comradely way there's been a change in Old Li. That time we succeeded in making a huge generator and the leadership commended other workshops but not ours, Li was sulky for days. Though I took it up with him then I didn't go to the root of his problem. . . .

At this point Chun-hua came to fetch a tool. Yao stopped her, saying jokingly, "Chun-hua, you've scared your father away."

"Really?" Swinging her plaits as she turned her head, the girl looked at Yao with a big query in her eyes.

"Chun-hua," Yao added, "disclosing a contradiction by going to the heart of it isn't enough — we must resolve it. We must cure the patient by giving him the correct treatment."

"Right!" the girl replied mischievously. "I guarantee to fulfil the task."

Turning to his visitors, Yao said, "Let me introduce you. This is Chun-hua, Old Li's daughter. She's the one who suggested the method of checking up on dimensions, and the one who took the lead in writing this poster criticizing the Party branch."

The visitors pressed round to shake Chun-hua's hand and urged her to pass on her experience to them. For her part, Chun-hua begged for some tips on how to save material while cutting.

Right there, in front of the bulletin board, the "hostess" and the "guests" exchanged experiences. . . .

At noon Li Cheng-kuei went home for lunch. Holding his rice bowl in his hand he became lost in thought, the big-character poster flashing before his eyes. Although Chun-hua had worked in the plant for three years, she was still just a slip of a girl in his opinion. Moreover, for a daughter to write a poster criticizing her own father, not caring a bit about saving his face, that was too much. . . . On top of it all, Old Yao had gone out of his way to show the criticism to their visitors. What sort of way was that to answer questions! He had simply made Li look ridiculous.

As he brooded like this the sound of merry singing floated into the room. The next moment Chun-hua entered briskly.

"Dad!" she cried fondly. "Is ma back yet?" This was her way of asking, "Still angry with me?"

Biting reproofs were on the tip of Li's tongue, but he choked them back at sight of her loving manner.

The girl bolted her meal in no time, then rummaged through chests and drawers until she found a length of blue twill. She spread this out on the bed and drew a pattern on it.

Li thought this was an odd time to start dress-making. When his daughter picked up scissors to cut through the middle of the material, he snatched it away, shook it, then turned it over before spreading it out smoothly on the bed again. Unexpectedly, he showed himself to be skilful in cutting out clothes. He redrew the pattern and said, "It would waste material, the way you wanted to cut. You see, there's enough material here for two

pairs of slacks. Lay the legs here — that bit'll do for the pockets — and this triangle is just enough for the belt. . . ."

Shaking her head, Chun-hua mimicked her father's tone. "No . . . that won't do. It'll affect the quality of the slacks, and spoil our old tailor's reputation too!"

Li looked up to glare at Chun-hua, but like a gust of wind she ran out laughing. He was dumbfounded, the chalk dropping out of his hand.

5

That afternoon Li went back to his office. No one else was there. With a look of annoyance he slumped on a chair and began to leaf through the material on his desk. The door banged open and Yao came in wet with perspiration.

Li's sulky expression aroused Yao's concern. "What's the matter with you, Old Li?" he questioned. "Don't you feel well? What's the trouble?"

"Depressed."

"Because Chun-hua and the others put up that poster? Why, man, hundreds of posters were put up about you during the Cultural Revolution. They helped wake you up to your faults. How come one poster today has made you depressed? What's at the root of this?"

Yao's remarks took Li back in memory to the Cultural Revolution. One unforgettable scene after another passed through his mind. At that time, all the big-character posters put up by the revolutionary masses to criticize him had kept him awake for nights, causing him sharp mental conflicts. With the help of Yao and

the revolutionary workers he finally came back to Chairman Mao's revolutionary line. At the meeting celebrating the founding of the workshop's revolutionary committee, he had said from the bottom of his heart, "I'll never forget the profound lesson I've learned in the Cultural Revolution." But today. . . . He hung his head moodily, deep in thought.

Yao continued, "I think you need more fresh air. If you shut yourself up within the four walls of this small office all day long, you'll never solve your problem and may even fall into the old rut. Come on, let's see what's happening outside." He pulled Li out of the office.

Chun-hua, who was again squatting over a steel sheet, was gesticulating with both hands as she talked to a man from the tool factory. When she saw Yao and her father, she sprang up to greet them.

"Have you thought over our proposal, dad?" she asked Li, tilting her head to one side. "The rational method of cutting is bound to save us twenty tons of steel. If you don't believe me, look at this. . . ."

Li looked down and saw that the carefully drawn dimensions of various machine parts had been skilfully fitted together to fill the whole sheet. He could not but admire the ingenuity of the designer. "Whose idea was this?" he asked. "It's really smart."

"The comrades from the tool factory and Chun-hua thought it up," replied Yao.

"No, the comrades from the tool factory and Master Yao," Chun-hua amended. "And you too — dad!"

"This isn't something to joke about," scolded Li, assuming that his daughter was needling him.



"Remember, dad, when I was a child I asked you what you did in the cold-shop? You told me the work there was like a tailor's, using the acetylene torch in place of scissors, and welding and rolling in place of sewing and ironing. . . . Later on, it occurred to me that if rational cutting makes dress material go further, why shouldn't the same apply to steel sheets? We have even more reason to economize on steel. With the help of the comrades from the tool factory and Master Yao, this idea has now materialized. Don't you deserve a share of the credit?"

"Chun-hua's right," said Yao. "Looking backward makes us smug; looking forward shows we still have a long way to go. The rational method of cutting is not complicated, but if we're blinded by conceit we're like a welder wearing a face-guard—unable to see something staring him in the face."

Yao walked up to Li and laid a hand affectionately on his shoulder. "Old Li," he said earnestly, "the tool factory's smaller than ours, but they've a bigger sense of the need to continue the revolution, to keep pressing forward."

"The need to continue the revolution!" Li clapped a hand to his head as it dawned on him why he had been so blind to the strong points of others; why he was interested in making full use of his daughter's dress material but not of the plant's steel; why he had flared up at sight of the big-character poster. It was all because he had not been giving enough thought to continuing the revolution. His blood racing, he looked at Yao in his work-stained overalls and recalled how often Yao went without food and sleep to study the works

of Marx, Lenin and Chairman Mao. Encouraged by his example, Li felt a new access of energy.

Chun-hua dashed up to him. "Reporting! I'm going to a meeting of the Youth League committee, dad."

"What kind of a meeting?"

"To swap experience!" she replied shooting him a quizzical glance.

"Well, we've still a long way to go," said Li knitting his brows as if he had been touched on a sore spot.

"Go by all means, Chun-hua," said Yao. "This is a good chance to learn from brother workshops."

"What should I talk about?" she asked, suddenly diffident.

"Tell them what we've learned from the tool factory."

Li shook his hefty fist, declaring, "You can start with me. 'Dissect' me as an example!"

"Right!" Chun-hua snapped to attention, turned smartly and made off like a whirlwind.

Illustrated by Tung Chen-sheng

Woman Forge Worker

Liu Jung-ken

OTHER workshops were sending more and more forging jobs to our section, a clear indication that our production of generators was steadily increasing, and a reflection of the rapid development of our country's national economy. However heavy the tasks, our old blacksmiths, seasoned at the forge, were able to carry them through. Then the factory leadership decided to select two from among our skilled workers and send them to help China's inland construction. We wondered how we were going to shoulder our task with a reduced number of workers. I called a special meeting of squad and group leaders to discuss how to deal with this problem.

All were agreed that we should take an over-all view of the matter and firmly support the release of the two to help inland construction. They also said we should display a spirit of self-reliance and help work out many technical innovations so that we could fulfil our task with the people available including the office workers.

I was delighted with the discussion — such high aims and rational suggestions. We began discussing the merits of individual staff members with a view to their replacing the departing skilled forge workers. The comrade in charge of blueprints and other materials was considered first, but he had injured his arm and so could not meet the needs of the job. Then there was the man in charge of statistic records, but he was very busy and couldn't possibly be spared. . . . We reviewed our forces for a long time without finding anyone suitable for the forging work, and had just about given up hope when the door opened to reveal a young woman just out of her teens. She had a round face, large eyes, and hair cut neatly to her ear lobes. She was attired in blue work jacket and a pair of army trousers, faded with many washings. After looking around all present at the meeting, she said to me, "I'm looking for you, Section Chief Chen."

I wondered why she was looking for me. She was Kao Hsiao-chin, a designer from the technical office next door. I knew she was the daughter of a People's Liberation Army cadre, and that she was reputed to have a stubborn character. Racking my brain trying to think of someone for the forging job, I was somewhat hasty in addressing her, "Well, what is it?"

"I hear you're short of forge workers. I'd like to be one," she said.

"You?" I questioned, while everyone else in the room looked quite aback. In fact, when discussing possibilities, not one of us had given a thought to the possibility of a *woman* forge worker. The men sniggered and one tried to pass it off with a joke, "Forge workers

strike a hammer on an anvil — hard metal against hard metal. It's quite different from sketching or embroidery. Better stick to your drawing board! And be careful you don't pierce a hole in the paper!"

Kao Hsiao-chin was furious. She raised her head, her eyes flashing, and said sternly, "Times are not what they were, men and women can do the same work. Why should you think us women incapable?" Her intense seriousness made her listeners laugh.

A voice was heard above the laughter, saying, "An ox ploughs the fields and a horse draws a cart — each has its own function. Men forge, women sketch, we don't need any girls around the forge."

"You're only showing your conservatism," Kao Hsiao-chin challenged. "In building socialism, is men's and women's work to be separated?"

I was a little out of patience, for I considered that to become a good smith a strong will, courage and great physical strength was needed and that not one of these qualities must be lacking. Women were naturally weaker, and besides, we'd never had a woman forge worker in our factory. I gave Kao Hsiao-chin a sign of dismissal and said, "It's no use arguing; whoever saw a woman swinging a hammer at the forge? We're busy now, go back to your work!"

Kao Hsiao-chin blushed but, far from leaving, stepped to the table and addressed me, "Section Chief Chen, I never thought you'd talk like that too! Haven't you seen the women wielding hammers in the film *Red Flag Canal*?"

Kao Hsiao-chin was really sharp and formidable in her reasoning! In the face of it, the group and squad leaders considered her proposal and agreed she should

be allowed to try her hand at forging. In the end I also gave in.

2

The workshop leadership endorsed our decision, and the next day Kao Hsiao-chin seemed to be walking on air. She went to the forging section humming a passage from a model revolutionary opera, "Well I know that there's danger ahead, but I'm all the more set on driving forward. . . ."

I asked her to just watch from the side till she got used to the place. For a while she obediently stood there, but when the steam hammers went into action she was so fascinated by them especially when the red-hot ingots emerged from the furnace and became long, short, square or round in the workers' hands, she could stand still no longer and edged her way over to the largest steam hammer. I was afraid something would happen and kept waving to her to stand back, but she simply didn't see me. Suddenly the steam hammer gave an especially loud "ho" as it struck from a height, and sparks flew in all directions. Kao Hsiao-chin intuitively took several steps backwards and almost fell. I rushed up to help her.

She opened her eyes wide but said nothing. Then suddenly she turned and strode towards the big steam hammer. I was at a loss what to do because of her unexpected action, with not a clue to what she was going to do. I could see her getting closer and closer to the huge hammer. . . . The force of its concussion was

already shaking her jacket. The shooting sparks were now spraying over her, but she just stood there gazing at the hot ingot, her round face reflecting the red flashes.

"Get back quickly, you silly girl!" I shouted, as I went to pull her back. This time she had the laugh on me. "Section Chief Chen, sparks are also paper tigers, the nearer you get to them the less they can harm you."

Looking at the smile on her full face and the burns the sparks had made on her hands, I recalled the words of her song, "Well I know that there's danger ahead, but I'm all the more set on driving forward. . . ."

To tell the truth, that young woman had what it takes! After only a few days in the workshop, she made repeated requests to do some forging. She had all her reasons ready: Since all real knowledge comes from practice, one must learn on the job, and in learning technique for the revolution one must display the revolutionary spirit of seizing the day and seizing the hour. There was no disagreeing with Hsiao-chin! What she said was correct. How could I frustrate this determined young woman who was so full of vigour! That morning I did things differently and decided to let her have a try at forging right away.

At first I guided her hand, but she was quick and took over the manipulation of the vise. I figured she must have worked out some method of her own, so I slowly withdrew my hand.

It seemed that Hsiao-chin was set on handling the forge alone. As soon as I let go she gripped the vise control tighter, turned the red-hot ingot over and hit it with a resounding blow. I saw that her arms were

shaking like springs recovering from excess strain, but she set her teeth, and again gripped the control.

I realized that she was really not familiar enough with the operation and that she hadn't the required strength either. I thought I should help her handle the vise. She seemed to read my thoughts, for she said, "I can do it, Master Chen."

After working with her for a while I got to know the young woman's temperament and stood by quietly while she managed by herself. But, when she was hitting for the third time, the vise control flew out of her hand. It was a good thing I was prepared for this eventuality. I grabbed it and held it firmly to prevent a major accident. The red-hot ingot slipped to the ground, rolled over a few times and then came to rest.

I asked her, "Do your arms ache?" Kao Hsiao-chin's face was pale and she was biting her lower lip. A little upset myself, I tried to console her. "It doesn't matter. You just haven't got the strength. Better take it a little easy. . . ."

"No! But that's really maddening!" she interrupted me, looking at her hands as though to place the blame on them.

Kao Hsiao-chin was unusually quiet that afternoon and I thought she was reconsidering the problem. In fact, I thought, it is not easy for women to learn forging. They're bound to lack at least one of the qualities required of a good forge worker: a strong will, courage and great physical strength. This young woman had not done badly. I thought of giving her some other, lighter work. There were many auxiliary jobs in the shop.

Early next morning I had just entered the shop when Kao Hsiao-chin came over to me and said, "Here's something for you, Section Chief Chen." She handed me a paper folded into a square, turned and left. I took the paper and, as I watched her leave, couldn't help wondering if she was backing out. Was she asking for a transfer?

I quickly unfolded the paper and glanced over it. Then, as I read it more carefully, I was moved. In my mind Kao Hsiao-chin seemed to grow taller. She seemed no longer the child Hsiao-chin I had known. Her note to me was by no means a request for a transfer, but a review of her own thoughts and determination. It said:

After entering the factory and becoming a designer shut up in an office all day, away from physical labour, I almost had an accident yesterday. This was a profound lesson to me. I must make up the physical labour I've been missing, in order to be able to carry out Chairman Mao's revolutionary line and devote myself to help the country's ever-expanding socialist construction. "Well I know that there's danger ahead, but I'm all the more set on driving forward. . . ."

I meditated over it for a long time, and concluded it was not Kao Hsiao-chin who should be writing a self-examination, but myself! The Party had educated me for many years and still I had little understanding of the revolutionary spirit of the youth in the era of Mao Tsetung. Pains should be taken in training good young people! Though they had their shortcomings, they should be helped enthusiastically. From now on

I ought to help Hsiao-chin more. I dismissed the idea of giving her other work.

3

Three months passed. Hsiao-chin made amazing progress and she could operate the forge independently. Rarely in our workshop had an apprentice learned to operate his machine independently in three months. It was strange, but strength seemed to grow in Kao Hsiao-chin's arms every day after the near accident.

One moonlit evening I had something to attend to in the workshop. As I walked towards it in the fresh breeze, I happily thought how we'd overfulfilled the month's quota, and hummed the revolutionary opera song Hsiao-chin had taught us that day. As I was about to enter the workshop I heard the sound of a hammer striking out a rhythm. Surprised, I stopped, and there was Hsiao-chin swinging a hammer on the ground! Her sleeves were rolled high and she was swinging the hammer with all her might, counting: eighteen, nineteen. . . . An improvised willow stump anvil resounded with the blows from her hammer.

Moved beyond words, I didn't say anything but leaned against the wall and watched her wield that sixteen-pounder, which seemed to grow in weight as she handled it. . . . Finally she had difficulty in raising it again, but mustered all her strength and swung it once more. Wiping the sweat from her forehead she slowly walked to a poplar tree and made a chalk mark on its trunk. She then went over to an iron bar lying on the ground, stopped, bent down and, using both hands, lifted it high,

put it down, lifted it again, and then put it down again . . . just like a weightlifter at practice.

I thought of the time at lunch when the hands in which Kao Hsiao-chin held her bowl and chopsticks were shaking uncontrollably as if she had some disease. Now I understood. These months had not been easy for her. I couldn't help expressing my feelings and cried out: "Put that bar down at once and go back and rest!"

When Kao Hsiao-chin was aware of my presence she became very embarrassed and said, "Master Chen, I must do two more rounds of the field according to my plan. I'll be through in a while. You go back first."

She'd turned the tables on me, asking me to go back first! But thinking about it, I realized she wouldn't go without completing her exercise, so I took off my jacket and started exercising alongside her. That done, I helped her to correct some faulty movements in swinging the hammer. I waited until, her arms heavy with fatigue, she had chalked up two more marks on the poplar. We left the ground together.

On the way back to her dormitory, I asked her: "Where do you get all that energy? What ever made you want to be a forge worker anyway?"

"Me?" The question seemed unexpected to her, and she paused before answering, "I've wanted to be a worker since I was a child. I especially like the challenging life of our fiery workshop. It has the atmosphere of a battlefield. What I like most is the kind of revolutionary spirit of fearing neither hardship nor fatigue that forge workers have. To defend Chairman Mao's revolutionary line, we ought to exert ourselves and really sweat. I resolve to train as a forge worker." Then

she said to me, a faraway look in her eyes, "My father, like you, was a smith. He said that to be a good revolutionary successor one must be repeatedly tempered in violent storms and stress, be prepared to give one's all to the cause of proletarian revolution."

I was a little astonished, for I had only known that Kao Hsiao-chin's father was a PLA cadre who joined the revolution very early. I didn't know that he had also been a smith and followed the same trade as my own.

The moon was high by this time. As I looked at this lively, vigorous young woman, a revolutionary successor, I felt proud to have such an apprentice! Hsiao-chin lightly sang the words from the model revolutionary opera, and I found myself singing too.

4

I received a notice that the bureau was calling an "exchange-of-practical-experience" meeting on forging part "703," and wanted our section to give a demonstration.

After consultation with the squad and group leaders, and with the workshop leadership's agreement, I decided to give the job of demonstrating the forging of this part to Kao Hsiao-chin. Hsiao-chin had now been learning for nearly a year and was ready to receive a practical training. It would also be an education for people like myself, who had conservative views concerning the training of women as forge workers. So the matter was soon decided.

"703" is a very complicated part involving the use of a rare metal. It is a national defence item. The forging process is difficult, requiring rapid hammering while the temperature is high, otherwise the piece is likely to crack and be useless.

Ordinarily, I wouldn't have hesitated to let Hsiao-chin forge this part, but this was to be a demonstration, with many experienced master workers from other plants, and bureau leaders present, coming to watch. Would she be flustered? I broke out in a sweat at the thought of it. The demonstration must be a success!

When the demonstration began, however, Kao Hsiao-chin did not appear at all nervous. She walked unhurriedly up to the huge fan and, to our surprise, turned it off. It was August, and the heat plus the flaming furnace made everyone around sweat. In spite of this, the veteran workers nodded in agreement with her action. What did a little sweat matter when the maintenance of the temperature of the forging part was at stake.

Kao Hsiao-chin, seeming quite at home at the forge, looked at those around her, then motioned for everyone to stand back a little. She turned, opened the furnace door, releasing waves of heat into the shop, then calmly raised the vise. Soon a flaming "dragon" flashed through the furnace door. It appeared to be more than 20 kilogrammes in weight, but Hsiao-chin took only one step back before clamping it firmly. She turned it over once, then sent the sputtering piece smoothly gliding onto the anvil. The spectators who had been milling around now stood transfixed.

After Kao Hsiao-chin had gripped the piece firmly, she pressed a valve with her foot, and then struck the

metal hard again and again. Sparks instantly flew in all directions. She then steadily moved it, delivering one hammer blow after another, forceful and accurate. The spectators gazed at the young woman in admiration. Everybody knew that in this rapid hammering a little carelessness might ruin the dimensions. On the other hand, rapid hammering is a good method of maintaining an even temperature during forging.

Soon the piece of metal was forged into an initial shape. Then Kao Hsiao-chin turned it over again and stepped on the valve lightly. The steam hammer struck it gently and steadily. With deft motions she neatly turned the vise. I sighed with relief and looked at my watch—two and a half minutes! The forging had been done twenty seconds faster than usual. Those watching expressed their praise, and someone said, "That wasn't easy!"

As soon as the part was finished everyone surrounded Kao Hsiao-chin to congratulate her. An old worker with hair greying at the temples, very moved, clasped Hsiao-chin's hand and said, "Your operating technique was good, my child. You've shown us the young generation's revolutionary spirit of fearing neither hardship nor death. We must learn from you."

Hsiao-chin flushed, saying, "I . . . I'm far from what you say." Then, tugging the arm of a veteran worker from another factory and pointing to the part, she said, "Master, you've come with your valuable experience just at the right time. Tell me my shortcomings in the operation." So the old workers gathered around her and they had a good talk.

As I stood among the spectators watching Hsiao-chin, I saw her large dark eyes flashing as she listened to

their discussion. It was as though she was examining her own shortcomings in the work. I thought of her practising on the willow stump, the sound of her hammer still ringing in my ears. This special clanging of the hammer echoed the sound of the young generation marching forward along the revolutionary road forged by the older generation.

The Sharp Cutter Edge

Liu Shu-chen

THE Young Workers' Conference for Exchanging Technical Experience would be meeting in a couple of days. I glanced over the list of names of representatives sent in by the workshops to the Youth League committee. The name "Li Chun" suddenly struck me as being very familiar. I had a vision of a stockily built young man, a cutter-grinder, a promising lad, always trying to improve his skill. We had struck up an acquaintance the year before when I was working in the metal-processing shop and he and a veteran worker were making a "tour" of it. There had been a rumour going around that Young Li was no longer content with being a cutter-grinder.

He was going to the lathe shop much too often, sauntering round and round the lathes to examine them. He was said to spend most of his spare time in the dormitory poring over books about machine tools.

I reminded myself that the conference was being called in order to put into practice Chairman Mao's in-

struction on the need to be "both red and expert," i.e., both politically conscious and professionally competent, and that the workers in our factory expected the same from their representatives. If Young Li were discontented with his job, he wouldn't be qualified to take part in the conference. I decided to go to the workshop to find out the actual situation.

Stepping out of the Youth League committee office, I bumped into Young Chao, a member of the metal-processing shop's Youth League branch committee — just the chap I wanted to talk to!

I laid my hand on his arm and burst out, "Li Chun's become very keen on metal-processing lately, hasn't he?"

He stared at me blankly for a second before catching my meaning. "So I've heard," he said. "I had a talk with him yesterday. Whenever I ask him about it, he smiles, but when I insist on knowing why, he just answers pointblank: 'I'm trying to learn a new skill.'"

Young Chao paused, then added: "I don't think he's really discontented with his job. I'll have a talk with Old Chu and find out what he thinks about it."

"Good! We mustn't judge things by appearance and overlook the essence," I said, stressing "essence" to show the gravity of the matter. Then on second thought, I said, "I'll tell you what, I haven't been in the metal-processing shop for quite a long time. I'd better go there now and have a chat with Old Chu."

Taking leave of Young Chao, I headed for the shop.

Old Chu and Young Li were master and apprentice. Chu's full name was Chu Ah-hsiang. He was a veteran worker in his early fifties, and both forthright and candid. The leadership had intended to transfer him

to the shop storeroom to be in charge of the measuring instruments. Whenever Chu was consulted about his possible new assignment, fingering the stubble on his chin, he would chuckle and say, "That won't do! I'm used to the shop. What's more, my fingers are as coarse as files; they would damage those precision instruments. Besides, we have a host of youngsters here. They are in my charge and I can't very well shirk that responsibility."

With his "what's more" and "besides" he again and again put off accepting the offer. Old Chu was the first experienced cutter-grinder to work in our factory. His knotted and calloused hands testified to his long years on this job. His fellow-workers rated his ability highly. I thought: Like master, like apprentice, and asked myself, could Young Li be so unlike Old Chu in this respect? From what I know of him, he didn't appear to be the "rolling stone" type.

Then I remembered something that happened the previous year.

It was the day before the new workers were due to start work with the teams in the shops. The shop Youth League branch had asked me to call a meeting of the new workers assigned to auxiliary jobs, find out what they thought about their work and impress on them its importance.

I arrived at the meeting room early, not expecting anyone would have arrived before me. But I found a young man already at the table, his head bent over a newspaper. I knew instantly that it was Li Chun, for he was the chubbiest of this group of new workers. I trod behind him softly. "Learn Technique for the Revolution" was inscribed in block characters on the

newspaper. Li Chun suddenly straightened up and turned towards me, his big eyes blinking.

I sat down close beside him and casually asked:

"How old are you?"

"Born in the year of the Tiger," he said in a matter-of-fact tone. I checked myself from laughing aloud. His candour encouraged me to ask outright:

"Do you like the work you are assigned to?"

He became grave, stared at me in surprise as if trying to guess what had prompted my question, then pointing to the article in the newspaper he explained:

"All work serves the revolution." Then he added bluntly, "My dad is also a cutter-grinder."

"Really?" This was a happy coincidence. I knew that Li Chun's father was a veteran worker but never imagined he was a cutter-grinder. With some curiosity I asked:

"Does your father know you've been given the job as a cutter-grinder?"

"Yes. Dad says that it's not easy to grind a veteran lathe operator's cutter so that he is satisfied with your work, unless you've tried very hard."

He sounded like an old-timer. Actually, he didn't even know how many kinds of lathe tools there were. Anyway I didn't laugh. I thought this youngster had some very admirable qualities — sincerity, candour and thoughtfulness.

Following the new-comers' meeting Li Chun worked with the energy of a little tiger. Every day after he had finished "touring" the workshop with Old Chu he practised grinding on an old, unused cutter. After working hours one could often hear the whirring of a motor in the cutter-grinding shop. The young apprentice

continued to grind cutters even when his hands were swollen and blistered; and in the evenings he was usually to be found reading a book about cutters. In a word, he had completely lost himself in them.

The end of the year was approaching, and as the workers strove to fulfil the year's production plan ahead of schedule, the atmosphere became quite tense in the workshops. At this critical time, a batch of spare parts was sent to the lathe shop to be processed. They were made of very hard material and were a foreign-aid job. Despite all the efforts to keep their cutters going, the lathe operators couldn't process the parts. The cutters just cracked as soon as they touched the work. The key to the problem lay in the cutter. The shop's daily output became very unstable, and everyone was worried. Old Chu and Young Li were kept busy the whole day, grinding cutters and trying them out.

One day after knocking off I met Li Chun near the playing-ground. Patting his shoulder, I teased him:

"How's everything with the one born in the year of the Tiger? Haven't you thought up something to improve matters? If we continue to go on like this, our production this year will be far below the mark and we'll have to spank the tiger."

Li Chun raised his eyebrows questioningly, then suddenly became grave.

He exclaimed vehemently, "I won't believe that I cannot grind a cutter that can process those pieces."

Just then a football flew past like a shooting star, hit a tree trunk and bounced off again. Li Chun stared at the football, then turned and asked me abruptly:

"Ever heard the story of Master Tsu making technical innovation in connection with the toes and the instep

of the foot?" He spoke very quickly and before I could think of a reply, he burst out:

"Oh! That's it! That's it!"

Then smiting my back playfully, he rushed back to the shop.

The next day I learned that the football incident had made Li Chun think of something. He recalled that veteran worker Tsu had been inspired to make a technical innovation by watching someone kick a football. Li Chun likened a cutter to a human foot with an edge, the toe, and a back, the instep. If one kicks a ball with his toes, he can easily sprain his foot. The same with a cutter—to process a part made of very hard material with the edge of a cutter is to get a cracked cutter. A football player kicks with the instep of his foot. Why not put the main strength at the back of the cutter? He and Old Chu worked the whole night and solved the problem of the cracked cutter. They thus contributed to the fulfilling of the task in respect to foreign aid before the scheduled time. I had thought highly of him—a diligent young man who used his brains. I believed that as long as he kept on the right track, he would be all right.

Was I right in assessing him this way? I quickened my pace.

It's still cold outside in early spring, but I found the shop warm and seething with life. I saw the overhead crane moving clangingly along the runways back and forth and could hear the hissing of the metal-cutting machines. How I wanted to plunge into this bubbling working life like all the others in the shop!

I caught sight of a short, chubby young fellow by a lathe, and knew it was Li Chun. His feet set wide

apart, his body bending forward, he was deeply absorbed in watching a veteran worker operating the machine. It became all too evident that he wanted to learn how to work a lathe.

The lathe operator was working with great zest. He manipulated the machine easily, now speeding up the cutter, now slackening it down a bit. Sparkling metal dust was spraying out on all sides. Processed by his deft hands the crude workpieces became gleaming finished parts. I didn't like to see Li Chun standing there looking at others working busily. I wanted to drag him away and have a good talk with him. On second thought, I felt I should first talk with his master Old Chu, for he was the one holding the key to the understanding of the young apprentice.

In the cutter-grinding shop, a slightly built, middle-aged worker was talking to a young man. I could tell by his gesticulations that he was talking excitedly, but the whirring of the motors drowned the sound of his voice. I went to his side and called: "Master Chu —"

He only then saw me. Greeting me, he said, "Ah! It's Young Chang. You've come to see what's going on here, eh?"

"No, Master Chu. I've come 'home' to see you."

The older man chuckled, and turning to the young man he said loudly:

"We have to do our work 'wholeheartedly' and 'completely,' so that the veteran workers are satisfied with our job. What do you think?"

The blushing young fellow nodded and turned to grind another cutter. Old Chu said to me, "All these youngsters are made of the best metal."

I retorted happily, "True! A loud drum doesn't need a heavy drumstick — a light tap is all that's necessary."

"No! Not exactly! A loud drum still needs a heavy drumstick." Old Chu paused, then added, "Take Young Li, he's a loud drum." Once Li's name was mentioned I got down to the real purpose of my visit.

"Master Chu, tell me how Young Li, the loud drum, has to be beaten with a heavy drumstick."

"Ha, I said that you'd come to see what's happening here. I couldn't tell exactly why, but there is no denying that Li really is a nice chap. He is a diligent pupil, and has now learned all the skill I have." He laughed lightheartedly.

I was baffled by his praise of Li: according to him, Li was content with his work and everything was all right. I was about to ask more questions when Li rushed into the shop holding a dozen or so cutters with both hands. He greeted me cheerfully, and laying the cutters down on the board, grouped them in twos and threes, meanwhile raising his voice to say to Old Chu:

"These are Big Chang's. These are Young Wang's. . . ."

In one breath he blurted out four or five names. Old Chu looked at Li happily, shot me a smiling glance and turned away to grind the cutters. Seeing it was almost end of shift time and there were so many cutters to grind, I volunteered to give a hand.

"Let me grind a few, Young Li."

"All right," he said offering me two cutters. But just as I stretched out my hand to take them he drew back, saying:

"Oh, I'll do these two. You grind the other two."

"Hm — I can see that you haven't much faith in a veteran lathe operator like me."

"No, it's not that. I was afraid that you might not understand his temperament."

I was nonplussed. "Oh, do you mean the cutter?"

"No. I mean the worker who uses these cutters. He's fiery-tempered and the lathe he operates is an old and worn-out one. Today he's processing some cast-iron pieces. I must grind his cutters properly so that they will last, and then he won't have to keep changing the cutter all the time."

I thought he had a good reason for insisting, and taking up another two cutters I asked: "What about these two?"

"They are Master Wang's. He's a rough-spoken, gruff sort of man, but he's very patient when he's working. So please grind his cutter edge sharp." I was lost for words. I had never thought there was anything very much involved in this grinding of cutters. But Li knew the temperament of every one of the operators very well. He must have spent days thinking over the matter.

We finished grinding all the cutters and I had a strong urge to congratulate him. Instead, however, I asked:

"You were standing by a lathe looking at something when I came into the shop. What were you doing?"

"Learning my trade," he answered casually.

"Your trade? But you're a cutter-grinder. Your work place is in the grinding shop." I looked at him doubtfully. He turned, stared at me questioningly, raised his eyebrows a little and smiled, but said nothing. He looked down at the cutters and then suggested:

"Let's take them back."

On the way I repeated my question. He slowed down a little and indicating the whole metal-processing shop said softly, "Look, this is the place where I work. To serve the couple of dozen lathes and their hundred or so operators, do you think I could do my work well shut up in the cutter-grinding shop all day?" He drew a long breath. I said, "You're really getting on well, Young Li. I must learn from you."

"From me?" he questioned, shaking his head. "But for Master Chu I wouldn't know what to do."

Then he began telling me reminiscently what happened when he first started work here a year before:

"I was very much excited when I first put on a worker's suit and started working with a veteran, especially when Master Chu took me to the shop and showed me all the lathes and introduced me to the operators. As I watched them work, my mind was jammed with all sorts of ideas. Chairman Mao says that the working class is the leading class, and I belong to it. I will work hard for socialism and be a worthy heir of that class.

"But it's not smooth sailing and there's plenty of struggle to overcome difficulties on the way forward. At first, I concentrated all my attention upon grinding the cutters. I thought I must learn that job so that I could serve the people well. Every morning Master Chu took me on a 'tour' of the workshop. I soon began to think that I knew every lathe and every operator in the place and doubted the sense of 'touring' it every day. But Master Chu seemed to discover something new there every day. While talking with the operators he would carefully examine the processed parts. I, however, thought only of the few cutters that I had to grind. You remember that day when Master Chu and

I re-made the cutter after a whole night's work. I was very pleased with my own work. I examined the cutter I had ground, sharp-edged, gleaming bright, and thought it's not so difficult after all — I've learned the technique of grinding cutters quite well. Then I grew content with myself and stopped 'touring' the shop with Master Chu. I shut myself up in the grinding shop. Master Chu's sharp-eyed, and understood all along what I was doing. But anyhow, reality taught me a good lesson."

He frankly recounted an incident which he would never forget.

It happened in the early autumn of the previous year. The metal-processing shop had started a labour emulation drive to raise production in celebration of National Day. Then Master Chu had serious pains in his stomach and for days on end he was knotted up with pain. But he kept on working. Time and again Li Chun urged the elder worker to take a few days off.

"Master Chu, I can manage on my own. You take a rest for a day or two."

Master Chu only shook his head.

But there came an occasion when the pain was so bad that Old Chu looked at the apprentice carefully before replying:

"All right. A piece of good-quality steel has to be shaped into a part before it is useful. You try it alone tomorrow."

The next day Li Chun in high spirits arrived early at the shop. This was to be the first time he was on his own, and he felt very proud.

He switched on the motor and the grinding wheel whirred. He ground dozens of cutters before lunch, humming a joyful tune as he saw the cutters being re-

turned to the lathe operators. In the afternoon, however, the cutters were sent back one by one for re-grinding. This kept him busy all afternoon, sweat pouring down his face as he strove to keep pace with the onrush of work. The cutters kept mounting up on the waiting board, and he could hear the veteran operators talking in the corridor.

"The cutters are not lasting very long today!"

"It looks nicely enough ground, but it won't stand up to the job."

"He's a green one. You have to make some allowances."

"."

Young Li felt as if he had fallen into a pit of thorns. How he wished Master Chu were back by his side to give him a hand. Suddenly, he heard the motor booming behind him. Turning he was happily surprised — Master Chu was grinding a cutter, his face flushed, his eyebrows knitted. Li Chun, very moved, hailed him:

"Hello, Master! Why are you — ?"

"Never mind, Young Li. You'd had a busy morning, I'm sure."

Li felt the moisture rushing to his eyes.

Work over, Master Chu kept Li Chun behind. Showing him a newly ground cutter, he asked the apprentice:

"What do you think of this job?"

It's a very well ground cutter, sharp-edged and even. Li said:

"You're really skilful, Master. It's sharp-edged and true. I'm sure that whoever uses it will process a part that'll be up to standard."

Master Chu shook his head. "No! I'm not so sure about that. If all operators on every lathe, processing

every kind of material, were to use cutters ground like this, I'm afraid that instead of turning out up-to-standard products, they might turn out rejects."

Li Chun stopped, his eyes shining joyously. I interjected eagerly:

"Why did he say that?"

The apprentice asked, "Don't you understand? Master Chu was summing up his experiences for my benefit. I used to think a lot about the edge, the surface and the angle of the cutters, without really understanding their users. As a matter of fact, if you don't understand the user, how can you grind his cutter so that it suits his purpose? In my mind's eye I then saw why Master Chu made a 'tour' of the shop every day. Only then did I understand why the cutters that he grinds satisfy the operators. Each gleaming cutter edge reflects Master Chu's strong wish to serve the people wholeheartedly and completely. Putting his hand on my shoulder, Master Chu said with deep feeling, 'Let's not focus all our attention on the few cutters we grind each day. Our work post is not in the grinders' shop, measuring only a dozen square metres. It's much bigger than that. The quality of our work is closely linked with the socialist construction of our country. The more skill we master the better we serve the revolution.'

"I took Master Chu's hand excitedly and said, 'Now I know. You mean that to grind a good cutter's edge, one must have a good ideology — to serve the people wholeheartedly and completely, serve the revolution by grinding good cutters. That's what I should remember and practise all my life.'

"Master Chu smiled and nodded his head.

"Since then I started to learn anew. . . ."

Li Chun raised his head, and in the twilight I saw his face was glowing. I understood! Li Chun, the loud drum, beaten with a heavy stick by Master Chu, boomed with a deep and resonant sound, beating time with the march of the people in our own era.

A few days later, the Young Workers' Conference for Exchanging Technical Experience opened. Li Chun made an excellent contribution, as expected.

A Young Pathbreaker

Hsiao Kuan-hung

A clap of thunder, then huge raindrops beat on the windows of the generator plant, splashing them with flower-like patterns.

In the meeting room a discussion was going on about the important task of producing generators urgently required for a defence project. The Party committee secretary, as usual at the conclusion of a speech, glanced around questioning. He finally fixed his attention on Old Cheng, head of the production group in the coil shop. He was concentrating on the veteran, because the key to the fulfilment of the assignment was whether or not the production of the coils could be finished ahead of time. The Party secretary wanted to learn Cheng's views. But, instead of making his usual comment, "can do," Old Cheng maintained a thoughtful silence.

Coil production up to then had always followed the completion of the stator of the generator. It was usual to trial-produce a coil, then fix it on the stator, modify

the model if necessary and test it again, repeating this procedure until the coil was considered good enough. Under such conditions, it seemed impossible to guarantee to fulfil the task ahead of time.

Old Cheng was still deep in thought when the door was pushed open. In came a girl drenched to the skin, her bobbed hair sticking to her rosy cheeks. Flicking her wet hair back, she peered around the room.

Old Cheng, shaken out of his stupor, called to her softly, "Young Chiang!" She slipped into a seat beside him.

Young Chiang, full name Chiang Hsiao-hua, had been sent by the Party branch secretary of the workshop a few days previously to be assistant to Master Cheng who was unusually busy. Formerly Cheng's apprentice, she was now a qualified technician. Of all Old Cheng's apprentices, she was his favourite. He had always been very strict with her, and after three years of training under him she had acquired some of his characteristics.

Old Cheng was pleased to be working shoulder to shoulder with this girl again, and consulted her whenever problems arose, big or small. His eyes had brightened when she entered the room, and he now proceeded to tell her in whispers what the Party committee was asking for.

She eagerly responded, "I've an idea! The old method of coil production ties our hands, Master Cheng. We cannot continue to work by trial and error. We have got to work out a rational scientific process. If we mathematically figure out the correct measurements of the coils, then we can produce them before the stators are completed. That way, we can save a lot of time."

"Mathematically figure out?" Old Cheng thought, after realizing from Young Chiang's high spirits that she was all set to try out a new process. "Really! The little devil wants to try! At this crucial moment! . . ."

Old Cheng muttered, "It's not as easy as it sounds!"

"If we don't dare experiment we'll never discover the secret," the girl said pulling her chair closer to his. She then explained what she had learned in her spare-time study and in the designing of certain special coils. She didn't think the calculation of the various dimensions and angles of the coils would be too difficult.

But Old Cheng had his own ideas. During all his years of experience in coil production, he had never yet known anyone design a coil by calculating. It was too risky. Furthermore, this was an important project for national defence, they couldn't afford to make even the slightest mistake!

"Do you know what kind of job this is?" he questioned her. "We must ensure the best-quality coil and work with a full sense of our responsibility to the Party. . . . We can't afford to take any risks."

Young Chiang had no inkling of what was going on in Old Cheng's mind. She was gazing out of the window visualizing the success of her proposed new method. She returned to the practical situation, declaring, "As long as we master the mathematical law governing the making of this kind of coil we can guarantee its quality. This method will not only save time; in the future it will. . . ."

Old Cheng lost his temper and interrupted her in a firm but low voice, "We can talk about the future later. The important thing now is to get the job done on time and ensure that it's of good quality. The old method

is safe and we are familiar with it. If we spend the next couple of days making full preparations, then we can go all out on the coil winding as soon as the stator is ready. By all-out exertion plus a revolutionary spirit we'll pull it off in time, don't worry!" he concluded, rolling up his sleeves to go into action.

Chiang stared at him in amazement for what seemed a long time. Turning away from him she then said: "I'm going to put my proposal forward!"

The Party committee secretary, who had sensed that they were having an argument, suddenly asked, "What's your idea, Young Chiang?"

Glancing at her master's stern face, she stood up. All eyes were focussed on her. A little excited, she tossed back her hair and said, "I think that coils made by using mathematical calculations would be more scientifically accurate, ensure better quality and save time. By this method we could speed up the whole production of generators."

"Now that's a good suggestion!" exclaimed the secretary, joyfully rising to his feet. "You've got a bold imagination, Young Chiang. This will really be an innovation in the generator industry. I always think. . . ."

"I don't agree!" cut in Old Cheng, who had now lost all patience.

Knowing his character, the secretary smiled but continued: "I always think that in our endeavours for production we should be able to break the force of old habits and dare to do things never before done by others." He paused and looked directly at Young Chiang, who lowered her head modestly. Raising his voice he went on, "That way, we can make a great leap

forward in production and get the hang of generator-making. Old Cheng and Young Chiang, you two go back to your workshop and talk it over with the workers and technicians. I'll come to see you tomorrow and discuss it with you."

As soon as the meeting ended, Old Cheng hurried off to the workshop. "Master!" shouted Young Chiang, trying to catch up with him, but he went on without a backward look.

Gazing at her master's receding back, she had mixed feelings. She had expected some opposition to her proposal to change the method of coil production but never expected that her own master would behave like this. She hesitated, not sure whether to stick to her proposal or not.

When Young Chiang first came to work in the factory, she was a slender girl with two braids that swayed as she walked, and although already a member of the Youth League she was known as "the kid" by her fellow-workers. She hated this nickname, which seemed to imply that her colleagues looked down on her. Whenever a fellow-worker addressed her as "the kid," she would say indignantly, her eyes sparkling and her braids swaying, "Don't treat me with contempt!"

Several engineers once arrived at the coil workshop to examine a model. Young Chiang listened carefully as they pointed out its defects, then frowning she interrupted, "Comrades, isn't it possible to calculate the curve of the coil? We have many losses because of the present blind way of production!"

A bespectacled engineer cast a sidelong glance at her and replied cynically, "Blind production! We have

always worked in this way, and so have foreigners. There are no mathematical calculations in any of the books which can be applied to this process, Comrade Young Pioneer. It's not toys we're making. This is a scientific project!" Blinded by conceit, he burst out laughing.

Young Chiang raised her eyebrows at this slick speech, and stared at him as if she thought, you should be ashamed to express such ideas! But she persisted cheerfully asking, "Why don't we break new ground? We should dare to think and act when others dare not." The engineer, red with embarrassment, walked away. It was then the turn of the veteran workers, standing around, to laugh.

Young Chiang felt a little compunction, but she asked, "Why can't we work out an equation, master?"

"You're right!" Old Cheng commented, looking at his apprentice in a kindly way. "We workers should have guts and be ready to tackle any difficulties! Young Chiang, we must have revolutionary daring and dogged perseverance too. That's the only way to storm the heights of science and technology."

It was true that no formula for the curve of a coil was to be found in any book. How then could they work it out? This was a difficult problem for Young Chiang to tackle, for she had only just finished middle school.

But difficulty could not dent her determination. Henceforth she always carried a book around with her and studied hard in the workers' spare-time university. She learned modestly from the old workers and technicians, who soon noticed that she was changing. Some said she had learned to use her head, others that she

was growing to be more and more like Old Cheng. They all agreed on one thing, the girl had guts! They stopped calling her "the kid."

Soon afterwards, Chairman Mao initiated the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, and the plucky girl became one of the vanguards in it. With her master and many other workers she opposed those who were taking the capitalist road. Old Cheng was later put in charge of production and Young Chiang was assigned to the design department. Her fellow-workers then termed her the "young pathbreaker."

Working in the design department placed heavier responsibilities on Young Chiang, but she remembered Old Cheng and other veteran workers' advice: We must not only consolidate the proletarian dictatorship, we must also storm the heights of technology for the people. When designing coils she was mindful of the need to solve the problem of how to calculate the curve, and conscientiously collected data about this. Her spare time was spent reading up on technical material and consulting veteran workers and technicians.

One night, Young Chiang went to the library only to find it closed. At that time few people went to the library to study technology, because they had come under the wrong influence that "technology is useless." Young Chiang knocked at the library door, and who should open it but the bespectacled engineer. When she told him she wanted to borrow some technical books, he hesitated, at a loss for words. After a while he said disapprovingly, "Oh, it's you! Why do you want to bury yourself in books? We've been criticized for having only book knowledge without socialist consciousness. You shouldn't follow in our footsteps.

I'm only here because I have been asked to translate some materials."

Young Chiang thought, you're like a willow bending whichever way the wind blows. You used to believe "technology is mysterious" and now you prefer to say "technology is useless." Do you ever take a firm and correct stand? Looking the engineer steadily in the eyes she retorted: "We're against book knowledge without socialist consciousness, but we're all for mastering technique for the revolution. We workers have got to scale the heights of science!" So saying, she walked in. After that she studied in the library every night.

With the speed-up in production the supply of coils could no longer keep pace with the growing demand, and the production of generators for the defence project became the driving force pushing Young Chiang to submit her proposal immediately. She revised her notes and wanted to talk things over with Old Cheng, but as he was very busy she meanwhile consulted others about her proposed new method. She made a thorough investigation in the generator workshop before going to the meeting, but was totally unaware of her master's strong opposition to her proposed innovation.

During the Cultural Revolution, Master Cheng and his apprentice became well-known activists. Nothing could stop either of them. But Young Chiang couldn't understand her master's present attitude. Was he afraid of change now, thinking himself to be secure when using the old production method? Was he fettered by old ideas? For her part she was determined to carry on, and resolved to strike out boldly for the sake of the revolution. Despite her great admiration

for her master, this was a time when she must stick to her own idea. Young Chiang was anxious to explain her opinions to Old Cheng.

Early the next morning, when there was little traffic on the road to the plant, Old Cheng hurried towards his workshop. After the previous day's meeting he had had a discussion with the workers about their new assignment and had made preparations for the next morning's work. As he approached the workshop he considered how to bring all the positive factors into play and get production going with a swing.

At the east gate of the workshop, Old Cheng saw a number of workers grouped under a pine tree. Going closer, he noticed Young Chiang and several veteran workers drawing diagrams on the ground and animatedly discussing them. A grey-haired worker greeted Old Cheng, "Here, old mate! Come and give us a hand." Young Chiang jumped to her feet, mopping the sweat from her forehead as she did so. "Master," she exclaimed excitedly. "Old Yang and the others are raring to go. They're determined to work out a formula for the curve of the coil."

Old Yang laughed, and scratched his grey head while exclaiming, "Quite right! We've been on this job for years, but we've never really summed up our experiences. What Young Chiang said last night was right. All the wealth in the world has been made by labouring people like us. This curve can't stop us going ahead." The others chimed in enthusiastically. Only Old Cheng kept silent. He was afraid Young Chiang's innovation move was going to make a mess of things.

The workers were puzzled by Old Cheng's worried look.

"Master," said Young Chiang stepping forward in her eagerness, "you have so much experience, if you'll give us a lead, however tough this problem may be, we'll solve it!"

Old Cheng stared at her, expressionless. He felt weighed down with responsibilities, but Young Chiang didn't appear to have the least idea about his worrying position. "Work out a formula!" he bellowed. "What if we mess up the defence project?"

Young Chiang had never seen her master so angry. Her heart sank. She knew he never compromised on what he thought was a matter of principle. But in her opinion whether to insist on this innovation or not was a matter of principle too. Most of the veteran workers were prepared to back her up. Only a few of them had opposed her suggestion and she had since carefully explained all its advantages to them. Now she was at a loss to know what to do. She deliberately calmed herself down, then said firmly, "Master, you used to tell us that no difficulty can conquer us as long as we depend on Mao Tsetung Thought, get united and work zealously."

Old Cheng felt hot under the collar, raised a hand as if about to speak, then suddenly turned on his heel and left.

"Master! Master!" she shouted, running after him.

Although Old Cheng left in an angry mood, his mind was on the work, and after assigning their tasks to the different groups, he kept going back to watch the skilled workers making the coils. From the distance he could see that they were surrounded by workers and techni-

cians from the generator shop. The Party branch secretary seemed to be giving a helping hand too. He went closer and saw that the Party committee secretary, sleeves rolled up, was joining in the work. Everyone was so absorbed in the job that no one noticed him. Old Cheng felt a twinge of conscience. He was a well-known innovator in the plant. He had sweated over every innovation ever made there, and had always been on hand at the most critical times. But today, he was a mere onlooker and felt like a soldier who had deserted his fighting post. It was a very depressing experience for an untiring fighter to stand idly by while watching others in the thick of a battle.

By supper time, he could contain himself no longer, and grabbing a young man by the arm, asked, "How's Young Chiang's innovation going?"

"There are plenty of snags!" came the reply.

"Ha!" murmured Old Cheng stamping his foot.

Not stopping for food he went to look for Young Chiang, hoping to persuade her to go back to the old method. He guessed she would be in the "Red Corner" (reading room of Chairman Mao Tsetung's works) on the first floor where they often had their meetings since the Cultural Revolution.

When Old Cheng pushed the door open and stepped in, a wave of hot air blew into his face. Many people were crowded around a ping-pong table in the centre of the room. Some young fellows were standing on nearby desks to get a better view. They were all engaged in a noisy, heated discussion. Old Cheng, standing on tip-toe, saw that Young Chiang and the Party branch secretary were right in the centre of the crowd. Scattered over the table were drawings and sheets of

calculations. Young Chiang, pencil in hand, was carefully listening to all suggestions and interposing her own comments. The confidence of the young girl staggered him. He was all too familiar with scenes of this sort. Many were the difficulties they had overcome in this way, the sole difference being that Old Cheng had always before been the person in the centre. Whereas now. . . .

At that moment, there was a sudden silence. Old Cheng hesitated to break it by speaking out.

A gruff voice blurted out, "What shall we do, Young Chiang, if this calculation misfires?"

Someone else slowly said, "The old method is safer."

Old Cheng wondered, how will she answer?

"What shall we do? If we fail, we'll try again," she replied. "Comrades, for days and nights we've been thinking how to make a better contribution to the revolution. We can take difficulties in our stride. We must never forget how Chairman Mao's teachings inspired us to surmount every difficulty to win victory in the Cultural Revolution. . . ."

Old Cheng was thoroughly shaken, as the unforgettable events of the days and nights of the Cultural Revolution flashed through his mind.

"Here on the industrial front," Young Chiang went on, "we need a revolutionary spirit in the struggle for production, like the one we had during the Cultural Revolution. If we stick in the old rut and dare not try anything new, it means we're not carrying on the revolution."

"Right!" the gruff voice agreed. "But why has your master turned so conservative lately?"

There was a short silence. Old Cheng flushed, and the word "conservative" lingered in his ears.

That word had also grated on Young Chiang's ears. She knew that Master Cheng was not really conservative; how could any worker in the plant think of him that way? Frowning a little she answered steadily: "Chairman Mao teaches us that thinking often lags behind reality. People don't accept new things all at once. Master Cheng has always been an advanced innovator, but for the moment he doesn't understand this new thing. The force of old habits is stubborn. It ties our hands and blinds our eyes and mind. We have to break it by revolutionary action."

Young Chiang was talking with growing feeling and, after a slight pause, continued: "We all know Master Cheng. He's full of revolutionary drive, and always the first in every fight. If he lags behind a step today, you can be sure he'll be racing ahead tomorrow. We must get him to join us in our struggle. We must work out the calculations for the coil model, produce more coils of higher quality, and further consolidate the gains of the Cultural Revolution!"

These words went right to Old Cheng's heart. They filled him with warmth. He had always thought of Young Chiang as a child, but she now seemed to have suddenly grown up. He was deeply stirred, and deeply ashamed of his own conduct. During his years on this job he had become aware that their method of producing coils made it impossible to speed up production, but he had not thought out a way to change it. Young Chiang had spotted it! And how had he reacted to her proposal? Where was the revolutionary drive which had

motivated him since the beginning of the Cultural Revolution? We should look on the workshop as a battlefield, he mused. How can we allow ourselves to be restrained by the outmoded conventions? Production can only be boosted by respecting scientific laws and breaking stultifying force of habit. We must look ahead and pitch in.

Old Cheng felt himself suddenly stirred into action by these ideas.

It was now quite late, but despite a day's hard work, Old Cheng felt indescribably elated. He rushed to the "Red Corner" and, pushing the door open, walked into the room. No one was there! Drawings were still scattered over the ping-pong table, the benches were in disorder, and Young Chiang's coat was tossed over a chair.

Old Cheng was studying some of the calculations when he heard a familiar voice call, "Master!" Turning, he saw Young Chiang bending forward, smoothing her dripping wet hair. Apparently she had just doused her head in cold water.

Before he could speak, she burst out, "Master, I've been looking for you everywhere! Are you still angry with me?"

Angry? His anger had long since disappeared. But putting on a show of annoyance he retorted, "You little devil, how are your calculations going?"

Immediately aware that he had come round to their way of thinking, eyes flashing, she gave him a detailed report of the confidence with which everyone was working, and of the various suggestions that had been made. The calculations were nearly finished, only a

few crucial points remained to be cleared up, and they were now working on these.

Old Cheng was infected by her enthusiasm, and told her the results of his consultation with some veteran workers on the matter. If the measurements were supplemented by calculations worked out four different ways, the dimensions of the coil would be more accurate.

He drew a diagram to illustrate what he meant. Young Chiang jumped for joy then, clasping his hands, exclaimed, "I knew all along that you would help us, master."

Old Cheng smiled briefly but immediately put on a serious look again. He draped her coat over her shoulders, saying, "You mustn't catch cold. Let's go back. Leave this till tomorrow—that's an order!" With that he led her out of the "Red Corner" and saw her back to her hostel.

Young Chiang felt far too excited to sleep, and the walk home had chilled her. Back in her room, having slipped on a sweater, she looked at the portrait of Chairman Mao on the wall. His kindly eyes reflected his high hopes for the younger generation. The quotation from the Chairman's works, which she had inscribed beneath the portrait, struck her with a new significance: **"China ought to make a greater contribution to humanity."**

As if impelled by a force greater than herself, she picked up her coat and ran out.

When she reached the "Red Corner" there was Old Cheng bent over the ping-pong table, a pencil in his horny hand, painstakingly working out some calculations. "Master!" she cried, running to him.

Hoo! Hoot! . . . A train moved slowly with a wagon packed with newly made generators.

Old Cheng and Young Chiang made a trip to the station to see the first batch of new generators dispatched. The method was a success and the production of coils had shot up. The quota of the generators for the defence project was fulfilled ahead of time. Although for years, never a day had passed without generators being dispatched to various parts of the country, the dispatch today was a particularly happy event. Their out-of-date method of production had been scrapped and their technique modernized.

The rosy clouds of the morning imparted a more vigorous view to the land, the Whangpoo River flowed eastward wave upon wave. Along its bank a laden train was speeding towards the rising sun. Amid the green trees the long arm of a crane stretched upward to the blue sky. Big characters stood out on it encouragingly, "Keep the country in heart and the whole world in view."

Watching the moving freight train, Old Cheng murmured, "Chairman Mao teaches us that young path-breakers are a challenge to us oldsters. If we don't study we shall lag behind."

Young Chiang responded with emotion, "But master, we were trained by you."

A Screw

Shen Hui-min

A few white clouds dotted the azure sky. By the river, the workshop office of an electric machinery plant was bright with sunshine. The faces of the youth seated there were flushed with excitement. We had left school two weeks previously to come to the plant, and, after a preliminary period of study and physical labour, were now waiting to be formally assigned to work and to follow the veteran workers, who were to be our future guides.

When Master Chang, a member of the workshop revolutionary committee, had concluded his welcoming speech, some of the workers began leading their new apprentices away. I was wondering what sort of a person would lead me away. My classmate and good friend Li Hsiao-hu, seated beside me, was by nature spirited and full of life, and now he was very restless. He seemed to be all on edge, and every time a worker came into the office he hurriedly stood up, as though expecting to leave with him. Finally he could restrain

himself no longer, and when yet another worker passed before us, he stood up suddenly, stammering, "Master, I am Li Hsiao-hu." The worker was taken aback, then, realizing what the young fellow had in mind, he patted his shoulder and smilingly said, "Young man, don't be impatient, your master will be here in a minute." The bewildered Hsiao-hu sat down again. A few minutes later he suddenly seized hold of my arm and shook it forcefully, saying, "Ta-chih, tell me, why hasn't our turn come yet? I'd like to know whether we're going to be assigned to work as turners or bench workers."

Oh, how he was wanting me to answer his misgivings and doubts! As a matter of fact, my own heart was in a turmoil too. I recalled our first day at the plant when the veteran worker who was acting as our guide began by taking us on a tour of the workshop. There was an atmosphere of tense, heated battle about the place, and a spirit of ardent fervour. Directed by the sounds of a whistle, a large bridge crane rumbled above our heads, and lines of neatly arranged machine tools were working on parts of machines, gleaming with metallic sheen. What attracted me most was the worker operating a large lathe with great concentration. When he pulled the handle, iron shavings flew off in quick succession. How full of the poetry of factory life! Hsiao-hu then said to me, "With our build, it will be most appropriate for us to be turners." I recalled that when I was in school I was one of Chairman Mao's Red Guards, and thought that now as a factory worker I must conscientiously and wholeheartedly be prepared to be re-educated by the working class, and develop a sense of workshop organization and discipline, face up to revolutionary necessity and strive to be Chairman

Mao's good worker. When we first became members of the plant, Chang, in his capacity of responsible cadre of the workshop revolutionary committee, had talked this over with us, educated us and expressed the hope that we would each be fully prepared mentally to let revolutionary necessity determine our choice. He also pointed out that in addition to the main part, every machine tool must have many co-ordinating parts as well as hundreds and thousands of small screws and nuts to ensure concerted effort, so that this machine tool runs smoothly and to its full capacity. Everyone of us should strive to be a useful small screw in the great machine tool of socialist construction. Therefore, I thought no matter whether the management assigned me to work as a turner, a bench worker, a planer, or as a miller, a grinder, an electrician, I should learn from the old-timers conscientiously and wholeheartedly, strive to get a firm grasp of productive skill as early as possible and join the glorious ranks of socialist construction.

Although I had made up my mind, my heart was filled with misgivings as I still did not yet know what I was to learn. I was trying to comfort Hsiao-hu when I saw an old worker holding a piece of paper enter in high spirits. He had closely cropped grey hair and his face was finely wrinkled. His eyes were screwed up as if with pleasure over some happy thought. "Who will he lead away?" Hsiao-hu whispered.

The worker scanned the office, his joyful eyes finally resting on Hsiao-hu and me. Looking at the benign smile on his face, I saw that long years of storm and stress had left their mark on a face that seemed to be familiar to me, and I had a feeling we had met before.

I was conscious that Hsiao-hu was tugging at me, pulling the tip of his own ear and grimacing at me — I took another look at the worker's face. Then suddenly I remembered. We knew him!

It was at dusk several days after we arrived at the plant. Hsiao-hu and I were coming back from the Puchiang Swimming Pool, feeling exhilarated. We two were school soccer team members and the small stones and iron shavings on the roadside were useful objects for us to practise on. As we were passing a new factory building, Hsiao-hu sent a nut whistling over a clump of bushes. I was thinking of applauding his skill when suddenly I heard an angry exclamation, ". . . Who?" Too bad! The nut must have hit somebody. Craning my neck, I looked in the direction of the voice and saw an old worker squatting on the ground. His work suit was soaked with sweat at the back. He was gently rubbing his ear, which had obviously been struck by the nut. He did not look round to find out who had hit him but turned to search the ground carefully. Tugging at my hand, Hsiao-hu whirled round and attempted to drag me away, but I held him fast, drew him round the clump of bushes and stood behind the old man.

After a while he stood up as if he had found a treasure. He was holding the damned little nut in his hand. Only then did he look round and see us. Pointing at the nut he said, "Did you kick this?" His voice sounded a little angry.

"Very sorry! Has it hurt you?" Feeling really sorry, we hung our heads and stammered, "We aren't, — yes, yes, we are. . . ." Seeing the state we were in, he

relaxed a little, murmuring, "Ha, ha, you've just entered the plant? Look, this nut is still quite useful. It's a pity to kick it away." He carefully wiped the dust off the nut.

Seeing that he was no longer angry, we two found our tongues again, Hsiao-hu saying, "Old Master, our plant is so large it can't possibly miss a few nuts." Screwing up his eyes to look at us, he answered deliberately, as if choosing his words carefully, "Hey, young fellows, don't look down on a few old screws and old nuts and bolts. Ours is a large plant with a wide range of parts, and if everyone takes good care of just one more screw, thousands of screws will be saved. It's as the common saying goes: Drops of water form big rivers and mounds of sand form tall pagodas. Chairman Mao calls on us to run factories in the spirit of industry and thrift. We working class should resolutely respond to this call with action. Don't you think that's right?"

The worker picked up the odd things he had collected while saying this. We blushed with shame as we watched him.

That was how we met him for the first time.

The old worker's loud voice brought me back to the present, "Young fellows, which of you is Yin Ta-chih and which of you is Li Hsiao-hu?"

"Looking for us two?" At first I was at a loss what to do, then I hastily dragged Hsiao-hu to stand up with me. The worker looked at us, then at the piece of paper in his hand, and said, "Fine, young fellows, you've been assigned to work with our general supplies group. Fresh, new blood is added to our group." Without allowing us a moment for thought, he led us outside.

We had just passed through the main gate of the workshop office when we met Master Chang returning from directing our classmates to their work posts. At the sight of us, he straightforwardly challenged, "Ah, Old Wu, are you satisfied with these two successors?"

Without saying a word our master looked at us well-pleased.

It was only later that I learned our master was called Wu Ken-jung, in charge of the store-room and a veteran member of the Chinese Communist Party.

Our master took us to a room on the side of the workshop. We saw that its walls were lined with rows of wooden shelves, which formed partitions, where various kinds of metal articles were stacked, some round, some in square and some polygonal shape. On one of the shelves were various kinds of screws and nuts and bolts, and beside them several locked wooden boxes. By the window on the left side was a sturdily built factory-type desk, on which were placed drawing materials. Though the little room was stored full of things, one had the impression that everything was neat and tidy, and arranged in good order. I thought our master was surely a good store-keeper for our plant!

"Ta-chih, is our work decided like this?" Hsiao-hu asked me unexpectedly.

I saw that Hsiao-hu was staring vacantly at the wooden shelf containing the screws.

Hsiao-hu said to himself, "How tedious it will be to work with these things every day."

"Hsiao-hu, don't think like that. Since this is our job, let's strike root here and work."

"Enough of such thoughts! We've come to a grand electric machinery plant, and our job is taking in ma-

terials and giving out screws. What contribution can we make?" Hsiao-hu was dejected.

I became worried about what was troubling Hsiao-hu's mind and thought of talking it over with him when the door opened with a creak and our master entered. Seeing our sober-looking expression, he smiled, "Feeling unhappy?"

I answered, "No," too embarrassed to tell him our real state of mind.

"Right! When you come to the plant, remember you are workers, you are masters of the country. You shouldn't feel unhappy."

Our master said this as if nothing disturbing had happened and all Hsiao-hu and I could do was to smile ruefully.

2

Our factory life formally began today.

Early this morning we put on our new work suits for the first time. Hsiao-hu and I were about the same build, and we were in high spirits as we got into large-sized suits. Some of our old classmates said we looked like two real workers, others said we were like "twins." The only difference was that Hsiao-hu was quite sullen. I had pulled him out of bed, otherwise he would probably have been still there.

I was excited and pulled Hsiao-hu impatiently towards the workshop.

It was still early and the workshop was quiet.

I was just about to push open the door when Hsiao-hu kicked it and it opened with a bang.

Our master's voice could be heard inside, asking, "Who's that? What a heavy kick!"

We had not expected our master to arrive so early and, all aflutter, Hsiao-hu scratched his head, put out his tongue and followed me in.

"How early you are!" I said.

Our master turned round to cheerfully remark, "Oh, I'm old and haven't much need for sleep." Holding his hastily removed spectacles in one hand he patted our shoulders with the other, carefully studying our faces as he did so. Then smiling, he indicated that we should all sit down.

He had been studying, and many things were spread over his desk: newspapers, books, and red-and-blue pencils. I sat in front of him and casually turned the pages of the newspapers. Hsiao-hu absentmindedly looked out of the window where a pair of sparrows were twittering on the sill.

Our master murmured to himself, "**The Communist revolution is the most radical rupture with traditional property relations; no wonder that its development involves the most radical rupture with traditional ideas.**" Very true indeed."

He had been studying the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*. Its oil-stained pages were underlined in many places.

Putting down his spectacles, our master asked, "Tachih, Hsiao-hu, how do you understand 'traditional ideas' mentioned here by Marx and Engels?"

After thinking the question over, I replied, "Doesn't it mean the old ideas, customs, habits and cultures left over from the old society? Marx and Engels proposed

to wage to the end the struggle in the ideological field, to break with the old ideological forms.”

Our master then asked, “Hsiao-hu, do you think Ta-chih is correct?”

Seeing that Hsiao-hu did not answer, he continued, “Right, I think so, too. Old ideologies are very stubborn. It is not easy to break with them completely. Take a machine for example. It is made up of many parts; a workshop is made up of many teams; a factory is made up of many workshops—every one of them is needed. But, some people think that one machine part is more important than another. One team is thought better than another. They feel proud to work in one workshop, but not in another. It is also another form of the old ideology to consider one kind of labour of higher rank than another!” These words made Hsiao-hu lower his head and flush down to his collar.

Our master suddenly asked, “Hsiao-hu, do you know the children’s song *A Small Nut*?”

“Yes. ‘There’s a small nut on the roadside. A tiny nut, a tiny bit, it means a lot to our construction.’ My little brother sings it every day.” Hsiao-hu suddenly became lively and answered briskly.

“That’s right! Even your little brother knows the importance of a nut, so you, his elder brother, should learn well from him!”

Hsiao-hu and I smiled at what our master said.

After the bell sounded to start work, our little room began to bustle with activity, with quite a number of people coming in and going out, but our master answered their questions with ease. Betweenwhiles, he talked to us about matters of production, acquainted us with the names and specifications of the various



materials and told us how to determine the sizes of the screws, nuts and bolts.

Youngsters like us did not feel the continuous heavy work tiring. Showing the same prowess as when on the soccer field, Hsiao-hu took off his jacket, rolled up his sleeves and accompanied our master everywhere. I was happy, thinking that Hsiao-hu must have now got over his misgivings and doubts.

After a while, a young skilled worker with thick, black hair and wearing a blue sports shirt came in and greeted us enthusiastically, "Hey, are you Master Wu's new apprentices?"

"What can I do for you?" I asked.

"I want some screws and some nuts and bolts for the electricians."

Hsiao-hu collected a box of shining-black new screws for him.

"Oh, you're giving me the wrong ones. The screws for electricians are zinc-plated."

"Are there so many kinds of screws and nuts and bolts?" the puzzled Hsiao-hu asked.

"That's right. You don't understand. What I want are those brown screws plated with zinc. That kind of screw is a good electricity conductor and resists corrosion."

Hsiao-hu and I listened attentively, and thought, oh, little screws contain a lot of knowledge.

Our master came over and asked, smiling, "Young Ting, what good experience are you propagating here?"

"Hello, Master Wu. What good experience have I got? Speaking of experience —" he drawled, turning towards us, "it is Master Wu who is socialist-minded,

has all-round ability and is rich in experience." Young Ting's amusing manner made us burst into laughter.

After seeing him off, Hsiao-hu whispered to me, "Ta-chih, it seems that my thinking is quite wrong. Without careful study we really can't do the job!"

"Right, Hsiao-hu. No machine can do without screws, small though they may be. Moreover, each particular screw serves a particular purpose. There are an infinite number of specifications to meet their special functions. It is a branch of learning in itself! Hsiao-hu, formerly we looked down on this kind of job. There is a world of knowledge to learn about screws, and it will take us a whole life-time to acquire the fine qualities of our old master."

3

After lunch, our master, not waiting for the bell to start work, pushed a small cart along, saying, "Let's go for a stroll." I was surprised and thought, how are we going to stroll? We "strolled" behind him to the waste heap and collected a cartload of rejected things including old screws, nuts and bolts, some machine parts and other materials. Only after sweating for some time did we return from our "stroll."

After carefully putting away what we had collected from the reject pile, our master said, "Now, let's make the rounds of the workshop."

I wondered what we were going to do.

We again followed our master, and found the workshop seething with activity. Going the rounds of the various machine tools, he warmly greeted the workers

there, asked about the progress of their work and checked on what supplies would be needed. We were ignorant about such things and he "gave us lessons" as he led us along. He taught us that in order to be good "screws" in the service of production, we should first of all be concerned about production and be on intimate terms with the workers, anticipating and knowing their needs. Who says the work of storing materials means only receiving and issuing things! With wide-opened eyes Hsiao-hu followed our master about. He had shed the unhappy thought of the morning like iron filings thrown off by the lathe.

There was a tense atmosphere on the site, where a repair team worked and a lathe was being assembled. Several people were heatedly discussing something. Our master led us towards them. We heard someone say, "Well, we can talk it over with the lathe team and ask them to help us by making them for us."

Another voice replied, "The lathe team's task for this month is heavy enough as it is. They're already working three full shifts a day. How can we expect them to take on additional work?" The speaker, much taller than myself, was only wearing a sleeveless undershirt, and his face was covered with beads of oily sweat.

Turning round, he saw us and greeted us smilingly, "Old Wu, you're really like timely rain in a drought. I was just thinking about you, and here you are. Come and help us find a way out of a difficulty." The repair team was refitting an old imported lathe held together by many screws, made according to English dimensions. They were badly worn and needed replacing, but our country had long stopped making this kind of screws

and nuts and bolts. Where were we going to get the replacements? The repair team was anxious to get this lathe repaired as quickly as possible.

What was to be done? Could we help solve this problem? I looked at our master in dismay.

Hsiao-hu whispered, "Ta-chih, can we tackle this problem?"

Our master pondered for a while with half-closed eyes, then walked around the lathe, and after taking leave of the workers there, quickly led us away.

Back to our store-room, our master got busy. After searching through several wooden boxes he unlocked a large one and took out box after box of used screws and nuts and bolts, all carefully coated with a thick layer of grease as a protection against rust. He carefully made a selection and checked their lengths. He finally filled a wooden case with long and short, large and small screws arranged neatly and according to size. Sweating with exertion he stood up looking quite happy, flicked the sweat off his forehead with one finger, sighed contentedly and said, as if to himself, but also appearing to be speaking to us, "If I had agreed, they would have been thrown away long ago. Now they can be put to good use."

Suddenly I thought of the first time we met our master. He was squatting on the ground looking for screws. Maybe these were the same screws. But no. These had been specially collected by our master, who always paid attention to such things during odd moments. I looked at him. He seemed to grow taller, and I felt I would have to raise my head to be able to see his grey hair and whole body more clearly.

Our master told us to take the case of screws and nuts and bolts to the repair team. Hsiao-hu raced me to take it from his hands saying, "Master, let me do it."

I urged, "No, let me do it!"

Looking at us both squarely, our master happily replied, "Go together!"

We headed towards the repair team with the wooden case. These old screws and nuts and bolts, which had been lying idle in our master's large wooden box for many years, had today come out of the "store-house." In a little while they would be fixed into that old lathe to rejuvenate it and help keep production going.

We watched the tall member of the repair team fix the screws into the old lathe and switch on the electric power. The motor hummed and the lathe instantly started. Our eyes shone as we witnessed it go into operation, and realized the role the screws played. We wanted to hurry back to report to our master but the tall worker detained us a moment saying, "Thank you for your screws!"

I was very excited, but Hsiao-hu seemed lost in thought. Suddenly he said to me excitedly but seriously, "Ta-chih, now I understand. Without these few screws, that lathe will not run smoothly again in the service of socialism. These screws have been carefully kept against rust thanks to our master's diligent concern for the success of the revolutionary cause! Why didn't I think of all these things before?"

Grasping his hand in mine I said, "Hsiao-hu, this is the very essence of socialism in factory life!"

My heart surged with joyful emotion. Common-place work and noble-minded people — the shining

screws in our store-room reflected the veteran worker's wholehearted devotion to the revolutionary cause!

"Hsiao-hu," I said, "we have no reason for thinking the work of the screws not important. Don't you remember, when we were in primary school, we made up our minds to learn from Comrade Lei Feng* to be a never-rusting screw in the revolutionary cause?"

"Ta-chih, that's right! From now on, I must conscientiously study and learn from the working class and foster a world outlook as Comrade Lei Feng did."

Hsiao-hu and I now feel that: to be a never-rusting screw in the service of the socialist construction of our great motherland should be the lifelong aspiration of us revolutionary youth. We must help our comrades by telling them the valuable changes that took place in our thinking after we began working.

Illustrated by Wang Kuo-feng

* Lei Feng was a truck driver in the Chinese People's Liberation Army. All his life he studied and applied Mao Tsetung Thought, serving the people wholeheartedly. He died in the course of duty in 1962. His name became known to every household in China and Chairman Mao called on the Chinese people to learn from him.

Hidden Reef

Shih Min

"WEIGH anchor!" bawled Chu Shan-hu, burly skipper of the survey ship *Vanguard*. As he strode to the bridge, the siren sounded and the spruce, streamlined craft cast off and headed briskly out of harbour. She ploughed quickly through the calm blue sea under a bright October sun, leaving behind her a long trail of white foam.

It was unusually suitable weather for surveying, but Skipper Chu seemed to be in no mood to appreciate it. Rigid as an iron pillar, brows knit, lips pursed, he gazed into the distance. The angry tone of his voice and the cloud on his face warned the crew that he had something unpleasant on his mind, despite the fact that he had not quarrelled with any of the men. The weather was favourable and everything was running smoothly. It was hard to know what was on his mind. Though he had not uttered a word, his mood did not escape the sharp attention of the two young subalterns Tao Yu-tsai and Hsiao Shih-hai on the bridge beside him. His eyes on the placid ocean, Young Tao was humming

the song *I Love the Blue Sea*. Abruptly tugging the peak of his cap he winked at Hsiao and, glancing at Chu, said, "Looks as if it's come over cloudy." The implication being, "Could you guess why our skipper has such a cloudy face?"

Answering the unspoken question, Hsiao jerked his head in the direction of the girl in a faded naval uniform, leaning against the bulwark. Young Tao forcefully patted him on the shoulder and murmured, "What a sharp eye! I think we are going to run into a lot of arguments on this trip."

Hsiao said, "There's a common saying: 'Just as man cannot be judged by his looks, so the sea cannot be measured by a bushel.' It seems to me that Skipper Chu's attitude is taking matters too far. . . ."

Seeing the girl move, Tao put a finger to his lips to draw Hsiao's attention, and warned, "Hush! Be careful!"

The girl, Chin Hua, was medium-sized and had two brilliant big eyes on her sunburnt face. She was twenty-five years old and a Communist who had recently been demobbed from the navy. She had come to the *Vanguard* the previous day to be Chu's second in command. This was the reason for the cloud over the skipper's face.

Thirty-four-year-old Chu Shan-hu had ten years of surveying experience behind him, having cruised over all the China seas and seen a good deal elsewhere of the world. He had been promoted captain in the Cultural Revolution, knew his job and had tremendous drive, but was quick-tempered and flared up easily. The former second in command, experienced Old Chen, had worked hard and they got on well together. They

had the confidence and co-operation of the *Vanguard's* crew, which was regularly cited as an advanced unit. Old Chen had recently been transferred to a new post and Chu had been hoping for another replacement of the same calibre. He had never expected it would be a girl. Of course, he assured himself, he didn't look down on women. He knew that women make up nearly half the Chinese population and among them are not a few pilots and navigators, to say nothing of surveyors. But he argued to himself, the *Vanguard* was something special. She had a reputation to maintain. Besides, her present assignment — to chart the location of a hidden reef, was an important job. "Owen Reef," which the *Vanguard* was now out to find, had first been charted by the Kuomintang customs authorities in 1948, the eve of liberation. In 1964 a hydrographer sent to verify the position of this reef had failed to find it. As he had no grounds for denying its existence, he just put a question mark in brackets behind the name "Owen Reef" on the chart, thus warning all passing ships to be on their guard. This was rather an irresponsible way out. As the channel was regarded of little importance, no further efforts had been made from that time to locate the reef.

After the Cultural Revolution Chinese maritime transport expanded rapidly, and rich submarine oil resources were discovered in the vicinity of "Owen Reef." It was imperative to open a navigation channel there. The leadership instructed the *Vanguard* to complete the location survey in a fortnight. It was a tall order. On top of which they had sent him a girl. . . .

Chu turned to glance at Chin Hua, still leaning over the bulwark. Her bobbed hair ruffled by the breeze,

she looked the picture of good health, cheerfulness and confidence. Chu could not help thinking: "It would be a good thing for such a girl to be in an office doing propaganda or similar work. But work on this vessel is not so becoming for her!" He snorted.

Chin Hua remained motionless, her eyes fixed on the horizon, as if she had no inkling of the skipper's annoyance. But, she understood the reason for Chu's snort and irate bellow. Far from being offended she was amused.

Her job in the navy had been surveying navigation channels. When she started her apprenticeship some men had predicted: "She'll never stick it out!" The job involved constant cruising through dangerous reefs and shallows, exposure to hurricanes and other risks. But she was enthralled by the arduous, adventurous life, and often told her mates, "We're blazing new trails." At the beginning the secretary of the surveying brigade Party committee arranged for her to work in the office, but after hearing her views, he agreed to send her to the *Vanguard* to take on the job left vacant by Old Chen. Before being posted, she had been told that Chu Shan-hu was a good comrade, who went all out in his work but was a bit overbearing. She was advised to do her best to help him, and be prepared for some cold-shouldering. . . .

The sound of a bell cut into these reflections running through Chin Hua's mind. It was the call to muster. She hurried towards the meeting room below.

Chu usually started a meeting with a joke, but that day he was unusually stern. A roll of sea chart in hand, he asked:

"Everybody present?"

Young Tao joked, "Everybody present, except those who are not here."

Chu glanced at him and unrolled the chart. On it was a big red square, in the centre of which a question mark indicated a possible hidden reef. Chu cleared his throat and said:

"As everybody sees, our survey task on this trip is to find out the unlocated 'Owen Reef'. . . ."

Inquisitive, Tao cut him short with the question, "Why is it called 'Owen Reef'? It sounds like a foreign name."

Chu could not answer.

Young Hsiao, who was considered quite a talent by his mates on the *Vanguard* for his wide range of knowledge, replied, "Nothing queer about its name!" Whenever the crew were free after casting anchor, he would recount about various things. For instance, he could give the detail of each country — its capital, area, president, foreign minister — the height of the Himalayas and the depth of Manila Bay.

Speaking in the tones of an authority on the subject, he said, "Before liberation, the imperialist invaders named our islands and reefs after themselves. Take for instance the well-known Tachi Mount at the mouth of the Yangtze River. It was so called for centuries after its discovery. But in 1840 a Britisher, named Gulliver, sailed there and changed its name to 'Gulliver Mount,' as if he had found something new. The reactionary authorities did nothing about it, and its name was not restored until after liberation. It seems that this particular reef was given its present name by a foreigner called Owen."

Young Tao and Chu nodded in admiration of his profound knowledge. Chu said, "I hear that in 1964 a hydrographer was sent to verify the position of this reef, but he failed to find it. Now it's up to us to complete the survey." As he spoke, he jumped to his feet, rolling up his sleeves with excitement, and continued, "Comrades, we are fighters who blaze new channels, so we are called 'trail-blazers on the sea.' Our *Vanguard*. . . ." He paused a while, and looked about trying to catch Chin Hua's eye, but failed to do so.

Then raising his voice he proclaimed, "Our *Vanguard* is really a vanguard. Comrades on the other vessels are used to calling us the vanguards among the trail-blazers, but we must not be proud and rest on our merits. Before the trip I promised, on behalf of everyone here, to fulfil the survey. However, talking is one thing and doing is another. What are we, vanguards or laggards? That depends on whether we fulfil the survey within fifteen days."

The skipper's words set everyone's heart aflame. Young Tao jumped up, rolling his sleeves as Chu did, declaring, "Skipper Chu, don't worry about it. We shall never defame the *Vanguard*. We would go ahead and struggle wherever you indicate!"

"We shall never stop until we find 'Owen Reef,'" followed Hsiao. "I would rather lose weight than fail to find the reef."

"Good!" exclaimed Chu thumping the table, and a smile relaxing his stern mouth for the first time. "Well spoken, Young Hsiao, you are worthy of the name of a learned man. As long as we have such spirit, we are bound to fulfil the task."

Then he announced the time-table, "We will rise at five and weigh anchor at six in the morning. In the evening we stop work at six and cast anchor at seven. Do you approve?"

"Agreed!" the crew shouted in chorus.

"That's settled!"

He was on the point of dismissing the meeting when an idea flashed into his mind, and looking round he asked, "Is Chin Hua present?"

Everybody turned to look at her, but did not locate her.

A gentle voice came from near the entrance, "I am here," and Chin Hua sitting by the door became the target of all eyes. Her face flushed as she found herself the centre of attention.

"Comrade Chin Hua, have you got anything to say?" asked Chu.

Though Chin Hua sat at the door she had listened to him attentively and caught every word he uttered, especially the references to the *Vanguard*. She understood that those references were directed mainly at her. However, she was not annoyed, but admired his frankness. She smiled and briskly straightening up her hair said:

"I have one word to add and would like to make a suggestion."

Young Tao glanced at Chu and nudged Hsiao to arouse his attention. The meeting room was suddenly extraordinarily quiet.

Chin Hua calmly proceeded, "What I want to say is that the accurate location of this reef has something to do both with keeping up the reputation of the *Vanguard* and with the safety of thousands of ships and

keeping up the reputation of our country, which is the most important aspect of our task."

Everybody nodded, but Chu frowned.

"As for my suggestion," Chin Hua continued, "examining the time-table, I think it's good that we have the spirit of hard work but at the same time we should not relax our criticism of revisionism and rectifying the style of work, and mass repudiation, nor should we relax our study. We should squeeze in every possible moment of reading and study."

Everybody looked at each other and then focussed their eyes on Chu. Chu flushed. He could hear the quick pounding of his own heart, and was on the point of scolding Chin Hua: "You have a lot to say before you have yet done any work." However, he checked himself as he could not find anything wrong in what she said.

He scratched his head and said, "Chin Hua has made a good suggestion. The movement to criticize revisionism and rectify the style of work is most important. As for the mass repudiation. . . ." He paused a while, looked at Hsiao and added, "Learned man, you'll arrange it. We'll try to publish a series of articles devoted to mass repudiation on this trip."

"On what subject?"

"Eh, you are the chief editor, so it's up to you to decide that. You may look over the newspapers and choose any one you like, for instance, that of criticizing idealist apriorism or the fallacious concept of heroes creating history and so on. Well, we are nearing the survey area. Let's adjourn and get ready for work."

Chin Hua shook her head thoughtfully.

2

"We'll make our dispositions," said Chu. He assigned men to take position measurements, make written records, keep a look-out. . . . Soon all the tasks except sounding and navigating were assigned. The former required little technical skill, but the latter was highly complex. In Chu's view, it called for "special directing qualities." He had always done the navigating himself. But now he made the proposal:

"You navigate, Comrade Chin Hua. I'll do the sounding. All right?"

In saying this, he had two purposes in mind: to exhibit his own modesty and to gauge the girl's capabilities. He was prompted by the thought, she can talk all right, but the real test comes in action.

Chin Hua understood this and answered with a smile, "No! You navigate, I'll do the sounding."

Chu didn't insist, convinced that she wasn't up to it.

The *Vanguard* slowed down as they reached the survey area. Chu gave the order.

"Port 52.45," "Starboard 47.22," reported Tao and Hsiao simultaneously. Then Chin Hua gave the sounding: "Twenty-one metres. . . ."

The atmosphere on board became tense as the survey went steadily ahead.

Then a sudden accident disturbed the routine. Hsiao got something in his eye, his vision was blurred and he asked the skipper to relieve him for a while.

Chu hesitated for a second, reluctant to leave his post of heading direction, the most important one aboard the vessel. In the old days, under such circum-

stances he would have called on the second in command to take over, but he was reluctant to do so now.

"Go ahead, Skipper," cried Chin Hua. "I'll stand in for you."

"You?" challenged Chu dubiously, but still he went to take the sextant from Hsiao.

"Let me have a try," said Chin Hua, taking the positioner and pencil from Chu's hand. Then she called crisply:

"Report position angles!"

Young Tao and Chu promptly responded. Still uneasy in his mind, the skipper peered at the girl. He was astonished by the speed and dexterity with which she fixed the bearings on the positioner, placed it lightly on the chart and with a brisk stroke of her pencil determined the ship's position. She then shouted to the helmsman, "Hold the course, forward!" The girl's quiet confidence took Chu's breath away. He himself could not have done better. He shouldn't have underestimated her.

After some time another problem cropped up. Young Tao, the starboard observer, announced that he could no longer see the coastal landmarks distinctly. At once Chu cried, "Avast!" Chin Hua, he thought, being new to this coast, would need time to set new landmarks; and unless the ship stopped at once, they would drift off course. But Chin Hua countermanded, "No need to stop. Hold course at the same speed." And before the skipper could utter a word, she announced:

"Attention! Change landmarks. The mark to the left is Two-goat Isle; in the centre, Half-cloud Mountain; to the right, the Pagoda. Get set!"

Chu was impressed by these clear, accurate directions. The medical orderly had meanwhile attended to Hsiao's eye, and he was ready to return to his post. He took the sextant from the skipper, who exclaimed, "To my surprise, that girl has natural talent as a commander!"

"There's no such thing as natural talent," Hsiao retorted. "All ability comes from practice."

"Practice! What practice has she had?" scoffed Chu. "This is her first trip on the *Vanguard*, her first cruise in these waters."

"There's no mystery about it," Young Hsiao chuckled. "I was on the after-midnight watch yesterday, and saw the light on in the steering house. While you were snoring in your bunk, Chin Hua was studying the navigation chart and the landmarks in this area."

Chu stared at him speechless.

3

A week went by. Countless soundings were made in the vicinity of the place where "Owen Reef" was originally charted. The average depth of water was twenty metres; but not a trace of any reef could they find. Staring out across the rolling waves, Chu reflected anxiously, this is like searching for a pin on the ocean bed. He had two alternatives. The first was to conclude that no reef existed. But he must have ample grounds for such a conclusion, otherwise, any accident in the future would be the responsibility of the skipper in charge of the survey. The second alternative was to extend the survey area. After careful consideration he decided to do this. Taking up his

set-square and red pencil, he extended the original square and added thirty more sounding lines to the chart. The next morning, as soon as the sun rose over the sea the *Vanguard* resumed the search, not stopping until the stars were twinkling in the sky. When three more days passed without any results, Chu became frantic and his crew downcast.

They had not been ashore for ten whole days, dropping anchor wherever they were when darkness fell. On the eleventh day they put in to Gold-flower Island for fresh supplies. This small island where little more than a hundred families of fisherfolk lived had no harbour, and so the *Vanguard* anchored in the bay. Usually, when the cook went ashore the rest of the crew followed to stretch their legs, but this time no one seemed to want to go ashore. They were mindful that they had only four days left to complete their survey.

Cupping his chin in his hands, Chu stared unwinkingly at the words "Owen Reef(?)" inscribed on the chart. His mood infected the others aboard. Tao was no longer heard singing *I Love the Blue Sea*, and Hsiao had stopped cracking jokes, and Chin Hua stared out of the window in silence.

Tao muttered, "Where can this confounded reef have gone?"

"Could there have been an earthquake here?" Hsiao wondered.

"What have earthquakes to do with it?" demanded Tao.

"A lot," was the reply in a tone of authority. "I read in a geography book that big changes are caused

in the ocean bed by earthquakes. Take the Pacific Ocean area near the equator for example. Earthquakes take place there so often that small islands and reefs seen by seamen on their outward passage are gone when they return. So they call them "ghost" islands. Maybe the reef. . . ."

Chin Hua put in, "I checked up before we set out. There's been no earthquake here."

Chu jumped up and squared his shoulders as if ready for a fight, saying, "It's no use sitting talking. We must get on with our search." He rolled up his sleeves, picked up his set-square and red pencil, and with a few strokes doubled the sounding area. He asserted, "I'm determined to find this damn reef even if it means diving down to the bed of the ocean."

Young Tao rolled up his sleeves too, as though preparing to plunge into the sea.

"Comrade Chu," said Chin Hua calmly, "shouldn't we discuss the best steps to take next?"

"Discuss!" repeated Chu staring at her, a scathing retort on the tip of his tongue. He suppressed his wrath, however, for working with Chin Hua these few days had already given him a healthy respect for her knowledge and courage. He merely said, "We must go all out — work harder."

Chin Hua, though calm and unruffled, spoke very firmly, "We can't go on this hit-and-miss way."

"Hit-and-miss?" questioned Chu, a bit annoyed. "Well, since we don't have magic eyes that can penetrate to the ocean bed, we have to burn up diesel oil in making the soundings. So long as this reef exists, we're bound to find it."

"Of course. But how long will it take us? The sea is so great. We've only four days left."

Chu had no reply to that. Shifting to the defensive he said, "Well, let's hear your reasonable proposal."

Chin Hua replied thoughtfully crooking her head slightly as if a pupil was answering her teacher's question:

"I have no reasonable proposal. But I have been wondering how 'Owen Reef' was charted in the first survey of 1948. I think it's queer that. . . ."

Chu hastily cut her short, "Not queer at all. Before liberation, the imperialists working in the Kuomintang customs were so careless that they often mischarted positions. You can find many examples of that. Take the reef in the water at Cow Mountain for example. They mislocated the position by 2,000 metres. Another example is the hidden reef in the water of Hsinchuan. The real depth of it is only 3 metres under water, but in their records it is 6 metres."

"Such strange happenings occurred because China's waters were controlled by the imperialists," Chin Hua replied. Then pointing to the chart she said, "As for 'Owen Reef,' we don't know how that came about. Now we have already extended the survey area for about 5 knots from the positional centre, yet we can't find it. It seems unusual. . . ."

At this moment there were warning sounds that the fisherfolk were getting ready for the morning tide. The exciting echoes of conch horns and rough shouts came to them from the distance.

"What step exactly do you think we should take then?" persisted Chu.

"Take the mass line, and consult the fishermen," came the reply from Chin Hua.

Chu curled his lip as if to say: "I thought you'd some good suggestion. Is that all?" Pushing back his cap he chided, "Comrade Chin Hua, we're on the sea, not in the streets of Shanghai. If we were in Shanghai and wanted to find Takuangming Cinema, we could ask someone the way. But who can we ask here?" Indicating the radar, depth sounder and other instruments around him, he added, "We've all this modern electronic equipment. . . ."

"Of course, modern equipment is important; but we mustn't forget the masses."

"It takes time to visit fishermen, and all we have is four days. The *Vanguard* can do thirteen knots an hour. The time needed for visiting the islanders would be enough to make several dozen more soundings. Probably. . . ."

"That's not the way to look at it, comrade," said Chin Hua patiently.

"All right!" said Chu, knowing he was no match for her in argument and beating a hasty retreat. "I may be wrong."

As the cook had not yet returned from his trip ashore, he thought: "We may as well take this chance to go ashore and have a look around." So he told Chin Hua, "We'll do as you suggest, go ashore and apply the mass line. I'm not counting on any useful results, though."

They went ashore by motor-boat. The tide was in and the islanders were busy on the golden sands. Bare-footed children carrying baskets and tins were busy collecting shells and digging up mussels, and fishermen

in baggy trousers sang and laughed as they carried nets and floats to the boats drawn up near the water-edge.

Chu glanced at Chin Hua as he said, "See how busy they all are. Who's the best person to ask?"

Without answering him Chin Hua walked towards a group of girls singing light-heartedly as they wove two large nets. The bright morning sun shining through the nets on to the golden beach and on to their clothes made a beautiful picture. When the girls saw them approaching, they stopped weaving, looked at them, then at the *Vanguard*, whispered to each other and giggled. Chu, Young Tao and Hsiao felt a bit shy but Chin Hua seemed quite at ease.

She greeted them, "How do you do!"

The girls winked slyly at each other. She took a shuttle from a big-eyed, plump girl, saying, "Let me have a try."

"Think you can do it?" the latter asked curiously.

"I'll try," said Chin Hua, sitting down on a stool and beginning to knot the loops. Her left leg slightly bent and her right leg extended, leaning forward from the waist, she nimbly plied the shuttle. The snow-white net in front of her grew apace.

Chu, Tao and Hsiao looked on in surprise. So Chin Hua had another skill they had not suspected. But for her faded naval uniform, she could have been taken for a fisherman's daughter.

The girls crowded around her exclaiming, "Where did you learn to weave nets?"

"Why, you're an old hand!"

"I once worked on a fishing boat," Chin Hua replied with an ingenuous smile. "But I haven't had a shuttle in my hands for several years."



They now considered Chin Hua as one of them, and the plump girl asked, "Is it true that you're charting a channel here?"

"Yes," nodded Chin Hua. She then explained how important it was to locate "Owen Reef," and asked, "Have you ever heard of this reef?"

Pricking up his ears, Chu stepped nearer.

"'Owen Reef?'" the girls repeated looking at one another blankly.

The plump one shook her head: "Never heard of it."

The skipper sighed. Chin Hua heard his sigh but, ignoring it, continued weaving and asked, "Are there any old fishermen here who know this part of the sea well?"

"Yes," replied the plump girl. "There's my father. Maybe he can tell you what you want to know."

Chin Hua stood up ready to go, asking, "Where is he?"

"Over there," replied the girl pointing to a group of fishermen in the distance. "He's preparing for casting off. I'll call him." Answering her call, an old fisherman left the group and came towards them. The girl introduced him to Chin Hua, and explained the visitors' purpose.

"'Owen Reef?'" The old fisherman murmured thoughtfully and then slowly shaking his head, he said, "Never heard of it!"

Chu was very ruffled as the old man went on to say, "To my knowledge, there's only one reef in this area, and that's called Tiger Reef."

Chu, eager to know more about it, demanded, "Where is it?"

The old fisherman told them the position of Tiger Reef, which was a long way from that of "Owen Reef." The gloomy Chu shook his head dolefully, then nodded to Young Tao, "Let's go!"

Chin Hua hopefully went on asking questions, "Who else do you know is familiar with this region?" She explained the importance of surveying the hidden reef, and as she spoke many more fisherfolk gathered round.

"I've heard that there is an Old Water-root who knows it," said one of the fishermen.

"Old Water-root? Where is he?" Chin Hua asked eagerly.

"On Silver-flower Island," replied the fisherman, pointing beyond the sea. "You can easily find him. Everybody hereabouts knows him. He's over seventy and known as a mine of information, a living chart."

"Fine! Thanks a lot, grandpa and comrades." Turning round, Chin Hua found that Chu and Young Tao had left and only Young Hsiao remained.

Hsiao looked quite distressed as he murmured, "He's already gone."

At that moment the siren sounded for leaving. Chin Hua and Young Hsiao warmly thanked the fisherfolk and walked towards the *Vanguard*, already weighing anchor.

"Comrade Chin Hua," said Young Hsiao. "I don't think our skipper will agree to going to Silver-flower Island. There is bound to be an exciting argument when we get back."

"Possibly!" replied Chin Hua gently. "But Chu is a good comrade. He works hard and diligently. . . ."

Her high opinion of the skipper made him think of Chu's somewhat lower opinion of her. Young Hsiao could not help feeling Chu was a bit unfair.

Hsiao said, "You appraise him so highly but he. . . ." He checked himself, realizing that it was not fitting to speak like that.

Chin Hua smiled as if to say, I understand, but what does it matter?

4

The *Vanguard* cast off as soon as they came aboard. Hsiao looked cross as he asked, "Why are you in such a hurry?"

"Hurry? That's strange!" smiled Chu. "There are only three and a half days left, comrade, and we haven't yet found any trace of 'Owen Reef.'"

Then he looked at Chin Hua with an air of triumph. "Comrade Chin Hua, you've asked almost every islander and not one of them could tell you about it."

"But there is somebody who knows."

"Who?"

"Old Water-root," Hsiao replied, and then repeated what the fisherman had said.

"Old Water-root. Where is he?"

"On Silver-flower Island."

"It's more than thirty nautical miles away," Chu grumbled as he pointed towards Silver-flower Island on their left. "The trip there and back would take half a day, and more time would be taken up finding this old fisherman. Two whole days would be used up. Besides, does Old Water-root really know where

the reef is? Even if he does, suppose he's away from home when we get there?" Fingering the red sounding lines he had added to the chart, he said, "I'm in favour of sticking to our old method and using the time left to make more soundings. Then we may find the reef." As Hsiao opened his mouth to speak, the skipper roared:

"Starboard helm!"

"Port helm!" exploded Hsiao.

"Hey!" protested Ah-lung, the old helmsman. "One says starboard, the other says port. Which direction is it?"

"Who's running this ship?" demanded Chu, his face an angry red.

"I suggest we cast anchor," proposed the chief engineer. "Let's hear what the crew has to say."

Chin Hua nodded.

"Very well. Drop anchor!" Chu bellowed.

As the huge anchor crashed into the sea, the ship rocked, then swiftly came to a stop.

"I declare the meeting open," announced Chu. "Speak up frankly, don't mince your words."

"All right, I'll start off," volunteered an excited Hsiao. "Chairman Mao teaches us that **'the correctness or incorrectness of the ideological and political line decides everything.'** I think your ideological line is not correct. You don't believe in the masses and are not willing to learn from them. You are infected with the theory that the masses are backward and the concept of heroes creating history."

Chu jumped to his feet as if scorched by fire, and exclaimed, "What!"

Chin Hua said, "Comrades, I've got something to say." The room suddenly became still, though she had spoken quietly. Everybody turned round and looked at her thinking, it goes without saying that she is on the side of Hsiao and will give Chu a good dressing down. Chu became obviously nervous, but Chin Hua simply said:

"It's possible that we have different views in our work. It's also allowable for those who differ from each other in discussion to keep their own views, but we should not easily put unwarranted labels on comrades with different opinions, nor easily allege that their opinions are against the revolutionary line."

What Chin Hua had said was not what the crew expected, yet, looking at each other, they nodded in agreement. Chu, surprised more than others, did not utter a word, while Young Hsiao flushed as he prepared to defend himself. As he opened his mouth to speak, Chin Hua continued, "As for Hsiao's criticism, in my opinion, Comrade Chu should think it over and accept what is correct."

Chu and Hsiao nodded.

The old helmsman said, "I want to say something. First of all, I'll clarify my position on going to Silver-flower Island. Then I want to say that I agree with what Chin Hua has said: Hsiao's allegations about Chu are excessive, but there's really something wrong with Chu's thinking. To my mind, you only rely on the radar, on the depth sounder. . . ."

"But you know that is being scientific," interjected Chu.

"No! As a matter of fact, you merely believe in yourself," said the old helmsman raising his voice.

"Brother Chu, I can't compare myself with you in any aspect, except that of age. When I was young, I worked on the boats at Ningpo. The fishermen there, though not possessing any modern instruments, not even a compass, were respected for their high capabilities as navigators. Watching the clouds, they could tell you what sort of wind would blow and what sort of a rainfall would occur. Smelling the clay fetched up from the sea bed, they could determine where they were. They were so familiar with their sea navigation area that they could tell you, without looking at a map, the position of the shallows and rises on the sea bed."

"They were all qualified by long periods of practice," added Chin Hua.

The chief engineer spoke slowly, "Well, I've got something to say. Shan-hu, you and I became crewmates ten years ago, when you were a surveyor and I was a stoker. We worked side by side. Just before the Cultural Revolution both of us were transferred to the ship *Surveyor*, you as skipper, I as chief engineer. Remember that wreck?"

Chu, puffing at his cigarette, replied, "How could I forget that old hulk? It leaked badly when the rain was heavy, and could do no more than two knots an hour against the current. Its only navigational instruments were one azimuth compass and two sextants."

The engineer continued, "You, Shan-hu, Ah-lung and I are the only ones here who served on that boat, but in those days, I remember, whenever a problem cropped up you talked it over with the rest of the crew. Sometimes you consulted seamen in the navigation department too, or the local fishermen. But now. . ."

"Now times have changed," cut in Ah-lung, pointing to the array of shining instruments. "We've all this modern electronic equipment and the latest, twentieth-century, high-speed ship. What's more," he said, turning to indicate the certificates of merit on the walls, "we've won all these handsome awards. We've no time now for the masses, no patience with people who disagree with us."

Chu buried his head in his arms, his ears burning.

"What do you think, Shan-hu?" asked Chin Hua with concern.

"I get your point, but I haven't come round. . ."

"You can take time to think it over," she smiled, very much impressed with his frankness. Then, with a great show of sincerity, she added, "What the old comrades have just said enlightens me greatly. The way I see it, no matter how times have changed, no matter what modern equipment we've got or how successful we've been, we must never for one minute forget the masses."

Chu nodded and stood up slowly. A glance at his watch and he said, "Well, let's weigh anchor for Silver-flower Island. But. . ."

"But what?" asked Ah-lung impatiently.

"What he wants to say, I think, is that," smilingly remarked Hsiao, "but there are only three and a half days left." While speaking, he looked at his watch, in imitation of Chu's manner, and then went on, "Now there are three days and a few hours left. If it happens that Old Water-root is out or other things happen. . ."

Chu flushed as Hsiao put his thoughts into words.

The chief engineer said, "Hey, you are so stubborn and our voices are hoarse from talking to you. It's time for you to decide!"

"All right," said Chu, as if set on risking a final move, "set course for Silver-flower Island."

Chin Hua stopped him, "Wait a minute."

"What for?" demanded Hsiao.

"It's correct to take the mass line and investigate among the fisherfolk, but an over-all arrangement is also important."

"I don't understand," said Hsiao shaking his head.

"There's also something correct in Comrade Chu's reservation that the time is short, for we have little more than three days. It'll take us two days to get to Silver-flower Island and back and to make investigations there. And if we fail to find Old Water-root or some other thing goes awry. . . ."

Chu felt much less worried and was so moved that he wanted to shake hands with Chin Hua, but he controlled himself.

The puzzled Hsiao asked, "Then what step do you think best? Shall we not go to Silver-flower Island?" He thought that the very person who had made the suggestion was at the same time refusing to carry it out.

"We are going to Silver-flower Island," said Chin Hua. "But we should also continue the survey. We must prepare ourselves for two eventualities."

"We only have one ship."

"The motor-boat will go to Silver-flower Island!"

Everyone felt this was a good idea and admired the way Chin Hua had considered all sides of the problem. A trip taking several hours in a small open boat might

prove extremely exhausting, but all volunteered to go. Chu raised his hand for silence. "Let's have no more argument," he said. "Young Tao, the engineer and I will go."

"No!" Chin Hua cut him short, then emphatically announced, "You stay on the *Vanguard* in charge of the surveying. I'll go with them to Silver-flower Island." She put on her life jacket, picked up a canteen and ration bag, and said to Tao:

"Let's go!"

Chu gazed after Chin Hua for a long, long time, until the little boat was lost to sight.

5

The sea was unusually calm the next morning. Coils of mist drifted over the water, and the mist-wreathed base of the green islands made them appear like huge white mushrooms floating on the sea.

Chu in waders, his unbuttoned jacket revealing a striped seaman's vest, had not shaved for nearly two weeks and now sported a beard. Brows knit, he strained his eyes in the direction of Silver-flower Island.

After Chin Hua's departure the previous morning, the *Vanguard* had gone full speed ahead with the survey. When it anchored at nightfall a dozen new soundings had been taken but the reef had not been located. Chu usually fell asleep as soon as his head touched the pillow, but that night he found it impossible to get off. He lay awake recalling his mates'

criticism of himself and Chin Hua's honest attitude towards him. The contemptuous way he had treated her preyed on his mind, and he wondered how she and the other two were faring. Had they found Old Water-root? If so, with what result? He tossed and turned in his bunk the whole night long.

Suddenly a shark leapt out of the water just in front of him. It was followed by another, then another. The sea, so calm a moment ago, started seething as the huge fish plunged and thrashed, frantically whipping up foam. Seamen have a saying, "When sharks cavort and play, a storm is on its way." Chu looked at the barometer: it had dropped to 900 millibars. The air was briny and moist.

He sighed. Just two days to complete their assignment and a storm was threatening. He would have to make a self-criticism after this trip, and the *Vanguard* would no longer be a vanguard.

"Aren't they back yet, Skipper?" asked Old Wang, the cook.

"Not yet," he answered gruffly. "This trip they're making is no picnic, Old Wang. You must give them a good rich fish chowder when they get back."

"Don't worry, I'm making a chowder they'll eat to the bottom of the bowl," replied Old Wang. After a quizzical glance at Chu, he went on, "They say this new woman comrade is sharp as a knife, Skipper, and she's given you a real bashing. So why. . ."

Before Chu could answer, one of the crew declared, "What's so strange about it? A bashing is one thing, chowder is another. That shows our skipper's concern for the masses!"

Chu turned round to see who was speaking. When he found it was Hsiao, he chided, "Enough! Don't make a fool of me."

"Why, haven't you reached a conclusion yet after thinking it over all night?"

"No," said Chu. "I've already said that in general I'm convinced by what you've said, but I have yet to be convinced by facts."

"You're bound to be convinced by facts. I believe that Chin Hua and the other two will come back with the correct information."

"I hope so. But what if their trip is fruitless?"

"It will have been worth-while even if that happens, for the line and the way of doing things is correct. As long as we go on surveying and go to the masses to investigate, we'll eventually find the whereabouts of 'Owen Reef,' I believe." Hsiao looked serious. "To be frank, I should say that yesterday's meeting, especially Chin Hua's opinion and her way of doing things, has helped me a great deal."

"That's right!" approved Chu.

"That's right!" Hsiao, imitating his tone and deliberately striking at him, said, "But you've forgotten your disapproval and snorting when she first came aboard."

Chu's face turned as red as a persimmon.

"She helped you at the meeting, and she also praised you behind your back," said Hsiao repeating what Chin Hua had said when they were on Gold-flower Island.

Chu stared at the restless sea, the tide of his mind seeming to rise and fall like its waves. After a long pause he said, "This girl, though fairly young, is quite out of the ordinary both in words and deeds."

"That's not difficult to understand," said Hsiao. "The main reason for that is that she studies well Marxist-Leninist works and the works of Chairman Mao. I took notice and found that every evening, no matter how tired she was, she studied for over an hour, and took careful notes." While speaking, he gestured with two fingers, "You see, the pages where she took notes on Engels' *Anti-Dühring*, are as thick as this."

"So thick?"

"I saw it the evening before last. That night she encouraged me to study hard, but I told her frankly that I was not quite clear about what was written in this thick book."

Chu smiled as he thought what Hsiao said could also be applied to himself.

Hsiao continued, "After hearing what I had told her, she said smiling, 'Studying is not an easy job, so Chairman Mao called on us to **read and study conscientiously**. At the beginning we might find it difficult. But as long as we have the idea of studying for the revolution and keep on studying and combining what we read with our own thoughts and with reality, we're bound to comprehend what is written in the books, and the more we study the more interested we will be in our study.'" Saying that he sighed:

"How about us? Every evening after work, we invariably indulge in small talk or crack jokes or just go to bed saying we're tired out."

"So we do!" agreed Chu.

"While we were studying we seldom combined our thoughts with what we learned from the books," continued Hsiao. "Take the mass repudiation for example. It seemed as if it only concerned a few 'learned men.'

As for us, the few 'learned men,' we only copied things from books or made comments without reference to our own thoughts. We wielded our pens simply to show off."

Chu nodded and sat down on the bollard. Young Hsiao's statement about his own case dealt a telling blow at him, and helped him find the essence of the matter.

"Skipper!" reported the man on watch. "Look! Isn't that a flare over there?"

Chu leapt to his feet, asking, "Where?"

"To the southeast!"

Chu raised his binoculars and, sure enough, saw a faint flare in the distance. He bounded onto the bridge, shouting, "Weigh anchor! We're going to meet them."

The *Vanguard* sped towards the signal light, which grew brighter as they approached. The motor-boat came into sight bobbing up and down on the waves. The engine, after running so long, had broken down. It was a signal for help!

Chu grasped the girl's drenched, icy hands as she came aboard, and asked anxiously, "Well, how was it, Comrade Chin Hua?"

"Our trip was successful!" cried Tao. "After we went ashore on Silver-flower Island yesterday, a fisherman guided us across two mountains during the night, and we found Old Water-root. He is familiar with this sea area, and might be truthfully described as a living chart. . . ."

"Come to the point," urged Chu.

"Old Water-root told us that 'Owen Reef' is the shoal the fishermen call Tiger Reef."

"How did that come about?"

"In 1948, some imperialist warships wanted to pass this way. The Kuomintang customs office sent a foreigner named Owen to survey the area. Because time was short, the customs authorities promised the crew a big bonus if they finished the job on schedule, and if they failed, a dock in their pay. Not long after his surveying ship moored near Silver-flower Island it became impossible to take any soundings because of stormy weather. Owen was frantic, and when he heard that Old Water-root knew this area well, he tricked him aboard his ship and offered to pay him for information about the reefs and other obstacles here. The imperialists had landed more than once on Silver-flower Island and killed and looted, and many fishing boats had been rammed by their warships. The mere mention of these pirates made the fishermen fume with indignation. So when Old Water-root learned that Owen was charting a navigation channel for imperialist warships, he said there were reefs there, and 'shifted' Tiger Reef from the east to the west. . . ."

"So that's the explanation!" said Chu glancing at the survey area on the chart. "No wonder we couldn't find it. We've been on the wrong track."

"Owen was so pleased with what Old Water-root told him," Tao went on, "that he changed the name Tiger Reef to 'Owen Reef' and marked it on the chart. Then having taken a few soundings for the sake of appearances, he went back to collect his bonus."

"Where is this Tiger Reef exactly?" asked Chu.

"Here," said Chin Hua handing him a slip of paper.

He unfolded it and read: "Upper Mount, Lower Mount; and a shoulder-pole carries the two peaks of Cowshed Mountain."



"What does it mean?" he asked.

"This is the method the old fishermen worked out from their own experience to locate Tiger Reef. The point in the sea at which Upper Mount and Lower Mount both lie straight ahead while the two peaks of Cowshed Mountain form a straight line on the other side of the triangle—that's where Tiger Reef is located."

"It is the same as the intersection in surveying," said Hsiao.

"Really?" Chu said surprised.

"How's that? Now you should have confidence in the fisherfolk."

"Yes, but. . ."

"But may the cross bearing not exactly mark the location of Tiger Reef?" Hsiao saw what was in his mind and, imitating his tone, said, "Seeing is believing. It is only when we get to the spot that we can verify the accuracy of their method."

"Well," boomed Chu. "Comrades, we've only two days left and a storm's blowing up. We must race the storm."

The *Vanguard* changed course for the new survey area and after two hours approached the place where Old Water-root had told them Tiger Reef lay. Dark clouds were gathering in the sky; big waves threw up white foam.

"Ding, ding . . ." Chu sounded the alert. The crew braced themselves for battle.

"Comrade Chin Hua, you take command," beseeched Chu.

"No, Skipper, that's your job. I'll handle the depth sounder."

The ship advanced steadily. Chu kept his eyes fixed on the sharp silhouettes of Upper Mount and Lower Mount on the distant coast until they were in line, then he turned right to look at Cowshed Mountain. Keeping a close grip on the emergency brake, he was ready to stop the ship at any moment. He still had his doubts, however, regarding the accuracy of this method which was based solely on experience instead of on measurements by scientific instruments.

Like a scout striking deep into enemy territory, the *Vanguard* moved cautiously but confidently forward. The rhythmic chatter of the depth sounder was accompanied by Chin Hua's clear voice stating, "Depth of water 21 metres, 19 metres, 20 metres, 17 metres . . . 5 metres. Halt!" As Chu put on the emergency brake, the crew cheered, "Found it! Found it!"

Chu remarked complacently to Hsiao, "Look, Upper Mount and Lower Mount are in line all right, but not the two peaks of Cowshed Mountain. We must go at least a thousand metres further for that."

Young Hsiao looked round and found that this was true.

"Of course," added Chu, "credit must go to the experienced fisherfolk, without whose help we wouldn't have fulfilled our task on schedule."

"Comrades," called Chin Hua, who had come down to the deck with the sounding lead in her hand, "this isn't a reef, it's a shipwreck."

Chu could not believe his ears and challenged, "What did you say?"

"A shipwreck," she repeated.

"How do you know?"

"Just look at the paint on this," she replied raising the lead. A small section of green paint was stuck in the grease on it. "What reef has paint on it? And look at the variation in depth." She again dropped the lead into the sea, then made the rope taut, and it showed exactly five metres. Then she took three steps forward to make another sounding, and this time the depth was seventeen metres. She commented, "Such a big difference within so short a distance can mean one thing only — a shipwreck."

Chu scratched his head murmuring, "Of all things! How could there be a shipwreck?"

"There is," said Tao. "Old Water-root told us that a warship passing along this course sank here after Owen's survey."

"That's right!" nodded Chu. "But, where is the hidden reef?"

"A thousand metres ahead," replied Chin Hua. Young Hsiao could not resist smiling at Chu.

Just then a huge wave broke over the *Vanguard*. The cups and ink-bottles on the table clattered to the floor. The storm had broken. The sky grew steadily darker. The sunbeams filtering through chinks in the black clouds flickered on the sombre, seething, hissing water.

"What now?" said Chu glancing at Chin Hua.

"Continue forward."

The *Vanguard* braved the storm onward towards the hidden reef.

"Depth of water 20 metres, 21 metres, 17 metres, 10.5 metres, 6 metres, 3 metres. . . ."

With a shout Chu applied the brake. "Good!"

"Go a little further," urged Chin Hua. "This isn't the peak of the reef."

"Isn't that too risky?" asked Chu dubiously.

"Don't worry. The tide is flowing," she reassured him. "You can't catch a tiger cub unless you dare to go into the tiger's lair. We must get the exact location of the reef."

"Depth of water 2.9 metres, 2.6 metres, 2.4 metres. . . ."

The whole crew cheered.

"Get ready, measure the position!" cried Chin Hua. Young Tao and Hsiao quickly reported the position angles, which Chu recorded on the chart. Then he looked out of the window at Cowshed Mountain and, sure enough, its two peaks were in line. He shouted exultantly, "Got it! The exact location of the hidden reef!"

The crew jumped for joy.

Tao cried, "This has been a really fruitful trip, we've found the hidden reef and a shipwreck as well!"

"I've found another 'hidden reef,'" announced Chu bluntly.

"Where?" asked the other in astonishment.

"In here," said Chu tapping his forehead. "I'm from a worker's family, I was tempered in the Cultural Revolution, I've made a fairly good showing as a surveyor and mastered all these modern instruments. . . . I thought that, with all this, I could never go wrong. All I needed was to work harder. But now I realize. . . ."

Impressed by Chu's self-critical attitude, Chin Hua made up her mind to learn from his revolutionary spirit. Speaking earnestly, she said, "What Comrade Chu says is very significant. It has taught me a lesson.

Because we're living in a class society, our skipper isn't the only one with a 'hidden reef' in his head—each one of us may have one, if not now, maybe it will appear tomorrow. Maybe in a different form, or maybe we haven't spotted it yet."

Chu nodded, "This trip has brought home to me that, to make a good job of finding hidden reefs, we surveyors must not only study hard but must first find the 'hidden reefs' in our own thinking."

The crew voiced approval. And Young Hsiao exclaimed:

"Well said. Spoken like a real poet, Skipper. . . ."

Chu cut him short, "Young Hsiao!"

"What?" questioned the youngster.

"I'll write an article criticizing the concept of heroes making history for the next issue of our wall newspaper. The topic will be. . . ." Chu thought deeply for a few seconds before announcing, "Hidden Reef."

"Really?"

"That's right!"

Chin Hua showed her excitement as she called, "Ready! Full speed ahead!"

The *Vanguard* ploughed through the waves, advancing rapidly in the teeth of the storm.

Illustrated by Chen Yu-hsien

Morning Sun

Shih Han-fu

I was on my way to Sea Island Farm, where I had been asked to enroll people to train as teachers. When I left, a leading comrade had once again asked, "Do you think that as a woman you can manage on your own?"

I thought, you asked me to do it, I accepted the task, and then you worry about this or that. You treat us women as you would kites — afraid they won't fly high enough, and at the same time afraid the string may snap, so you let it out first and then pull it in. However, I felt sure of myself, and urged, "You just get the truck ready; I'll guarantee to bring back a batch of live-wire teachers for you!"

But in spite of my big talk I frankly didn't feel so sure after I got on that truck. I'd never been on a farm, and wouldn't know my way about one. But the moment I alighted from the truck, I was fascinated! Before me was an endless expanse of green fields of young wheat. A long shining river flowed away to

the distant horizon. There were scattered blocks of grey brick apartment houses roofed with red tiles. But where was the farm headquarters? There was no one around from whom I could inquire.

A buffalo cart eventually came lumbering along the road, its driver, wearing a woollen army cap with ear-flaps dangling and flourishing a whip so that its crack repeatedly rang out. I'd heard say that an old experienced cart driver knows much more than where the farm headquarters is, and is familiar with every twist and turn in the road around the village. I was happy thinking I'd solved my problem when a sharp "gee-up" startled me. The cart driver was neither a grandpa nor a husky young man, but a slender young woman. City born and bred, I found this quite strange. The buffalo cart quickly passed me. Gripping my bulging bags, I ran after it calling, "Comrade, stop!" The young woman turned and shouted, "Whoa!" and the mouse-coloured buffalo shambled to a halt.

I took a couple of steps to the cart and asked, "Comrade, can you tell me where the Sea Island Farm headquarters is?"

The young woman looked me up and down and then answered cordially, "I'm heading for the farm office now. Hop on and I'll drive you there." With that, she put one of my string bags on the cart and then pulled me up. Cracking the whip and calling "gee-up," she started off again. As soon done as said! The cart wheels rolled along.

That was my first buffalo-cart ride. The cart jogged along, young wheat in the fields seeming to dance up and down, and elm trees both sides of the road slowly retreating into the distance. I saw the farm ahead,

pretty as a picture. The young woman, quick to notice my curiosity about everything, asked over her shoulder, "Is this your first trip to a farm?"

"Yes," I said excitedly. "It's a fine farm you've got."

"You haven't seen anything yet," she commented proudly. "When you have time, take a look at our farm machinery plant. We've got big tractors, and walking tractors — plenty of noise and life. Enough for you to feast your eyes on. Later you can look round our orchards, fish ponds, kilns, our. . . ." It seemed there was no end to this young woman's "our" this and "our" that.

"Your farm's really fine," I interrupted.

Becoming very serious, she answered, "Not fine enough yet!"

I was wondering what she had in mind when she pointed to the gravel road with her whip and explained, "This used to be a reedy marsh; now buffalo carts drive over it with ease. After we drained it, for a time it was still an alkali waste, but now we grow good grain and cotton and get bumper harvests. Just think, without the tens of thousands of reclamation workers battling bravely there would not be any of these good things!"

The young woman spoke very enthusiastically, opening her heart to me. It was like opening a picture album before my eyes, each page being more attractive than the one before, with the last picture — the myriad militant reclamation people at work, capping them all.

The young woman driver was slim and courageous-looking, open and warm-hearted. The fields were well

tended and their crops were good. They were the product of these good young people's labour. Right before me stood this remarkable young woman. I reminded myself, I haven't really yet begun my task enrolling teachers and the very first person I meet qualifies! It presented a happy prospect.

I deliberately turned the conversation on to herself. "It's not easy for a woman to drive a cart. How did you manage to learn?"

Her sunburnt face flushed like a pink cloud as she replied, "It's not hard. One or two trips and you master the job!" She handed me the whip and invited me to try, but I waved it away.

"I can't do it," I protested. "Suppose we all land up in the ditch!"

She laughed as she chided, "What are you scared of? I wasn't scared. They wouldn't even let me try to drive at first, but I insisted. . . ." She paused, then asked, "Are you from Shanghai?"

"Yes, I've come to recruit teachers."

"Oh," she said in a shrill voice, "I heard some time ago that you were coming. We've been expecting you a long time."

Of course I was glad to hear this, and said, "I planned to come sooner but we were kept very busy, and were delayed." Then I explained, "The method of enrollment is, recommendation by the masses, approval by the leaders, and examination by the school. If you like, you can register with your own work unit."

The buffalo ambled on, the young woman urging it ahead with her whip, so that the animal went a little faster and the rhythm of its hoofbeats on the gravel increased a little.

"Sign up to be a teacher!" she shouted. "Why, a team of eighteen water buffaloes couldn't drag me to do that!"

I was taken aback and asked, "Perhaps you are planning to go to a factory or mine?"

"Why should I go to a factory or a mine?" came her immediate challenge.

"Then where do you want to go?" I persisted.

"I don't want to go anywhere. I just want to stay here," she said, waving her whip and indicating the vast country.

I couldn't understand this, and said challengingly, "We're looking for first-class teachers, selecting the best."

This apparently amused her very much, for she roared with laughter. "You're selecting the best? You really don't need to do any selecting. There are plenty of fine young people all around you!"

Without any prompting she began reeling off her story, telling me first about the pacesetters on their stock farm, then about those keen on scientific farming, about their model store-keeper, their rice-transplanting experts — people she described as having "rubber backs" — the many "iron-shouldered" people who carried rice with poles across their shoulders. I whipped out my notebook to jot down the names of those who would qualify as the teachers I was looking for. With a professional air I interrupted her to ask, "Do any of them stammer?"

"No," she answered in a matter-of-fact tone.

"That's good!"

The young woman paused, then said, "And there's one more. Maybe she is the one you'll like best."

This was exciting news. "Oh, and what's her name?" I asked.

My companion did not answer at once, and kept me in suspense, as though about to display some treasure. Then finally she said simply, "Yeh Hung. The name signifies Red Leaf. You surely know the red leaf of the maple."

"A young woman?" I asked.

"Yes. Young like me, but better."

"Better than you?"

"That's how I feel. She can sing and play ping pong too. At school, she was in charge of the mass criticism column of the wall newspaper."

"An ideal teacher!" I exclaimed. "Are you from the same school?"

"No. We met one late night when we came to the farm."

There was a mysterious air about her when she mentioned this, but before I had time to ask for the details, she began her story —

"I was one of six Youth League members assigned to one work group, and we felt very happy to be here. That evening we got together to go for a stroll along the beach on the northern edge of the farm. We were talking at random: about the sea, the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, our school days, the future of the farm. . . . Then a girl student steered the conversation on to a serious note.

"She said that the past and the future being both far away from us, we should start everything right from under our foot and we should take this very north

beach as our own 'great northern wilderness'* — the soil was alkaline and wouldn't even grow a blade of grass. We all agreed with her. Some of us took handfuls of the earth and rubbed it through our fingers demonstrating that it was barren stuff. One young man reminded us that the Tachai people grew their crops on rocky hillslopes, and challenged why we couldn't grow cotton here!

"Another interrupted saying that he wanted to be like seed, scattered then rooted here, to blossom and bear fruit all his life. The sea water lashed the embankment, the wind ballooned our jackets. Our six hearts beat lustily and our voices rose like a poem: We were willing to dedicate our youth to the farm; nothing could change our will.

"During our long talk, we made a fine plan. We would plant a tree on that north beach as a symbol that we were taking root on the farm."

The cart swayed and rumbled on as the driver's story built a poem-like picture in my mind. She continued:

"That night, after the moon had climbed high and was shining through the window of our women's quarters on to the sleeping faces, I crept out of bed and tiptoed to the window of the room where the others stayed. Crr. . . crr. . . I called, imitating the call of a cricket. The six of us quickly gathered at the farm's nursery, the place appointed. There, with sharpened bamboo sticks already prepared, we dug out an evergreen and took it to the deserted north beach. After making a solemn pledge we dug a pit, those of

* A former wilderness in northeast China transformed by pioneers into a prosperous settlement with vast tracts of cultivated land.

us who had no stick to dig with using our hands. I thought the pit wasn't big enough, so I got a stick and thrust it into the earth with all my might. It snapped and I fell headlong. Of course we all had a laugh over that!

"Just then we heard a splash and looked to see what was happening. There was a shadow in the creek and it was moving towards us. We approached it, and found a teen-age girl, very much like one of us, with a pair of bright eyes twinkling out of a round face in the moonlight. A Chairman Mao badge shone on her faded yellow army uniform. Water dripped from her trouser legs, and she was breathing heavily.

"I went up to her, grasped her hand, and addressed her as 'comrade.' Her lips parted and she asked if we wouldn't let her join us.

"I glanced at her child-like face, her eyes filled with tears, and I did not know what to say. Suddenly she stood smartly to attention, head high and hand clenched, and announced that she was a Red Guard, Chairman Mao's Red Guard, and wanted to strike root on the farm too!

"Her resolution moved us, so that tears also came into our eyes. We welcomed her, saying we would be glad to have her join us. I took out my handkerchief, wiped the mud from her face, and softly asked her name.

"She took over my handkerchief to wipe her face, and replied that her name was Yeh Hung, the Red Leaf of the maple!

"I remarked that it was a very pretty name, and suggested that we all plant the evergreen together. Yeh Hung agreed, but asked if we would afterwards plant

another tree with her. She seemed very pleased with the prospect, as I assured her that we would.

"Scarcely had I said this, when Yeh Hung ran back to the tree nursery for a sapling, as we had done. After a while she returned unexpectedly carrying a square box which she placed gently on the ground. We gathered round and saw that the box contained a small tree, well rooted!

"In response to an inquiry she replied that it was a red maple. We were excited and gathered closer to see. . . .

"During the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, when we young people went to different parts of China exchanging experiences, Yeh Hung went on a long march to Nanniwan.* One day, as she stood on the slope of a hill gazing at the red maples, a grizzled old man came over and looked intently at her Red Guard armband. Moments passed before their eyes finally met. Yeh Hung smiled and the old man inquired what her name was. When she said it was Yeh Mei-li, he thought a while and then asked her if she liked red maples.

"The girl exclaimed that she liked the red maples very much, at which the old man suggested that she take the name Yeh Hung. She thought that would be fine and said that henceforth Yeh Hung would be her name.

"The two, who had never met before and were two generations apart in age, sat down on the hillside and

* Nanniwan is near Yenan. During the difficult years of the War of Resistance Against Japan, the 359th Brigade of the Eighth Route Army reclaimed the land there and launched a large-scale production campaign.



talked. Grandpa Chao, who watched over the forest in that area, told Yeh Hung about the changes which had taken place in Nanniwan. How in 1941 the Communist Party Central Committee and Chairman Mao issued the great call to provide ample food and clothing by using our own hands. How this loess highland, once overgrown with bramble, had become a beautiful, rich place, with forest after forest of scarlet-covered hills. . . . Yeh Hung in her turn told Grandpa Chao about the fierce struggle going on in her school, and then about the happy scene at Tien An Men Square in Peking when Chairman Mao received the Red Guards. . . . They parted with good wishes to each and went their several ways.

“When Yeh Hung was graduating from high school she wrote to Grandpa Chao about her wish to take root on a farm to make revolution, and Grandpa Chao answered by sending her a red maple sapling in the box, made by himself with great care. It had travelled a long distance, by rail and by boat, over hills and streams, and finally arrived at Sea Island Farm. On its journey, many people had admired the well-made box and because Yeh Hung liked singing, some of her friends thought it might contain a musical instrument.

“Yeh Hung now carefully handed over the precious sapling. I was happy and suggested that we plant it with the wish that our farm would live long like the evergreen tree, and grow red like the maple! Yeh Hung nodded and said that she wanted to make a pledge as we had done a moment before.

“And that was how it was! The secret of our tree planting had got out when we made our pledge, the wind had carried it to Yeh Hung’s ears. We all said

she should be a sharer in it. Her face was bright as she carefully brought the sapling over. Then after smoothing her hair and straightening her jacket, she raised her right arm resolutely. Her clear-spoken pledge, like a bugle call on a fine morning, or a drum beat in a valley, echoed through the star-canopied fields. . . .”

The water buffalo had been steadily slowing down as its driver told the story. The driver herself was deeply absorbed in happy reminiscences, and I thought the prospects for my teacher recruiting looked very bright indeed!

Pointing her whip in the direction of the forest, the young woman said, “Later, tree planting became popular on the farm. That was planted by the educated youth of our work group.”

I looked, and saw a fine holly grove, and beyond it the flames of red maples. I decided to recommend Yeh Hung especially as one of the new teachers, and I asked the driver, “When do you get off work? I’d like to talk with Yeh Hung.”

The young woman driver said, “Unfortunately you’ve just missed her. She went to Shanghai yesterday.”

I was surprised. “Does she go to Shanghai often?” I asked.

“No, she hasn’t been away from the farm for a long time. Last year when her younger sister was going to settle in the countryside in Heilungkiang Province and telegraphed asking her to see her off, she refused, despite our leaders’ urging her to go. We were digging a canal at the time, so she wrote her sister a letter of congratulation and encouragement and didn’t take any time off for the event.”

“Oh. Is this a slack time then?”

“No. We haven’t finished winnowing the wheat yet. Then there’s the winter compost, and after that we’ll start working right away again on the canal. And while we’re doing those jobs we shall also be criticizing revisionism and checking up on our style of work.”

I couldn’t imagine a girl like Yeh Hung going to Shanghai at such a busy time. I asked, “Did anything happen to necessitate her going there?”

“I don’t know. She left in such a rush, we all wondered why.”

The gravel road was flat, but the cart lurched back and forth, and my thoughts did the same: when would this girl Yeh Hung be back? Would she sign up to be a teacher?

After several days’ work mobilizing, registering, discussing and recommending, the list of teacher-candidates was finally agreed upon. I was delighted to see Yeh Hung’s name first on the list.

Then came the individual physical examination. On the day appointed, the farm clinic was more crowded than ever before. But none of the people there looked at all sick! On the other hand, all were sturdy, sun-tanned and in a happy mood — full of fun. Sitting there at a desk set up temporarily for the examination I felt I was going to be very busy. I gave out the examination forms and directed the candidates’ attention to particular points. After the examination was over, someone asked, “Does wax in the ear matter?” Others inquired, “When will the final list appear?” Most of the young people, however, just hurried back to their work.

One strapping young fellow carrying a rake called to some others still milling around, “Let’s get back to

work, chaps! Even those who go to teach will work right up to the last minute!" The call was effective and there was no further loitering around the clinic.

After all the prospective teachers had left, I noticed I still had a blank form in my hand. It was Yeh Hung's. I wondered if she had been notified of the physical examination. Then I thought perhaps she had gone off to Shanghai again. I left after telling Dr. Lu, who was in charge of the examination, that I was going to the farm headquarters and would be back soon.

Comrade Tsui, who was handling the teacher recruiting for the farm, saw me hurrying along and said, "I was just looking for you, Teacher Chang. Hasn't Comrade Yeh Hung turned up yet?"

"What's happened?" I asked.

"She refuses to enroll. I phoned to ask her again, but she said definitely, no."

"Her name was on the registration list," I said somewhat bewildered. "Why didn't she show up for the physical examination?"

"Oh, she didn't put her own name down," said Tsui. "She was in Shanghai, so the people here on the farm recommended her and the leaders approved. We put her name down for her."

"So that's what happened. But didn't the farm leaders impress on Yeh Hung the importance of this work?" I persisted.

"Ha!" exclaimed Old Tsui. "I find it difficult to explain, you'd better talk with Yeh Hung herself."

Old Tsui went to the window, opened it and, pointing outside, said, "Their work group is digging the canal. Follow this river past the row of houses where the cotton gin mill is and you'll find the canal under con-

struction. She'll be there, among the many carrying earth."

I followed Old Tsui's directions till I came to the canal, cutting straight as an arrow through a vast wheat field. There were indeed many people there. The singing of a girl rang out. Her song ended, the people clapped. "More!" shouted a young fellow. His trousers rolled high over his bare feet, he stood in the ditch, a muddy spade in his hand.

"More! More!" echoed many others.

I saw a girl wave as she approached me with her baskets full of earth, her carrying-pole bent into a half-moon under the load. But her back was straight and her stride long. She seemed to fly towards me. I recalled how tired I had often been after holding classes, and often thought I would collapse. I also thought about the debates I had with men comrades as to whether women really were as strong as men. I admired this young woman and felt ashamed of my own weakness. When she was about to pass me I spoke to her and asked if she could find Comrade Yeh Hung for me. Lifting her head and looking directly at me and obviously well informed, she said, "Have you come to recruit teachers?"

"Yes," I replied.

She smiled, "Just look at what we're doing! Who do you think has time to talk with you about that now?"

What could I say? Since I was eager to find Yeh Hung, I said, "Your Comrade Yeh Hung doesn't seem to realize how important teaching is, so I came to talk with her."

The girl looked at me in wonder, and exclaimed, "Eh? Just you say how important this work is!"

This girl doesn't seem to realize the importance of teacher recruiting either, I thought. Her group only grasps production and doesn't pay attention to the work of enlisting teachers. In order to further my quest for Yeh Hung, I gave this girl a little talk on the importance of teaching, the future of the motherland, the heavy responsibility of the era we are living in, the vital link teaching is in both internal and international struggles, and so on. Unexpectedly my words sparked off an argument, and without waiting for me to finish, she opened her eyes wide and pointed to her shoulder-pole, saying, "You seem to think that teaching is the only significant work in the world. Do you mean to say that I don't carry any responsibility for the motherland's future and the work of the era, the Chinese and world revolution, on my shoulders?"

The girl saw I had no reply to that, and went on, "Of course teaching is important, and it's natural for you to favour your own profession. I understand that you want to recruit a large number of the best youth as teachers. We should look at the over-all situation. When you mobilize for your profession you should think of the farm and not place your work on too high a plane. Moreover, in our country there are as many vocations as there are days in the year. Can you say any of them are not important?"

She gazed at me, her eyes blazing. As I had nothing to say, she picked up her load and started off again. "The educational front needs us, I know," said she, "but the agricultural front needs us more. Yeh Hung is unwilling to leave the farm. Don't come looking for

her any more!" And with that the girl hurried off with her load.

I hadn't expected this girl, who was so full of song and laughter, to embarrass me so much with a load of words. I realized I'd have to weigh my words more carefully when I talked with Yeh Hung.

Just then a young fellow also carrying a load of earth shouted, "Yeh Hung! Didn't you hear me ask you for another song? Why didn't you sing?"

She answered teasingly, "If you can catch up with me, I will." So the girl I'd just been talking to was Yeh Hung!

As the lad was only a few steps behind he speeded up and the people around roared with laughter. Then I noticed that the girl was wearing army uniform, her hair braids were held tight with rubber bands. She exactly fitted the description given by the young woman cart driver! Her bent carrying-pole and firm footsteps, her whole body seemed in rhythm with the earth beneath her. So this was Yeh Hung! I began to see the deep roots she had taken on that farm, in the heart of the countryside.

I stood there for a while, then remembered I'd told Dr. Lu I'd soon be back at the clinic. As I hurried back along the river side, I heard the broadcast announcer's voice: ". . . Comrade Yeh Hung fulfils the tasks of a Youth League member. She worked night and day in the last compost collection drive, and last night when she went with her squad to collect duckweed at Hsiangchien Dock two *li* away, she twisted her back but insisted on continuing with the work. They had no boat so they tied the duckweed into a

big bundle and pulled it along up the river. They all came back singing. . . . This morning Comrade Yeh Hung and her team begin a new battle. . . .”

The announcer's lively voice sounded quite the opposite to how my knees felt, for they were stiff and I could only move them mechanically. Yeh Hung's lyrical singing seemed to resound through the green fields under the bright sky.

Checking up the results of the examination, we found that more young people had passed the tests than we needed. It was necessary to sift through the names again and make a further selection. The time passed quickly, and soon the teacher enrollment was successfully concluded and I was to leave the farm next day.

That night it rained. The patter on my window-pane was accentuated by the silence around me, for I was the only guest at the women's hostel that night. Putting aside the thermos bottle and cups on the desk, I took out the application forms, the results of the political and physical examinations and my notebook containing the final list of names and arranged them in careful order on the desk. Yeh Hung's name still occupied the first place. I could not forget her smiling face and ringing voice. I was sorry that she was losing this opportunity, but I would have to strike her name off the list!

The wind grew fiercer and the rain pelted down. The window frame rattled. I looked out but all I could see was a vast murky expanse. Though I had only been at the farm a few days I found myself worrying about how the tender young wheat sprouts were faring in the storm.

Suddenly, I saw a bounding ball of light in the distance. It seemed very bright in the surrounding blackness, and as I gazed at it I saw the outline of a figure carrying a flashlight. The figure was coming towards my window. Then it turned, disappeared from sight, and I heard several raps on my door. I opened it, to face a girl soaked through despite the oilcloth umbrella she carried. Raindrops sparkled on her tanned face; water dripped from her faded yellow army jacket and trouser legs. Her bare feet shone with a coat of slick mud.

“Comrade Yeh Hung!” I exclaimed, grasping her icy hand, and urged her indoors. Once inside she bent down to wring the water from her trouser legs. I poured a basin of hot water for her to wash her feet, and thanking me, she pulled a pair of cloth shoes from her pocket and put them on. I got a blue jacket from my string bag and offered it to her, making the obvious remark, “Such a heavy rain!”

“It doesn't matter, even if it rains cats and dogs. The wheat sprouts thrive in wind and rain,” said Yeh Hung, taking the jacket but not putting it on. I wondered if Yeh Hung was just passing by and dropped in, or if she had come for some special reason. But it was she who spoke first, asking with an open smile, “Teacher Chang, is it too late for people to sign up?”

The question puzzled me. Had she changed her mind and regretted her decision now that the enrollment was over and she had missed her chance? If that was so, how could I break the heart of this fine young woman by refusing her? After searching my mind for an answer, I closed the notebook with her name crossed out and put it aside. When I thought I'd found the

right words, I said, "Yeh Hung, I think there should be a chance for such a young woman as you to transfer. . . ."

But before I could finish, she suddenly straightened up and moved towards the door. She turned to look back, her eyes flashing fire, and said, "Teacher Chang, do you really think I'd consider a transfer? Is this the way you mobilize students to settle in the countryside? Is this the way you're going to train future teachers to think and act?"

There was a fury of wind and rain outside, but inside the room it was very still. My heart pounded. Then unexpectedly Yeh Hung reached for the thermos and poured me a cup of water. Asking me to be seated, she sat down close beside me, saying, "Teacher Chang, I know I'm too wrought up, but I really didn't expect to find such thinking in you. You know, I've been very irritable recently. Certain people have been thinking that the most promising young people should be transferred out, and that the less promising should be left on the farm. Have you thought what will happen if this takes place? Can our farm keep improving its grain and cotton harvests? No! That's not the way it's going to be, Teacher Chang. You've been here for a few days and have become somewhat acquainted with the young folk here. Do you think it will be like that?"

I took a sip of the hot water, thinking that Yeh Hung's words were no less scalding to my ears. I promptly said, "You're right!"

"But there are those who look down on farming. Sometimes I think that if such people were to have to go without food for about a week their attitude might

change. Don't you agree, that when they got real hungry they would say there's nothing the matter with farming after all?" I couldn't help laughing, and Yeh Hung had to laugh too.

"But there are a lot of stories about work in the countryside. Once when I went to the hospital I met an acquaintance who surprised me by asking how I could tolerate staying on the farm. I thought the question odd, for I intended to make my life on this farm, and felt I'd like to ask him what he thought he was doing on this earth anyway. People live on the earth, but some want to leave it. Some exist bodily under socialism, but their minds are stuffed with a lot of old rubbish. We young people want to wash the sludge away, conquer it!"

Yeh Hung's words gave me food for thought. Looking into her steady, calm face, I was thinking, "Really a fine new generation!"

The rain, driven by the wind, was coming in slanting sheets. I wanted to talk longer with her, so I suggested she stay overnight and sleep on the extra bed in my room. She could leave early the next day. But she said she had something to do for her work unit. She took off her shoes, replaced them in her pocket, rolled up her trouser legs, opened her umbrella and switched on her flashlight. "Goodbye," she said, disappearing into the storm. Watching the gleam of her flashlight and shadowy figure, I seemed to see the wheat sprouts shooting up. I also thought of the golden wheat in the ear, growing even now in that storm, later to weather frost and snow. . . .

I couldn't drop off to sleep for a long time but, tossing and turning, did a lot of thinking — about Yeh Hung

coming through the mud and going out in the rain. Had she really come to register? The rain finally abated and the wind died down, and when I opened my eyes it was already dawn.

I walked into the sun's early rays to the bus stop. Suddenly there was the crack of a whip, accompanied by a loud "gee-up!" and a buffalo cart was coming briskly down the road. It must be that slim, courageous young woman driver again, I thought. She greeted me from a distance, "Get on, Teacher Chang!"

I signalled that I didn't want to, saying, "I'll walk today."

But the cart had now stopped beside me and the young woman driver said, "Hop on, I've got something more to tell you."

That persuaded me. As soon as I was on the cart, the young woman asked, "Did Yeh Hung go to your place to register last night?"

"Yes! Or it seemed she did. But maybe not. I'm not sure."

"Right! You're not sure! Yeh Hung went to introduce one of her best friends, Miao Ching, as a prospective teacher."

"She came on behalf of Miao Ching? Why didn't Miao Ching come herself?"

The young woman driver didn't answer, but opened a khaki bag with the words "Serve the people" embroidered on it, took out a letter and said, "Read this and you'll understand."

She handed the letter to me, carefully avoiding it blowing away, and not loosening her grip on it until I had taken a firm hold. As I unfolded the letter I noticed it was written in a firm hand. It said:

Comrade Miao Ching,

Your phone call came too late. The teacher enrollment is over. I know how you feel about being a people's teacher. Your father was a fine teacher at Nanniwan, and dedicated his life for the Party's cause on the educational front. You made up your mind to succeed your father and are eager to be a teacher for the people too! This wish is praiseworthy. But some days ago I learned that your father was not only a fine people's teacher, he was also a glorious fighter in the battle to open up wasteland at Nanniwan. You are a young person with high aims, but I think we shouldn't be successors on the basis of profession. We should be successors on the basis of the revolutionary spirit your father displayed at Nanniwan!

I hear that your study class is extended. I wish you ever greater achievement!

The letter was unsigned except for the red pencil drawing of a maple leaf.

I read and re-read the letter, trying to absorb its contents. The young woman, seeing me so occupied with the letter, said, "It's not just an ordinary letter between best friends; it shows the red heart of our educated youth taking root in the countryside."

There was a pause before the young woman went on. "Last time you asked me why Yeh Hung went to Shanghai so suddenly. At that time I didn't know myself." She refolded the letter and put it back in the bag, then began talking about Yeh Hung's trip to Shanghai.

"The maple sapling we planted is growing well on that north beach, and Yeh Hung, educated through the farm organizations and trained in the three great revolutionary movements of class struggle, the struggle for production and scientific experiment, has grown rapidly too. She joined the Youth League not long afterwards, and on that same day had a picture taken beside the sapling. She sent a print to Grandpa Chao at Nanniwan, and he replied with a letter of encouragement.

"One day Yeh Hung received a letter from the Shanghai airport. It was from Grandpa Chao, who was taking saplings to Shanghai by plane, a thing Yeh Hung never dreamed of. She left the farm immediately and went to the Shanghai airport. But the comrade there told her that Grandpa Chao had left after finishing his business, and had left a note for Yeh Hung. She glanced at the note and, learning that Grandpa Chao had gone to visit the Red Flag Tree Nursery in the Shanghai suburbs, went there too.

"As she approached the nursery, with its rich green foliage, she saw an elderly man with grizzled hair and beard. He was straight of carriage, and was caressing the leaves. She then watched him pick up a handful of soil and examine it carefully. It was Grandpa Chao all right! Yeh Hung called him by name and ran towards him. As soon as Grandpa Chao heard the familiar voice of Yeh Hung he strode forward to greet her. Two pairs of calloused hands clasped tightly.

"Grandpa Chao's eyes narrowed in a smile as he commented that Yeh Hung had grown taller and stronger. He said he wouldn't have recognized her if she hadn't

sent him the photograph of herself taken beside the maple sapling.

"Then Yeh Hung complained to him of neglecting to send her a photograph of himself, saying that the comrades in her work group wanted to see what he looked like.

"Grandpa Chao opened his sheepskin coat and drew a diary from the pocket of his white tunic. In the diary was a red paper wrapper, and inside the wrapper a photograph. It showed a robust man with a pick. At the top of the photo were Chairman Mao's words about procuring ample food and clothing by using one's own hands. The picture was yellow with age but, kept in the diary, it was still glossy and in good condition.

"Grandpa Chao held the photograph in both hands and told Yeh Hung that he had in fact brought a photograph. He said it was taken thirty years before on the slopes of Nanniwan, that he had treasured it all those years and was now giving it to Yeh Hung.

"Yeh Hung took it excitedly, and looked at it again and again. Suddenly she asked Grandpa Chao if everyone there at that time took part in opening up wasteland. When Grandpa Chao nodded 'yes' Yeh Hung asked if that included the teachers.

"Grandpa Chao hesitated for a moment before inquiring why she asked that particular question. Her reply was that the father of one of her best friends was a teacher at Nanniwan at that time. He later sacrificed his life.

"It was quiet in the tree nursery, and Grandpa Chao, his hands behind his back, took several slow steps, as if in contemplation. Then he stopped and looked at the rows of evergreens, and in measured, drawn-out

words, said, 'He must have been an excellent fighter in the battle to open up the wasteland.'

"Then Grandpa Chao turned and, placing an arm across Yeh Hung's shoulder, reminded her calmly about that autumn when she was at Nanniwan and saw the scarlet maples on the hillsides and the golden millet in the valley. Hadn't it all made her feel very happy? He asked her if she realized how it had all come to be. Then, answering the question, he said that the crimson maple leaves were the colour of the martyrs' blood, and the golden millet was fattened by the sweat of the working people.

"Grandpa Chao's words rang true as a bell in Yeh Hung's ears. She took the photograph and gazed at it, speechless for some time. Then she said that that year Grandpa Chao gave her the name 'Yeh Hung,' and now today he had given her the precious picture of himself, taken at Nanniwan. She said she must carry on the Nanniwan spirit and spread it among the people on the farm! . . ."

The young woman driver recounting all this as the cart travelled along was so moved that she couldn't continue. I also felt choked with emotion as I asked, "Has Grandpa Chao returned to Nanniwan?"

"No," answered the young woman happily. "When Yeh Hung came back she said she had asked Grandpa Chao if he would spend a few days on our farm after his Shanghai trip and tell us all about Nanniwan. The farm headquarters has arranged for him to pay us a visit."

"Lucky you!" I said.

"You needn't tell me," she affirmed. "Only then did I understand why Yeh Hung had gone off to Shanghai so abruptly. You see what kind of an 'official' I am!"

I thought she was joking and said, "How can a cart driver talk about being an 'official'!" We both laughed.

Just then a tractor approached and the driver shouted, "Deputy Company Commander, where are you off to so early in the morning?"

The young woman waved her whip and said, "Miao Ching's study class is extended, so I'm taking more clothing to them!" The tractor passed by quickly, but the words kept throbbing in my ears. So this young woman driving the cart was really an "official"!

The fields of green wheat followed one after another and the evergreens stretched right to the horizon. I had a vision of the red maples too. I felt that here were not just Yeh Hung, or the young woman cart driver, deputy company commander, but a whole steadily maturing generation. It was not just a farm I had been visiting, but another Nanniwan opening up before my eyes.

Again I thought: What has a person like myself to contribute to this generation of Yeh Hungs? What has a person like me to do to serve my country? How can I serve thousands of "Nanniwans"?

Just then the sun rose in splendour in the east, reddening half the sky. I looked back for another view of the farm, where I had spent the past few days. Group after group of young men and women were on their way to the fields with their farm tools on their shoulders. Drenched in the morning sunlight, they marched into the future. What a glorious sunrise that was! What a fine new generation of young people!

Illustrated by Chen Yu-hsien

Pupil Excels Master

Sheng Hua-hai

THE yearly technical examination was scheduled for that morning, and every young lass and lad in the workshop was excited and in high spirits. They had arrived early and already finished pasting up the several dozen slogans written on red and green paper, and hanging up the red streamer prepared the night before. The workshop was decorated as for a festival. The youngsters started to oil the lathes and get their tools ready for the examination. Peals of merry laughter and shouts of mutual encouragement rang through the workshop from time to time.

The young apprentice Yang Chun-hsia's master, Ho Chin-sheng, was especially happy to see all this activity, for it was his pupil, the Youth League branch secretary, who had initiated it. Yang Chun-hsia, though still young, was maturing very quickly.

As Ho Chin-sheng was absorbed in these happy thoughts, someone tugged at his sleeve and said, "Old Ho, now's the time for a famous master's skilled apprentice to show what she can do!"

Old Ho was about to tone down that compliment when he looked over his shoulder and saw a neatly dressed elderly man enter the workshop. It was Master Chen!

Ho Chin-sheng did not stop to answer, but immediately stepped forward to greet the new arrival.

His manner of greeting drew the attention of everyone around, and they clustered nearer. "Good morning, Master Chen!" exclaimed Yang Chun-hsia in a warm voice.

Chen Fu-kang, retired for four years, had formerly been Ho Chin-sheng's master. With unflagging revolutionary spirit, he often dropped in at the workshop, where he would stand at a lathe or vise and point out anything wrong. He was always to be found, sleeves rolled up, beside the other workers, tackling key problems in work, and making innovations. When the workshop leaders asked him to take a rest, he invariably answered with a wave of his hand, "I can't sit still at home. My ears are accustomed to the rhythm of machines and when I don't hear it I feel uncomfortable."

A strong desire to see the progress made by the young people had brought Master Chen to the factory that day. He especially wanted to test Chun-hsia, the apprentice of his apprentice. The first meeting of Chen Fu-kang and Yang Chun-hsia makes quite an interesting story. Yang Chun-hsia was doing some private study of drawing at home one night — only three days in fact after entering the Chunlei Electric Meter Plant. Her younger brother had taken her pair of compasses to a schoolmate's home, and now she needed them. She looked up, saw a light in the window across the street, suddenly decided to borrow the compasses of her for-

mer classmate Chen Hsiao-hung and hurried across to her house.

Without waiting for an answer to her own call, she pushed open the door. There was only an aged worker in the room. He was busy hanging up a plastic curtain. It was Chen Hsiao-hung's grandfather, Chen Fu-kang. Chun-hsia hesitated for a moment, then explained, "I want to see Hsiao-hung."

"She hasn't come home yet from her factory. Is there anything I can do for you?"

"Grandad Chen," Chun-hsia replied, "I'd like to borrow her compasses."

"I have a pair, and as soon as I get this wire straightened out I'll get them for you."

Chun-hsia looked at the tangled wire in the old worker's hands and wondered how he was ever going to straighten it out. Chen Fu-kang got a stick and said to her, "Stand in the doorway, place this stick on the door-frame and hold it there firmly." Chun-hsia was still puzzling when she found the stick had been placed in her hand. Chen Fu-kang, holding the two ends of the tangled wire, drew it energetically backwards and forwards. The wire was straightened in no time! Chun-hsia could not suppress a smile. She had not yet got the compasses, but she had learned something very useful!

After hanging up the curtain, Chen Fu-kang pulled a small wooden box from under his bed. Taking the compasses out he said, "There you are! What are you drawing?"

Compasses in her hand, Chun-hsia answered, "I'm doing some mechanical drawing."

"Oh, I'd like very much to see it!" said Chen Fu-kang. Then glancing at his watch he said, "It's not late. I'll go with you."

When they arrived at her home, the grateful Chun-hsia poured Chen Fu-kang a cup of tea and seriously set to work on the drawing. Chen Fu-kang got a surprise as he thumbed through her book of mimeographed mechanical drawings and saw its cover inscribed: "Chunlei Electric Meter Plant Spare-time Red-and-Expert School." He had not had time to go to the factory recently because of numerous neighbourhood meetings, and had no idea that the girl had been assigned there. On inquiring, he learned that her master was his own former apprentice, Ho Chin-sheng. The old man was overjoyed, and reflected that this girl who studied so conscientiously at home was indeed very promising. Young and filled with revolutionary vigor, she should be well trained. From then on, Chen Fu-kang often went to her home to help her with problems.

Now, Yang Chun-hsia was shouting her warm greeting: "Good morning, Master Chen!" She then said, "We League members and other young people want you to examine us!" A few of the youngsters were getting nervous, fearful that Master Chen might pose difficult questions. One young fellow eyed Chen Fu-kang's neat suit and teased him, "You're dressed up like it was a holiday, Master Chen!"

"Imp! Isn't the workshop decorated like it was a holiday? Better watch out! Pretty soon I'll be asking you a lot of questions. Just see how impish you'll be then!"

Chen Fu-kang's remark made everyone laugh, and Yang Chun-hsia clapped her hands in approval crying, "Welcome! Welcome!"

The starting bell interrupted the laughter, and the comrades of the technical examination group said the test would begin straightaway. The young people each went to his own lathe, and the test was on.

Chen Fu-kang, Ho Chin-sheng and comrades of the examination group stood beside Yang Chun-hsia's lathe. As Ho Chin-sheng watched his apprentice calmly and skilfully operate the lathe and successfully turn out the product specified in the examination, he felt very happy that this young worker was shooting up like a sapling.

Besppectacled Chen Fu-kang asked his former apprentice a very pointed question: "What do you think of her performance, Chin-sheng?"

Ho Chin-sheng smiled with satisfaction and nodded approval. But when he saw this old master worker adjust his glasses and his eyebrows twitch, he knew that something more was involved. He was not surprised when his old master proceeded to give this apprentice of his a test.

"Chun-hsia, turn off your machine!" said Chen Fu-kang. Chun-hsia calmly obeyed this instruction.

"Give me the hammer," said Chen Fu-kang, taking the hammer from the girl. "Why did you run the lathe so fast just now?" he questioned.

Yang Chun-hsia thought a while before replying. "Because the diameter of the piece is small."

Chen Fu-kang said after a pause, "Why do you study technique in the running of your machine?"

"To build the socialist motherland and support the world revolution!"

Ho Chin-sheng gave a sigh of relief, thinking: Don't worry, Master! Chun-hsia is a fine young person, a lot better than I was at her age! But Young Chun-hsia thought differently from Ho. She thought, Master Chen is well known for his conscientiousness in doing things. He makes strict demands on people. A few questions would not be the end of it, and this is a rare chance to learn. She waited wide-eyed for him to go on.

Chen Fu-kang, his eyes on the examination piece, nodded slightly at Chun-hsia's answer. Then he struck the piece a blow with the hammer. Yang Chun-hsia had machined the part shiny and perfect. Those around her uttered an "Ah," as if they had been struck the blow. They were at a loss to understand Chen Fu-kang's action.

Ho Chin-sheng started to ask anxiously, "Master, you. . ."

Chen Fu-kang paid no attention to him but, pointing to the bend, said to Yang Chun-hsia, "An 'accident' has occurred and your product is bent. You must quickly straighten it!"

The youths who had finished their tests, hearing that Master Chen was testing their League branch secretary, gathered round. One astonished youth asked, "And to straighten it I suppose you should hit it with a hammer?"

"No micrometer is to be used, and the error should not exceed a hair's breadth." Chen Fu-kang eyed Yang Chun-hsia and repeated his question.

"Oh, my! It'll be pretty difficult to assess with just your eyes," the youth said.

Ho Chin-sheng's heart pounded and he regretted not having taught Chun-hsia what to do in such a case. This really called for a turner's high professional skill, and Chun-hsia. . . . He stepped behind Chen Fu-kang and looked anxiously at the girl. The workshop was silent except for some hushed comments. All were in a cold sweat wondering what Chun-hsia would do.

Chun-hsia stared wide-eyed at the group. She coolly thought over the problem for a moment, set her mouth, concentrated her attention on the lathe and turned the tool-holder to a 90-degree angle. Everyone was closely watching the movements of her hands—everyone keyed up, waiting to see her hammer the piece back into shape. But she only turned the hammer over and fastened it in the tool-holder. She switched on the power and fed in the tool-holder, using the wooden handle of the hammer to mould the bent piece back into shape. When she withdrew the tool-holder the test piece came out straight.

Everyone was astonished. Why didn't Chun-hsia hammer it? The comrades looked at Chen Fu-kang who then asked Chun-hsia: "Why use that method?"

Chun-hsia knew what she was doing and replied, "This piece has so little surface, hammering it might ruin it."

Chen Fu-kang felt the piece with his fingers and asked in a rueful tone, "Then was it wrong to strike it?"

"No, Master Chen, you struck it in exactly the right place."

Chen Fu-kang took a step forward and measured the part with the micrometer. It was less than a hair's breadth out. He wondered, when did Chun-hsia learn this knack?

Those around expressed surprise but admitted it was a good method. The examination group measured it several times and declared it a hundred per cent. The youth who had cried "Oh, my" said, "It should be three hundred per cent!"

Chen Fu-kang looked at him and asked, "What do you mean, three hundred per cent?"

"Oral, written and practical added together make three hundred per cent," the youth announced.

Ho Chin-sheng took a deep breath, drew a handkerchief from his pocket and wiped the sweat from his brow. Chen Fu-kang looked over his shoulder and said, "What a sweat you're in. You're not being examined!"

"Master, it's a test for me too."

The words struck a responsive chord in Chen's heart and, recalling the time when he completed his apprenticeship in the old society, he smiled in response. He had also stood beside a lathe, but what chance had he of learning technique? He recalled the time when Ho Chin-sheng finished his apprenticeship, and how he had examined him. Since the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, these youths eagerly learned technique for the revolution, and what a happy occasion this was!

"Have you any other questions to put, Master Chen?"

"No," said Chen Fu-kang to Yang Chun-hsia, adjusting his spectacles.

But Ho Chin-sheng had a question which was bothering him: Where had Chun-hsia learned this way of restoring a bent part?

Chen Fu-kang, a man with rough hands, was a keen observer. He picked up a book from the tool box, revealing several gold-embossed words. He said to his

apprentice, "Chin-sheng, see how conscientiously Chun-hsia studies the works of Marx, Lenin and Chairman Mao! Now each generation is improving on the previous one. We should learn from these youngsters."

Ho Chin-sheng nodded and said, "Yes, I must do my best too."

Chen Fu-kang opened the book and noticed a lot of annotations in it. The book in one hand and his eyes on the young people around him, he was deeply moved, and many thoughts crowded his mind. Here, in this book, was the foundation of their growth, the beacon light in their march forward. . . .

The young fellow who had made sideline comments couldn't help asking, "Yang Chun-hsia, who taught you that clever knack?"

"Yes, who taught you?" Ho Chin-sheng also asked. "Master Chen taught me."

"Me?" asked Chen Fu-kang in amazement. "When did I ever teach you that?"

"Have you forgotten? When I went to your house to borrow a pair of compasses, you were hanging a plastic curtain. You straightened out the tangled wire by drawing it backwards and forwards over a stick. That's when you taught me."

"So that's how it is!" Chen Fu-kang had almost forgotten about the curtain-hanging incident. Ho Chin-sheng looked hard at Yang Chun-hsia, smiled and, holding out a packet of cigarettes to Chen Fu-kang, invited him, "Have one, Master Chen!"

Chen Fu-kang lit the cigarette and inhaled deeply, a contented look on his face, as he said, "She really puts her heart into it!"



Yang Chun-hsia shook her head and said, "It's just a first step on the road to becoming red and expert."

Standing between Ho Chin-sheng and Chen Fu-kang she smiled, her cheeks flushed. Ingenuous and lovely, her smile was like a blossom in spring.

Illustrated by Chen Yu-hsien

Re-examination

Huang Pei-chia

IT was the last morning of the year and the second-year students of a senior middle school were taking their physics examination. The atmosphere in the classroom was a bit tense but everyone was calm. Teacher Lu, who taught the physics course, was also in charge of this class. He walked up and down the aisles, satisfied at the way his students were answering the questions.

Suddenly the door was thrust open noisily and a tall student strode in. He was panting for breath and his square, honest-looking face was flushed. He appeared quite upset. The teacher frowned as he asked, "Why are you so late, Chiang Yung-kang?"

The late-comer, becoming still more upset, stammered, "Teacher Lu, I . . ." The other students looked up from their examination papers, astonished.

"Teacher Lu," repeated Chiang Yung-kang, "first let me take the examination, and I'll explain later. Do you agree?"

The teacher handed Chiang an examination form, but could not help wondering what had happened. Chiang had always been a conscientious and well-disciplined student. What made him late for the examination today? Why, during the last few days, had he disappeared as soon as class finished? The more Teacher Lu thought over the events of the previous few days, the greater his perplexity. He decided to keep Chiang back for a talk when the examination was over.

The bell rang. The students handed in their examination papers and left the classroom. Chiang Yung-kang frowned as he handed his paper to Teacher Lu and turned to leave the room. The teacher hurried to say, "Don't rush off, Chiang Yung-kang. I want to talk to you."

Chiang stopped, then said hesitantly, "I didn't review the lessons well, and on top of that I arrived late. It's all my fault. . . ."

Teacher Lu questioned anxiously, "What made you late?"

"Teacher Lu, I . . . I have some urgent things to do. I'll explain later. All right?" Chiang Yung-kang repeated, his face betraying anxiety. The teacher was even more puzzled, but thought it better to put off their talk since the student had urgent business to attend to.

Returning to his office, Teacher Lu opened Chiang Yung-kang's examination folder. He was very puzzled about the way he had dealt with the third question. The question was: "What is the working principle of the moving armature loudspeaker?" Chiang had not attempted to answer it at all but had made a detailed explanation of the method of setting up such a speaker. He had then crossed his answer out. Underlining the

words "working principle" he had drawn circles and inserted a conspicuous "?". Obviously he had thought the problem over earnestly.

Teacher Lu thought that Chiang Yung-kang's class work had been quite good. Like all the other students he had been given three days' notice. Most of them had done well. But what had happened to Chiang that he hadn't done as well as expected? The teacher recalled Chiang Yung-kang's first day at school.

Chiang Yung-kang had arrived early that morning accompanied by his father, a former poor peasant aged about fifty. As he was leaving, the old peasant had patted his son's head and said to him, "Our family has been illiterate for generations. You're the first to get the chance to wield a pen. You must never bring disgrace on us poor and lower-middle peasants."

Excited, Chiang Yung-kang had replied, "Studying socialist culture well is a task entrusted by our poor-peasant class; it is the people's hope. Don't worry, dad. You can assure the poor and lower-middle peasants of our village that I'll bring back a good report!"

Teacher Lu had always considered Chiang Yung-kang an honest student. He usually wore a blue cotton suit and looked rather countrified. Shy perhaps in the presence of others, he was not a good speaker. But as a platoon leader in his class, he was thoroughgoing in his work, and well respected by his classmates. He was eager to study, and when he met a problem he would grapple with it tenaciously. Teacher Lu compared him to a geological prospector determined to expose every hidden aspect of the treasure. Chiang Yung-kang had always been at the head of his class.

Teacher Lu recalled how the year before, when Chiang Yung-kang started senior middle school, he began studying English but could not keep up with the others. He had appointed a good English student, Ho Chih-hsueh, to coach him. Ho was very patient and Chiang studied hard. He would get up early every morning to review the new list of words and study the text. In his spare moments he would go and sit by the river with a small mirror in his hand watching and correcting the movements of his mouth in order to improve his pronunciation. Ho however thought that the going was too hard for Chiang and advised him to give up. "You're two years behind and it's practically impossible for you to catch up! Better drop it!"

Chiang Yung-kang jumped up protesting, "Drop the course? That would be like laying down a revolutionary responsibility. How can I do that? No matter how hard the going is, I'll conquer the 'formidable bastion'!"

When Ho Chih-hsueh saw Chiang's determination he said, "If you really won't drop it then you'll just have to memorize the new terms and master the grammar. If you can manage to translate that will be enough. Why should you go at this thing so hard? Is it because you want to become an interpreter?"

"We should keep the country in heart and the whole world in view, so we need to know a foreign language," Chiang Yung-kang replied. "There isn't much room for considering personal careers with the well-being of the world's three thousand million people to think about!"

Chiang's firmness made Ho change his mind. "All right then. As you're determined to learn, I'm determined to help you!" The two became inseparable

friends and in less than half a year Chiang Yung-kang had caught up with the others in the English class.

Thinking over these things, Teacher Lu found Chiang's behaviour during the previous few days very odd indeed. He would disappear as soon as class was over, and in class he lacked spirit, couldn't keep his eyes open and kept biting his lips. From time to time he knocked his head with his fist to keep alert enough to take in what was being said. He had never been like this before.

Teacher Lu again recalled what Chiang Yung-kang's father had said: "Our family has been illiterate for generations. You're the first to get the chance to wield a pen. You must never bring disgrace on us poor and lower-middle peasants." This big responsibility made the teacher more conscious of his own obligations, and he felt he must not on any account allow this poor peasant's son to lag behind. He should look into the matter and see what was really going wrong. He put down his pen and went to the boy students' dormitory. His students saw him coming and crowded round to greet him. Going directly to Chiang Yung-kang's room, he found no one there and asked, "Where has Chiang Yung-kang gone?"

"We don't know," replied one of the students. "He seems very busy these days, doesn't even take time to eat or sleep properly. It's eleven or twelve o'clock every night before he gets back. When we ask him where he's been, he just says, 'Something urgent.'"

Ho Chih-hsueh said, "It's probably the literacy class that keeps him so busy, preparing lessons and giving extra coaching. . . ."

Ho Chih-hsueh and Chiang Yung-kang had taken on the work of wiping out illiteracy in the Hsiangyang Production Brigade, and when Teacher Lu had notified the students that the physics exam would be held in three days, Ho said to Chiang, "We'll have to stop the literacy class temporarily while we prepare for the exam."

But Chiang could not be persuaded to agree to this, arguing, "Wiping out illiteracy is an important political task. How can we stop the class?"

"But Chairman Mao says the students' main task is to study," said Ho. "If we fail the exam, how'll we explain that?"

"True, our main task is to study, but it doesn't mean exams are the main task," retorted Chiang. "We should have a correct attitude towards examinations, and not set aside important work for them!"

This made Ho angry, and he replied, "Are you insinuating that my attitude towards exams is not correct? Is it right to neglect examinations and necessary preparations for them? Go to the literacy class if you like, but I'm not going!" With that he stalked out. Chiang Yung-kang couldn't stop him and carried on the literacy class himself.

When Ho Chih-hsueh mentioned the literacy class, most of Teacher Lu's doubts vanished. Still he wondered how the literacy class could take up so much of Chiang's time that it interfered with his eating and sleeping. Was there something else? He was aware that there were differences of opinion among the students regarding examinations, which reflected differences of attitude towards study and also gaps between

the students' thinking. And this should be solved at the "meeting to appraise teaching and learning" which was due to be held that afternoon.

When Teacher Lu entered the classroom with the register in his hand and the sheaf of examination papers under his arm, a quick glance around revealed everyone present except Chiang Yung-kang. He thought, absent again! Why hasn't he shown up for the meeting? He looked quite stern as he prepared to start the meeting.

There was the sound of the door being pushed open, and in rushed Chiang all in a sweat, and a black smudge on his nose. His face flushed as he glanced at Teacher Lu and announced, "I'm late again!"

"Take your seat!" said Teacher Lu. Then turning to the class, he continued, "Well, let's start. Today's meeting requires that everyone sums up experiences and lessons from an ideological point of view, by making a just evaluation of the usual teaching and learning in combination with the recent examination. I sincerely hope that you will criticize me and help me with your suggestions for improvement."

Silence prevailed over the room as the students thought over what they were going to say. Chiang was the first to stand up. In a subdued voice he said, "I did badly in the exam. I left out one question entirely. Besides that, I arrived late. I didn't study hard enough, didn't make strict enough demands on myself." Mumbled comments arose among his classmates, who were really surprised at his failure in the exam.

Teacher Lu took out Chiang's examination paper and calmly remarked, "That's right. You didn't do very well. You entirely left out one of the questions. . . ."

"Chiang Yung-kang is not to blame!" exclaimed a strange voice as two men entered the room. Everyone turned to look at the new-comers. They were a Hsiangyang Production Brigade leader, Comrade Chang, and a Hsiangtung Brigade leader, Comrade Li. Chang shook hands with Teacher Lu and said, "We owe a great deal to the help Chiang Yung-kang has given us, Teacher Lu!"

This created a stir in the classroom, all the students talking at once. Teacher Lu asked Chang to explain what it was all about, and he then recounted the following events.

Not long previously, the county Party committee had asked all production brigades in the area to set up a radio rediffusion system, with a speaker in every household. In order to comply, so that the poor and lower-middle peasants could directly hear the voice of the Party Central Committee and of Chairman Mao, the Hsiangyang Brigade had bought moving armature speakers. It planned to install them at once, but the brigade had not many electricians or others qualified for the job. Everyone was anxious to hear the broadcasts as soon as possible, and when Chiang Yung-kang learned of this during one of his daily trips to the brigade, he volunteered to help with the work. At first he thought he'd tell Teacher Lu about this, and get some of his classmates to take part in this important job. But then he remembered that the physics exam was soon taking place and dropped the idea. So on the three days, when the others were preparing for the examination, Chiang was setting up poles, stringing wire and installing loudspeakers, too busy to eat or sleep properly.

After saying this Chang took Teacher Lu's hand and said with great sincerity, "Thank you very much for training such a good successor for us poor and lower-middle peasants!"

The students gazed at Chiang Yung-kang in admiration, while Chiang blushed with embarrassment and murmured under his breath, "That's no excuse for not doing well in the exam. . . ."

Teacher Lu fetched a bench and asked the two brigade leaders to sit down. Then addressing the class he said, "Brigade Leader Chang's arrival here today has given increased meaning to our meeting. Let's first discuss the problem of correctly assessing Chiang Yung-kang's examination mark. How should he really be graded?"

The students chorused, "He should be graded 'excellent!'"

"Why do you think that?" was the teacher's next question. The room bubbled like a kettle of boiling water, the students all wanting to speak. They praised Chiang's actions from different angles—his aim in study, his attitude towards examinations, and his ideology.

When most of the students had made their contribution, and Teacher Lu was about to speak, Chiang rose to his feet and in a loud voice said, "I don't agree!" Silence fell as he continued, "Chairman Mao teaches us: **'Rational knowledge depends upon perceptual knowledge and perceptual knowledge remains to be developed into rational knowledge.'** I found I could set up the loudspeakers but I didn't understand the principle on which they worked. I had only a smattering of knowledge of that, and it was not enough for the heavy task



of building up the country and changing the objective world!"

Teacher Lu seemed to glimpse his meaning, and the tall youth before him appeared to grow in stature. A thousand thoughts crowded into his mind as he searched Chiang's square and honest-looking face. This son of a poor peasant, who said very little, carried the great wide world in his heart!

The room was quiet, the students thinking over what Chiang Yung-kang had said. Then in a lowered voice Chiang continued, "I wasn't prepared for the exam. Please let me take it again. . . ."

The Hsiangtung Brigade leader stood up to complete Chiang's explanation. "Teacher Lu, I'd like to say something. I came to the school today to ask Chiang Yung-kang to help us. Our speakers arrived on time and were to be set up before the new year, but with only one electrician we couldn't make it. We'd like to ask for Chiang Yung-kang's help. Can you put off his re-examination for a few days?"

Ho Chih-hsueh, who had remained silent throughout the meeting, was doing a lot of thinking. He was now the first on his feet and said, "Though I answered all the questions in today's physics exam, still it revealed the gap between Yung-kang's thinking and mine. I should have failed the exam. I ought to learn from Yung-kang. Let me install the speakers for the Hsiangtung Brigade — give me a chance to make up my exam results!"

At that all the students raised their hands and shouted one after another, "Let me go!"

Teacher Lu was delighted. He could hear the sound of his class marching forward in step. Very much

moved, he said, "Students, today's meeting has gone well. We've assessed both ideology and style, and the direction for the revolution in education. But there's still something lacking, that is, you haven't criticized me. This examination also reveals the gap between my thinking and that of you students. I didn't even know that Chiang Yung-kang had been installing speakers for the brigade during these past three days! My examination test only required you to write down theories and didn't lead you into practice to test out your live knowledge. I also have failed the exam!"

The students laughed heartily at what Teacher Lu said. Then he continued, "Concerning Chiang Yung-kang. He does his best to link book learning with practice, to serve the poor and lower-middle peasants. This kind of thinking should be graded as excellent, but we hope he will raise his theoretical understanding as well. I agree to a re-examination for him." He paused, then added, "But it's not only Chiang Yung-kang who needs it. We all do! Brigade Leader Li has brought us an 'examination form' that gives us all a chance to make up the shortcomings in our exam, including myself. Now we'll go in groups to every brigade in the commune and help set up the speakers, so that every poor and lower-middle peasant can hear the voice of the Party Central Committee and of Chairman Mao promptly. Everyone agree?"

"Good!" the students responded, and there was an uproar as they filed out of the classroom. The two brigade leaders shook Teacher Lu's hand again and again. Chiang Yung-kang and Ho Chih-hsueh ran out together ahead of the others. . . .

On New Year's day the Central People's Broadcasting Station put the song *The East Is Red* on the air. Over mountains and rivers, it speeded throughout the country, and into every household.

The school New Year holiday came and the classrooms were vacated. Only a few sports fans were seen playing ball on the sports field. Teacher Lu was busy finishing the correction of the examination papers. He rose from his desk, took a deep breath, and left the dormitory for a walk by the river. As he passed his classroom, he noticed the door was open and looked in. Two students were sitting there, one with his head buried in a book, busy writing something down. The other was assembling a moving armature loudspeaker. It was Chiang Yung-kang and Ho Chih-hsueh. The teacher asked as he entered the room, "Why haven't you gone home for the holiday?"

Chiang Yung-kang stood up and said, "I've been lagging behind in my studies these last few days, and I want to catch up."

Teacher Lu picked up the paper before him and read out the topic: "The Moving Armature Loudspeaker and Rural Radio Rediffusion." It outlined the purpose of setting up a radio rediffusion network in the countryside and gave a detailed account of the wiring of the system. It also stated the principle of the moving armature speaker and the method of its assembly, maintenance and repair. It also made some original suggestions by linking the classroom theoretical knowledge of physics with the experience gained from setting up loudspeakers for the production brigades.

"This is my re-examination paper, Teacher Lu," said Chiang Yung-kang. "I am sure there are some mistakes in it. Please read it and correct them!"

Teacher Lu, much moved, took the "examination paper" with both hands. This is no ordinary examination paper, he thought, but the outpouring of the flaming heart of a revolutionary youth!

Teacher Lu patted Chiang Yung-kang and Ho Chih-hsueh on their shoulders, saying, "You've been here all day, haven't you? You need some exercise to tone up your muscles. Let's go and join the ball game!" They left the room together.

Beside the door grew a neat row of pines, trunks pencil straight, their fresh green needles shining in the sun. They looked unusually luxuriant and sturdy.

Illustrated by Chen Yu-hsien

A Steel Worker's Assistant

Yu Ping-kun and Wu Sheng-hsi

*I*T was a morning in early spring, the sun rising like a large fiery ball cast a golden sheen over the land. The smokestacks of a steel plant stood like a stately, giant forest of trees. The neat rows of buildings, criss-cross pipes, overhead bridges and towering blast furnaces all caught the sun's rays.

Along the main roadway leading to the ladle construction group's workshop, near the blast furnace area, strode a rugged-looking youth, a khaki bag slung over his shoulder. His rapid and heavy footfalls sent the pebbles flying on the road before him. He was young worker Ma Chi-kuang whom the old secretary of the plant's Party committee had the previous day asked to take over the responsibility of deputy-head of the ladle construction group. Ma was about to start on that task.

The job of the group was to keep the blast furnace supplied with ladles. The one they used was shaped like an iron cauldron twice the height of a man and three metres in diameter. The outer casing was of steel

and the inside lining was made up of 3,000 firebricks. Its capacity was 100 tons of molten metal. But it had a big drawback, the firebricks were very brittle, easily cracking and chipping, so that a lining didn't last long. This problem was constantly bothering the group.

Ma Chi-kuang hurried to the group's office and inquired of someone there, "Is Master Hsu Lien-shan in, comrade?" Stepping inside, Ma saw that the man had a heavy stubble of beard on his chin, and recognized him. "Oh, you're Master Hsu," he said. "I'm Ma Chi-kuang, come to be your assistant."

Master Hsu thought to himself, heavens! Is this my assistant? Scarcely dry behind the ears. He remembered what the old Party secretary had said to him the previous evening, "I've found a good assistant for you, Old Hsu. His name is Ma Chi-kuang. I hope you'll train him well." Then he had added, "As group leader you'll need to pay close attention to unity. Can I rely on you to do that?"

Hsu had laughed heartily when he replied to the Party secretary, "That will be no problem, Comrade Secretary. Unity's one of my strong points! The whole group, with the exception of that young Sun Chi-nien, is united as one from top to bottom—you couldn't knock us apart with a sledge hammer!"

Hsu Lien-shan now saw that Ma Chi-kuang was much younger than he had imagined and wondered if he'd heard correctly when the Party secretary had told him something about the new assistant. Had he said "good," or had he said "young"? Hsu had his doubts from the look of this "assistant," but acted warmly towards him, taking his bag and pouring him a cup of tea before starting to talk things over with him.

Ma Chi-kuang began modestly, "Hsu, you'll have to help me. You're an old comrade, a veteran who's had far more years of experience than I have lived."

Hsu was about to address Ma as "Old . . ." his usual term of respect for a man over thirty, but somehow he couldn't get the word out when addressing this new assistant.

Ma flushed when Hsu broke off what he was saying, then said, "Old Hsu, you have a face covered with beard while I've only got a little down on mine. I'm really very much your junior."

The atmosphere was eased. Hsu relaxed and said, "Young Ma, from now on we'll be working together. You mustn't think that because you're young you shouldn't work with confidence in your own ability. There's nothing to be afraid of. My experience is that both patience and persistence are needed to work well. Take my beard, for example. It grows quickly as though bent on hiding my face. As for me, I keep on shaving, determined not to let my beard show."

Ma laughed. Hsu's little story had revealed something of his character. He thought Hsu was straightforward, and as a straightforward man himself, it would be fine to work with this group leader. He at once asked for a job to do.

Hsu found it difficult to immediately assign his new assistant to some work. If it was difficult he might not be able to cope with it, and if it was easy the young man wouldn't get proper training. Then he thought, as he's young he should know a young man's mind and be able to help Sun Chi-nien.

"Suppose you first take over the political-ideological work with the young people here," suggested Hsu. "I

have especially in mind a fellow by the name of Sun Chi-nien. He's a skilled worker but he doesn't very much like having to follow instructions — got a lot of ideas of his own. You could be a help to him."

Ma Chi-kuang considered this suggestion and agreed to do his best. Hsu was delighted and took up Ma's bag to show him to his living quarters. Just then Sun Chi-nien himself pushed the door open and said, "What's the hurry, Old Hsu? Hold on a minute." And with that he took over Ma Chi-kuang's bag, saying, "Young Ma's my old partner and he's going to room with me whether you agree or not." He winked at Ma, took his bag and started off, leaving Hsu Lien-shan scratching his head.

"We're fellow members of the district amateur ping-pong team. Practise together every evening," Ma Chi-kuang explained to Hsu as the two went out.

Hsu was both happy and worried about this pair. As they hit it off so well, there was the possibility that Ma could influence Sun. But there was also the danger of Ma becoming like Sun.

2

The next ten days passed quickly. It was near stopping time, and another ladle had been lined. Ma Chi-kuang and Sun Chi-nien emerged from inside it almost at the same time. Sun tapped Ma on the arm and said, "Whew! What a relief that's done!" The words were hardly out of his mouth when the hum of a locomotive indicated the arrival of another ladle with a damaged lining. "Look at that!" Sun burst out flying into a

rage. "This one's hardly finished and another's already in for an overhaul. This is what I call being led around by the nose. The ladle situation's really got us in a corner!"

Ma Chi-kuang had already spent a few days going among the people in the plant, investigating and learning about conditions, with particular attention to the ladle construction group. Now he thought this a good time to talk with the young worker Sun Chi-nien. "Yes," said Ma. "The situation's got to be changed. Say, Sun, I hear you made a suggestion recently for improving the construction of the ladles. . . ."

"Oh, I gave up any hope of that ages ago," Sun exploded.

Ma smiled as he replied, "You never admit defeat when in a tight corner during a game of ping-pong but you throw in the towel when it comes to the problem of putting out more steel!"

"The group leader doesn't give me any support. What can a chap do but give up?" said Sun, shrugging his shoulders.

"Don't get excited. You should try to find out why he doesn't give any support to your suggestions, and see if we've got any shortcomings in our own work. . . ."

"The group leader's a conservative, while you're a fence-sitter," Sun retorted. Then, having started on his tirade, he threw in a few more criticisms and called Ma names.

"You're a queer one. Last night you couldn't beat me at ping-pong, so today are you trying to get even by calling me names?" asked Ma with a smile. "Well I've got an idea. We're strong, healthy young fellows. How about putting in some extra time on the night

shift so's to have time during the day to experiment with your innovation idea?"

Hsu Lien-shan came near them and Sun Chi-nien left the room in a huff. Hsu frowned and said to Ma, "See what I mean? Just look at him now!"

"He's got something against you, Old Hsu," said Ma good-humouredly. "How about his innovation suggestion? . . ."

"Oh yes," replied Hsu, "I've had several talks with him about it. I told him not to try anything he's not sure of. Suppose he takes a chance and fails, or worse, that there's an accident? But Sun won't listen to me. You'd better help by convincing him to give it up."

Ma Chi-kuang kept smiling as he explained, "Old Hsu, I ought to help Sun. That's only right. But you say you're not sure his idea will work and he's taking a chance. Tell me, what do you think the problems are?"

Hsu was pleased to have broached the subject and started to reply, "I . . ." but stopped, for he could not formulate any particular problem.

Seeing the quandary Hsu was in, Ma went on, "Old Hsu, Chairman Mao teaches us that truth comes from practice. We'll have to try out his suggestion before we can draw any conclusion; otherwise, we won't be able to make him see the light. What do you say?"

Hsu Lien-shan suddenly realized that this young man Ma had a way of convincing people and Hsu himself was now convinced indirectly. He thought for a while. He had no valid reason for opposing Ma's suggestion, so he said, "Well, let's give it a try then. But I'm warning you, Young Ma, containing molten metal is no joke! The thing's got to be taken seriously!"

Just then Sun Chi-nien came banging in, grasped Hsu by the shoulder and shook him. "What wind woke you up that you're so good today!" he said brightly.

While Ma and Sun were occupied with the innovation, Hsu and some other old workers took voluntary work shifts on the ladle to make up the shortage of hands.

A new situation arose. A second blast furnace was about to go into production and twice as many ladles would be needed at the current break-down rate to keep the output up. The plant allowed very little increase in the allocation of men and material to the ladle construction group. Hsu thought that concentrated effort must be made on getting more ladles ready and therefore the innovation experiment would have to wait. He hurried to look up Ma Chi-kuang. No one appeared to be there; all he could see was a ladle. He was about to leave when he suddenly thought the two might be working quietly inside the ladle. He picked up a brick, struck the ladle with it and shouted, "Young Ma!" A head popped up. It was Ma all right. Sweat streamed down his grimy face, and his eyes shone.

"What's up, Old Hsu?" asked Ma, wiping the large drops of sweat from his chin, his sooty hand drawing a heavy beard on it as it swiped across. Hsu untied the towel from his neck and waved it at Ma.

"Come down from there! Wipe off that soot. I want to talk to you!"

"We are in the thick of the job," Ma retorted. "Cut your story short so I don't have to come down!"

"All right, that suits me. You've got to stop your experiment."

Ma's eyes opened wide as saucers as he gasped, "What!" Then Hsu told him that with the second blast furnace going into operation there'd be no time for the experiment.

Ma frowned. "We can't stop now, Old Hsu!" And with that he disappeared inside the ladle and another head popped up.

"That's right, Old Hsu. We can't!" It was Sun Chien.

So my apprehensions are justified, thought Hsu. Ma's come under the influence of Sun and become as obstreperous as him. What am I to do now?

Ma appeared above the ladle rim again and queried testily, "You want us to guarantee the supply of ladles, don't you?" Hsu nodded and Ma continued, "Well, stop worrying. I'm sure we will have enough ladles for the second blast furnace too."

"Don't be ridiculous. There can't be enough."

But Ma Chi-kuang came back firmly with, "I'm serious. I'll see you later!" And he again disappeared inside the ladle.

3

When the work on the innovation was at its most important stage, an unforeseen thing happened.

One evening when Ma Chi-kuang was in his room studying an article from Chairman Mao's works, an alarm bell suddenly sounded and an old worker rushed in to say that a mechanical hammer had fallen into a ladle. Ma ran to the casting shop. The hammer weighed three tons and was very important in produc-

ing steel. The raw material, which came in from different parts of the country, was very uneven in composition and contained a lot of waste material. While the molten metal was being transported to the casting shop, a thick slag crust formed on top. A steel rod was then used to pierce it and the mechanical hammer then broke it up. The clean molten metal could then be poured out and the ladle immediately used again. As the hammer descended on this particular occasion it broke the crust all right but went into the molten metal beneath it. This melted the wire rope with which the huge hammer was suspended so that it fell into the ladle.

Ma Chi-kuang had never known such a thing to happen before, and was trying to think out a way of recovering the hammer when a man dressed in asbestos clothing suddenly appeared to direct the moving crane to remove the ladle from its track, and tip it over on its side. Ma recognized the man as Old Hsu. Hsu grasped the wire rope and stepped into the ladle, spreading his legs wide apart to avoid the molten metal still inside. Every firebrick he stepped on emitted a puff of flame! He quickly looped the wire rope through the eye of the hammer and then stepped out of the ladle, drawing the rope with him so that he could attach it to the crane hoist and pull the hammer out. But the attachment to the hoist was slack so that the wire rope fell back inside and was melted again.

Hsu got into the ladle a second time but now the rope was out of his reach. Just then Ma got a pair of long-handled tongs, grabbed the rope end and quickly looped it through again. As Hsu got out of the ladle, Ma

shouted "Pull!" to the crane operator, and the heavy hammer obediently rose from the ladle.

The asbestos-clad Old Hsu emerged smoking all over and feeling giddy. Someone doused him with water from a hose. Then he was suddenly aware of another man near him. Smoke was pouring from his clothing, and there was a smell of scorched cloth. Old Hsu took over the hose, and when the other uttered an "oh," Hsu saw that it was Ma Chi-kuang. He was the one who had come to his help at the critical moment, without asbestos clothing!

Hsu went to his quarters to change his clothes, then hurried to see Ma. Ma had already changed and was studying in his room.

Calling "Young Ma," Hsu rushed to inspect him carefully. Ma's hair was singed badly in a couple of places, and his right eyebrow was half gone. Hsu couldn't resist taking him by the shoulders and saying, "You really are my good assistant!"

Ma invited Hsu to sit down and said to him, "I'll probably go on being a nuisance to you."

"How can you say that, young fellow?" replied Hsu. "Aren't we firmly united together? But let's not sit here talking, for that soaking I gave you may cause you to catch a cold. I've got some ginger tea at my place. We'll have a glass to warm us up."

When Ma had sat down, the older worker looked for the promised ginger tea but found it was all gone, so he got a handful of spiced beans from a tin, some dried beancurd from a pot, and then produced a bottle of Yangho Ta Chu liquor, and placed all these delicacies on the table in front of Ma.

Nibbling some of the spiced beans Ma said, "I am not thirsty."

"Oh, this is not to quench thirst," explained Hsu. "It's to warm you up."

"What is it?"

"Yangho Ta Chu."

"Why do you call it that?"

"Because it's distilled in the Yangho River area," said Hsu, thinking how naive Ma was, not even knowing about the famous liquor!

Ma unscrewed the cap and sniffed at the contents. "Oh, it's strong stuff! I can't drink that!" And he screwed the cap back onto the bottle.

Suddenly remembering something, Hsu said to Ma protectingly and also in praise, "Young Ma, you experiment on the innovation in the daytime and, without telling me, work on the night shift as well, to line those ladles. That can't go on, you know!"

Ma grinned. "But, Old Hsu, I'm not the first to take on an extra night shift."

Hsu laughed, for he had been working overtime that very night. He merely said, "Young fellow, the old Party secretary was afraid we wouldn't get along together, and for a while I was worried too. But we get on very well, don't we?" He picked up a piece of dried beancurd and munched it happily.

Glancing at Hsu, Ma said, "We're not likely to disagree very seriously. But real unity is not so easy to achieve; it must be based on Mao Tsetung Thought. I have many weak points and also wrong ideas, but I have the determination to correct them. I hope you'll help me."

Hsu suddenly felt that this young man in his early twenties was by no means young in mind; in some respects his assistant seemed more mature than himself. Speaking to him seriously he said, "You must also help me. I'm a straightforward person. I didn't like your innovation so I just wouldn't go near it. Please forgive me!"

"You were brave enough to rush into that red-hot ladle, but not brave enough to take a peep at the ladle experiment! Is it the dirt you're afraid of? I hope you'll show some concern for innovation," said Ma with a warm smile. "Our old secretary is busy enough as it is, but he comes every two or three days to take a look and see how the experiment's going on. Come over here. Sun and I want your help."

Hsu Lien-shan thought a while and then raising his voice said, "All right then. Whenever you get stuck, just come to me with your problems." He paused a moment and then continued, "And if you're not sure, don't go knocking your head against a wall. Just stop and we'll try to find some other way."

Ma couldn't help laughing. Hsu felt a little uncomfortable at this laugh and hastened to say, "To tell the truth, I'm really afraid of a failure. But I don't want to pour cold water on your idea. If it succeeds, nobody will be happier than I!"

The No. 2 blast furnace had gone into production and the stokers of the two furnaces had entered into a friendly competition. The output of molten metal rose substantially and there were indications that the ladles wouldn't be put out fast enough to keep pace with production. Fortunately the experimental ladle was completed by now, and Ma suggested that it be

tried out immediately. If it proved successful, production would be given another big boost.

But when Ma asked Hsu for permission to run the trial, the elder man said, "It's not that I don't support what you're doing, but right now . . . when a tiger's at our heels. . . . One slip would be too much."

Ma now knew this master worker pretty well after working closely with him all these days, so he replied, "Well, when a tiger's at your heels you've got either to beat it off or else be eaten by it. We'll give you a sketch of our plan first, then if you approve we'll give it a try. All right?"

Hsu nodded.

Ma had more consultations with Sun Chi-nien and the old workers and put their plan down on paper for Hsu to see. The old Party secretary was at once interested, took the draft and, after discussing with the production department, gave permission to try it the very next day. He asked Hsu and Ma to make adequate preparations. Hsu was nervous when told this and at once went to find Ma.

When Ma outlined for Hsu the main points of the test, Hsu said, "All right!" Then after thinking for a while he added, "Since the Party committee has made the decision, of course I give my consent. Usually I'm fearless, but right now I'm afraid of an accident happening. Can I just say something about preventing accidents?"

Ma was very serious. "You're an old hand, Hsu, and you're steady. You certainly ought to make your suggestions."

"Well, for one thing," Hsu replied, "there are a lot of puddles in front of the furnace. You'll have to fill

them in. One drop of water can cause an explosion if a little molten metal gets on it."

"Right!" answered Ma. "We've already done that. Will you inspect it before the test tomorrow?"

"Yes, I will. . . . And secondly you'll need to have some hoses in readiness in case it is necessary to cool off the ladle to prevent the extension of possible crack."

"We've got three hoses on hand. Is that enough?"

"Plenty!" And so Ma was able to reassure his group leader on every point. Hsu found that Ma had taken every precaution, and his nervousness subsided. However, when he got back to the office he suddenly thought of another thing and phoned the transport section to send a locomotive over for the test the next day. It might be needed to pull the ladle away in a hurry. The unexpected reply was, "Are you thinking of becoming a transport group? Ma Chi-kuang's already got one locomotive over there and now you're calling for another. How many do you want anyway?"

Hsu quickly apologized and put down the receiver, thinking that after all Ma was a very careful and steady fellow to have thought of the locomotive and be so completely calm before the big event.

Early next morning Ma Chi-kuang walked confidently to the blast furnace area. By eight o'clock workers had already gathered before the furnace that was to discharge the molten metal for the crucial test. A giant, fiery "dragon" with gilt stars shimmering from its body rushed from the tap-hole of the furnace, casting a red glow over the whole shop. It roared and serpentine into the experimental ladle, belching a hot blast against the people standing there. Ma, with the protection of his stoker's goggles, walked along the

platform up to the ladle to try and ascertain what was happening inside. Sparks showered over him, but he seemed not to notice them. Hsu went over, too, and watched the metal rising in the ladle.

Suddenly Sun Chi-nien ran up shouting, "There's smoke coming out of the air vent!"

Ma kept his eyes on the ladle and replied calmly, "Watch it!"

Hsu really got a fright when he heard about the smoke, for this was generally regarded as a warning that something had gone wrong. He was going down to ask for the locomotive to pull the ladle away so that any spilt liquid metal would not ruin the tracks. But Ma saw him and called out, "Don't worry! Our experimental bricks are more durable than those we used before; it's normal for smoke to come from the air vent." Hsu nodded, though he didn't quite believe it possible.

Soon, a worker reported seeing a black object in the ladle of metal. "It looks like a brick," he added.

Ma Chi-kuang remained calm, his eyes on the ladle as though on alert.

Hsu was startled at this announcement. How could a brick have broken loose from the lining of the ladle? It could cause a lot of trouble, and emergency measures would have to be taken at once. He was about to leave the platform when Ma handed him his goggles saying, "Look at it carefully, Old Hsu. I can't find any place in the ladle lining where a brick's missing." Taking the goggles to look, Hsu couldn't find any gap either, but he was still worried that there might be one covered over by the metal. If the molten mass penetrated the ladle casing that would be a catastrophe.

Ma said to Hsu, "I've been observing the ladle lining closely, especially where the impact of the molten metal is the greatest, and I haven't found any evidence of a missing brick."

"Look! Quick!" shouted Sun, who had now got onto the platform. "A black thing's floating on top!"

Ma saw a darkish thing now swirling in the molten mass. It certainly wasn't a brick. Then, after watching it for some time he said, "It looks like a blob of slag, maybe flushed down through the iron runner."

"I think that's likely," agreed Sun.

A stoker came up and said he'd found some slag in the metal. He'd given it a stir and probably some had got through the runner. Again the tenseness of the atmosphere dissolved. The metal flowed freely into the ladle, soon coming up to the half-way mark.

Ma never moved a muscle but kept on observing. Hsu brightened up, for the accident he had feared had not occurred, and the test was as good as completed, with the ladle already half full. He was going to close the spigot and let the rest of the molten metal flow into another ladle. That done, he would congratulate Ma and Sun. But before he could do either, Ma reached out and took him by the arm saying, "The ladle's not full yet!"

"Its capacity may be a hundred tons," replied Hsu, "but for safety's sake we generally give it only sixty to seventy. It's already. . . ."

"Let's fill it full this time," said Ma.

Hsu thought, what a big "appetite" this young man has, almost as big as the ladle's! If the ladle burst at, say, ninety tons, wouldn't the whole effort be wasted? After all, he thought, Ma's very young, and is trying

to show off. No, I won't have it. I'll put a stop to his bravado! So he announced, "My comrade assistant, at this crucial moment, you must listen to me."

Before Ma could answer, Hsu tried to stop the flow, but a strong, sooty hand reached out to prevent him. Hsu turned abruptly to look. There beside him on the platform was the old Party secretary!

"Old Hsu, didn't you say your whole group from top to bottom is united as one, that a sledge hammer couldn't break you apart? What's happened?"

Hsu was so startled that his grip loosened.

Ma went up to Hsu and said, "Old Hsu, it's not the ladle itself we're testing. We are testing a new way of lining it. We want to help the group snap out of its passive way of tolerating drawbacks. The new method of lining the ladle is designed to make it carry the full impact of its load."

Only now did Hsu feel the heat of the molten metal so near him. The sweat streaming from his face sizzled as it dropped onto the platform.

The ladle had stood up to the test and the experiment could be termed successful. The workers shouted and jumped for joy. The old Party secretary grasped Hsu by the shoulder and said, "Old Hsu, I did give you a good assistant, didn't I!"

Hsu was almost too excited to speak. "Old Secretary, in rank he may be my assistant, but in boldness of thinking I'm not qualified to be his!"

The secretary replied, "That statement is itself a great step forward in your thinking. However, you have to view things from all sides, and see yourself from two aspects — your strong points, and your weaknesses as well. That way you will never lose heart."

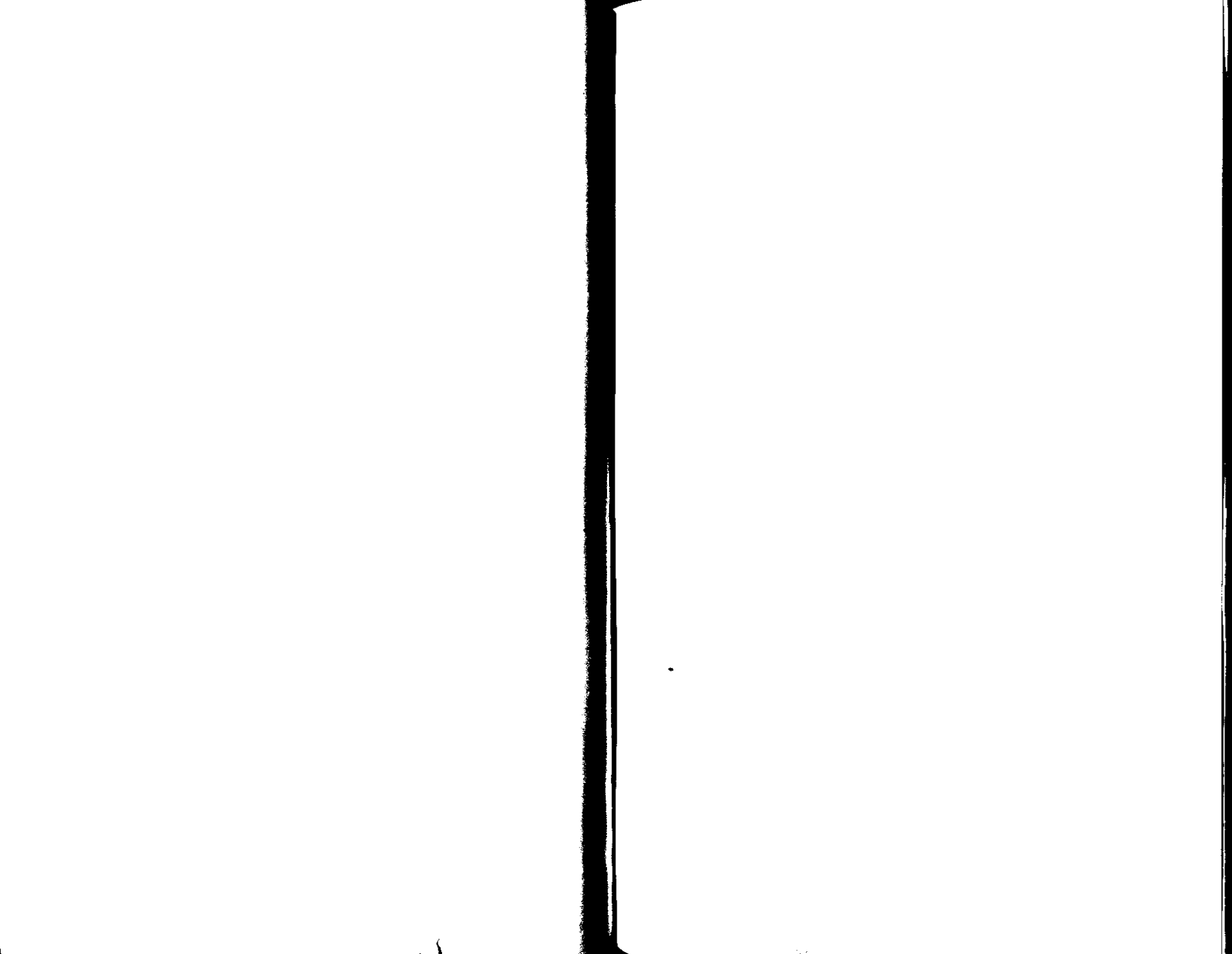
Hsu nodded.

The old Party secretary went on with deep meaning, "The people, like us cadres, want assistants, but in some respects we have to be their assistants too. It's a question of mutual help. This is not only demanded by the work but it's also the way with things. These young people, like the sun at eight or nine o'clock in the morning, are vigorous and full of energy. If we don't catch up with them quickly, there's the danger of our falling behind. Whether we're aware of it or not, that would obstruct the development of the Party's cause."

Ma Chi-kuang took a paper from his pocket, announcing as he did so, "Now that our Party secretary and Old Hsu are here together, I'd like to show you the design of something to prevent the formation of slag crust. I've discussed it with some veteran workers but it's not been tested yet. Do you think we could try it out?"

Hsu took the design in both hands, thinking, this time I must be Ma's good assistant!

The old Party secretary looked from one to the other, and beamed with satisfaction.



小 将
(短篇小说集)
肖关鸿等著

·
外文出版社出版 (北京)
1975年 (34) 第一版
编号: (英) 10050-812
00130
10-E-1345P

