

CHINESE LITERATURE



1978 12

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STORIES

Chi Hsueh-pei

Two Brigade Leaders

Aunt Wei's sheep were nibbling the young wheat of the brigade, when Liu Kuai-huo, who was in charge of keeping work-points, caught them. According to regulations, a fine of one yuan would be imposed for each sheep that had caused the damage.

He also realized that there would be one hell of a rumpus over this.

Aunt Wei was the village's notorious scold. In arithmetic, for example, she couldn't count more than a hundred. But when she was arguing, she could hold her own with anyone and brazen it out for days and nights if necessary. Everyone was afraid of her and had nicknamed her the "Village Terror".

Kuai-huo was not in the least afraid of her. Although he was a mere seventeen and still had a youthful smile on his face, he was quite grown-up and had a good head on his shoulders. "Every family has taken good care of its sheep, since we worked out those rules," he thought to himself. "But our Village Terror has ignored them all. If we let her get away with it this time, no one will bother any more

Published by Foreign Languages Press
Peking (37), China
Printed in the People's Republic of China



about the rules. All right. She's stuck her neck out, so let it get chopped. We'll make an example of her."

He took the two sheep to the brigade office, where only the deputy brigade leader, Liu Chuan-yu, was there. In excitement, the boy cried out as he entered the gate: "Look, deputy brigade leader! I've caught some thieves!"

Though in his fifties, Liu looked older and was a bit of an old woman in his ways. Concentrating on repairing a cart and with his back to the gate, he was startled by Kuai-huo's voice and demanded quickly: "What thieves?"

Kuai-huo winked and, making a face at the sheep, burst out laughing. "These two. They sneaked into the northern wheat field and were grazing to their hearts' content. See what a bellyful they've had!"

Liu relaxed and examined the animals. Their bellies were as fat as gourds, their teeth stained green. They certainly seemed to have had a good time. Then he asked: "Aren't these Aunt Wei's pride and joy?"



"I don't give a damn whose they are!" Kuai-huo retorted. "They ate the brigade's wheat, so the fine should be imposed." So saying, he tied the sheep to an old elm tree.

Liu sighed, very irritated, and in his heart he reproached the youth, "Kuai-huo, my boy, you've really loused things up. Why must you force a confrontation with such a character? When she hears about this, she'll kick up one hell of a fuss..."

He'd hardly had time to say the words aloud when the Village Terror's piercing voice could be heard crying outside: "...Who the devil was it? Just itching to make trouble, eh? What have my little pets done? You wait. Granny's going to sort you out right now!"

Seeing the situation was getting too hot for comfort, Liu told Kuai-huo hastily: "Tell her none of us cadres are here," as he ran into the northern room in retreat.

Kuai-huo didn't know whether to laugh or be angry. But knowing how timid Liu was, he just tightened his belt and waited for the Village Terror to descend on him.

She came rushing in like a gust of wind, a group of eager little

boys and girls tagging along behind her hoping to see some fun. About forty and short in stature, she had a flat face. Her eyebrows were creased in a furious frown; her mouth pouting.

Kuai-huo took a few steps backwards, ready for her attack. But it was quite unnecessary. When she saw Kuai-huo was the only person around, she didn't deign to give him a second glance but swaggered over to untether her sheep.

"Hey, wait a moment!" Kuai-huo protested, trying to stop her. "You can't take them away like that!"

"Mind your own business!" she snapped at him.

Biting his lip, the youth smiled and asked: "So you think the brigade grows wheat just for your sheep to eat?"

"To hell with it!" cried the woman. "My sheep have been safely in my yard. How could they have eaten the wheat? What a rotten accusation!"

"So these sheep aren't yours?"

"What do you mean? Why aren't they mine?"

"Because I caught them in the northern field. How could they be yours then?"

Getting more worked up, the Village Terror moved a step nearer to the boy and asked: "What's the matter with you, Kuai-huo? Why are you trying to make trouble? Have I thrown your darling baby into the well or something?"

"Hardly! I haven't even a wife yet," he smiled. "You know very well it's a question of principle."

Having failed to talk him over, the Village Terror now tried to threaten him. "Are you going to let me take them home or not?"

"Of course, but not until the brigade leader comes back."

"Then your granny will have to fight you." With this she tried to push the youth, but Kuai-huo dodged away from her and caught hold of the rope tethering the sheep. She tried desperately to wrest the rope from him.

The crowd of children were delighted. Jumping up and down with glee they shouted: "Hold on, Brother Kuai-huo! Don't let go!"

"Sure! A fat chance she's got!" the older boy laughed.

Beaten, the Village Terror gave up. Then she began roaming

around the courtyard, clapping her hands and crying: "Where are our cadres? Where are those damn village cadres? Good grief! How come you cadres egg on this little twerp to bully me?" She began searching the room for the cadres.

Kuai-huo seized this chance to tell a plump boy to go and fetch Uncle Chen-chi from the eastern pit. "Make it snappy!" he ordered.

The little boy gave a triumphant whoop and led his playmates away.

After a while the Village Terror emerged from the northern room. It was incredible, but she'd failed to find Liu there. Reluctant to accept her defeat, she shrieked at Kuai-huo: "Just you wait! I'll fetch the brigade leaders and settle accounts with you, my lad!" Then she strode off in a fury.

Kuai-huo wasn't in the least cowed and shouted back cheerfully: "O.K. The sooner the better!"

Then Liu emerged from the room, his head and back covered in dust. Kuai-huo burst out laughing. Liu, frowning, scolded: "Oh shit! What a bloody row you've caused!"

"Don't blame me," Kuai-huo protested. "I didn't make the rules. They were worked out by our brigade members."

Liu pointed his finger at the boy. "You ought to understand more about the spirit of making regulations." He continued after a pause: "We just want to encourage people to look after their sheep. It's not really necessary to impose a fine on them, I feel. Don't you see that?"

Puzzled, Kuai-huo smiled and asked: "But what if they don't bother to look after their sheep?"

"It's up to their conscience."

"But Aunt Wei didn't bother and broke the rules..."

"Oh, she's only one individual," Liu quibbled.

"But tell me," Kuai-huo insisted, "what should we do with this particular individual?"

"Well, we could do this," Liu answered after a moment's thought. "You take the sheep back to her and tell her off so that she won't be so careless again."

"That's no good! If we overlook the regulations this time, everyone will ignore them in future. The wheat shoots have just grown,

and there are a lot of sheep in the village. What if other sheep damage the wheat?" He stopped for a moment, thinking to himself: "If we let our Village Terror off so easily now, it will mean we sacrifice the principle and the interests of the collective."

Kuai-huo was an honest and straightforward youth. He would never insist on something unless he was sure about it. "You'd better go yourself and give her back her sheep. I'm no good at theorizing. I wouldn't know how to make her see reason."

Like a scalded cat, Liu jumped backwards and said hurriedly: "No, no! You're just the person to do the job. After all, you know the old saying, 'Let the one who tied the bell untie it.'"

It suddenly dawned on Kuai-huo: "Liu never wants to offend anyone."

Just then, the Village Terror was heard yelling in the distance. Liu advised: "Let her have her way, if she comes for the sheep."

Determinedly Kuai-huo caught hold of his arm: "If she comes, then you can give her a strong criticism."

"No, you'd better do that. I've got something very important to attend to." With that he struggled free and fled into the room again.

But it was a false alarm. The person who entered was none other than Liu Chen-chi, the brigade leader.

He was a simple, honest and robust-looking man in his early thirties. He always seemed to be very cheerful and alert.

Kuai-huo was delighted. "Thank goodness you've come at last."

"Having a bit of difficulty, eh?" he grinned as he approached. "You were quite right to catch the sheep and bring them here. If we hadn't got her sheep at it this time, it might have become a tricky situation to tackle. The sheep have damaged quite a large area of wheat."

"You've been there already?" asked Kuai-huo.

"Of course," Chen-chi sighed. Then he inquired if Liu was in.

Kuai-huo gestured with his chin in the direction of the room and whispered: "He wants me to give back the sheep."

"But has she admitted she was in the wrong?"

"What? Some hopes you have of that!" Kuai-huo pulled a face. "She created such a racket, we thought all hell had been let loose."

"Then why should we give her back her sheep?"

At this Liu came out and started to drag Chen-chi into the room, whispering in a low voice: "Quickly! I've got something important to tell you."

Inside the room Liu began to explain: "You know, Chen-chi, what an old bitch our Village Terror is. If we handle this affair badly, she'll make such a commotion that our production will be affected and others will accuse us cadres of not uniting our brigade members. So I think . . . we'd better . . . er . . . treat the affair as a small one and let her off. . . ."

Chen-chi cut him short: "And if the others follow her fine example?"

"My dear nephew," Liu began, patting Chen-chi on the shoulder, "you can count them on one finger. Is there anyone else in our village like that old witch?"

Chen-chi chuckled: "What a splendid idea of yours! Return the sheep with our sincere apologies, then everything will be just fine. Really, uncle, do you think our brigade members will thank us for that?"

"But we can explain what happened, can't we?" After a while he continued: "Perhaps I shouldn't be so frank, but there is an old saying, 'To offend a person is to build a wall in front of you.' We won't remain cadres all our lives and. . . ."

"So according to you cadres should be useless and ineffectual." Then Chen-chi asked sharply: "Why should our villagers have entrusted us with being cadres?"

Ashamed, Liu coughed.

"I can't accept your advice, uncle," Chen-chi replied seriously. "It would mean sacrificing the interests of our collective just to keep in that old hag's good books. According to you, we should try to keep in with everyone, but that doesn't work. Moreover you're just thinking of yourself and not of the collective, and that is no answer. I'd rather risk her wrath than smooth things over."

Liu blushed deeply and scratched his neck, muttering nervously: "O.K. Forget what I've just said. But I'm telling you, you'll have a tough job on your hands trying to make that old hag see sense."

"We can only try. After all she's human, not stone."

Just then Kuai-huo burst into the room shouting: "She's coming!" They went out to find her already in the courtyard. The moment she saw the two cadres she rushed forward waving her hands and shrieking: "Oh, my good cadres! I'm so unfortunate! My two sheep were safe in the yard, but someone tried to cause trouble and blame me. But you're just, you can settle the matter."

Liu stepped back and began coughing.

Chen-chi remained where he was, smiling. He said nothing but simply let her talk. Puzzled by this, she stopped and asked in dismay: "Well, why the hell don't you say something?"

Immediately Chen-chi told Kuai-huo to fetch a chair for Aunt Wei.

The boy was a little surprised, but, sensing the situation, rushed into the office and returned with a large armchair, which he placed in front of her. "My good aunt," he began, "you must be exhausted with all your rushing about. Please sit down here."

Then Chen-chi gave another order: "Please bring us some tea, Kuai-huo."

"Right away!" said the boy as he quickly produced some cups and a pot of tea.

Chen-chi politely asked Aunt Wei to sit down as he served her some tea. She was bewildered and at a loss as to what to do. After they had urged her several times, she finally sat down. Holding the cup she was too nervous to drink.

Bringing out two benches, Chen-chi and the others then sat down. Lingering over his cup of tea, Chen-chi slowly began with a smile: "We rarely have the chance to talk over things, so please don't spare your comments if you have any criticisms about our work."

Aunt Wei had been in a rage when she had arrived at the office, determined to give them a piece of her mind. But now, in the circumstances, she felt the wind had been taken out of her sails. Not knowing what to say, she stared at her tea-cup and muttered vaguely: "Oh, so far so good."

"Then do you think we were right to adopt that regulation about the wheat field?"

Silence.



"Do you think we were right?" Chen-chi pressed her.

"Yes."

"I can see you're a reasonable person. Have some tea," Chen-chi encouraged her. Taking a sip from his cup and then wiping his mouth with his hand, he continued: "When did we adopt those regulations?" He stopped abruptly as if forgetting the date.

"The night of 4th November," Kuai-huo eagerly butted in.

"Of course, you're right!" Chen-chi agreed, carefully watching Aunt Wei's expression. "Now I remember. You were at the meet-

ing that night, Aunt Wei, weren't you? In fact you voted for those regulations, didn't you?"

"Yes, they were adopted unanimously," Kuai-huo said taking the cue, afraid she would try to deny it.

Aunt Wei said nothing. Then after a while she broke her silence and said with a determined toss of her head: "Anyway, my sheep were safe in the yard."

Kuai-huo was about to reply, when Chen-chi stopped him and asked with a smile: "If that was the case, how did they get into the wheat field?"

"Who knows? They've legs, haven't they?"

Kuai-huo roared with laughter, while Chen-chi pressed his advantage: "So you admit they ate the wheat shoots?"

Aunt Wei pursed her lips and took a deep breath.

"Since it was your sheep that damaged the crop, what have you to say?" asked Chen-chi after a pause.

She glanced at him and countered: "Well, what do you have to say first?"

"I say," Chen-chi began with a grin and holding up two fingers, "that according to the rules, you are fined two yuan."

"Then I give up. I'll pay." She put down her cup and went over to untie her sheep.

Liu couldn't help smiling and whispered in Chen-chi's ear: "Well done! You've beaten her at last."

Chen-chi looked at Liu and said meaningfully: "Cadres should not be afraid to offend people to see justice done."

Kuai-huo didn't bother about what they were saying. Lost in his thoughts he smiled to himself and said: "Our brigade leader is terrific!"

Illustrated by Ho Yu-chih

Camel Hsiang-tzu

This story takes place in old China.

In our last issue we published the first six chapters of this novel which starts with the arrival of eighteen-year-old Hsiang-tzu in Peking, then called Peiping. He has lost his parents and what little land they had in the countryside. After selling his labour for some time he decides to become a rickshaw-puller, the lowest of the low. Renting his rickshaw from Harmony Yard, he works tirelessly in the hope of buying a new rickshaw for himself, so as to make a better living and later marry a village girl and have a home of his own. It takes him three years to save up enough to buy his own rickshaw.

But these are days of fighting between warlords. Soldiers seize Hsiang-tzu and his rickshaw. He loses his rickshaw but manages to escape, taking three camels with him. That is how he comes to be known as Camel Hsiang-tzu.

On his way back to the city, Hsiang-tzu sells his camels and returns to Harmony Yard to pull a rickshaw. Tigress, only daughter of the owner of Harmony Yard, takes a fancy to Hsiang-tzu though he finds this woman, ten years his senior, repulsive. To get away from her, he goes to work by the month for the Tsaos.

The following excerpt starts from here and ends in the middle of Chapter Thirteen. The second half of the book depicts Hsiang-tzu's return to Harmony Yard. He no longer feels strong enough to struggle against fate and marries Tigress, whose angry father drives them both away. Tigress buys Hsiang-tzu

another rickshaw and he goes on pulling fares until Tigress dies in childbirth and the rickshaw is sold to pay for the funeral expenses. Now Hsiang-tzu is no longer young and robust and he has lost his dream of buying a rickshaw of his own.

To help our readers understand the background of the book, we quote a few words from the author's "Afterword" written in 1954 when the novel was reprinted:

"In my book, though I showed sympathy for the labouring people and admired their fine qualities, I did not find a way out for them. They lived a wretched life and died in bitterness. In those days I saw only the dark side of society, not the bright hopes of revolution, for I had not yet learned the truth about revolution myself. The strict censorship at the time when the book first appeared in print also made it necessary for me to be careful. I dared not say that the poor should rise in revolt."

— The Editors

7

Hsiang-tzu went to work in the Tsao household.

He felt a bit guilty toward Tigress. However, as she had started the whole thing by seducing him and he wasn't after her money, he saw nothing dishonourable in breaking with her. What did worry him was his small savings in Fourth Master Liu's keeping. The old man would probably smell a rat if he were to claim them now. If he steered clear of father and daughter, Tigress might get angry and run him down and then he'd never see that money again. If he went on trusting his savings to the old man, he would be bound to meet Tigress whenever he went to Harmony Yard, and that would be very awkward. Unable to think of any good way out, he grew more and more uneasy.

He thought of consulting Mr. Tsao, but how to go about it? That bit about Tigress was something he couldn't tell anyone. Filled with remorse, he began to realize that this sort of relationship couldn't be broken off so easily. He would never be able to wash himself clean of it — it was like a freckle on the skin. For no rhyme or reason, he had got himself entangled. He felt done for: no matter how hard he tried he would never get anywhere. After thinking it

over and over, one thing became clear to him: in the end, most likely, he'd have to pocket his pride and marry Tigress, not that he wanted to — or was it because he wanted those few rickshaws? He'd be a cuckold, eating left-overs. The idea was unbearable, but it might really come to that. He would just have to keep going and do his best, prepared for the worst. Gone was his previous self-confidence. Size, strength, determination all counted for nothing; for though his life was his own he had let someone else get control of it, and a most shameless creature she was too.

He should by rights have been happy, because of all the households he had worked for the Tsao family was the most pleasant. The pay was no better than anywhere else, and apart from bonuses at the three festivals there was little extra money to be earned; but Mr. and Mrs. Tsao were such agreeable people, they treated everybody decently. Though Hsiang-tzu was so eager, so desperate to earn more, he liked having a proper room and enough to eat. The Tsaos' house was spick and span, even the servants' quarters; their food was good and they never gave the staff stale left-overs. With his roomy quarters, three leisurely meals a day, plus a most considerate employer, even Hsiang-tzu could not think only of making money.

Besides, with board and lodging to his taste and the work fairly light, it was a golden opportunity to get himself back into shape. If he had had to buy his own food, he would certainly not have eaten so well. Now, with all his meals provided, and the chance to digest them in peace, why shouldn't he eat his fill? Food costs money and he knew just how much this was worth. It wasn't easy to find a job where he could eat well, sleep well, and keep clean and presentable.

Moreover, though the Tsaos didn't play mahjong and seldom invited guests, which meant no tipping, he could get ten or twenty cents extra for various chores. For example, if Mrs. Tsao wanted him to buy pills for the little boy, she would be sure to give him ten cents extra and tell him to go by rickshaw, although she knew he ran faster than anyone else. Though the money was negligible, the consideration behind it warmed his heart.

Hsiang-tzu had worked for a good many employers. Nine out of ten would delay paying wages if they could, to show that they would

prefer not to pay at all and that servants were basically no better — perhaps even worse — than cats or dogs. The Tsaos were different, and so he liked it here. He would sweep the courtyard and water the flowers without waiting to be told, and each time they would say something pleasant, even taking the opportunity to hunt out some old things for him to exchange for matches, though the things were always usable and he would keep them. At such times he sensed their genuine fellow-feeling.

Some of the masters for whom Hsiang-tzu had worked had been literati, some had been military men. Not one of the military ones had measured up to Fourth Master Liu. As for the literary ones, although among them there had been university lecturers and officials with comfortable jobs in a yamen, all of whom naturally had considerable book-learning, he had never yet met one who was reasonable. If the master happened to be fairly reasonable, the mistress and daughters were sure to be hard to please.

Only Mr. Tsao had book-learning and was reasonable too, while Mrs. Tsao won all hearts by her modest behaviour. Actually, Mr. Tsao was not all that brilliant. He was simply a man of average ability who did some teaching at times and also took other jobs. He styled himself a "socialist", was something of an aesthete and had been considerably influenced by William Morris. Though having no profound views on politics or art, he had one strong point: the ability to put his few beliefs into practice in the trivialities of everyday life. He seemed to realize that he was no genius who would perform earth-shaking feats, so he organized his work and family in accordance with his ideals. This, though it did society no good, was at least honest and saved him from becoming a hypocrite. So he paid special attention to the small things of life, as if to say that as long as his household was happy, the rest of society could do as it pleased. At times this attitude filled him with shame, at others with satisfaction, for it seemed clear to him that his home's sole significance was to serve as a small oasis in the desert, able only to supply those who came to it with food and water.

By luck, Hsiang-tzu had come to this oasis, and after wandering so long in the desert he felt it was nothing short of a miracle. Never

had he met anyone like Mr. Tsao and so he identified him with the Sage — Confucius — either from inexperience or because such people are rarely seen in the world. When he took him out in the rickshaw dressed with such sober refinement and looking so animated yet dignified, Hsiang-tzu, neatly turned out himself, stalwart and strong, took extra pleasure in running, as if he alone were worthy to pull such a master.

Their home, where everything was so clean and quiet, filled him with peace and contentment. In his village, he had often seen old men basking in the winter sun or sitting under the autumn moon, sucking bamboo pipes, silent and still. Though too young to imitate them, he had enjoyed watching them, certain that they must be savouring something very special. Now, although he was in the city, the peacefulness of the Tsao household reminded him of his village and made him feel like smoking a pipe himself and ruminating.

Unfortunately, that woman and his scant savings preyed on his mind. His heart was like a green leaf entwined in silken threads by a caterpillar preparing its cocoon. He was so preoccupied that he often gave the wrong answers when questioned by others, even with Mr. Tsao. This upset him badly. The Tsao family went to bed early, he would be through with his work soon after nine. Sitting alone in his room or in the courtyard, he would mull over these two problems of his. At one point he nearly decided to get married right away, so as to put an end to Tigress' hopes. But how could he support a family by pulling a rickshaw? He knew what a wretched life his mates led in tenement compounds, the men pulling rickshaws, the women taking in mending, the children scrounging in the ash-heaps for cinders. In the summer they gnawed melon-rinds picked off garbage-piles, and in the winter the whole family went to relief kitchens for gruel. Hsiang-tzu couldn't stand that. In any case, if he married, he'd never get back his savings from Old Man Liu. Tigress would certainly not let him off so lightly. He couldn't bear losing that money for which he had risked his life.

He had bought his own rickshaw early the previous autumn. Over a year had passed since and he had nothing now but thirty-odd

dollars which he couldn't get back, plus an entanglement! The more he thought about it the worse he felt.

It was ten days after the Autumn Festival and the weather was getting cooler. He would need two extra pieces of clothing. Money again! If he spent it on clothes he wouldn't be able to save it, and how could he go on hoping to buy a rickshaw! Would he ever make anything of his life? And even if he managed to go on working on a monthly basis, what sort of life was that?

One evening, taking Mr. Tsao back from the East City later than usual, Hsiang-tzu took the main road in front of Tien An Men Gate as a precaution. There were few people on the wide, flat street, a cool wind blew gently, and the street lamps were still. He really got into his stride. For a while, the pad of his footsteps and the slight creaking of the rickshaw springs made him forget the depression which had weighed him down for so long. He unbuttoned his jacket and felt the cool wind on his chest. How invigorating! He could have run on and on to some unknown destination, run until he dropped dead and was done with everything.

He had speeded up now so that he overtook each rickshaw in front of him. In a trice, Tien An Men was left behind. His feet were like springs, barely touching the earth before bounding up again. The wheels of the rickshaw were turning so fast, the spokes were invisible and the tires seemed to have left the ground, as if both rickshaw and puller were borne aloft by a strong wind. Mr. Tsao was probably half-asleep, fanned by the chilly wind, otherwise he would certainly have forbidden Hsiang-tzu to run so fast. Hsiang-tzu was running for all he was worth, with the vague notion that if he could have a good sweat he would sleep soundly that night instead of brooding.

They were not far from Peichang Street. The north side of the road lay in the dark shadow of the acacia trees outside the red walls. Hsiang-tzu was on the point of slowing down when he bumped into an obstruction on the road. First his feet, then the rickshaw struck it. He was pitched headlong. One of the rickshaw shafts snapped.

"What's up?" exclaimed Mr. Tsao as he was thrown to the ground.

Hsiang-tzu didn't answer but scrambled to his feet. Mr. Tsao also nimbly picked himself up and asked again, "What happened?"



Before them was a pile of newly unloaded stones for repairing the road, but no red lantern had been put there as a warning.

"Are you hurt?" Hsiang-tzu asked.

"No. I'll walk back, you bring the rickshaw." Mr. Tsao, still calm and collected, groped around the stones to see if he had dropped anything.

Hsiang-tzu felt the broken shaft. "It's not badly broken. Get

in, sir, I can pull it." He hauled the rickshaw off the stones. "Do get in, sir!"

Mr. Tsao didn't want to ride back but he complied -- he could hear that Hsiang-tzu was very close to tears.

When they reached the lamp at one end of Peichang Street, Mr. Tsao noticed a graze on his right hand. "Hsiang-tzu, stop!"

Hsiang-tzu turned his head. His face was covered with blood.

Shocked, Mr. Tsao could think of nothing to say but, "Hurry, hurry. . . !"

Hsiang-tzu misconstrued this to mean that he should run faster. He bent forward to put on a spurt. Very soon they were home.

When he put down the rickshaw, he noticed the blood on Mr. Tsao's hand and rushed into the yard to get some medicine from the mistress.

"Don't worry about me," said Mr. Tsao, running in. "See to yourself first!"

Hsiang-tzu looked himself over and began to feel the pain. Both his knees and his right elbow were cut. What he had thought was sweat on his face was blood. Too dazed to do anything, even to think, he sat down on the stone steps of the gateway staring blankly at the broken shaft of the rickshaw. Against the fresh black paintwork, the bare white splintered shaft stood out jarring and ugly, like the millet stalks blatantly sticking out from under a fine paper figure which hasn't yet had its legs pasted on. He stared at the two white ends.

"Hsiang-tzu!" Kao Ma, the Tsao's maid-servant, was calling him loudly. "Hsiang-tzu, where are you?"

He sat motionless, his eyes riveted on the broken shaft as if it had pierced his heart.

"What's the matter with you, hiding here so quietly? You gave me quite a fright! The master wants you!"

Kao Ma always larded what she had to say with her own feeling about it. The result was both confusing and colourful. She was a widow of about thirty-two or three, clean, straightforward, energetic and meticulous. Other households had found her too talkative and too opinionated, for ever giving herself mysterious airs. But the Tsaos liked clean, forthright people and didn't pay much atten-

tion to minor quirks, so she had already been with them two or three years and they took her along whenever they moved house.

"The master's calling you!" she said again. When Hsiang-tzu stood up, she saw the blood on his face. "Oh my, oh my, you're frightening me to death! What in the world happened? You'd better get a move on if you don't want to get lock-jaw. Hurry! The master has medicine!"

With Kao Ma behind him, scolding, they both entered the study where Mrs. Tsao was dressing her husband's hand. When she saw Hsiang-tzu, she too exclaimed in alarm.

"He really came a cropper this time, madam!" Kao Ma feared her mistress might overlook Hsiang-tzu's injuries. She hurriedly poured water into a wash-basin and tattled away even faster. "I knew it all along! He always runs so recklessly, sooner or later I knew something would happen. Wasn't I right now? Come on, hurry up and wash, then put on some medicine. Really!"

Hsiang-tzu, gripping his right elbow, stood stock-still. In that clean, refined study, this hulking fellow with blood all over his face was decidedly out of place. Everyone seemed conscious that there was something wrong, and even Kao Ma stopped talking.

"Master!" Hsiang-tzu hung his head, his voice was low but forceful. "You'd better find someone else. Keep this month's wages for the repairs. One shaft's broken and the glass of the left lamp is smashed. All the other parts are all right."

"First get washed and put on some medicine, then we can talk about it." Mr. Tsao looked at his own hand which his wife was slowly bandaging.

"First get washed!" Kao Ma recovered her voice. "The master hasn't said anything yet, so don't be in such a hurry."

Still Hsiang-tzu didn't move. "No need, I'll be all right in a moment. When a man hired by the month throws his master and smashes the rickshaw, he has no face left to. . . ." Words failed him, but his emotion was as fully disclosed as if he had burst out sobbing. In his eyes, giving up his job and forfeiting his wages amounted practically to suicide. Yet his duty and self-respect meant more to him at this point than life itself.

That was because it was Mr. Tsao — not anybody else — that he had thrown. If he had spilled that Mrs. Yang, it would have served her right. With her he could be as rough as any brawler in the streets, because there was no need to be polite — she had never treated him like a human being. Money was everything, and self-respect didn't come into the picture — that was the general rule.

But Mr. Tsao was a quite different case, so Hsiang-tzu must give up the money to keep his self-respect. He didn't hate anyone, only his own fate and was seriously thinking of quitting pulling a rickshaw after he left the Tsaos. Since his own life was worth nothing, he could do what he liked with it, but what of other people's lives? If he really killed someone, what then? He had never thought of this before, but this accident to Mr. Tsao had woken him up to this problem.

Very well then, he'd give up the money and change to a trade where he wasn't responsible for the lives of others. Rickshaw-pulling was, to him, the ideal profession and quitting it meant giving up all hope. His life would be pointless and empty. It was no use thinking now even of becoming a good rickshaw man — he had grown so tall all for nothing!

When picking up fares in the street others had cursed him for snatching their business from them, but he could justify such shameless behaviour as he wanted to better himself and buy his own rickshaw. But after this accident what could he say for himself? If word got round that he'd thrown his master and smashed up his rickshaw, he'd become a laughing-stock — a fellow who had bungled a steady job. There was no way out! He must quit himself before Mr. Tsao dismissed him.

"Hsiang-tzu." Mr. Tsao's hand was bandaged now. "Wash yourself. There's no need to start talking about giving up the job. This wasn't your fault, the workmen should have put a red light by those stones. Forget it, wash up and put on some disinfectant."

"Yes, sir." Kao Ma remembered to put in her bit. "Hsiang-tzu's all upset and no wonder, with the master so badly hurt. But as the master says it's not your fault, you needn't feel so put out. Just look at him, a big, hefty fellow as worked up as a child! Do tell him, madam, to stop worrying!" Kao Ma's way of talking was

like a gramophone record, going round and round and bringing in everyone without any apparent effort.

"Hurry up and wash, you're a fearful sight!" was all that Mrs. Tsao said.

Hsiang-tzu's brain was in a whirl, but when he realized that Mrs. Tsao was afraid of blood he felt that here was a chance to reassure her. He took the wash-basin outside the study door and sluiced himself a couple of times. Kao Ma waited in the doorway with a bottle of medicine.

"What about your elbow and knees?" she asked, dabbing the disinfectant all over his face.

Hsiang-tzu shook his head. "Never mind!"

Mr. Tsao and Mrs. Tsao went to bed, Kao Ma, still holding the medicine bottle, followed Hsiang-tzu out of the study to his room. Putting the bottle down she said from the doorway, "Put some on yourself presently. And don't let this little accident upset you. Before, when my old man was alive, I was always quitting jobs too. Firstly, because it made me mad, the way he let things slide while I was wearing myself out outside. Secondly, because young people have short tempers, and if someone put my back up I would walk out. I'd say: 'I'm working for money, I'm not a slave. You may be stinking rich, but even a clay figure has earthy qualities. Nobody could wait on an old woman like you!' But I'm much better now. Ever since my old man died, I've had nothing to worry about and so my temper has improved a bit.

"As for this place, I've been here just short of three years — that's right, I started here on the ninth of the ninth month — there's not much tipping, but they treat you right. We sell our muscle for money and nice words don't do us a bit of good. On the other hand, it's better to take a long view. If you quit your job every two or three days, you're at a loose end six months a year, and that's certainly a dead loss. Much better to find a good-natured employer and stick it out longer. Though you don't get many tips, you can usually manage to put something by in the long run.

"The master hasn't said anything about that business today, so just forget it. Why not? I'm not trying to brag about my age, but you're

still a young fellow and easily worked up. There's really no call for it. A quick temper isn't going to fill your belly. Decent and hard-working as you are, why not stick it out here quietly for a while? That would be much better than flying all over the place. It's not them I'm thinking of but you. We get on so well together!"

She stopped for breath, then added, "All right, see you tomorrow and don't be mulish. I'm blunt and direct and never mince words!"

Hsiang-tzu's right elbow ached badly and kept him awake until past midnight. Reckoning up the pros and cons he came to the conclusion that Kao Ma was right. Everything else was bogus, only money was genuine. He must save up for his rickshaw, losing his temper would never fill his belly. This decision reached, he finally felt a placid drowsiness steal over him.

8

Mr. Tsao had the rickshaw repaired and didn't deduct the cost from Hsiang-tzu's wages. Mrs. Tsao gave him two pills for trauma, which he didn't take. He said no more about leaving. For several days he felt sheepish, but finally Kao Ma's advice prevailed. Before long, life slipped back into its old groove, he gradually forgot the accident and hope sprang up anew in his heart.

When he sat alone in his room working out ways to save money and buy his rickshaw, his eyes would sparkle and he would mutter to himself like someone half crazy. His methods of reckoning were crude but he kept repeating to himself, silently as well as aloud, "Six sixes thirty-six." This had little connection with the sum of his money but its constant repetition increased his confidence, as if he really did have an account.

It was already early winter. In the alleys, to the cries of "Sweet roast chestnuts!" and "Peanuts for sale!" was now added the low plaintive call "Urinals-oh!" In his baskets, the vendor also had pottery money-boxes shaped like gourds, and Hsiang-tzu chose one of the largest. He happened to be the first buyer and the vendor couldn't find change. Hsiang-tzu, whose eye had been caught by an

amusing little urinal, bright green with a pouting spout, said impulsively, "Never mind the change, I'll have one of those!"

After putting his money-box away he took the little green urinal over to the main apartments. "The young master isn't in bed yet, is he? Here's a little toy!"

Everyone was watching Hsiao Wen, the Tsaos' little boy, have his bath. When they saw Hsiang-tzu's gift, they could not help laughing. Mr. and Mrs. Tsao made no comment. They probably felt that though the gift was rather crude, it was the kind thought that counted and so they smiled their thanks. Of course, Kao Ma had to add her bit:

"Just look at that! Really, Hsiang-tzu! A hulking fellow like you, is that the best you could think of? What a disgusting thing!"

Hsiao Wen was delighted with his toy and promptly scooped some bath-water into it. "This little teapot got big mouth!" he crowed.

Everybody laughed even harder. Hsiang-tzu straightened his clothes, because he never knew what to do when self-satisfied. He left the room feeling jubilant, for it was the first time that everyone's laughing face had been turned toward him, as if he were a very important person. Still smiling, he took out his few silver dollars and gently dropped them one by one into his pottery gourd. He told himself, "This is still the surest way! When I've saved enough, just smash this gourd against the wall, and wham, there'll be more dollars than broken bits!"

He made up his mind never to ask for help from anyone. Trustworthy as Fourth Master Liu was, he still didn't like the set-up. Money in Old Man Liu's hands was safe enough, but he felt a bit uneasy. This thing called money was like a ring, it was always better to have it on one's own finger. Having reached this decision he felt relieved, just as if he had tightened his belt one notch and thrown out his chest to stand straighter and firmer than ever.

It was growing colder and colder, but Hsiang-tzu seemed impervious. Now that he had a definite aim, everything was much clearer to him and cold could no longer affect him. The first ice appeared on the ground, even the dirt side-roads were frozen. Everything was dry and solid; the black earth appeared tinged with yellow

as if drained of all moisture. Especially in the early hours, when the ruts made by carts were inlaid with frost, and piercing gusts of wind scattered the morning mist to reveal the exhilarating blue, blue sky high above. That was when Hsiang-tzu liked taking the rickshaw out. The icy wind would funnel up his sleeves making him shiver as if having a cold bath. Sometimes there would be a raging wind which beat the breath out of him; but he would lower his head, grit his teeth and forge doggedly ahead, like a large fish swimming against the current. The stronger the wind the stiffer his resistance, as if it were a fight to the death. When a sudden blast would not let him breathe he would keep his mouth closed for some minutes, then let out a belch, as if he had taken a header into deep water. After letting out the belch, on he would push, battling his way, every muscle taut and straining, a giant whom nothing could stop. He was like a green insect attacked by ants, its whole body quivering in its resistance.

What a sweat he would be in! When he put down the shafts and straightened up, he would let out a long breath and wipe the dust from around his mouth, feeling that he was truly invincible. He would nod as he watched the wind swirl dust and sand past him. The gale bent the trees lining the road, tore the cloth shop-signs to shreds, ripped the handbills clean off the walls. It shrouded the sun, it sang, shouted, howled, reverberated. Sometimes it carcered ahead like a huge terrified spirit, tearing heaven and earth apart in its frenzied flight; then suddenly, as if in panic, it would swirl around in all directions like an evil demon which has run amuck; then again it would sweep along diagonally, as if to take everything by surprise, breaking branches, carrying off roof-tiles and snapping electric wires. Yet Hsiang-tzu stood there watching, for he had just come in out of the wind which had been powerless against him. Victory was his! As for times when the wind was with him, he need only take a firm hold on the rickshaw shafts and let himself glide along. The wind, like a good friend, would turn the wheels for him.

Hsiang-tzu was not blind, so naturally he had noticed the old, weak rickshaw men. Their clothes were so tattered that a light wind blew right through them while a strong blast would tear them to shreds, and their feet were wrapped in heaven knows what rags. They wait-

ed, shivering, at the rickshaw-stands, glancing furtively this way and that; and as soon as anyone appeared they would rush over and ask: "Rickshaw?!" Once they had a fare they would warm up and their tattered clothes would be soaked. When they stopped, the sweat would freeze on their backs. In a head-on wind, they could not lift their feet and barely managed to drag the rickshaw along; when the blast swooped down from above they ducked their heads, while upward gusts nearly swept them off the ground. When they met the wind head-on, they dared not raise a hand for fear the rickshaw would be overturned, while if it came from behind they lost all control of the rickshaw and themselves. Yet they tried in every way, straining every muscle, to drag the rickshaw to its destination, nearly killing themselves for a few coppers.

After each trip, dust and sweat begrimed their faces, leaving only three frozen red circles — their eyes and mouth. Few people were about on the short, cold winter days, so even after a whole day of bitter toil they might still not have earned enough for a full meal; yet the older men had a wife and children at home, the young ones, parents and younger brothers and sisters. Winter was one long hell for them and it was only a breath of life that distinguished them from ghosts, whose leisure they certainly lacked — ghosts never wore themselves out the way they did! To die like a dog in the street was their only hope of peace. A poor devil who froze to death always had a smile on his face, so it was said.

How could Hsiang-tzu not see all this? But he had no time to worry about other people. They were all in the same boat but he, being young and strong, could stand hardships and feared neither cold nor wind. And with a clean room for the night and neat clothes for the day, he felt himself in a different category. Although they were putting up with hardships together, these differed in degree. He was suffering less than they did and later could escape their fate, for he was convinced that in his old age he would certainly not be pulling a dilapidated rickshaw and freezing and starving. He believed that his present superiority guaranteed his future victory.

Hsiang-tzu's attitude toward his old, weak mates was similar to that of chauffeurs when they met rickshaw-pullers outside restaurants or

private residences. Never did they chat together because the chauffeurs felt it beneath their dignity to have any truck with rickshaw-pullers. They were all in the same hell, but on different levels. It never occurred to them to stand together, and so each went his own way, blinded by his own hopes and efforts. Each believed that, empty-handed, he could set himself up in life and therefore went on groping alone in the dark. Hsiang-tzu neither thought of nor cared about anyone else, all that mattered to him were his money and future success.

The streets gradually took on a festive appearance as the New Year approached. On sunny, windless days, the air would be crisp and cold but both sides of the streets grew more colourful with displays of New Year posters, gauze lanterns, red and white candles, silk flowers for the hair, and sweetmeats of all sizes. It was a heartening sight but rather disturbing too, for though everyone hoped to spend a few days pleasantly over the New Year, each had his worries big or small.

Hsiang-tzu's eyes brightened when he saw the New Year displays, knowing that the Tsao family would be sending their friends gifts and for each trip he made he would get a tip. The New Year bonus set at two dollars wasn't much, but he would be taking home those who paid New Year calls and each time that could mean twenty or thirty cents extra. It all added up. No matter if the amounts were small, as long as they kept trickling in. His gourd money-box would not let him down. In the evenings when he was free, he would stare fixedly at this clay friend who could only swallow money but not disgorge it. In a low voice he would exhort it, "Eat more, old boy, eat more! When you've filled yourself up, I'll be satisfied too!"

The New Year was getting nearer and nearer and in no time at all it was the eighth day of the twelfth lunar month. Pleasure or worries forced people to plan and prepare. There were still twenty-four hours in the day, but they were different now and could not be spent just anyhow, but must be occupied in some way with an eye to New Year. It was as if time had suddenly developed consciousness and emotions which compelled people to think along with it and busy themselves according to its wishes.

Hsiang-tzu belonged to the happy ones. The bustle in the streets, the calls of the vendors, the hope of bonus money and tips, the New Year holiday and the visions of good food filled him with thrilled anticipation like a child. He decided to spend eighty cents to one dollar on a gift for Fourth Master Liu. The gift might be small but would show his respect. He had to take something when he paid his visit, on the one hand as an apology because he had been too busy to call sooner; on the other, to enable him to collect those thirty-odd dollars of his. Spending one dollar to retrieve thirty was absolutely worthwhile.

Satisfied, he gently shook his money-box and imagined how lovely the heavy clinking would sound after he had added those thirty dollars. With the money back in his hands, he would have nothing more to worry about.

One evening, he was just going to shake his treasure-trove again when Kao Ma shouted to him, "Hsiang-tzu! There's a young lady to see you at the gate. She asked me about you when I came in from the street." When Hsiang-tzu came out, she added in a low voice, "She's like a great black pillar, a real fright!"

Hsiang-tzu flushed red as if his face were on fire. He knew there was trouble ahead.

9

Hsiang-tzu barely had the strength to step across the threshold of the gate. Still standing inside the door he gazed out, dazed, and by the light of the street lamp saw Miss Liu. She seemed to have powdered her face again and the lamplight gave it a grey-green tinge, rather like a black withered leaf covered with frost. Hsiang-tzu dared not look her in the eye.

The expression on 'Tigress' face was mixed. Her eyes betrayed a certain longing to see him, yet her lips were parted in a faint sneer while the wrinkling of her nose suggested both disdain and anxiety. Her arched eyebrows and grotesquely powdered face were at once seductive and grimly overbearing.



When she saw Hsiang-tzu come out, she pouted a few times and the mixed feelings on her face seemed not to know what expression to assume next. She gulped, as if to control her involved emotions. With a hint of her father's society manner, half teasing and half blustering, as if she couldn't care less, she cracked a joke.

"Well you certainly are a guy! A dog given a bone who doesn't come back for more!" Her voice was as loud as when she bawled out the rickshaw men in the yard. The faint smile had vanished from her face and suddenly she seemed to feel rather ashamed and cheap. She bit her lip.

"Don't shout!" All Hsiang-tzu's strength went into blurring out these two words, which burst from his lips low-pitched but vehement.

"Hah, you think I'm afraid!" She gave a mean chuckle, but involuntarily lowered her voice slightly. "No wonder you're dodging me, now that you've found yourself a little bitch of an amah here, I've known all along you were a rotter. You big stupid dark lout, pretending to be dumb!" Her voice was rising again.

"Don't shout!" Hsiang-tzu was afraid that Kao Ma might be listening behind the door. "Don't shout! Come over here!" As he spoke he started across the street.

"I'm not afraid, no matter where. My voice is just this loud!" Though she protested, she followed him.

Once across the street, they took an east side-road skirting the red walls of the park. Here, Hsiang-tzu, who had not forgotten his country ways, squatted down on his haunches.

"What have you come for?" he asked.

"Me? Huh, for lots of reasons!" Her left hand was on her hip, her stomach stuck out. She looked down at him and thought a while, as if touched by compassion for him. "Hsiang-tzu, I've looked you up for important reasons!"

Some of his anger melted away at the sound of that low, soft "Hsiang-tzu". He raised his head and looked at her. There was still nothing lovable about her, yet that "Hsiang-tzu" echoed softly in his heart, tender and intimate, recalling past ties of affection impossible either to deny or break. In a low but gentler voice he asked, "What reasons?"

"Hsiang-tzu." She came closer. "I'm in trouble!"

"What trouble?" He was startled.

"This!" She pointed to her belly. "What are you going to do about it?"

He gave a strangled cry as if struck on the head. In a flash everything was clear to him. Thousands of thoughts that had never occurred to him before flooded his brain, so many, so urgent, so confused that all of a sudden his mind became a blank, like a screen when the film snaps unexpectedly.

The street was very quiet, the moon veiled in grey clouds. Little gusts of wind stirred the bare branches and rustled the dry leaves. In the distance a cat was yowling. But as Hsiang-tzu's confusion turned to utter blankness he did not hear these sounds. Chin in hand, he stared fixedly at the ground until it seemed to move before his eyes. He could think of nothing, nor did he wish to think. He felt as if he was shrinking, but wasn't yet small enough to disappear into the earth. His whole life seemed focused on this one painful moment, everything else was void. Only now did he feel the cold — even his lips were trembling.

"Don't just squat there! Say something, get up!" She too seemed to feel cold and wanted to move about.

Stiffly he stood up and followed her northward, still tongue-tied, his whole body numb, as if he had been frozen in his sleep.

"Any ideas?" She glanced at him, a loving expression in her eyes.

Still he had nothing to say.

"The twenty-seventh is the old man's birthday. You must come."

"It's the end of the year, too busy!" In spite of his confusion, Hsiang-tzu had not forgotten his own affairs.

"You have to be handled roughly, I know that. Talking nicely to you is just a waste of time!" Her voice was rising again and in the quiet street sounded extra shrill making Hsiang-tzu acutely embarrassed. "Who do you think I'm scared of? Go on, what are you going to do? If you don't listen to me, I've no time to waste breath on you! If we reach no agreement, I can stand outside your employer's gate and curse you three days and nights! I don't care who

you are, wherever you go I can find you! So don't think you can get away!"

"Can't you stop screaming?" Hsiang-tzu edged away.

"If you're afraid of my making a noise you shouldn't have put one over on me in the first place! You got what you wanted and now you expect me to take the consequences all on my own! Who the balls do you think I am anyway?"

"Slow down, take your time, I'm listening!" Hsiang-tzu had been icy cold but now these curses made him hot all over, the heat breaking through his frozen pores so that his whole body itched. His scalp especially tingled.

"Now, that's better. Don't make things hard for yourself!" Her lips parted to show her canine teeth. "No fooling, I've really got a thing about you, so count yourself in luck! Believe me, it'll do you no good to get mulish with me!"

"Don't. . . ." Hsiang-tzu wanted to say "don't slap me once to pat me three times", but he couldn't think of the whole saying. He knew quite a few humorous Peiping expressions but could not use them fluently though he understood when other people used them.

"Don't what?"

"Finish what you have to say!"

"I've got a good idea." Tigress stood still, confronting him. "See here. If you got a go-between to approach the old man, he would be sure to refuse. He owns rickshaws, you pull them, he wouldn't accept a son-in-law so far below him. As for me, I don't care about that. I like you and that's enough, to hell with the rest!

"No go-between can handle this because, at the first mention of the subject, the old man will think it's with an eye to his few dozens of rickshaws. He'd turn down even men better placed than you. This is something I have to fix myself. I've picked you and we've done what we've done without asking his opinion. And anyway, I'm pregnant so neither of us can run away!

"But we can't just march into the hall and announce it to him. The old man is getting more and more pig-headed. If he got wind of this, he'd take a young wife and run me out. I'm telling you, the old fellow is as strong as an ox for all he's nearing seventy. If he

really married again, I bet you he could get himself at least two or three kids by her, believe it or not."

"Let's keep moving." Hsiang-tzu noticed that the policeman on duty had walked past them twice, and he didn't like that one bit.

"We'll talk right here. Who's to stop us?" Following his gaze, Tigress also saw the policeman. "You haven't got your rickshaw, what are you afraid of? He can't bite anybody's balls off without rhyme or reason, can he? That would really be too much! Let him mind his own business and we'll mind ours!"

"Look, here's my plan. On the twenty-seventh, the old man's birthday, you come and kowtow three times to him. Then, on New Year's Day, you come again to wish him a happy New Year. That'll put him in a good mood and I'll get some wine and tidbits and let him have a good drink. When he's nearly tight, you strike while the iron's hot and ask him to be your foster-father.

"Later on, I'll gradually let him know that I don't feel so well. He's sure to ask questions but I'll hold my tongue to begin with. When he gets really worked up, I'll say it was that Chiao Erh who died recently — the vice-manager of the undertaker's shop just east of our place. He had no family or relatives and is already buried in the paupers' cemetery outside Hsichihmen, so where's the old man going to find out the truth? Once he's at a loss, the two of us can hint that the best thing would be to give me to you. After all, you'd already be his foster-son, what's the difference between that and a son-in-law? That way, without any effort, we'd save ourselves a scandal. What do you think of my plan?"

Hsiang-tzu was silent.

As if she felt she had said enough for the time being, Tigress started off in a northerly direction. Her head was bent, as if to savour her speech and also as if to give Hsiang-tzu a chance to think things over.

Just then, the wind blew a rift in the grey clouds, and in silver moonlight they reached the north end of the street. The moat, long since frozen over, stretched silent, silver-grey, flat and solid around the walls of the Forbidden City, as if to hold them up. There was not a sound within the Forbidden City. Its intricate watch towers, magnificent archways, vermilion gates and the pavilions on Coal Hill

seemed to be listening with bated breath for something they might never hear again. The light wind, like a mournful sigh, wove in and out of the pavilions and halls, as if to tell some tales of times gone by.

Tigress walked in a westerly direction and Hsiang-tzu followed her to the archway at one end of the Peihai Bridge. The bridge was practically deserted and faint moonlight shone, cold and desolate, on the wide stretches of ice on either side. The distant pavilions, half obscured by dark shadows, were immobile as if frozen on the lake, only their yellow tiles shimmering faintly. Trees stirred gently, the moonlight seemed hazier than ever. Above towered the white dagoba, its chalky whiteness casting a chilly gloom on all around so that the three lakes, despite their man-made adornments, revealed their full northern bleakness. When they reached the bridge, the icy breath from the frozen lake made Hsiang-tzu shiver. He didn't want to go any further.

Normally, when he pulled his rickshaw over this bridge, he concentrated on his feet for fear of stumbling and had no time to look about him. Now, he was free to look around, but he found the scene somewhat frightening. That ashen-cold ice, those gently stirring trees and the deathly white dagoba were so desolate that he felt they might suddenly let out a shriek or leap up madly. Even this white stone bridge beneath his feet seemed abnormally deserted and so remarkably white that even the street lamps shed a mournful light. He didn't want to go any further or look any more, much less accompany Tigress. What he really wanted was to dive off the bridge, smashing through the ice and sinking down to the bottom to freeze there like a dead fish.

"See you tomorrow!" He wheeled around and started back.

"Hsiang-tzu, we'll leave it like that then. See you on the twenty-seventh!" she called to his broad straight back. Then glancing at the white dagoba, she sighed and walked off to the west.

Without so much as a backward glance, as if the devil were after him, Hsiang-tzu hurried on in such a dither that he nearly bumped into the wall enclosing the old palace grounds. He leaned one arm against it, on the point of bursting into tears. Motionless and dazed, he stood there awhile till he heard someone calling from the bridge.

"Hsiang-tzu, Hsiang-tzu! Come here, Hsiang-tzu!" It was Tigress.

Very slowly he took two steps toward the bridge. Tigress was coming down toward him, inclining slightly backwards, her lips parted.

"I say, Hsiang-tzu, come over here, I've something to give you!" Before he could move any further, she was standing in front of him. "Here, your thirty-odd dollars savings. There was some change but I've made it up to a round sum. Take it! This is just to show you how I feel. I really miss you, care for you and have your interests at heart. As long as you're not ungrateful, I don't care about the rest. Here, take it, look after it and don't blame me if you lose it!"

Hsiang-tzu took the wad of notes and stood there blankly. He could think of nothing to say.

"All right, till the twenty-seventh! Mind you keep the date!" She smiled. "You're getting the best of the bargain, you know, just work it out yourself." With that she turned and went back.

He clutched the wad of notes, watching her in a daze till the arch of the bridge hid her from view. Clouds covered the moon again, the street lamps brightened, and the bridge seemed abnormally white, cold and empty. He turned and strode back at top speed, yet when he reached the gate of the 'Tsaos' house he still had a vision of that cold white forlorn bridge, as if it were but one blink away in time.

Back in his room, the first thing he did was to count the bills. He counted them two or three times and his sweaty palms made them sticky. Each time the total was different. Finally he stuffed them into his gourd money-box and sat down on the edge of the bed staring vacantly at the earthen receptacle, not wanting to think any more. There was always a way out when one had money and he had great faith that this money-box was going to solve all his problems. There was no need to think any more. The moat, Coal Hill, the white dagoba, the bridge, Tigress, her belly . . . all were a dream; yet when he woke up, there'd be thirty more dollars in his till! That was real.

When he had looked his fill, he hid the money-box away and decided to have a good sleep. No matter how great his troubles, he could sleep through them and shelve them till tomorrow.

He lay down but couldn't close his eyes. The events of the day

were like a nest of wasps — barely had one flown in than another buzzed out, and each with a sting in its tail.

He was unwilling to think because really it was no use. Tigress had blocked every avenue of escape, so there was no way out.

The best thing would be to clear out, but Hsiang-tzu couldn't bring himself to do this. Rather than go back to the countryside, he would even be willing to stand guard over the white dagoba in Peihai. What about another city? There was nowhere better than Peiping. No, he couldn't leave, there was no point in cudgelling his brains any more. Tigress was quite capable of carrying out her threats. If he didn't toe the line, she would keep on pestering him. As long as he stayed in town, she could hunt him down. In fact, it was no use trying to give her the slip. Once angered, she could enlist the help of her father who might hire a man or two — it didn't need many — to do away with Hsiang-tzu in some quiet, deserted spot. As he thought over all she had said, he felt as if he had fallen into a trap and his whole body was pinned down — there was absolutely no escape for him. Unable to fault any of her reasoning, he could find no cracks in her armour. He felt she had cast a lethal net which not even a tiny inch-long fish could slip through. Failing to analyse the business in detail, he accepted it as one whole which weighed on him like a thousand-pound metal block pressed down on his head. And this crushing weight convinced him that a rickshaw man's lot in life could be summed up in just two words: rotten luck.

A rickshaw man, since he was a rickshaw man, should stick to his rickshaw and steer clear of women — any contact with one might land him in big trouble. Fourth Master Liu, because he owned several dozen rickshaws, and Tigress, because of her smelly cunt, had swindled him and treated him like dirt. There was no point in thinking about it any more. If he accepted his fate, then he should kowtow, ask Fourth Master to be his "foster-father" and prepare to marry that old witch. If he didn't accept this fate, then his life was in danger.

Having thought this far, he put Tigress and all she had said aside. This trouble wasn't because she was hard and cruel; it was a rickshaw-puller's destiny, just as a dog is bound to be beaten and

bullied even by children for no reason at all. Why hang on to a life like this? To hell with it!

Sleep deserted him and he kicked the quilt aside and sat up. He decided to buy some wine and get dead drunk. What the fucking hell did he care about his job or so-called rules of behaviour? Get drunk, sleep! The twenty-seventh? Not even on the twenty-eighth was he going to kowtow to anyone, and who dared touch him! He pulled his thick cotton quilted jacket over his shoulders, picked up the small bowl that he used for tea and ran out.

The wind was blowing harder and the grey clouds had dispersed. The moon, very small, was shedding a chilly light. The cold made Hsiang-tzu — just out from his warm quilt — gasp. There were no pedestrians about, only a couple of rickshaws at the side of the road, their pullers standing by them, their hands cupped over their ears and stamping their feet to keep warm.

In one breath Hsiang-tzu ran to the little shop on the south side. To preserve some warmth, it had already put up its shutters, but money could be paid in and purchases handed out through a small window. Hsiang-tzu bought four ounces of spirits and three cop-pers worth of peanuts. Holding the bowl steady and not daring to run, he strode off with the speed of a sedan-chair carrier. Back in his room, he hurriedly slipped into his quilt, his teeth chattering violently, reluctant to sit up again. The spirits on the table gave off a sharp, pungent odour which he rather disliked, and even the peanuts didn't interest him. The icy air like a basin of cold water had woken him up completely, yet he felt too lazy to stretch out his arm while his heart was no longer burning.

After lying there for some time, he peeked over the edge of the quilt, at the bowl of spirits on the table. No, he couldn't destroy himself over such a paltry affair, he couldn't break his resolution never to touch alcohol. He was in a mess, no doubt about it, but somewhere there must be some crack through which he could wriggle out. Even if there was no escape, he shouldn't first wallow in the mud himself. He must keep his wits about him to see just how other people shoved him down.

He put out the light and burrowed inside the quilt, hoping to fall asleep. Still it was no good. He pushed the covers back and looked around.

The moonlight in the courtyard had given his window paper a bluish sheen, as if it were nearing daybreak. The tip of his nose felt how icy it was in his room, and a faint smell of spirits pervaded the freezing air. He sat up abruptly, reached for the bowl and gulped down a big mouthful.

10

Hsiang-tzu wasn't smart enough to solve his problems one by one, neither was he forceful enough to make a clean sweep. So he was utterly helpless, resentment gnawing all the time at his heart. All living creatures, when they have been injured, seek desperately to make the best of a bad business. A fighting cricket that has lost its powerful legs still tries to crawl with its small, weak ones. And so it was with Hsiang-tzu. Having no definite plan, he could only hope to get by from day to day, taking things as they came, content to crawl as far as he could with no further thought of leaping.

There were still about a dozen days till the twenty-seventh, the day on which all his attention was focussed. It was always in his thoughts and dreams, and he kept muttering "the twenty-seventh" as if, once that day was past, all his problems would be solved — though he knew very well that this was wishful thinking.

At times his thoughts ranged a bit further. Suppose he took the few dozen dollars he had and went to Tientsin? Once there he might be lucky enough to land some other job and stop pulling a rickshaw. Could Tigress follow him to Tientsin? For him, any place you needed to take a train to was necessarily very far away; so she certainly wouldn't be able to follow him there! This seemed a good idea, but deep down he knew it was a last resort, because if he could stay in Peiping he would. And so, back he came to the twenty-seventh. Better to think of things closer to hand. If he could get over that hurdle he might get by without drastically

changing the whole situation. And even if he couldn't make a clean break, every hurdle crossed was one hurdle the less.

But how to get over the first one? There were two ways: one, to ignore the whole business and not pay any birthday call; the other, to follow Tigress' advice. Either way, the result was the same. If he didn't turn up, she certainly would not let the matter drop; if he did, she would not let him off lightly either. He recalled, when he first started pulling a rickshaw, how he had tried to imitate the others by taking short cuts down alleys. Once, by mistake, he got into Lochuan Alley and went round in a big circle only to end up just where he had started. Now it was as if he were once more in just such an alley: whichever way he turned, the result was the same.

In his helplessness, he tried to look on the bright side. What was wrong with marrying Tigress anyway? Yet however he looked at it, the idea sickened him. The mere thought of her appearance made him shake his head. So forget her appearance, think of her behaviour, ugh! How could a decent fellow, so anxious to better himself, accept such shop-soiled goods? He would never be able to face anyone again, not even his parents' spirits after death.

Anyway, who could guarantee that the child was his? Or that she would bring him some rickshaws? Fourth Master Liu was no easy customer! And even supposing everything went smoothly, he couldn't stand it anyway, for when could he ever get the better of Tigress? She only had to point her little finger to keep him running until he was dizzy, all sense of direction lost. He knew what a terror she was! Even if he wanted to set up a family, he couldn't marry her. It was out of the question, no doubt about it. If he took her that would be the end of him, and yet he had his own self-respect! There was really no way out.

Unable to deal with her, he turned to hating himself and was tempted to give himself a few hard slaps. Yet the fact was he had really done nothing wrong. She had planned it all and waited for him to fall into the trap. The trouble with him, it seemed, was being too decent — decent people always get worsted and put in the wrong.

What made him unhappiest of all was that he had nowhere to un-

burden himself. He had no parents, no brothers or sisters, no friends. Usually he felt proud of being a stout fellow with his feet on the ground, able to hold up the sky, free as the wind with no ties to anyone. Only now did he realize with dismay that nobody can live in isolation.

For other rickshaw men, especially, he now felt an affection. Had he made friends with a few before, he thought that a big fellow like himself need not fear any number of Tigresses, for his friends would have given him advice and taken his side. But he had always kept to himself, and you couldn't make friends on the spur of the moment! He felt a fear he had never known before. At this rate, anyone could cheat and bully him. One man alone could not hold up the sky!

This fear caused him to start doubting himself. In the winter, when his employer had dinner engagements or went to the theatre, Hsiang-tzu was in the habit of taking the water can from under the carbide lamp and holding it to his chest, because if left on the rickshaw it would freeze. He would be in a sweat from running, the icy little can against his flesh instantly set him shivering, and it would take some time for the can to warm up. But he had never felt this an imposition and had actually sometimes had a sense of superiority, because the pullers of ramshackle rickshaws could not afford carbide lamps. Now it occurred to him that he was earning a monthly pittance, putting up with all sorts of hardship and even hugging a water can to prevent it freezing. Apparently his broad chest was worth less than a small can. Whereas before he had believed that pulling a rickshaw was the ideal job for him and that he would be able to set himself up in this way, he now began to have silent doubts. No wonder Tigress bullied him — he wasn't even up to a tin can!

Three days after Tigress had tracked him down, Mr. Tsao and some friends went to see the evening show of a film. Hsiang-tzu waited in a small tea-house, nursing the ice-cold can. It was freezing and the doors and windows of the tea-house were tightly closed. The place reeked with coal fumes, sweat and the smoke of cheap cigarettes. Even so, the windows were frosted over.

The customers were mostly rickshaw-pullers who worked by the month. Some sat with their heads against the wall, dozing in the

warmth of the room. Others had a bowl of spirits and, after inviting those around to join in would drink slowly, smacking their lips after each sip and breaking wind noisily. There were others eating large rolled up griddle cakes, biting off half in one mouthful so that their necks became distended and red.

One man was glumly relating his woes to the company at large, telling how he hadn't stopped running since early that morning and how he'd lost count of the number of times he'd been soaked and dried out again. The others had mostly been chatting among themselves, but these last words brought about a sudden silence. Then, as vociferous as birds whose nests have been destroyed, they all burst out airing their own grievances. Even the fellow eating griddle cakes found room in his mouth to wag his tongue, talking and swallowing at the same time, the veins standing out on his head.

"You think a mother-fucking monthly puller doesn't have a rough time? Ever since two o'clock — urp! — till now, I haven't had a bite to eat or a drop to drink! Three times I've pulled the mother-fucker — urp! — back and forth from Chienmen to Pingtsemen! This cold has frozen my arse-hole till it's cracked and all I can do is fart!"

He looked around at the others, nodding to them, and took another bite of griddle cake.

This switched the conversation to the weather and gave everybody a chance to talk of the hardships brought on by the cold.

Hsiang-tzu was silent throughout, but he listened intently. Though the tales the others told, their tones of voice and their accents were all different, each cursed his lot and complained of its injustice. And the resentment in Hsiang-tzu's heart made him lap up such talk as the parched earth laps up rain. He had no way, did not know how, to tell them his own story from beginning to end. He could only take in something of the bitterness of life from what they said. Everyone was wretched and he was no exception; he could see himself and so wanted to sympathize with them all. At the sad parts of their stories he knit his brows, at the funny ones he grinned. His silence and his not knowing them did not prevent him from being at one with them and feeling that they were all fellow-sufferers. Before, he would have thought this pointless jabber — if they kept it up all

day they would never get rich. Now, for the first time he felt it wasn't empty talk, they were speaking for him too and expressing the common suffering of all rickshaw-pullers.

When the conversation was at its noisiest, the door suddenly swung wide open, letting in a blast of cold air. Everyone glared angrily round to see who was being so inconsiderate. The more impatient they were, the slower the newcomer moved, as if he were deliberately taking his time. One of the waiters called out, half jokingly, half urgently, "Hey there, uncle, hurry up! Don't let all the warm air out!"

Before he had finished speaking, the man outside had come in. He was a rickshaw-puller too, who looked over fifty. His cotton-padded jacket, neither long nor short, was as full of holes as a reed basket, tufts of padding sticking out of the front and the elbows. His face seemed to have been unwashed for days, so that no one could see the colour of his flesh except on his ears which were frozen bright red, like ripe fruit ready to drop. His white hair stuck out untidily from under a small ragged cap, and on his eyebrows and short beard there were drops of frozen moisture. As soon as he got in, he groped for a bench and sat down.

"A pot of tea!" he gasped.

This tea-house was frequented only by pullers with monthly jobs. Ordinarily this old puller would certainly not have come here.

Everybody looked at him, more deeply moved than by what they had been saying a moment before. No one spoke. Usually one or two green youngsters would have cracked some joke to make fun of such a customer, but today none of them said a word.

Before the tea was ready, the old man's head sank slowly lower and lower until he slid to the ground.

At once everyone leapt up. "What's happened? What's wrong?" All wanted to rush forward.

"Don't move!" The tea-house manager, an experienced man, stopped the crowd. Going over alone, he loosened the old man's collar, propped him up against a chair and held his two shoulders. "Bring some sugared water, quick." Then he put his ear to the old man's throat and listened, muttering, "There's no inflammation."

Nobody moved, but neither did they sit down again. They stood there blinking their eyes in the smoke-filled room and looking at the two figures by the door. All seemed to be thinking the same thought, "That's what we'll come to! When our hair is white there'll come a day when we'll fall and die in the street!"

As the bowl of sugared water was held to his lips, the old man moaned a couple of times. His eyes still closed, he raised his right hand — it was black and shone as if lacquered — and wiped his mouth with the back of it.

"Drink some of this!" the manager said in his ear.

"Eh?" The old man opened his eyes. When he saw that he was sitting on the floor, he drew up his legs, intending to get up.

"Drink first! There's no hurry!" The manager took his hands away from the old man's shoulders.

Everybody hurried over.

"Ai, ail" The old puller looked around, then holding the bowl in both hands sipped the sugared water.

He drank slowly, and when he had finished he looked around at everyone once more. "Ai, excuse me for putting you out!" His voice was so gentle and kindly, it was difficult to believe it came from the mouth under that scruffy beard. Again he tried to rise and three or four men made haste to help him up. He smiled faintly and said, still gently, "It's all right, I can manage. What with cold and hunger, I came over faint. It doesn't matter." Though his face was so caked with dirt, the faint smile seemed to make it clean and kindly.

Everyone was moved. The middle-aged man who had been drinking spirits had finished his bowl. His bloodshot eyes filled with tears. "Here," he called, "bring me two more ounces!" By the time this arrived, the old puller was seated in a chair by the wall. The drinker was tipsy, but he politely placed the spirits before the old man.

"This drink is on me, please take it!" he said. "I'm over forty myself and, if the truth be told, I can barely manage a monthly job. As the years go by, my legs tell me I'm no longer so strong. In two or three more years I'll be like you. You must be nearly sixty!"

"Not yet, fifty-five." The old man took a sip. "In this cold there are no fares around. And I, well, my stomach is empty. My few coppers went to buying some wine to warm up on. By the time I got here, I was dead-beat so I came in to warm up a bit. The room was so hot, and I'd had nothing to eat, so I blacked out. It really doesn't matter. I'm sorry to have given you all so much trouble!"

By now, the old man's grey hair like withered grass, his muddy face, coal-black hands, shabby cap and padded jacket, all seemed to be radiating a faint pure light, rather like the aura of dignity that still surrounds a crumbling idol in a tumbledown temple.

Everyone looked at him as if loath to let him leave. Hsiang-tzu had remained silent all along, standing there woodenly. When he heard the old man say that his stomach was empty, he rushed out and came back at top speed with a large cabbage leaf. In it were wrapped ten steamed minced-mutton patties. He put them down in front of the old man and said, "Eat these!" Then he returned to his seat and lowered his head as if he were worn out.

"Ai!" The old man seemed happy but close to tears too. He nodded to everyone, "We really are mates, aren't we? You can pull a fare with all your might, yet how hard it is to get one single copper extra out of him!" He stood up and moved toward the door.

"Eat!" Everyone seemed to be calling out at once.

"I must fetch Little Horse, my grandson. He's outside watching the rickshaw."

"I'll go, you sit down!" said the middle-aged rickshaw man. "You can be sure you won't lose your rickshaw here. There's a police sentry-box just across the street." He opened the door a crack and yelled, "Little Horse, Little Horse, your grandfather's calling you! Bring the rickshaw over here!"

The old man fingered the patties several times but did not pick any up. As soon as Little Horse came in, he took one and said, "Little Horse, this is for you, laddy!"

Little Horse was not more than twelve or thirteen. His face was very thin, but his clothes were bulky. His nose, red with cold, was running. On his ears he wore a pair of tattered ear-muffs. He stood in front of the old man, took the proffered patty in his right

hand and automatically reached out his left for another. He took a rapid bite out of each.

"Hey, slowly!" The old man placed a hand on his grandson's head, with the other he picked up a patty and lifted it slowly to his mouth. "Two will be enough for grandad, the rest are yours. When you've finished we'll pack up for today and go home. If it's not too cold tomorrow, we'll start a bit earlier. What do you say, Little Horse?"

The boy nodded his head at the patties and sniffed some of the snot back into his nose. "Grandpa, you have three and the rest are mine. Presently I'll pull you back home."

"No need." The old man looked at everyone with a proud smile. "We'll walk back, it's too cold to ride in the rickshaw."

The old man finished his share and waited for Little Horse to eat up the rest. He fished out a rag, wiped his lips and nodded to the company again. "My son went to be a soldier and has never come back. His wife. . ."

"Don't talk about that!" cut in Little Horse, his mouth so full that his cheeks were bulging like peaches.

"It doesn't matter, we're not strangers!" In a lowered voice he continued, "The lad takes things very seriously, he's so set on making good. His mother left too. For the two of us, grandad and grandson, that rickshaw is our living. It's very run-down but it's our own so we don't have to worry about paying rent every day. Whether we earn more or less, it's a hard life. But what other way out do we have?"

"Grandpa." Little Horse, still eating away, tugged at the old man's sleeve. "We've got to pull another fare. We have no money for coal tomorrow morning. It's all your fault. Just now we could have made twenty coppers by pulling that fellow to Houmen. I wanted to, but you wouldn't. How will you manage tomorrow with no coal?"

"There's always a way. Grandpa will get five catties of coal-balls on credit."

"What about kindling?"

"Why of course! Eat up, there's a good lad, we must be moving



along." As he spoke the old man stood up and, glancing around him, said, "Thanks, mates, for going to so much trouble." He took Little Horse's hand and the boy stuffed the last patty into his mouth.

Some of the men in the tea-house sat where they were, while others followed them out. Hsiang-tzu was the first to do so. He wanted to see that rickshaw.

It was a most ramshackle rickshaw. The paint was peeling off, so that the grain of the wooden shafts showed through. The broken lamp rattled in the wind, and the spokes of the hood had been tied on with twine. Little Horse took out a match from one of his earmuffs, lit it by striking it on the sole of his shoe, then cupped the flame in his small black hands to light the lamp. The old man spat on his palms, let out a deep breath, picked up the shafts and said, "See you tomorrow, mates!"

Hsiang-tzu stood stock-still in the doorway watching the old man and the boy with that dilapidated rickshaw of theirs. The old man was speaking as they left, his voice rising and falling, while the street lamps and the shadows beneath them flickered. As Hsiang-tzu listened and watched, his heart ached as never before. In Little Horse he seemed to see his own past, in the old man, his future. Never one to part lightly with money, he none the less felt very glad that he had bought the two of them those ten patties. He followed them with his eyes until they were out of sight before going back to the tea-house, where everyone was talking and laughing once more. He felt so confused that he paid for his tea and left, pulling his rickshaw to the cinema to wait for Mr. Tsao.

It was bitterly cold. The air was full of fine sand, and the wind seemed to be high above. The only stars to be seen were a few of the larger ones, trembling in the void. There was no wind on the ground yet everywhere struck chill, with long cracks in the frozen cart ruts and the earth, ashen white, cold and hard as ice.

After standing outside the cinema for a while Hsiang-tzu began to feel cold, but he didn't want to go back to the tea-house. He preferred to stand here quietly all by himself and think. That encounter with the old man and his grandson had destroyed his fondest hope, for that rickshaw of the old man's was his own! From the

very first day that Hsiang-tzu pulled a rickshaw, he had made up his mind to buy one of his own and he was still going all out to reach this goal. He had believed that once he owned a rickshaw he would have everything. Well, just look at that old man!

Wasn't it for this same reason that he didn't want to marry Tigress? He had thought that with a rickshaw of his own he could put money by and take a wife with a clear conscience. Well, just look at Little Horse! If he had a son, the child might end up like that too!

Looking at it in this light, he saw no reason to resist Tigress' threats. Since he was caught anyway in this vicious circle, what difference did it make what kind of wife he married? Besides, she might bring a few rickshaws with her, so why not take it easy at her expense for a change? Once you've seen through yourself there's no need to despise other people. Tigress was Tigress, and that was that.

The film show had finished now. Hurriedly, he fixed the little can of water on the lamp and lit it. He stripped off even his inner padded jacket and stood there in his shirt. He wanted to run as fast as he could so as to forget everything. If he fell and killed himself, what did it matter?

11

When he thought of the old man and Little Horse, Hsiang-tzu gave up hope and decided to enjoy himself while he could. Why grit his teeth all day and drive himself so hard? It seemed to him that the fate of the poor was like a jujube kernel, pointed at both ends and round in the middle: if you didn't die of hunger in your childhood you were exceedingly lucky; it was very hard to escape dying of starvation in your old age. Only during the middle period, when you were young and strong, able to put up with hunger and hard work, could you live like a human being. You'd be a real fool not to make the most of this time and enjoy yourself, for this was like the last hostel in the last village; you wouldn't get another chance! Seen this way, even Tigress and her affairs weren't worth worrying about.

Yet when he saw his pottery money-box he would change his mind again. No, he couldn't let himself go; only a couple of dozen dollars more and he would have enough for a rickshaw. He mustn't let his previous efforts be wasted; at least, he mustn't carelessly throw away those hard-earned savings of his! He must keep to the straight and narrow path, no doubt about it. But Tigress? That hateful twenty-seventh still preyed on his mind.

When he felt completely hopeless, he would hug his money-box to his chest and mumble, "Come what may, at any rate this money is mine! No one can take it away! With money, I'm not afraid of anything. If you push me too far, I'll up and away. With money you can get around."

The streets were growing livelier all the time, with displays everywhere of candy made into the shape of melons to honour the Kitchen God, and cries of "Malt candy!" resounding on every side. Hsiang-tzu had been looking forward to the New Year, but now it left him quite cold. The busier the streets the more tense he became. That fateful twenty-seventh was just round the corner! His eyes became sunken and even the scar on his face darkened.

When he took out the rickshaw, he had to be extra careful on the crowded slippery streets. At the same time, his own problem preoccupied him so that he felt unable to cope with both at once. When he thought of one he forgot the other and then with a start he would tingle all over, like a child coming out with prickly heat in summer.

On the afternoon of the day to make offerings to the Kitchen God, a gusty east wind blew dark clouds over the sky and it suddenly turned warmer. Nearing lamp-lighting time, the wind dropped and it began to snow sparsely. The vendors of candied melons became very worried, for fear that the warmth and the snow would make their wares stick together. They frantically sprinkled white powder over them. Not many snowflakes fell; soon they turned into tiny granules which swished softly down till the ground was covered with white.

After seven o'clock they began, in shops and homes, to make their offerings to the Kitchen God. The fine snow went on falling amid

the glow of incense and the intermittent flashes of fire-crackers, adding a sombre note to the festive atmosphere.

The people walking or riding through the streets all had an anxious look, for they were in a hurry to get home to make their offerings yet dared not go fast on the slippery roads. The candy vendors, hoping to dispose of their stock before this feast day was over, were shouting and touting their wares at the top of their voices, with hardly a pause for breath. It was all very lively.

At about nine o'clock, Hsiang-tzu was pulling Mr. Tsao back from the West City. Having passed the busiest section around Hsitan Arch, they turned east into Changan Street and the road gradually became less crowded. The wide, flat, tarmac surface was covered with a thin layer of snow, a dazzling white under the street lamps. Now and then a car would go by, its headlights probing far ahead and turning the small granules of snow yellow, like a shower of golden sand. Near Hsinhua Gate, the wide street thinly covered with snow seemed to stretch away to infinity, and everything around took on a more solemn air. Changan Arch, the gate tower of Hsinhua Gate and the red walls of Nanhai were all wearing white caps which contrasted with their ruby pillars and red walls. Still and quiet, under the glow of the street lamps, they displayed all the stateliness of this ancient capital. The time and place made it seem as if Peiping were uninhabited, composed solely of sumptuous halls and palaces with a few ancient pines silently receiving the falling snow.

Hsiang-tzu had no eyes for the lovely scenery, for gazing down the imperial highway all he could think of was getting home as fast as possible. In his mind's eye he could see the Tsao's gate at the other end of the straight, white, quiet street. But he couldn't put on speed because the snow, though not thick, stuck to his shoes and soon formed a thick layer on his soles. He stamped it off but it quickly accumulated again. The snow particles were heavy and not only stuck to his feet but blinded him, preventing him from running fast. His shoulders were already white with a layer of unmelted snow and, though it was nothing, the dampness made him uncomfortable. Although there were no shops in the area, fire-crackers were still being let off in the distance, and every now and then the

darkness would be lit up by a double-explosion rocket or one of those known as "Five Devils Resisting Judgment". As the sparks died away, the sky seemed darker than ever, even frighteningly black. Hsiang-tzu heard the crackers, saw the sparks and the darkness and longed to get home right away. But he could not lengthen his stride and put on speed. It was exasperating.

What annoyed him most was that, all the way from the West City, he was conscious that a cyclist was following him. On West Changan Street, where it was quieter, he could even hear its tires crunching softly over the snow. Like all rickshaw-pullers, Hsiang-tzu loathed bicycles more than anything else. Cars were a nuisance, but they were so noisy that you could get out of their way while they were still a long distance off. But bicycles veered now east now west, weaving through the traffic in a way that made you dizzy to watch. And you had better not collide with one, because any trouble was always the rickshaw man's fault, as the police invariably laid the blame on him, not on the cyclist, feeling that rickshaw men were easier to push around.

Several times tonight, Hsiang-tzu had felt like stopping suddenly and throwing the fellow behind him but he did not dare. Rickshaw-pullers had to put up with all kinds of treatment. So each time he stopped to stamp the snow off his feet he called out, "Stopping!" The street in front of Nanghai Gate was very wide yet the bicycle still tagged closely behind him. In mounting irritation, Hsiang-tzu deliberately pulled up to brush the snow off his shoulders. As he stood there, the bicycle brushed past the rickshaw and its rider even turned to look at them. Hsiang-tzu purposely took his time, waiting until the cyclist was a good distance away before picking up the shafts again.

"Confound him!" he swore.

Mr. Tsao's "humanitarianism" made him unwilling to put up a cotton-padded hood and wind-breaker over the seat of his rickshaw and he only allowed the canvas hood to be put up if it was raining hard, to save his puller's energy. In this light snowfall he saw no need to unfold the hood, wanting, moreover, to feast his eyes on the snowy night scene. He, too, had noticed the bicycle and after Hsiang-

tzu swore at the cyclist he said in a low voice, "If he continues to tail us, don't stop at home but go to Mr. Tso's place by Huanghua Gate. Don't get flustered!"

Hsiang-tzu really was a bit flustered. He had always hated cyclists but had never thought them anything to be afraid of. If Mr. Tsao daren't go home, there must be something sinister about this one! He hadn't run more than several dozen paces when he caught up with the cyclist who was waiting for them. As he passed him, Hsiang-tzu looked at him and saw at a glance that he was a member of the secret police. He had often run into them in tea-houses and, though he had never spoken with any of them, he knew them by their bearing and style of dress. This fellow's get-up was familiar: a black padded gown and a felt hat, its brim pulled very low.

When they reached the cross-road at Nanchang Street and turned the corner, Hsiang-tzu glanced quickly behind. The man was still following. He forgot the snow on the ground and put more strength into his stride. The long, straight road stretched white before him, lit here and there by cold street lamps, and behind was a detective tailing him! This was something he had never experienced before and he broke out in a sweat. At the back gate of the park, he looked around, still there!

When they reached home he dared not stop, much as he wanted to, as Mr. Tsao remained silent. He had to go on running north. In one breath he reached the northern end of the street, the bicycle still following! He turned down an alley, still there! Out of the alley, following still! As he reached the north end of the alley, he realized that this was not the way to Huanghua Gate and had to admit that he had lost his head which made him even angrier.

When they reached the back of Coal Hill, the bicycle turned north toward Houmen Gate. Hsiang-tzu mopped his brow. The snow was falling less thickly and there were a few flakes amongst the granules. He loved snowflakes which fluttered gaily in the air, unlike those irritating little granules. He looked back and asked, "Where to, master?"

"Still to the Tso house. If anyone asks you about me, say you don't know me."

"Yes, sir." Hsiang-tzu's heart started thumping but he asked no further questions.

When they reached the Tso house, Mr. Tsao told Hsiang-tzu to pull the rickshaw into the courtyard and quickly close the gate. He was very calm still but his face had lost colour. After giving Hsiang-tzu these instructions he strode into the house. Hsiang-tzu had just parked the rickshaw in the covered entrance-way when Mr. Tsao came out with Mr. Tso, whom Hsiang-tzu knew as a good friend of the Tsao family.

"Hsiang-tzu," Mr. Tsao's lips were moving rapidly, "you're to go home by cab. Tell the mistress I'm here and tell them to come too, by cab. But call a different one; don't make the one you've taken wait for them. Got it? Fine! Tell the mistress to bring whatever she needs and those few scroll paintings from my study. Have you got that straight? I'm going to ring her right away, but I'm telling you too in case she gets excited and forgets. If she does, you can remind her."

"How about my going?" Mr. Tso asked.

"There's no need. It's not certain that that fellow was a detective, but with this other business on my mind I have to take precautions. Would you ring for a taxi?"

Mr. Tso went inside to telephone, while Mr. Tsao gave Hsiang-tzu some further instructions. "When the taxi comes I'll pay the driver. Tell the mistress to pack up quickly. The rest doesn't matter, but she must be sure to bring the child's things and those paintings in the study, those scroll paintings! When she's ready, let Kao Ma ring for a cab and come straight here. Have you got all that straight? When they've left, you lock the main gate and move into the study where the telephone is. Can you use a telephone?"

"Not to make calls, only to take them." In fact, Hsiang-tzu disliked taking calls too, but he didn't want to add to Mr. Tsao's worries.

"That's fine!" Mr. Tsao was still speaking very fast. "If anything should happen, don't open the gate. With the rest of us gone and only you there they're sure to hang on to you. If things take an ugly turn, put out the light and jump over the back wall into the

Wangs' yard. You know the Wang family, don't you? Right! Hide there a while before you leave. Never mind about my things or about your own, just jump over the wall and go before they nab you! If you lose anything I'll make it good to you later. Here's five dollars to be going on with. All right, I'm going to ring the mistress now, and when you get there you can repeat what I've said — but leave out the nabbing bit. That man just now may or may not be a detective. So don't lose your head."

Hsiang-tzu's thoughts were in a whirl. There were many questions he wanted to ask but he didn't venture to, so anxious was he to remember all Mr. Tsao's instructions.

The taxi came and Hsiang-tzu got awkwardly in. The snow was still falling, neither heavy nor light, and everything outside the cab seemed unreal. He sat stiff and straight, his head nearly touching its top. He wanted to think but his eyes were drawn to the red arrow on the dash-board, so bright red and attractive. Those wind-screen wipers too before the driver, swinging back and forth of their own accord and wiping away the moisture on the glass, were also very intriguing. Just as he was beginning to tire of watching them, the taxi stopped at the Tsao's gate. Reluctantly he climbed out.

He was on the point of ringing the bell when a man appeared from nowhere, as if he had materialized out of the wall, and caught hold of Hsiang-tzu's wrist. His first instinct was to wrench free, but he didn't move for he had already recognized the man. It was the detective on the bicycle.

"Hsiang-tzu, don't you recognize me?" With a grin the man released him.

Hsiang-tzu gulped, not knowing what to say.

"You've forgotten how we took you out to the Western Hills? I'm Lieutenant Sun, remember?"

"Ah, Lieutenant Sun!" Hsiang-tzu didn't remember him. When the soldiers had dragged him off to the hills, he hadn't paid any attention to who was a lieutenant and who was a captain.

"You don't remember me, but I remember you. That scar on your face is a good identification mark. Just now when I was tail-

ing you all that way I couldn't be sure at first, but looked at from all sides there was no mistaking that scar!"

"Have you any business with me?" Again Hsiang-tzu made a move to press the bell.

"Of course I have, and important business too! Why don't we go in and talk?" Lieutenant Sun, now a detective, raised his hand and pressed the bell.

"I'm busy!" Sweat broke out on Hsiang-tzu's brow. Inwardly he was fuming, "Isn't it enough that I can't get away from him, do I have to ask him in too?"

"Don't get worked up. I'm here to do you a favour!" There was a faint smile on his face, a foxy smile. When Kao Ma opened the door, he strode in past her with a muttered "Excuse me!" And without giving Hsiang-tzu a chance to say anything to Kao Ma, he pulled him in and pointed to the gate-house. "Is this where you live?" He went in and glanced around. "Quite clean and cosy! Not a bad job you have!"

"What's your business? I'm in a hurry!" Hsiang-tzu couldn't bear to listen to this drivel.

"Didn't I tell you it's important?" Detective Sun was still smiling but his tone of voice was grim. "I'll give it to you straight. This Tsao fellow is a member of the rebel party. When he's caught he'll be shot, and he can't get away! Now, we've had dealings with each other before, when you waited on me in the barracks. What's more, we both knock about the streets, so at the risk of heavy punishment I've come to tip you off. If you're one step too slow you'll be caught, because we're going to block all escapes and smoke them out, no one will get away! Why should fellows like us who sell our strength for a living get involved in such a compromising case? Don't you think I'm talking sense?"

"I'll never be able to face them again!" Hsiang-tzu remembered Mr. Tsao's instructions.

"Face who?" Detective Sun's mouth curved in a smile, but his eyes narrowed. "They've brought this on themselves, you haven't let them down. They've stuck out their necks and must take the consequences; it wouldn't be fair if we were dragged in too! To

mention nothing else, could you stand three months in the lock-up in a black cell, accustomed as you are to living like a wild bird?

"Another thing, if they go to prison they have the money for bribes and won't do so badly. But you, mate, you have no dough so they're sure to rough you up. And this is nothing compared to the fact that, if they happen to have money and pull some strings, they'll get off with a few years in clink while you will be made the scapegoat when the officials can't wind up the case. You and me, we don't harm or offend anyone, how unfair to end up at the Tien Chiao execution ground with lead jujubes in our chests! Now you're smart and a smart fellow doesn't do something he knows he'll suffer for. Face them, ha! Let me tell you, mate, they've never done anything for us down-and-outs entitling *them* to look *us* in the face!"

Hsiang-tzu was frightened. Remembering what he had suffered at the hands of those soldiers he could well picture what prison would be like. "Then I must clear off and not mind about them?"

"You mind about them, who's going to mind about you?"

Hsiang-tzu could think of no reply. He remained stock-still until even his conscience felt clear. "All right, I'll go."

"Just like that?" Detective Sun laughed caustically.

Hsiang-tzu was thrown into confusion once more.

"Hsiang-tzu, old partner, how stupid can you get! I'm a detective, do you think I'd let you go?"

"Then..." Hsiang-tzu was so frantic he didn't know what to say.

"Don't act dumb!" Detective Sun's eyes bored into him. "You probably have some savings, bring them out and buy your way out! I don't earn as much as you every month and I have to eat and dress and support a family, depending on the little I can make outside my regular pay. I'm talking to you frankly. Do you really expect to get out of my clutches like that? Friendship is friendship, and if I weren't your friend I wouldn't have come. But business is business. You expect me to come out of this empty-handed and let my family eat the northwest wind? We're both men of the world and don't have to waste words. Now what about it?"

"How much?" Hsiang-tzu sat on his bed.



“As much as you have, there’s no fixed price.”

“I’d sooner go to prison!”

“Now *you* said that, don’t be regretting it!” Detective Sun reached inside his padded gown. “Look at this, Hsiang-tzu! I can arrest you right away and, if you resist, I’ll shoot! If I nab you right away, you’ll be stripped even of your clothes, not to mention money, when you get to prison. You’re a smart fellow, figure it out yourself.”

“If you have the time to squeeze me, why don’t you squeeze Mr. Tsao?” Hsiang-tzu struggled for words.

“He’s the principal offender. If I get him I receive a small reward; if I don’t, it’s my mistake. As for you, my stupid friend, letting you go would be like farting, shooting you like killing a bed-bug. Hand over the money and go your way; if not, see you at the execution ground! Come on, stop dithering and look smart — you’re old enough! Besides, this bit of money won’t be all mine, my mates each have to get their little cut and I don’t know how many coppers will fall to me. Such a cheap price to pay for your life and you won’t go along. Really you are the limit! How much money do you have?”

Hsiang-tzu stood up, his brain bursting, his fists clenched.

“I’m warning you, raise a fist and that’s the end of you. I’ve a whole gang of men outside. Come on, cough up the dough! I’m giving you face, so know when you’re well off!” There was an ugly glint in Detective Sun’s eyes.

“What wrong have I ever done to anyone?” There was a sob in Hsiang-tzu’s voice as he sat down again on the edge of the bed.

“You haven’t wronged anyone, you just happen to be the one around! A man’s fate is decided in his mother’s womb, we’re at the very bottom and that’s that.” Detective Sun shook his head as if deeply moved. “All right, take it that I’m wronging you and stop dithering!”

Hsiang-tzu thought a while but could see no way out. With a shaking hand he reached inside his quilt and brought out his pottery gourd.

“Let me see!” Detective Sun grinned and, pouncing on the gourd, smashed it against the wall.

Hsiang-tzu watched the coins scatter over the floor and felt his heart was bursting.

“Is that all?”

Hsiang-tzu said nothing. All he could do was shiver.

“All right then. I don’t want to drive a man too hard, a friend is a friend. And make no mistake, you’ve had a real bargain, buying your life with this little sum!”

Still Hsiang-tzu said nothing. Shivering, he started to roll up his bedding.

"Don't touch that!"

"It's so cold. . . ." Hsiang-tzu glared at him with flaming eyes.

"I told you not to touch, so hands off! Now get out!"

Hsiang-tzu gulped, bit his lips, then pushed open the door and went out.

There was already more than an inch of snow on the ground. Hsiang-tzu walked with his head bowed. Everything was clean and white, except for the big black footprints he left behind him.

12

Hsiang-tzu wanted to find a place to sit down and mull things over from start to finish. Even if he only ended up by crying, at least he would know why. Events had moved too fast for his mind to keep up. But there was nowhere to sit, everything was covered with snow. All the little tea-houses were boarded up as it was after ten, and had one been open he wouldn't have gone in anyway. He wanted to find somewhere quiet, because he knew that his tear-filled eyes would brim over any minute.

With no place to sit, he had best walk slowly on; but where should he go? In all this silver world there was no place for him to sit, nowhere for him to go. In this expanse of whiteness, there were only starving little birds and a man at a dead end who knew what it was to sigh in despair.

Where to go? This was the problem on which to concentrate first. To a small inn? That wouldn't do. Dressed as he was, he might be robbed during the night, and anyway he shrank from all the lice there. A bigger inn then? He couldn't afford it. All he had in the world was five dollars. A bath-house? They closed at midnight, one couldn't spend the night there. There was nowhere to go.

This fact brought home to him the straits he was in. After so many years in town, here he was with just the clothes on his back and five dollars in his pocket. He had even lost his bedding! From this

his thoughts turned to tomorrow: what should he do then? Still pull a rickshaw? Huh, that would just land him up homeless, robbed of his meagre savings.

Suppose he became a hawker? With only five dollars capital, out of which he'd have to buy a carrying-pole, how could he be sure of earning his keep this way? A rickshaw man, starting with nothing, could make thirty to forty cents a day; but a peddler needed capital, and there was no guarantee that he could earn enough for three meals a day. If he sank his capital in this only to end up pulling a rickshaw again, it would be like stripping off his pants to fart — a complete waste of five dollars. No, he couldn't lightly let go of a single cent of these five dollars for they were his last hope.

A job as a servant, then? That wasn't in his line. Waiting on people? He just couldn't do it. Washing and cooking? He didn't know how to either! He had no training, no skills, he was just a big, bungling, useless lout!

Quite unawares, he had reached the bridge over the Chunghai Lake. It stretched away on either side with nothing to be seen but a flurry of snowflakes. Only now did he realize that it was still snowing and, feeling his head, he found his woollen cap wet. The bridge was deserted, even the policeman on duty had disappeared somewhere. The falling snow made the few street lamps appear to be blinking. Hsiang-tzu looked around, his mind blank.

For a long time he stood there, and the world seemed dead. There was not a sound; nothing stirred. The grey-white snow seemed to be taking this chance to flurry lightly and persistently down, to bury the whole world surreptitiously.

In the stillness, Hsiang-tzu heard his conscience whisper: "Never mind about yourself, go back first to see how the Tsao family is." Mrs. Tsao and Kao Ma were alone there, without a man in the house. Wasn't it Mr. Tsao who had given him these last five dollars? Not daring to stop to debate it with himself, he started back, striding swiftly.

Outside the gate there were footprints and on the road two fresh tracks made by a car. Had Mrs. Tsao left? Why hadn't that Sun fellow arrested them?

He was afraid to open the gate in case he got caught. But there was no one about. His heart thumping, he decided to try it and see. Anyway, he had nowhere to go; if they arrested him it was just too bad. Gently he pushed the door, which unexpectedly opened. Hugging the wall, he advanced a few steps and saw a light in his room. His own room! A sob welled up in his throat. Stooping, he crept over and listened outside the window. There was a cough inside — it sounded like Kao Ma! He pulled open the door.

"Who's there? Heavens, it's you! You frightened me to death!" Kao Ma pressed her hands to her heart, then composed herself and sat down on the bed. "Hsiang-tzu, what happened to you?"

Hsiang-tzu could not reply. He felt as if years had passed since last he saw her, and there was a ball of fire blocking his chest.

"What's happened?" There were tears in Kao Ma's voice. "Before you got back, the master phoned and told us to go to the Tso house. He also said you were coming back right away. You came back all right, didn't I open the door for you? When I saw you had a stranger with you, I didn't say a word but hurried back to help the mistress pack. You didn't come in once.

"There we were, the mistress and I, groping around in the dark. The young master was already sound asleep and we had to pull him out of his warm covers. The bags were ready, the paintings taken from the study and still no sign of you. Where were you? When we'd packed up as best we could, I came out to find you and, well, you'd vanished! The mistress was so angry — so upset too — that she kept trembling. So I called for a taxi. But we couldn't all go, leaving no one to keep an eye on things. So I swore to the mistress I'd stay and told her to go first. I said that when you came back I'd join them right away at the Tso house. If you didn't come back, well, that was my bad luck. What have you to say for yourself? What happened to you? Speak up!"

Hsiang-tzu had nothing to say.

"Say something! What are you staring at? What really did happen?"

"You'd better go!" Hsiang-tzu finally found his voice. "Go!"

"You're staying on to watch the house?" Kao Ma had cooled down a bit.

"When you see the master, tell him that the detective nabbed me, but then — but then he didn't after all!"

"What does that mean?" Kao Ma almost laughed in her exasperation.

"Listen!" Hsiang-tzu himself was getting heated now. "You tell the master to get away as quickly as possible. The detective said he was going to arrest him for sure. The Tso house is no safe place either. Get away as quickly as possible! After you've gone, I'll jump over into the Wangs' yard and spend the night there. I'll lock the front gate here. Tomorrow, I'll go and look for a job. I've let the master down."

"The more you say the more muddled I get." Kao Ma sighed. "All right, I'm going. The young master may have caught cold; I must go and see. When I see the master I'll tell him Hsiang-tzu says he must get away as fast as he can. Tonight Hsiang-tzu will lock the front door, jump over the wall into the Wangs' yard and spend the night there. Tomorrow he'll find another job. Did I get that right?"

In great shame, Hsiang-tzu nodded.

When Kao Ma had left, he locked the front gate and returned to his room. The shattered pottery gourd lay on the ground. He picked up a few pieces and looked at them, then threw them down again. On the bed, his bedding was untouched. Strange, what did this mean? Could Detective Sun be a fake? Impossible! If Mr. Tsao hadn't smelt danger, would he have abandoned his home and fled like this? He didn't understand this business at all.

Not knowing what he did, he sat down on the edge of the bed, yet barely had he touched the boards when he started up again. He mustn't stay here long! What if that fellow Sun came back again! His thoughts were in a whirl. He had let Mr. Tsao down, but it wasn't so bad now that Kao Ma was taking the message telling him to get away as fast as he could. His conscience was clear. He had never deliberately done for anyone, but he'd had a raw deal himself. With his own money gone, he couldn't worry about Mr. Tsao's

any more. Muttering all this to himself, he gathered his bedding together.

Hoisting his bedding-roll on to his shoulder, he put out the light and hurried to the back yard. He put down his bedding, then pulled himself up to look over the top of the wall.

"Old Cheng!" he called softly. "Old Cheng!" Old Cheng was the Wangs' rickshaw man.

When there was no answer, he decided to jump over the wall and see what happened. He threw his bedding over and it landed soundlessly on the snow. His heart thumping, he quickly climbed up on to the wall and jumped down on the other side. Having picked up his bedding, he quietly headed for Old Cheng's room which he knew. Everyone seemed to be asleep, there was not a sound in the courtyard. It suddenly occurred to him how easy it was to be a thief. He plucked up courage and stepped more confidently across the firm snow, which crunched beneath his feet. Standing outside Old Cheng's room, he coughed. Old Cheng had evidently just gone to bed.

"Who's there?" he asked.

"It's me, Hsiang-tzu. Open the door!"

Hsiang-tzu spoke as naturally and cordially as if, in Old Cheng's voice, he had heard reassurance from someone dear to him.

Old Cheng turned on the light, threw a tattered fur-lined jacket over his shoulders, and opened the door. "What brings you here, Hsiang-tzu, at this hour of the night?"

Hsiang-tzu went in, put his bedding on the floor and plumped himself down on it, all without a word.

Old Cheng was in his early thirties and his muscles were so strong they bulged in knots all over his body and even on his face. Normally, Hsiang-tzu had little to do with him, but when they met they would greet each other and chat. Sometimes Mrs. Wang would go shopping with Mrs. Tsao, giving the two men a chance to drink tea and rest together.

Hsiang-tzu did not particularly admire Old Cheng because, though he ran very fast, he jolted the rickshaw instead of keeping his hands steady on the shafts. Although as a person he was fine, this failing

of his made it out of the question for Hsiang-tzu to respect him wholeheartedly.

But tonight, Hsiang-tzu felt Old Cheng thoroughly admirable. Though he sat there speechless, his heart was full of warmth and gratitude. A while ago, he had stood on the bridge at Chung'ai, now here he was in this room with his mate. The speed of this change made him feel blank and somewhat feverish.

Old Cheng crawled back under his quilt, pointed to his tattered fur-lined jacket and said, "Have a smoke, Hsiang-tzu. There are some in the pocket."

Hsiang-tzu didn't smoke, but this time he felt he couldn't refuse. He took a cigarette and started to puff.

"What's happened?" Old Cheng asked. "Left your job?"

"No." Hsiang-tzu still sat on his bedding. "There's been trouble. The whole Tsao family has run away and I don't dare to watch the house all alone."

"What trouble?" Old Cheng sat up again.

"Can't say for sure, but it's pretty bad. Even Kao Ma has gone!"

"All the doors wide open, and no one in charge?"

"I've locked the main gate."

"Hum." Old Cheng thought for a moment. "What do you say to my telling Mr. Wang?" He made as if to get dressed.

"Wait till tomorrow — I simply can't explain!" Hsiang-tzu was afraid Mr. Wang would question him.

What Hsiang-tzu had no means of explaining was this: Mr. Tsao gave a few lectures each week in a certain university. He had offended the educational authorities who, to teach him a lesson, had accused him of being a radical.

Now Mr. Tsao had got wind of this but thought it ridiculous. He knew he was not a thoroughgoing progressive and that his hobby — collecting traditional paintings — prevented him from taking any strong action. How ridiculous, to be labelled as one of the revolutionary party! So he did not take the business seriously, though his students and colleagues all warned him to be careful. However, in troubled times, keeping calm is no guarantee of security.

The winter vacation provided an excellent opportunity for cleaning

up the university. Detectives set about making investigations and arrests. Several times, Mr. Tsao had sensed that he was being tailed and this shadow behind him turned his amusement to fear. He went to see Mr. Tso.

Mr. Tso proposed, "If need arise, you can move in with me. They wouldn't go so far yet as to search *my* place!" Mr. Tso had important connections, which counted for more than the law. "You come here for a few days and lie low, to show we're afraid of them. Then we can start smoothing things out. You may have to grease a few palms. Show them enough respect and buy them off, then you can go home and they should leave you in peace."

Detective Sun knew that Mr. Tsao often visited the Tso house and that he was sure to go there if hard pressed. The secret police dared not molest Mr. Tso, they were just out to frighten Mr. Tsao. Only by chasing him into the Tso house could they hope to milk him and feel that they had face. Fleecing Hsiang-tzu had not been part of their plans, but as they had run into him and it was no extra trouble, why not first shake him down for eight or ten dollars?

That was life, everyone had a way out, could find a loophole somewhere except for Hsiang-tzu — he could not escape, because he was a rickshaw-puller. A rickshaw-puller swallows husks but spits out his life's blood, he strains his utmost for the lowest pittance. He stands on the lowest rung of society, the butt of all men, all laws, all adversities.

By the time he finished his cigarette, Hsiang-tzu still had not figured things out. He was like a chicken grasped by a cook, unable to think of anything, thankful only for each extra minute of life. He longed to talk things over with Old Cheng, but there was nothing he could say for words were inadequate to express his feelings. So in spite of all his bitter experiences, he remained speechless like a mute. He had bought a rickshaw and lost it, saved money and lost it, all his efforts ending up in his being bullied and humiliated. He dared not provoke anyone, even had to make way for wild dogs. And yet here he was so browbeaten that he could hardly breathe.

There was no point in dwelling on the past, but what about tomorrow? He couldn't go back to the Tsao's house, so where should

he go? "Can I spend the night here?" he asked, like a stray dog that has found a corner out of the wind and hopes to make do with it for the time being. But even in a little thing like that, he must be sure not to get in anyone's way.

"Sure, stay here, where else is there to go in this snow? Will you be all right on the floor? We can squeeze up together on the bed if you like."

Hsiang-tzu didn't want to crowd him. He said the floor would be fine.

Old Cheng fell asleep, but Hsiang-tzu tossed and turned in wakefulness. The cold draught on the floor quickly froze his mattress into a sheet of iron, and in the calves of his curled up legs he felt cramp coming on. The cold wind blowing through the cracks of the door pierced his head like countless needles. In desperation he closed his eyes and covered his head, yet still he couldn't sleep. The sound of Old Cheng's breathing filled him with irritation, and he felt the only way to relieve his feelings would be to jump up and to pummel him. As it grew colder and colder his throat itched, yet he was afraid to waken Old Cheng by coughing.

Unable to drop off, he thought of getting up surreptitiously and going back to the Tsao house to have a look round. His job was gone, the place was empty; why shouldn't he go and take some things? Because of them, he'd been robbed of his hard-earned savings; it was only right, surely, for them to reimburse him. His eyes gleamed; he forgot the cold, he must get cracking! Such an easy way to get back his hard-earned money, what was keeping him?

He had already sat up, but then he hurriedly lay down again as if Old Cheng had seen him. His heart thumped. No, how could he become a thief? It was bad enough not following Mr. Tsao's instructions and washing his hands of the whole business, how could he steal from his master too? No, no, he'd starve to death rather than steal!

But how could he be sure that others wouldn't rob the place? If that fellow Sun had taken something, who was to know? Again he sat up. In the distance, a dog barked a few times. He lay down once more. No, he still couldn't go. If others stole, well, let them,

his conscience was clear. Poor as he was, he mustn't dirty his hands by theft.

Besides, Kao Ma knew he had come to the Wangs' house. If anything got lost during the night, he would be blamed whether he had stolen or not. Now, not only was he unwilling to steal himself, he was afraid that someone else might break in. Should anything be lost, he would never succeed in clearing himself, not if he jumped into the Yellow River!

No longer did he feel cold, in fact his palms were sweating slightly. What should he do? Jump over the wall and take a look? He daren't. He had given money for his life, he couldn't throw himself into another trap. But what if something got lost?

In a dilemma, he sat up again, his legs drawn up, his face nearly touching his knees. His head kept nodding and his eyes kept closing, but now he dare not sleep. Long as the night was, for him there was no time to rest.

How long he sat there he didn't know, considering one plan after another. Suddenly he had a brain-wave, and reached out to shake Old Cheng. "Old Cheng! Old Cheng! Wake up!"

"What's the matter?" Old Cheng was loath to open his eyes. "Want to piss? The urinal's under the bed."

"Wake up, put on the light!"

"Thieves?" Old Cheng sat up in a daze.

"Are you wide-awake?"

"Hmm."

"Old Cheng, look! This is my bedding, these are my clothes and here are the five dollars Mr. Tsao gave me. Nothing else is there."

"No. What's up?" Old Cheng yawned.

"Are you wide-awake? This is all I've got. I haven't taken a needle from the Tsaos!"

"Of course you haven't. How can we fellows who've always worked on a monthly basis for good families filch from them? If we can work, we work; if not, we quit. How can we steal their things? Is that what you're talking about?"

"Did you get a good look?"

Old Cheng smiled. "No mistake! I say, aren't you cold?"
"I'm all right."

13

Because of the gleaming snow, the sky seemed to lighten earlier than usual. And as many families had bought poultry to keep for the New Year, more cocks were crowing than usual. The cackling of fowls everywhere and the new fall of snow seemed to promise abundance in the year to come.

Hsiang-tzu, however, had hardly slept all night. In the early hours of the morning, he managed to doze off a couple of times, but it was an uneasy half-sleep as if he were floating up and down on some waves. He grew colder and colder until, by the time the cocks started crowing, he simply couldn't stand it any longer. Not wanting to disturb Old Cheng, he curled up his legs and covered his mouth with his quilt to muffle his coughing, but still he dared not get up. He stuck it out, waiting impatiently. Finally dawn broke and from the streets came the sound of carts and the cries of the drivers. He sat up.

As he still felt cold, he got up, buttoned his jacket and opened the door a crack to peep out. The snow wasn't very thick — it had probably stopped falling in the middle of the night. The weather seemed to have cleared but the sky was greyish and indistinct, there even appeared to be a faint grey shadow over the snow. His eye was caught by the large foot-prints he had made the night before. Although covered by snow the hollows still showed clearly.

Partly in order to find something to do and partly to wipe out his tracks, he quietly picked up a small broom from one corner of the room and went out to sweep away the snow. It was heavy and not easy to sweep, for he didn't know where the large bamboo broom was kept and therefore had to bend very low and sweep hard. He cleared away the top layer but there remained some which seemed to cling to the ground. He straightened up twice in the course of sweeping the whole outer courtyard, and finally piled the snow at the base of two small willow trees. By now he was perspiring and felt warmer

and more limber. He stamped his feet and exhaled a long, white breath.

Returning indoors, he replaced the broom and decided to roll up his bedding. Old Cheng who had woken was yawning. His mouth still agape, he mumbled incoherently, "Is it late?" Then he rubbed the sleep from his eyes and fished out a cigarette from the pocket of his fur-lined jacket. A puff or two and he was wide-awake. "Don't go yet, Hsiang-tzu. Wait till I fetch some boiling water and we'll have a nice hot pot of tea. That must have been some night!"

"Let me go for the water," Hsiang-tzu offered amiably. But hardly had he spoken when the terror of the previous night came back to him and his heart suddenly contracted.

"No, I'll go, after all you're my guest!" As he spoke, Old Cheng threw on his clothes without fastening the buttons, then slinging his tattered jacket over one shoulder like a bundle he ran out, his cigarette between his lips. "Why, you've swept the courtyard! Good for you! You really must stay for a drink!"

Hsiang-tzu began to feel a bit easier.

After a while, Old Cheng returned with two large bowls of sweet gruel and a whole lot of little "horse-hoof" buns and crispy fritters. "I haven't made tea, let's have some congee first. Come on, tuck in. If it's not enough, I'll buy more or get some on credit. Those who do heavy work mustn't stint themselves of food. Tuck in!"

By now it was completely light and the room was clear and bright. Holding their bowls in both hands, they smacked their lips as they lapped up the congee. Neither said a word and, in no time at all, the buns and fritters were gone.

"Well?" Old Cheng picked a sesame seed from between his teeth.

"I must be going." Hsiang-tzu looked at his bedding on the floor.

"Tell me what's up. After all, I still don't understand." Old Cheng offered Hsiang-tzu a cigarette but Hsiang-tzu shook his head.

On second thoughts, he felt ashamed to keep anything back from Old Cheng. So, haltingly, he stammered out the whole story of the previous night. It cost him a great effort, but he virtually left nothing out.

For some time Old Cheng digested his story in silence, his lips pursed. "The way I see it, you still have to find Mr. Tsao. You can't let it go at that, and you can't lose your money just like that! Didn't you say that Mr. Tsao's instructions were to make a break if things looked bad? Well, it's not your fault that the detective nabbed you the moment you got out of the cab. It's not that you sold out, but that devil pounced so fast, of course you had to save your own skin first. I don't see that you let him down in any way. Go and find Mr. Tsao and tell him all about it from start to finish. I don't think he can blame you, and with luck he may even refund you your money. Go on, leave your bedding here and look him up bright and early. The days are short, the sun comes up at eight, hurry up and get a move on!"

Hsiang-tzu's thoughts were in a whirl. Though he still felt he had let Mr. Tsao down, what Old Cheng said sounded very reasonable — when a detective threatened him with a gun, how could he worry about the Tsaos' affairs?

"Off you go," Old Cheng urged him again. "Last night I could see you were a bit befuddled. No one can guarantee to keep his head in a tight spot. I'm sure this way of mine will work; after all, I'm older than you and have seen more of life. Off you go. Look, the sun's come out!"

The morning sunlight, reflected by the snow, bathed the whole city in light. Between the bright blue sky above and the gleaming white snow below, everything was a golden shimmer so dazzling that one could scarcely open one's eyes. Hsiang-tzu was on the point of leaving when someone knocked at the gate.

Old Cheng went out to see who it was, and called from the gateway, "Hsiang-tzu, someone looking for you."

It was Wang Erh from the Tso household. He was stamping the snow from his feet and his nose, red with cold, was running. When Hsiang-tzu came out Old Cheng urged them both, "Let's all go inside and sit down." All three went into his room.

"Well, it's like this," Wang Erh rubbed his hands. "I've come to look after the house. How do I get in? The gate's locked. Um, it sure is cold after the snow! Well, Mr. and Mrs. Tsao left first

thing this morning for Tientsin, or maybe Shanghai, can't say for sure. Mr. Tso sent me to look after the house. Um, beastly cold!"

Hsiang-tzu suddenly felt like bursting into tears. Just as he was on the point of following Old Cheng's advice, Mr. Tsao left. At first he was dumbfounded, then he asked, "Didn't Mr. Tsao say anything about me?"

"Uh, no. Up before daybreak they were, in too much of a rush to say anything. The train, well, it left at seven forty. Um, how am I to get into the next compound?" Wang Erh was in a hurry.

"Jump over the wall!" Hsiang-tzu glanced at Old Cheng as if he were handing Wang Erh over to him. He picked up his bedding-roll.

"Where're you going?" Old Cheng asked.

"Harmony Yard, I've nowhere else to go!" All Hsiang-tzu's bitterness, shame and hopelessness were packed into this one sentence. There was no other way out — he had to throw in the sponge. All roads were closed to him, he could only head through the white snow towards that black tower — Tigress. His self-respect and urge to better himself, his loyalty and integrity — all were quite useless. He was fated to lead a dog's life.

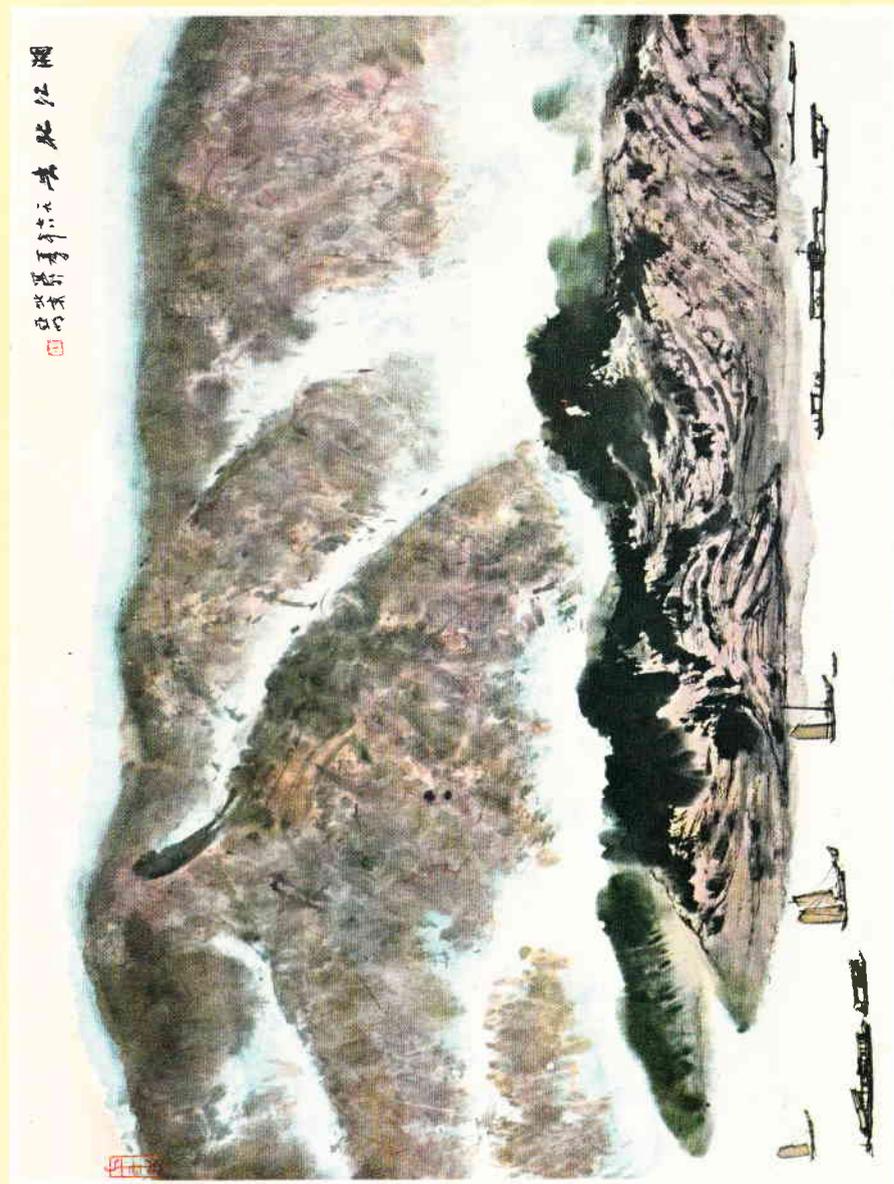
Old Cheng followed up with, "You go your way. Here's Wang Erh to bear witness, you haven't touched a single thing belonging to the Tsaos. Go along then, and whenever you pass this way, drop in for a chat. I may have heard of some good job I could recommend you for. After you've left, I'll help Wang Erh get over next door. Is there coal there?"

"Coal and kindling all in the shed in the back yard." Hsiang-tzu hoisted his bedding-roll on to his shoulder.

The snow on the streets was no longer so white. Tamped down on the tarmac by the wheels of cars it looked more like ice. On the dirt roads, the pity was that horse hooves had splodged black marks over the white. Hsiang-tzu, his mind a blank, trudged on with his bedding-roll.

Illustrated by Ni Chen

The Hsiang River (traditional Chinese painting)
by *Ya Ming*



FABLES

Huang Jui-yun

Two Carrier-Pigeons

A man had two well-trained carrier-pigeons. Each time he released them with messages, they reached their destination correctly. But he soon discovered that they never arrived at the same time. Sometimes one was earlier than the other or vice versa. He wondered if perhaps the two birds occasionally made a detour or took a wrong direction so that was why they arrived at different times. Thus he hit upon the idea of tying them together, so that they would fly together in the right direction and arrive more quickly at their destination.

He put his scheme into practice, tethering the two pigeons together with a foot-long rope and releasing them.

But the birds didn't fly in formation keeping the same distance apart, nor could they fly at the same speed. The rope became entangled. The more they wished to speed ahead, the more they felt restrained.



Finally they dropped from the sky. On the ground they struggled to fly into the air again, but failed and eventually died.

— If you let them fly freely to their destination, although they may make a small detour or fly at a different pace, they will arrive safely. Without such freedom, they will die en route.

A Pottery Jar and an Iron Jar

In the king's kitchen there were two jars. One was made of pottery, the other of iron. The iron jar was very arrogant and always looked down on the other one, sneering at it.

"Bet you don't dare to knock yourself against me," jeered the iron jar.

"Quite right, dear brother," replied the pottery jar modestly.

"That's because you're a snivelling little coward!" the iron jar spoke contemptuously.

"It's not because I'm afraid of you that I don't want to crash against you," the pottery jar began patiently. "Our job is to be containers, not to knock against each other. As far as our job goes, I'm just as good as you. In fact..."

"Shut up!" yelled the iron jar angrily. "How dare you presume to be my equal? Just you wait. I'll smash you to pieces within a few days. Then you'll be finished. But me, I'll last for ever! Nothing can bother me."

"Come now, don't talk like that," said the pottery jar trying to make peace with the other. "We should try to live together peacefully. There's no need to pick quarrels with each other."

"I'm ashamed just to be seen living together with you," roared the iron jar. "Why you . . . you're just nothing! O.K. then. Let's wait and see. Sooner or later you'll be smashed to smithereens."

The pottery jar was silent.

Time passed and the world changed. The kingdom was destroyed. The palace crumbled. The two jars were buried in the ruins of the palace. The dust of the centuries covered the ruins.

After hundreds of years had passed, some people came to the place one day and started digging through all the deep layers of dust. Finally they found in their excavations the pottery jar.

"Hey! Look at this! Here's a jar!" a man exclaimed in surprise.

"Wow! It's a pottery jar!" They all laughed delightedly.

Carefully they all helped to remove the pottery jar from the ruins. They dusted the earth from it and washed it clean. It was exactly



as it had once been in the king's kitchen — plain and beautiful, with its shiny black glaze.

"What a beauty!" one man cried in wonder. "We must be very careful. It's a priceless treasure. We mustn't break it."

"Thank you so much," the pottery jar cried in gratitude. "My iron jar brother was lying beside me. Please, will you go and rescue him as well from the ruins? It was stifling down there."

Immediately the men set to work. They searched carefully, sifting the earth but could not find the iron jar. Instead, they found only a few rusty scraps and even then they couldn't be sure if these were the traces of the iron jar. It had been oxidized.

—Never emphasize another's weaknesses by comparing them to your own strengths. He may have good qualities that you do not see.

Two Dogs

A black dog lived in the eastern courtyard and a spotted one in the western one. Every night whenever the black dog started to bark, the spotted one would howl in unison, only stopping when the black dog ceased.

One day the two dogs started to quarrel.

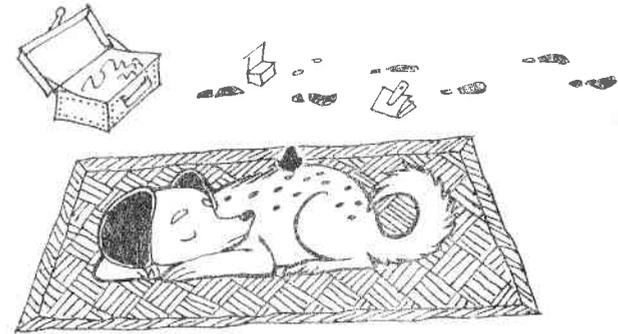
"Why don't you do some useful work at night?" the black dog criticized the other. "Why just waste time barking?"

"You're one to talk!" exclaimed the spotted dog. "What useful things do you ever do? You howl away, while I bark as much as you do, not a bit less!"

"You may bark as much, but there is a great difference between my barking and yours," the black dog retorted. "I start to bark when I hear something suspicious. You just copy me. What's the significance of your barking?"

"You're wrong," argued the spotted dog. "You say you start barking because you're suspicious. Me too. Since we begin barking at the same time, then obviously we both feel suspicious. So how is your barking more significant than mine?"

"For example," the black dog began, "the night before last, when that thief came to my door, I sprang at him barking and chased him



away. If you'd come and helped, between us we could surely have taught him a lesson. But you just stood there in your courtyard howling."

"Don't be so unreasonable!" the spotted dog answered. "It's only because I helped you that you were successful in driving him away. If I hadn't barked so loudly, he'd probably have given you a whipping. And how could I leave my courtyard unattended? The thief might creep into my house."

The black dog said no more. He'd never realized that this little spotted dog who always copied him could argue so skilfully.

Later the thief came to know the nature of the two dogs. One night he sneaked into the western courtyard from the back door and stole everything in the house. The spotted dog remained squatting in the yard because he hadn't heard the black dog bark in the eastern courtyard. He kept silent, not paying any attention to what was happening in his house.

— A skilled debater may silence his opponents, but he doesn't alter the facts of the case.

The Medical Prescription

One day the fox and wolf decided to co-operate. They would try to bite to death all the other animals, large or small, in order to feast on them later. In the name of their king, the lion, they issued a proclamation: "It is said that here in our forest there is a special medicine which gives immortality. You are all hiding it from our king, the lion, and us two. By imperial edict, anyone knowing the prescription for this elixir of life must immediately report it to us. Those who disobey will be punished by death."

All the animals gathered together. The fox was the interrogator; the wolf the executioner. They presided over the meeting in the name of the lion.

The deer was the first to be summoned. He knew nothing about the medicine. The fox announced: "The deer is disobeying the edict. He must die." At once the wolf sprang on the deer.

Then the goat and pheasant were bitten to death on the same pretext.

The entire forest was silent and tense under this reign of terror.

Suddenly the little white hare jumped towards the two monsters, the fox and the wolf.

"I know the prescription you want," said the little white hare bravely.

Shocked, the fox stared at the hare, while the wolf gnashed his teeth. They both knew full well that there was no such prescription anywhere in the world. So they asked: "What did you say?"

"You said you wanted the prescription. I know it," replied the little white hare confidently.

"Then tell us at once!"

"Well, the prescription is this. Our king, the lion, must eat fox heart and wolf lungs immediately!" Turning round to his fellow creatures, the little white hare shouted: "Come on, everyone! This is it! Tear out their heart and lungs and present them to our king, the lion!"

All the other animals immediately understood the little white hare's meaning. United as one by their common hatred, the zebra, the panda, the hedgehog, the squirrel . . . all surged forward to attack the fox and the wolf. Under their combined attack, the two evil animals perished.

— Those who do evil will come to no good end.



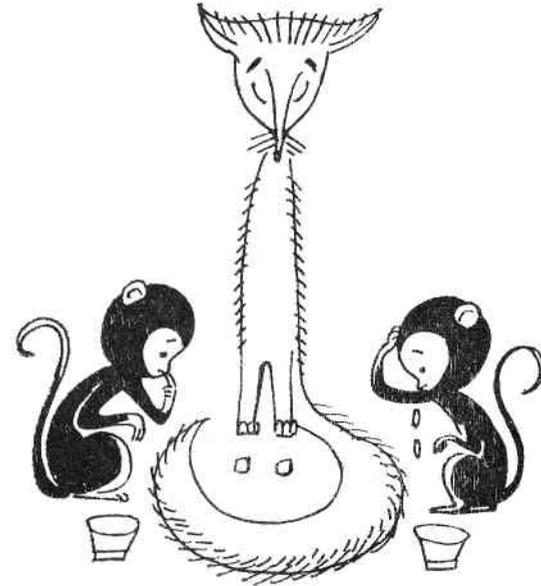
Monkeys on the Omei Mountain

Whenever you visit the Omei Mountain, you will find many lovely monkeys begging food from you. Once two monkeys were given a large piece of roast meat by a visitor, but as they did not know how to divide it between them, they started arguing about it.

Attracted by the scent of the roast meat a fox ran up to them and asked: "What are you quarrelling about?"

"Someone gave us a piece of meat," replied the smaller monkey, "and we want to share it equally between us."

"Oh, is that all?" said the fox assuming a nonchalant tone. "I'm the fairest judge on the Omei Mountain. I'll help you to divide it." He soon broke the meat into two pieces. Then he exclaimed: "*Aiya!* The piece on the left is bigger than the one on the right." So he took a big bite out of the piece on the left. Then he said: "*Aiya!* The piece on the right is bigger now!" He took another bite from that piece, and so on until the pieces of meat grew smaller and smaller, while the fox's belly grew bigger and bigger.



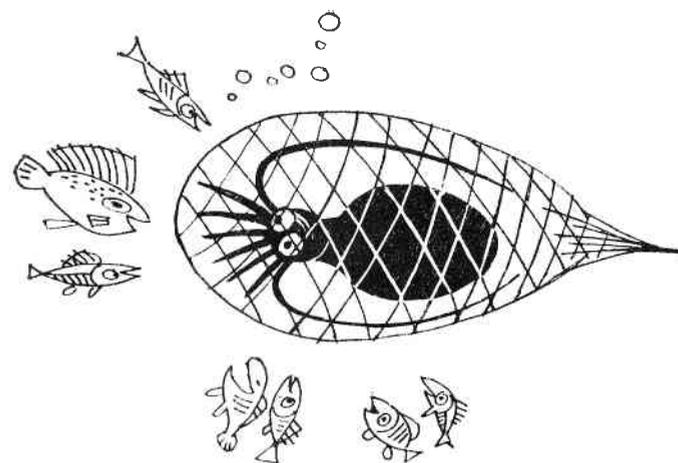
Eventually it dawned on the two monkeys that if this continued, there would be no meat left for them. Springing on the fox, they gave him a good beating. Then they drove him out of the forest with this warning: "You hypocrite! Pretending to be just and saying that you want to help us, but in fact you only did it for your own ends."

A Cuttlefish in a Net

The sea is full of mysteries, and one is a fish-like creature with a pair of tiny eyes, a big belly and some tentacles. Quick as a mouse and cunning as a thief, it ejects an ink-like fluid, clouding the water. People call it the cuttlefish or "black thief" in Chinese.

Once, while searching for food, the cuttlefish discovered a shoal of minnows among the weeds. The cuttlefish thought to himself: "If I attack now, I may only catch one, as all the others will scatter in panic. That would hardly be a good catch." So he sent out a cloud of black inky fluid. The water immediately darkened and the little minnows, very inexperienced and naive, didn't know what had happened. They just came to a halt. Seizing his chance, the cuttlefish attacked and ate his fill.

Another time, the cuttlefish persuaded an old croaker to accompany him looking for food in some deep water. As they swam into the depths, the cuttlefish's sensitive tentacles felt the water around him being disturbed by something. He guessed it was a shoal of fast-approaching large fish. After ejecting his inky fluid he managed to escape, abandoning the croaker to its fate. The fish caught the



croaker, while the cuttlefish, hiding in a crack of a rock, watched the scene with a gleeful smile on his face.

Another time, the cuttlefish was caught in a net. As usual he adopted his smokescreen tactics, ejecting his inky fluid and turning tail quickly. But he only swam into another part of the net. Ejecting more dark fluid, he swam hastily in another direction, only to be trapped again.

The fisherman had caught the cuttlefish and although he struggled desperately, in all directions, he could not avoid his fate.

Illustrated by Miao Ying-tang

Mao Tun

On Creative Writing

The principles according to which and the way in which a writer observes, analyses, generalizes and distils the countless social phenomena and transforms them into his artistic imagery, dictate his style of writing. He is also guided by his world outlook, but this cannot be equated with the former considerations.

Where classes have different outlooks in a society, there are naturally differences between the styles, choice of subject and artistic imagery of the literati and the folk literature of the working people. Even writers of the same class background with the same basic world outlook may adopt different styles of writing because of their different approaches to literature and art. These will shape the various literary trends which are as numerous as are the different styles of writing.

This is the fourth part of the well-known writer Mao Tun's recent article *Notes on Creative Writing*.

In fact there are only two influential trends in literary history: romanticism and realism. There are many other "isms", but they basically belong to the same category, namely formalism.

Formalist literature and art are either for the amusement of the exploiting classes or attempts to dupe the working people. They serve as an opiate for the exploiting class and help to consolidate its position of power. They can also be merely a writer's subjective impressions, his attempts at originality and the setting up of a new style. Apart from a few devotees, formalism has few admirers. These literary trends have one common aspect. They seek elegance or magnificence in form, admired by the feudal lords and exploiters; they describe the mysterious and the bizarre, so that they become unintelligible. They totally neglect content and ideas. In extreme cases, writings devoid of content are advocated. Thus they lack vitality. Each new school exists for a very brief period in only one or two countries. Then like something out of fashion, it is soon discarded.

Classicist literature popular in seventeenth-century Europe may also be classified as a kind of formalism, adhering to certain stereotyped art forms, such as the law of the Three Unities. Writers such as Molière and Racine opposed the tyranny of the church and the feudal monarchy. They represented their times, but they were not opposed to the bourgeoisie. Their works can be understood and appreciated by the general reader. Apart from such classicists with their materialist approach to life, the dominant ideological school of thought was rationalism.

Rationalism considers reason the sole source of true knowledge, denying the necessity for experience or sensory knowledge in the process of cognition. It fails to see or accept that experience is the basis of knowledge. Reason was divorced from experience. The rational process became absolute. Rationalists believe that truth is derived directly from reason, so the criterion for truth is not practice, but whether the ideas are clear and logical. The classicist approach models itself on ancient Greek and Roman works, portraying a society far from real. The characters have the quality of sculpture, being fixed and unchanging, rationalized by the writer's imagination.

This brief look at the history of literature helps us to see that the so-called laws of writing, such as the "Three Prominences",* so trumpeted about by the "gang of four" as their great "creative discovery", were in fact nothing but the spittle of classicism spilled over from the spittoons of history. The "gang" attempted to force vivid and colourful reflections of reality into a stereotyped framework. Classicism during the seventeenth century played a progressive role, however, opposing the church, monarchy and medieval philosophy. The outstanding works of the classicists went beyond pure formalism and as such are worth studying even today. The "gang of four" merely digested the left-overs and regurgitated these as their new "creative discovery". Their rubbish was pure retrogression.

Like the classicists, the "gang of four" denied the necessity of learning from life. They preached a doctrine of "letting the subject-matter take command", which meant the writer could write without experience and investigation, working in isolation at his desk. The classicists advocated an ideal hero fashioned through reason; the "gang of four" insisted on the principal hero being "great, sublime and perfect". Thus no development in his character was possible; he remained fixed and unchanging. They fabricated their pernicious literary theories to enable them to usurp Party and state power. It was all part of a carefully planned plot. They thus violated Chairman Mao's instructions concerning the principle of writing and distorted the explicit Marxist-Leninist theory of creating the typical.

The integration of revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism as advocated by Chairman Mao sums up and develops our fine cultural traditions in literature and art. These have their origins far back in history. For example there are the folk-songs in the *Book of Songs*** which could be called realist works, while the *Li Sao****

*In depicting characters, prominence was to be given to the positive characters; among positive ones, prominence was to be given to the heroic characters; and among these, prominence must be given to the principal hero.

**The first anthology of Chinese poems to be collected from 11-6th centuries BC.

***The work of the great romantic poet, Chu Yuan (340-278 BC).

is romanticism. Tu Fu (712-770), the great Tang poet, may be classed as a realist, while Li Po (701-762), another fine Tang poet, was a romantic. The writer who presents what he considers is social reality based on his own observations and analysis is a realist. He reveals his own political thinking and individual will. Romantic writers, on the other hand, express their ideal, will and political thinking through their imagination and fantasy. They project a desirable development in society in their own minds.

Whether or not the objective reality depicted by a realist writer accords with the laws of social development depends on his world outlook. A progressive realist writer can reflect the essence of reality while not necessarily giving guidance for the future. Only Marxists can deeply reflect reality and predict future trends. Such realism we call revolutionary realism.

The writer's world outlook also determines whether or not the ideal romantic world portrayed in his work is merely utopian or has a scientific basis. Eighteenth-century European romantic writers utilized ancient legends, creating idealized characters out of their hatred for and disgust at their society. Their rebellious characters were resplendent heroes, powerful enough to shake their society and so inspire their readers to rise against the iniquities and contradictions inherent in it. Although the characters were often based on legend, the reader's reaction was one of realist opposition to the evils of his society. This is the positive side of romanticism and such works are positive romantic writings. Then there are those which idealized the pastoral life of the Middle Ages, transporting the reader into a world of fantasy far removed from the brutal reality of his day. Such works are passive romanticism. Positive romanticism is the product of a progressive world outlook. But positive romanticism for all its virtues is not based on scientific thought, it is merely a reflection of utopian socialism in literature. Only a Marxist world outlook can develop positive romanticism to conform with the laws of social development, and thus produce revolutionary romanticism.

In 1958, Chairman Mao advanced the theory of combining revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism. In the new phase of socialist revolution and socialist construction, Chairman Mao pointed out the dialectical relationship necessary for our culture, namely the guiding role of revolutionary romanticism based on revolutionary realism. Our people responded to the call of socialist construction and the prospects of a beautiful future. Their work and struggles were the background for the combination of these two principles. Life itself is a struggle, manifest in the class contradictions between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, between men and nature, in the transformation of the old self into the new, until one is remoulded into a revolutionary armed with Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought. It is not enough to depict the great communist panorama and the struggles of our people against the outside world. One must also show their inner struggles and their communist spirit. Anything less diminishes the educational significance.

The integration of revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism is the scientific summary of the laws of literary development on the basis of the proletarian cultural movements and the experiences of progressive writers and artists. It is the creative development of Marxist-Leninist literary theory and a fine contribution to this. It clearly indicates the correct orientation for our revolutionary cultural workers.

A model of this are the poems of Chairman Mao. Vice-chairman Yeh Chien-ying and other proletarian revolutionaries of the older generation such as Commander-in-Chief Chu Teh and Marshal Chen Yi also demonstrated this in their poetry. Apart from their fine style, they show how to integrate romanticism and realism, so that their poems reflect the great struggles of our people as well as the magnificent spirit of the writers, their proletarian world outlook and their personality.

Since this theory was first advanced, many writers have worked hard to explore the field and have produced some fine works. With the smashing of the "gang of four" and our efforts to modernize our

country, the situation is now better than before. Also since the policy of letting a hundred flowers bloom and a hundred schools of thought contend is being encouraged again, the people can expect from our writers and artists new achievements from this integration of revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism in their work.



Translations of Foreign Literature

In modern China, the translation of foreign literature could be said to have started with Liang Chi-chao, a leading representative of the new bourgeois reformists, who published in 1898 some abridged translations of foreign short stories and wrote a preface urging that more be translated. That same year, Lin Chin-nan, another pioneer in the field, introduced the French novel, *La Dame aux Camélias*, by Alexandre Dumas *Fils*. He produced some 160 books, including 100 based on English and 27 on French ones, re-writing them after being told their contents. During the 1920's and 1930's, encouraged and supported by our great writer Lu Hsun, the translation of foreign works into Chinese gained a new impetus. Emphasis was given to the translation of Russian revolutionary literature as well as that of Eastern European countries. Lu Hsun was also concerned that Chinese writers should learn from foreign classics. He himself translated *Dead Souls* by Gogol, the great Russian realist writer.

After the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, foreign literature was translated in a planned and organized way. From then until the advent of the Cultural Revolution seventeen

years later, more than 6,000 foreign literary works were published. Unfortunately, owing to the interference and sabotage of the "gang of four", translation work was practically stopped during the ten years after 1966. This abnormal situation in China's cultural exchanges with foreign countries was rectified with the overthrow of the "gang of four" in October 1976.

In the autumn of last year, selected short stories by two noted modern Japanese writers, Kiyoshi Inoue and Sawako Aliyoshi, were the first to re-appear in our bookstore windows. The translator had selected from their large collections stories reflecting modern Japanese society and illustrating the writers' skills. These stories tell of the struggles of the Japanese working people, family conflicts and the problems of intellectuals. The stories of Sawako Aliyoshi, in particular, reveal her deep love and concern for Japanese culture.

To mark the hundredth anniversary of the birth of the great Urdu poet, Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938), a collection of about thirty of his poems was translated and published. Writing at the dawn of the nationalist movement in his country, he called on the people to unite in their struggle for independence and liberate themselves from European domination. His poems represent the spirit that led to the establishment of the state of Pakistan. The translation, made directly from Urdu into Chinese, is thought to be an accurate representation of the poet's thoughts and feelings.

Several modern Latin American dramas were popular theatre attractions in China during the early 1960's. Now the recently published *Selected Latin American One-act Plays* has introduced these to the public at large, and includes works from Argentina, Colombia, Peru and the Dominican Republic. They represent a new realistic style of drama, which also attempts to absorb elements of Western and classical Spanish drama as well as Indian folk plays. For general background information, *A Short History of Latin American Literature* by the Chilean literary critic Arturo Torres Riosco was recently published. Another book coming out soon, *Quetzalcoatl*, by the Mexican President José Lopez Portillo, is a novel about a legendary revolutionary hero, who helped the Mexican peasants develop agriculture.

Great achievements have been attained in the literature of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and this year two translations of Korean works were published here. One, *Becdu Mountain*, is a long poem by the late revolutionary poet Tso Kie Chen, and describes the Battle of Bochenbo against the Japanese imperialists in 1937 under the command of their great leader, Chairman Kim Il Sung. The other, *The Flower Girl*, is an opera very popular with Chinese audiences. The novel on which the libretto was based is also being translated.

Cultural exchanges between Australia and China have entered a new phase, with the publication of a collection of twenty short stories by the Australian writer Henry Lawson (1867-1922), introducing Chinese readers to Australian society of that period. The author, who was raised in the outback on a poor homestead, travelled widely around the vast country in search of work. He vividly describes the lives of the gold prospectors, farmers and small traders, while sympathetically writing about the situations of women and children.

The re-appearance of Arabic classical literature such as the *Arabian Nights* has been widely welcomed. It has been reissued in an edition of more than 600,000 copies. An example of modern Arabic literature, published for the first time in China, is a collection of short stories by Mahmud Temur, an Egyptian writer. The Temur brothers are considered to be among the pioneers of modern Egyptian writing.

Jaroslav Hasek's *The Good Soldier Schweik*, a novel beloved by the Czech people, has been reprinted. It tells of the resistance of Schweik to the army of occupation of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The present edition includes the famous original illustrations by Joseph Lada.

Chinese readers have always been interested in Western classics, especially those of the nineteenth century. *Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe, *Vanity Fair* by William Thackeray and *Hard Times* and *David Copperfield* by Charles Dickens are among the British books republished. Previously there was a simplified translation of *Ivanhoe* by Sir Walter Scott, but this has now been published in full by two well-known translators. A happy event in the translation of English literature is the publication for the first time of the complete works

of William Shakespeare, in an eleven volume edition, of ten volumes of plays and one of poems. The translation of most of Shakespeare's plays was by Chu Sheng-hao. The present edition contains both improved and new translations. It is almost a century since the translation of Shakespeare's works began in China.

In the past six months, four novels of the great nineteenth-century French writer, Honoré de Balzac, have become available, namely his *Eugénie Grandet*, *Le Père Goriot*, *Le Curé de Tours* and *Illusions Perdues*. The latter appears for the first time and is essential to an understanding of Balzac. Other works by French authors republished are a *Selection of Short Stories* by Guy de Maupassant, *Six Comédies* by Molière and *Les Misérables* and *Quatrevingt-treize* by Victor Hugo.

A collection of poems by the little-known German poet, George Weerth, who was a close friend of Marx and Engels, and *Germany: A Winter's Tale*, by the world-famous poet Heinrich Heine, are again available. The latter has been translated by Professor Feng Chih, a specialist in German literature.

Pa Chin, one of China's most famous writers and translators, has re-translated and published the great Russian novel *Virgin Soil* by Turgenev, and is currently working on a translation of another Russian work, *My Past and Thoughts* by Herzen.

A new translation of the Spanish classic *Don Quixote* by Cervantes has received much praise. During his recent visit to China, King Juan Carlos of Spain met the translator, Yang Chiarg.

Particularly popular among Chinese youth are *The Gadfly* by the British writer Ethel Boole Voynich, and *Spartacus* by the Italian author Raffaello Giovagnoli.

Also very popular are the fairy tales of the great Danish writer Hans Christian Anderson. His *Fairy Tales and Stories* appeared in the first half of this year, and in September, another volume of his *Fairy Tales* was published. A complete collection of his fairy tales will be republished in Shanghai at the end of this year.

Research into foreign literature is once again active. Histories of European, American and French literature are being written, and the first and second volumes in this series will appear soon. Chi Hsien-lin, a specialist in Indian literature, has finished *On the Trail*

of the *Ramayana*. Professor Yang Chou-han is planning a book on Shakespeare, while a series of essays on English literature by Professor Wang Tso-liang is nearing completion.

One basic regret, however, is that too few modern literary works have been translated. Contemporary literature will certainly become available to Chinese readers as the cultural exchanges between the Chinese people and peoples of the world increase.



A Girl's Face

ORNAMENTAL PLATE DESIGNS

by Li Ping-fan



A Mountain Village



Planting Trees



Early Snow



Flowers

Ornamental Plate Designs by Li Ping-fan

Visitors to my home are always attracted by the ornamental plates decorating my walls. Made of white porcelain, the plates have beautiful pictures painted on them. One entitled *Early Snow* is a picture of seven lively, gaily-clad children, with satchels over their shoulders en route to school. They are walking side by side over a field covered with snow. *A Mountain Village* shows a newly-built cottage beside an orchard. The house and plentiful fruit suggest the hard work of the villagers. Children are streaming out of their village school to report their marks to their parents.

This unique, new art-style is the work of a well-known woodcut artist, Li Ping-fan. He became interested in art at the age of fifteen and has been working as an artist now for forty years. He was deeply influenced by the progressive woodcut movement started by Lu Hsun in 1931, and became one of the many artists who aided the revolution through their work. Some of his finest woodcuts during the late thirties were *Lining Up for Relief Porridge*, *Night Shift*, *Homeless Children*, *Unemployed Workers*, *Subsisting on Garbage* and other progressive works, highly critical of the corruption and exploitation of the old society and showing solidarity with and sympathy for the poor



Li Ping-fan

and dispossessed. This same sense of justice and outrage at exploitation is to be found throughout his artistic career. Li Ping-fan during the latter half of the 1940's went to Japan and taught there. He helped to organize a progressive woodcut association, held exhibitions, published books and continued to expose the corruption of the Kuomintang and their cruel treatment of the masses.

In the early 1950's he returned to China, to the new socialist society. His style and themes changed in response to the transformation of the society. He strove to find new forms of expression and as a result created many fine works praising the new life. His paintings of children have been especially admired. In an international woodcut exhibition in 1959, he won a silver medal for a woodcut of children. For many years he kept a diary in the form of sketches. This became the basis of his ornamental plate designs. In recent years he has painted over 700 ornamental plates reflecting daily life. Whether of children, flowers, autumn, or winter, Li Ping-fan's pictures express his deep love of life. His style is noted for its composition and symmetry. *A Girl's Face*, for example, is drawn in proportion, though the artist has emphasized her sparkling eyes and slightly parted lips.

Such artistic exaggeration produces a vivacious effect. The girl's hair-style and head-scarf are beautifully designed. In his landscapes, Li Ping-fan uses a traditional Chinese painting technique to bring harmony and contrast to his pictures.

One feature of his unique style is his use of bold, black contour lines, which stand in sharp relief against the white plates. They give a brightness and firmness to his images, like light and shade in woodcuts. They are like a frame and foundation, harmonizing these two contrasting colours. To avoid monotony, Li Ping-fan employs a method of line-engraving for bolder lines or larger patches of colour, using a style or knife to cut dots and lines, producing a shading effect. The head-scarf of the girl is an example of this.

Li Ping-fan tries to obtain the same effect with his colours as that produced in his coloured woodcuts. He uses simple saturated ones that are thick, bright and shining. If he is painting trees, he will use purple instead of green, so that the effect will be a mixture of brilliant black and purple. His bold use of colour and his skilfully executed designs demonstrate his high artistic achievements.

Homeless Children (1942)



INTRODUCING CLASSICAL CHINESE LITERATURE

Hsu Teh-cheng

Szuma Chien and His "Historical Records"

Szuma Chien, the outstanding historian and biographer of the Western Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 8), was born in 145 BC in a village in Hsiayang, present-day Hancheng County, Shensi Province. He spent his early childhood there until the age of ten, when his father, Szuma Tan, took him to the capital, Changan. Szuma Tan was appointed the grand historian by Emperor Wu, in charge of the calendar, astronomy, and the historical records. A scholar, he gave his son a strict education, grooming him to be his successor. Szuma Chien's later achievements were due in part to his father's sound training.

Szuma Chien liked to travel, and wherever he went he collected writings and legends about historical figures, besides studying local geographical conditions and customs. He visited many historical sites. Later, in his position as a minor court functionary, he travelled widely throughout the country with the emperor. Thus he was able to do research which complemented the incomplete historical documents and records.

He succeeded to his father's position in 108 BC three years after his father's death. As the grand historian he had easy access to the imperial library and archives. He began sorting out and studying all the books and materials, in preparation for his great work, *Historical Records*.

He began writing his book in 104 BC. Then, in 99 BC, occurred an incident which almost cost Szuma Chien his life. That year General Li Ling and five thousand troops were sent by the emperor to fight the Hunnish hordes. His troops were outnumbered six to one and surrounded by the enemy. They were defeated because of their heavy losses in men and the shortage of supplies. General Li Ling was himself captured and surrendered. He had been one of Szuma Chien's colleagues and a grandson of the well-known Han-dynasty general, Li Kuang, whom Szuma Chien had once met and for whom he had great respect. Szuma Chien's sense of justice impelled him to speak on Li Ling's behalf, which angered the emperor. He was thrown into prison and castrated. Humiliated by the prison guards and suffering bitterly, Szuma Chien contemplated suicide. What saved him was his realization that such a death was of no value. He thought of Chu Yuan who had written the *Li Sao*, his famous poem of lament while in exile, and of the strategist Sun Pin, who had written *The Art of War* after his feet had been cut off as a punishment. Many immortal works had been written in times of deepest grief or suffering. Szuma Chien therefore took heart and resolved to continue his humiliated existence and fulfil his lifelong dream.

Eventually he was pardoned and appointed as the Palace Secretary, a post usually held by eunuchs. Instead of being honoured by the appointment, he felt all the more humiliated and depressed. In a letter to a friend he described his feelings thus: "At home I feel listless, not knowing what to do. Outside I have no direction at all. When I think of my humiliation, perspiration pours down my back, soaking my shirt." It was in this wretched and desperate frame of mind that he wrote his book. It was an act of great will-power and determination. He finally finished it round about the year 93 BC.

His *Historical Records* was the first biographical history book, which recorded the birth and development of the Chinese people from

the time of the legendary Yellow Emperor to that of Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty, a period of about three thousand years. It gave an outline of Chinese history during the primitive society, the slave society and the early stages of feudalism. Szuma Chien's great achievement was to create a new form of general history, the first of its kind.

With over 520,000 written characters, the book consists of five parts. "Twelve Basic Annals" is about the lives of the emperors. "Thirty Hereditary Houses" describes other high-ranking feudal princes, noblemen, officials and generals. "Seventy Lives" concerns people in different sectors of the society. There are "Ten Tables" of chronological events, and "Eight Treatises" dealing with ceremony and law, astronomy, water conservancy, economics and other subjects. People, however, are its main theme, and the book records the main historical events in these biographies. Szuma Chien's method of embodying history in biographical sketches has served as a model for Chinese historians ever since. After the book had appeared, the form of compiling history during the Chinese feudal society was basically delineated.

Szuma Chien, like all outstanding historians, attempted to be historically accurate. He was also talented in selecting typical events, reconstructing certain episodes and vividly depicting scenes and figures from the past. His book is an example of a fascinating historical panorama, crowded with people and events from the past three thousand years.

Although his work gave prominence to emperors, feudal nobles, officials and generals, the author without class bias expressed his sympathy towards the exploited classes and their resistance. For example, immediately after the death of the first emperor of Chin, in 209 BC, a peasant uprising took place led by Chen Sheh. Nine hundred peasants pressed into military service rebelled, and an armed struggle aimed at the Chin rulers swept the country. Before long, the vanguard of Chen's army reached the capital, Hsienyang. Though the uprising was suppressed within half a year, it nevertheless shook the very foundations of the Chin Dynasty. Out of respect, Szuma

Chien wrote a record of Chen Sheh, ranking him among the great feudal personages of the times.

Another rebel leader after Chen was Hsiang Yu. He was of noble origin and became the leader of a joint army opposing the Chin rulers. After the fall of the Chin Dynasty, Hsiang Yu fought for five years for the throne against another peasant rebel army led by Liu Pang, who had formerly been a village bailiff. Liu eventually triumphed after more than a hundred battles. It was he who founded the Han Dynasty. Szuma Chien's descriptions of their struggles demonstrated his literary talent to the full. Several episodes are extremely well-written and dramatic. There is, for example, a banquet scene at Hungmen in the record of Hsiang Yu, in which Liu Pang outnumbered by Hsiang Yu's troops goes to meet him. Hsiang Yu has over 400,000 troops stationed there. Szuma Chien describes the tense atmosphere at the banquet, the charges and apologies, the attempt at assassination and the escape. Liu's strategist Chang Liang and General Fan Kuai, Hsiang Yu and his adviser Fan Tseng, are all so vividly portrayed that the readers feel witnesses to the scene.

The literary merit of Szuma Chien's book lies in his fine characterization. There are many personages from all walks of life, and over a hundred biographies. He had an eye for detailed descriptions of both people and scenes, which make his writings come alive. His style, with its forceful dialogues and vivid narrative, is both concise and explicit. By reporting a few remarks of his characters, the author gave a greater depth to his work, making a deep impression on his readers.

For centuries, Szuma Chien's *Historical Records* has been loved by the people for its rich content, literary style and profound analysis. The book, it has been generally acknowledged, was the finest of its genre, comparable to the works of Li Po (701-762) and Tu Fu (712-770) in the field of poetry, and the calligraphy of Wang Hsi-chih (321-379). Lu Hsun praised it as the greatest historical work by Chinese historians. Generations of writers and dramatists have based their novels and plays on its many exciting episodes, which are extremely popular. *Historical Records* is an extremely valuable legacy. On the occasion

of Szuma Chien's 2,100 anniversary in 1955, scholars both at home and abroad wrote articles praising his great contribution to both ancient Chinese history and literature. He can be regarded as the Chinese Herodotus, the ancient Greek historian who has been called the father of history by Western historians.



Lord Pingyuan and Yu Ching

Chao Sheng, Lord Pingyuan, was a member of the royal house of Chao, the ablest of all the young lords. He was a great patron whose protégés numbered thousands. Prime minister under King Hui-wen and King Hsiao-cheng, he resigned three times and three times was reappointed. His fief was Tungwucheng.

Lord Pingyuan's storeyed mansion stood next to a commoner's house from which a lame man once limped out to draw water, only to be heartily laughed at by one of the lord's concubines. Next day the lame man came to the lord's gate and said, "I hear you are such a great patron that worthy men come to you from a thousand *li* away, because you value them more than your concubines. It is my misfortune to be lame, but one of your concubines has laughed at me. I want that lady's head."

Lord Pingyuan consented with a smile. Once the lame man had gone, however, he said with a laugh, "What a fool, wanting me to kill my beauty because of one laugh! Ridiculous!" And he did not kill her.

Within a year or so, more than half of his protégés and retainers had left one after the other.

"I have never treated you gentlemen impolitely. Why are you all leaving like this?" he asked in surprise.

One of them stepped forward to answer, "By not killing the lady who laughed at the lame man you showed that you love feminine beauty but despise worthy men. That is why so many are leaving."

Then the lord cut off the head of the offending concubine and himself presented it with apologies to the lame man. After that his protégés gradually returned.

At this time, Lord Mengchang in Chi, Lord Hsinling in Wei and Lord Chunshen in Chu were trying to outdo each other in their treatment of worthy men.

When the army of Chin besieged Hantan, Chao ordered Lord Pingyuan to seek aid by entering into an alliance with Chu. He decided to take with him twenty strong, fearless protégés skilled in the arts of peace as well as of war. "If we can succeed by peaceful means, well and good," he said. "If not, let us take an oath on blood in the hall to bring back an agreement. I shall not seek men elsewhere, only in my own household."

He selected nineteen men, but could not decide on the twentieth. Then one of his retainers, Mao Sui, came forward and volunteered, saying, "I hear you want to join Chu in an alliance against Chin, my lord, and that you mean to choose twenty men from your own household but are still one short. Will you take me to make up the number?"

"How many years have you been here?" asked Lord Pingyuan.

Mao Sui answered, "Three."

"An able man in this world, like an awl kept in a bag, quickly shows himself. If you have been here for three years, praised by none and unknown to me, you can hardly have any talent. No, no, you had better stay here."

"I am asking now to be put in the bag," said Mao Sui. "Had I been put there earlier, the awl would have thrust right through instead of simply showing its tip outside." So finally the lord agreed to take him. The other nineteen exchanged amused glances in silence.

By the time they reached Chu, Mao Sui had convinced the other nineteen of his ability in argument.

At sunrise Lord Pingyuan and the king of Chu began to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of an alliance, but no agreement had been reached by noon.

Then the nineteen others urged Mao Sui, "Go up, sir!"

Mao Sui, his hand on his sword, mounted the steps and said to Lord Pingyuan, "Whether this alliance is advantageous or not can be settled in two words. How is it that negotiations started at sunrise yet no agreement has been reached by noon?"

The king of Chu demanded, "Who is this man?"

Lord Pingyuan answered, "One of my retainers."

"What impudence!" shouted the king of Chu. "I am discussing matters with your master. What business have you here?"

His hand on his sword, Mao Sui advanced and said, "Your Majesty dares to shout at me because Chu has powerful forces; but within these ten paces they are no help to you. Your life is in my hands. How dare you shout at me in my master's presence? I have heard that King Tang ruled the world although he only started with seventy *li* of land, and King Wen with his kingdom of a hundred *li* ruled over all other states. These kings had no great armies, yet they could control events and exercise their might. Now with Chu's five thousand *li* of territory and million halberdiers, you have the resources to become a great conqueror. The whole world should be powerless to withstand you. Yet that young cur Pai Chi with a few tens of thousands of men in one battle took the cities Yen and Ying, in another burned the royal tombs at Yiling, and in a third brought shame upon your ancestors. We blush for you over this undying disgrace, yet you are not ashamed. We are proposing this alliance for your sake, not for our own. How dare you shout at me in my master's presence?"

"Yes, yes," said the king of Chu. "Just as you say. My state shall ally with yours."

"Is that settled, then?" asked Mao Sui.

The king said, "It is."

Then Mao Sui ordered the king's followers to fetch the blood of a cock, dog and horse. On his knees he presented the bronze dish of blood to the king of Chu, saying, "You must make a blood pact,

sir. Then my master will pledge himself, then I." So the alliance was concluded in the court.

Then holding the dish of blood in his left hand, Mao Sui beckoned to the other nineteen with his right, "You shall swear with blood too," he said. "You yes-men can only reap what others have sown."

Having made the alliance and returned to Chao, Lord Pingyuan said, "I shall never set myself up as a judge of men again. I have judged perhaps a thousand men, or several hundreds at least, and thought I could not miss any man of talent; but I was mistaken in my judgement of Mao Sui. His going to Chu has made our prestige higher than that of the nine tripods of Hsia or the great bell of Chou. His three inches of tongue have proved mightier than an army a million strong! I shall never set myself up as a judge of men again." Thereafter he treated Mao Sui as his most honoured guest.

After Lord Pingyuan's return to Chao the king of Chu sent Lord Chunshen with an army to Chao's rescue, while Lord Hsinling of Wei took over General Tsin Pi's army by trickery to aid Chao. Before the arrival of these forces, however, the troops of Chin were pressing Hantan so hard that the city was on the verge of surrender, and Lord Pingyuan was desperately worried.

Li Tung, the son of a steward in a hostel, asked, "Don't you care if the state of Chao is overthrown?"

"If Chao falls I shall be captured," replied Lord Pingyuan. "Of course I care."

"The citizens of Hantan are in such sore straits they are using bones for fuel and exchanging their sons to eat," rejoined Li Tung. "Yet in your inner palace are hundreds of slave girls and concubines who wear silk and embroidery and have grain and meat and to spare, while the people lack sackcloth to cover their nakedness and would welcome husks to eat. Exhausted, with no weapons left, they are sharpening sticks to serve as spears and arrows; yet your bronze vessels, bells and chimes remain intact. All these will be lost if Chin conquers Chao. But if Chao is saved, you will have no lack of such things. You should make your ladies take part in the work of the troops and distribute all you have to supply our men. In their desperate state, it is easy to win their gratitude."

Lord Pingyuan took his advice and assembled three thousand men ready to risk their lives. With Li Tung they charged the soldiers of Chin and made them fall back thirty *li*. Just at that juncture Chu and Wei came to their assistance. Then the men of Chin raised the siege and Hantan was saved. Li Tung fell in battle, but his father was enfeoffed as marquis of Li.

Because Lord Hsinling had saved Hantan, Yu Ching decided to ask for a larger fief for Lord Pingyuan. When Kungsun Lung heard this he drove by night to see Lord Pingyuan and said, "I hear that Yu Ching means to ask for a larger fief for you because Lord Hsinling saved Hantan. Is this true?" Told that it was, he said, "That would be very wrong. It was not because you are the wisest man in Chao that the king made you his chief minister, nor was it because you had achieved much and all others nothing that he gave you Tungwucheng as your fief. He did so because you are his kinsman. And you accepted the chief minister's seal and fief without declining on the grounds of unworthiness, also because you are his kinsman. Now if you accept a fief because Lord Hsinling saved the capital, this would mean that you had accepted cities in the past as a member of the royal family and were now asking for a reward like a common citizen. That would be most improper. Yu Ching stands to gain either way. If he succeeds you will be indebted to him; if he fails you will have to be grateful to him for trying. You must not listen to him, sir!"

So Lord Pingyuan declined Yu Ching's offer.

Lord Pingyuan died in the fifteenth year of Hsiao-cheng.* His descendants held the title after him until the fall of Chao. Lord Pingyuan gave very generous treatment to Kungsun Lung, a skilled logician, until he was ousted from favour by Tsou Yen, who came to Chao to expound the origin of things.

Yu Ching was an itinerant politician. Shod in straw sandals and carrying an umbrella, he spoke with King Hsiao-cheng of Chao. After one interview he was given a hundred *yi* of gold and a pair

*251 BC.

of white jade discs, while after a second interview he was made chief minister. Thus he was known as Yu Ching or Minister Yu.

In the battle against Chin at Changping, the men of Chao were worsted and lost their commander. The king consulted Lou Chang and Yu Ching, saying, "Our army has been defeated and our commander killed. What if I attack with all our men at arms?"

"That would be useless," said Lou Chang. "Better send some high-ranking envoy to treat for peace."

But Yu Ching said, "Lou Chang proposes peace for fear our army will be beaten, but making peace depends on Chin. In your view, does Chin want to destroy our army or not?"

"Chin is going all out to destroy us," replied the king.

Yu Ching said, "If you take my advice, you will send envoys with rich gifts to Chu and Wei. Wanting our gifts, these states will admit our envoys. Once our envoys enter Chu and Wei, Chin will take fright, suspecting that all the other states have allied against it. That is the only way to achieve peace."

The king did not accept this advice, however, but told Lord Pingyuan to negotiate and sent Cheng Chu to Chin. When Chin accepted his envoy, the king of Chao summoned Yu Ching and said, "I have asked Lord Pingyuan to negotiate for us, and Chin has accepted our envoy Cheng Chu. What do you say to that?"

Yu Ching answered, "You will fail to make peace, the army will be destroyed, and all the world will go to congratulate Chin on its victory. Cheng Chu is a nobleman, and the king of Chin and the marquis of Ying (Fan Sui) are bound to make a great show of respect for him. When Chu and Wei see you are treating for peace with Chin they will not come to your rescue, and when Chin sees that it will not agree to make peace."

Sure enough, the marquis of Ying paraded Cheng Chu before all the envoys from different states, who came to congratulate Chin on its victory, and Chin refused to make peace. Then the great defeat at Changping was followed by the siege of Hantan, so that Chao became the laughing-stock of the world.

After Chin raised the siege of Hantan, the king of Chao held court and told Chao Shih to sue for peace and offer Chin six counties.

Yu Ching asked, "Has Chin withdrawn because it is exhausted? Or do you think it is still strong enough to advance but has called off the attack for your sake?"

The king answered, "Chin went all out in its attack. This withdrawal must be owing to exhaustion."

"So Chin attacked as hard as it could, yet was unable to take the city and has withdrawn, exhausted. If you give it what it was unable to take, you are helping Chin to attack us. Next year it will attack again, and you will be doomed."

The king repeated this to Chao Shih, who said, "Can Yu Ching really know the strength of Chin? Suppose, knowing that Chin can do no more, we keep back these small patches of land, if it attacks again next year you will have to give up your palace to obtain peace."

"If I take your advice and give Chin these counties, can you guarantee no further attack next year?"

"I can't promise that," said Chao Shih. "In the past the three states of Ts'in were on good terms with Chin, whereas now Chin is friendly with Han and Wei but has attacked us. This shows that we have not served Chin as well as Han and Wei have done. Now I can enter the Pass, present gifts, and serve Chin as well as Han and Wei have done. If there is an attack on us alone next year, that will mean you are still not serving Chin as well as Han and Wei — I cannot be responsible for that."

The king repeated this to Yu Ching, who countered, "Chao Shih says that if we do not make peace, next year when Chin attacks again we shall have to give your palace to obtain peace; but if we make peace with Chin, he cannot guarantee no further attack. What is the use, then, of giving up six cities? If Chin attacks again next year and to make peace we give up more land which it cannot take, we shall be cutting our own throats! Better not make peace. Although Chin launches strong attacks, it cannot take our six cities. Although we have given ground, we have not lost these six cities. Now Chin has withdrawn, exhausted, its troops tired out. If we use these cities to induce other states to attack Chin, exhausted as it is, we shall receive compensation for our cities from Chin. Our country is still strong.

Why should we tamely surrender territory, weakening ourselves and making Chin even more powerful?

"Chao Shih says Chin is friendly with Han and Wei but has attacked Chao, implying that Han and Wei will not help us, that we are standing alone, and that this shows we have not served Chin as well as Han and Wei. He wants you to give up six cities to Chin each year, which will soon amount to taking the surrender of all our cities lying down. Next year when Chin asks for cities, will you give it them or not? If you refuse, all past efforts will have been wasted and you will be asking for trouble. If you agree, you will soon have no more to give.

"The proverb says, 'When the powerful launch strong attacks, the weak must give ground.' If you let Chin have its way, it will add to its territory without fighting, and that will strengthen Chin while weakening Chao. Chin as it grows stronger will never cease seizing land from us as we grow weaker. There is a limit to your territory, but none to their ambition. If things go on like this, Chao will disappear."

Unable to make up his mind, the king consulted Lou Huan, just back from Chin. "Which is better, to give Chin land or not?"

"That is not for me to say," replied Lou Huan.

"Still, what is your private opinion?"

"Does Your Majesty know the story of Kungfu Wen-po's mother? Kungfu served in the state of Lu, and when he fell ill and died two women killed themselves in their chambers. His mother, receiving word of this, did not mourn for him. Asked the reason by his nurse she said, 'The sage Confucius was driven away from Lu, but he did not follow Confucius. Now two of his wives have killed themselves because of his death, which shows how little he thought of elders, how much of women.' These words spoken by his mother prove that she was a good mother, whereas if spoken by his wife they would simply have shown jealousy. Thus the same words may have a different meaning, depending upon the speaker. Now I have just come from Chin. If I urge you not to cede these cities, it would be bad advice. If I urge you to cede them, you may suspect me of speaking on behalf of Chin. So I dare say nothing. If I were you, I would give up these cities." The king agreed with him.

When Yu Ching knew this he went to the king and said, "He is hiding his real motives. You must not agree!"

Lou Huan, learning of this, went back to see the king, who told him what Yu Ching had said. Lou Huan replied, "No, Yu Ching sees one side only, not the other. Now all other states are gloating over this trouble between Chin and Chao. Why? They hope to side with the stronger to take advantage of the weaker. They have sent congratulations to Chin on defeating our army. We had better give up some land at once to make peace, to sow doubts in the others and placate Chin. Otherwise they will take advantage of Chin's might and of our weakness to carve up our state as if it were a melon. That would mean the end of Chao and all these speculations about Chin. This is why I say Yu Ching sees one side only, not the other. I hope Your Majesty will make up your mind and not hesitate any longer."

Word of this reached Yu Ching, who went back to the king and said, "What a dangerous proposal! Lou Huan is working for Chin. This would make the other states suspect you more without placating Chin. Why didn't he say that this would show the world your weakness? Besides, when I advised you not to cede those cities, I had something else in mind. Chin has asked you for six cities. Well then, offer six to Chi, Chin's sworn enemy. For then, if asked to join in an attack on Chin in the west, Chi will agree before you finish your speech. In this way you will cede something to Chi but gain compensation from Chin, while both you and Chi can take your revenge and display your power to the world. If you make known your intention then Chin will send rich gifts and sue for peace before your armies set out. When you accept and Han and Wei hear of it, they will think highly of you and send rich gifts too. So at one stroke you will make friends with three states, while your position and Chin's will be reversed."

The king approved and sent Yu Ching eastwards to the king of Chi to discuss an alliance against Chin. Before Yu Ching's return, an envoy from Chin had reached Chao. When Lou Huan knew this, he fled. The king enfeoffed Yu Ching with a city.

Later Wei offered to ally with Chao and the king summoned Yu

Ching to consult him. Yu Ching first saw Lord Pingyuan, who said, "I hope you will speak in favour of the alliance." Then he went in to the king. When told of the proposal Yu Ching said, "Wei is making a mistake."

"That is why I have not agreed," rejoined the king.

"Then Your Majesty is making a mistake."

"You say Wei is mistaken in seeking an alliance, and I am mistaken in refusing. Are we then not to consider an alliance at all?"

Yu Ching replied, "I have heard that when a small state allies with a large one, it is the large state that benefits if all goes well, while if there is trouble the small state suffers. Now Wei as a small state is asking for trouble, while you with your large state are missing a golden opportunity. That is why I say that both Wei and Your Majesty are mistaken. I think the alliance would be to our advantage."

The king approved and entered into an alliance with Wei.

For the sake of Wei Chi, Yu Ching gave up his fief of ten thousand families and the seal of a chief minister. He fled with Wei Chi from Chao and found himself in difficulties at Taliang. After Wei Chi's death he was not so highly regarded, and therefore he started to write a book based on material from the past as well as his observation of recent events. There were eight chapters in all, including the chapters "On Character", "On Titles", "On Speculation" and "On Policy". This book, passing judgement on good government and bad, has been handed down as the *Annals of Yu Ching*.

The Grand Historian comments: Lord Pingyuan was a fine nobleman in troubled times, but he failed to keep in sight what was most important. As the proverb says, "Profit makes fools of the wise." Lord Pingyuan, led astray by Feng Ting's bad advice, was responsible for making Chao lose more than four hundred thousand men in the Battle of Changping and nearly losing Hantan.

Yu Ching was a man of shrewd judgement and great insight, and his plans for Chao were certainly well devised. Yet he let pity for Wei Chi involve him in trouble at Taliang. Even an ordinary man should not be such a fool, let alone a man of his talent. However, if not for his troubles and misfortunes, he would have been unable to write his book which has been handed down to posterity.



CULTURAL EXCHANGE

Lu Chi

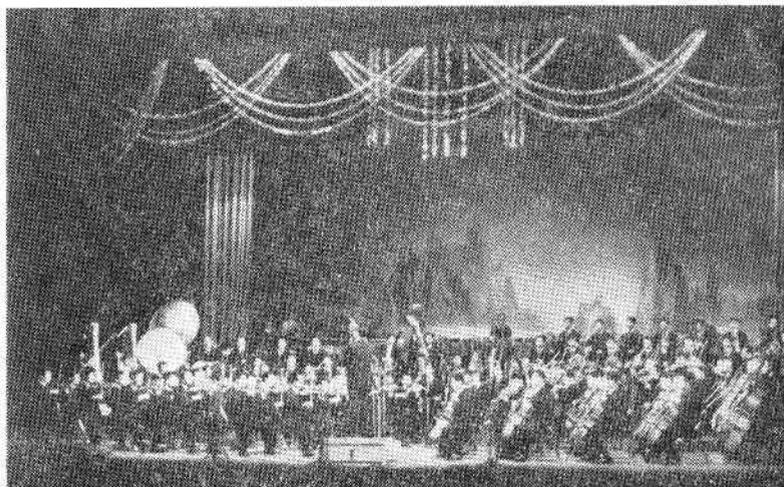
The Korean National Symphony Orchestra in China

Recently, the Korean National Symphony Orchestra gave performances in the Chinese cities of Peking, Shanghai, Changsha and Hangchow.

Their entire repertoire, based on the life of the Korean people, reflected their socialist revolution and construction led by their great leader Kim Il Sung during the past fifty years. Their composers have a good understanding of the lives of the workers, peasants and soldiers and have incorporated this into both their songs and music, depicting their hardships and joys.

This achievement is due to Chairman Kim Il Sung's directive to develop the people's revolutionary music based on national melodies and the efforts made by Korean musicians. The orchestra's programme, so rich in national flavour, clearly demonstrated this.

Lu Chi is a noted composer and chairman of the Union of Chinese Musicians.



A national style is important in the musical development of many countries, and it is an issue about which there is much debate. Chinese musicians should note and learn from the remarkable achievements of Korean composers in this respect.

Korean national instruments have also been improved, giving, for example, a wider range and volume while still retaining their original tone. Thus these instruments can now be included in modern orchestras for performances of various kinds of national music.

Another feature of the repertoire was that their music had been approved and accepted by the masses, with its distinct themes, clear logic, natural composition and good rhythm. Such music reaches the hearts of the people. Anything less cannot be understood by the masses.

The moving performances of the Korean National Symphony Orchestra owed much to the outstanding musicians and conductors, Kim Pion Hua and Li Jen Su. The orchestra was united in its feeling for and appreciation of the music. They played with great sensitivity and gave a profound interpretation of the difficult items. This is indeed a fine achievement, which many orchestras fail to attain.

CHRONICLE

A Shansi Opera Cleared of False Charges

The Shansi opera, *Going Up to Peach Peak Three Times*, which was condemned four years ago by the "gang of four" and Yu Hui-jung, one of their close followers then in the Cultural Group under the State Council, has been cleared of all false charges in a recent article published in the *People's Daily* by the Theoretical Group of the Ministry of Culture.

The opera, based on an article entitled *A Horse* published in the *People's Daily* in 1965, portrayed how a sick horse was sold and bought by two production brigades in Funing County, Hopei Province. Because Wang Kuang-mei, wife of the former chairman of the People's Republic Liu Shao-chi who was overthrown during the Cultural Revolution, had been sent to work in Peach Orchard Village which was also in Funing County during the socialist education movement in 1964, the "gang of four" and their followers insisted that the opera reflected her experiences and was really praising the disgraced Liu Shao-chi. They insisted that like the heroine, Wang Kuang-mei had sent a big chestnut horse to Peach Orchard Village to help with the spring ploughing in 1966. A recent investigation has shown that this so-called evidence was fabricated by Chu Lan, a group of "gang of four" writers.

The criticism of this opera spread throughout China in the spring of 1974. It quickly created a climate in which to criticize all litera-

ture and art which the "gang of four" disliked, and they claimed that the appearance of this opera was a "come-back of the black line". Many people were wrongly criticized during this movement.

The *People's Daily* article pointed out that the "gang of four" fabricated the charges against the opera in order to launch an attack on literature and art. Their main target was none other than the Party Central Committee headed by Chairman Mao and Premier Chou. As the editors wrote in the article: "In order to differentiate between right and wrong, we must repudiate all the false charges against the opera, *Going Up to Peach Peak Three Times* and other works. We must rehabilitate all the literary workers who were wrongly condemned at that time. We must totally rid ourselves of the 'gang of four's' counter-revolutionary policies in literature and art, as illustrated by the attacks on the opera."

Four Essays Attributed to Lu Hsun

Four essays, recently attributed to Lu Hsun, are believed to have been written by him on the eve of the May 4th Movement in 1919.

One is a review of a fine arts journal; the other three are short essays entitled *Advice to a Man of the Old Regime*, *Confucians and Emperors* and *The Power of Old Operas*.

These four essays were published under the pseudonym Keng Yen in the *Weekly Review*. The first appeared in the second issue on December 29, 1918; the other three in 1919. All four were republished in the first issue of the *Journal of Peking University* this year, with an accompanying article by Sun Yu-shih, a faculty member of the Department of Chinese Language and Literature, Peking University. The pseudonym, Lu Hsun's relationship with *Weekly Review* and the style of the four essays have led Sun Yu-shih to the conclusion that they were indeed written by Lu Hsun.

Tang Tao and other specialists on Lu Hsun support Sun Yu-shih's thesis.

Memorial Hall for Tang-Dynasty Poet

The construction of a memorial hall for the great Tang-dynasty poet, Li Po (701-762), is going ahead in Chiangyu County, Szechuan Province.

Li Po was born near the River Sujab, south of Lake Balkhash, Central Asia. In 705, his family moved to Chinglien, Chiangyu County where he lived for fourteen years, until at the age of eighteen he went to Chengtu. The sites of Li Po's house and the terrace on which he liked to study are still to be seen to this day in Chinglien.

On the 1,200 anniversary of Li Po's death in 1962, the Szechuan Provincial Bureau of Culture decided to build a memorial hall in Chiangyu County, and their proposal received much support. Because of sabotage by Lin Piao and the "gang of four" during the Cultural Revolution, the plan was shelved.

However, since the overthrow of the "gang of four", work has once again been resumed. According to the original plan, the hall was to be built in Chinglien. Now a new site has been chosen in a new park in the county seat.

Much material for display has been amassed, including various editions of Li Po's works, paintings based on his poems and other related material. The opening of the memorial hall is scheduled for October next year.

Peking Concert of 19th-century East European Music

At a week-end concert in Peking, the Central Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Han Chung-chieh performed 19th-century Czech, Hungarian and Polish music. This is the sixth concert since the start of their popular week-end ones in July.

The programme included two Czech works, Antonin Dvorak's *9th Symphony in E Minor*, *From the New World*, and *Vltava*, the second in a cycle of six symphonic poems from *Ma Vlast* (My Country), by Bedrich Smetana. From Hungary, there was Franz Liszt's *Piano Con-*

certo No. 1 in E Flat Major, and from Poland, Stanislaw Moniuszko's *Overture to the Opera Halka*.

Shanghai Modern Drama Festival

The 1978 Shanghai Festival of Modern Drama has ended. Eighteen plays, of which twelve were written this year, were performed.

The Children's Theatre of the China Welfare Institute performed *Tunghsin*, which is about an old teacher, Tunghsin, who followed the Party's educational policies, and who, despite persecution and his enforced retirement by followers of the "gang's" line, continued to teach children at home. *An Excellent Answer* is a comedy exposing the "gang's" persecution of intellectuals and how they tried to sabotage scientific development. *The Long March of Our People*, with an orchestral accompaniment, was performed by the Shanghai Modern Drama Troupe. It skilfully portrays in a series of scenes the struggles of the Chinese people over the past century, and their efforts to modernize the country now. *Appointment*, a comedy, and *A Problem*, a one-act play, deal with the problem of love for young people. Also performed was *On the Other Side of the Ocean* by the playwright Tu Hsuan, concerning the struggles of the peoples of Africa against hegemonism.

Sculpture Exhibition of Workers and Peasants

One hundred and twenty sculptures by workers of Chungking, Szechuan Province and peasants of Huangpi County, Hupeh Province were recently exhibited in Peking, reflecting factory and rural life today and encouraging increased production, hard work and the high moral standard of our socialist society.

The Chungking workers began making their sculptures in 1972, their numbers growing from seven to more than three hundred. Many factories and mines since then have established their own amateur sculpture groups. The peasants in Huangpi County started making

their sculptures in 1973 and over a hundred production brigades in the county now have their own groups.

New Cartoon Films

The Shanghai Animated Film Studio has recently produced a number of new cartoon films. These include *One Night in an Art Gallery*, which is a devastating exposure of the "gang of four's" cultural despotism and oppression. *Two Young Peafowls* describes the life of Chinese children and the Tai people in the southwest of the country. It employs a traditional brushwork style in its pictures.

The Panda's Shop and *The Fox and the Hunter* are based on two fairy tales. The former tells of a little panda who is in charge of a shop in the forest, its theme being serving the people. The latter is about a crafty fox who disguises himself as a wolf to fool an inexperienced young hunter, satirizing cowardly people who fear their enemies.

Romanian Film Week in China

A Romanian film week which started on August 22 was held in Peking, Tientsin, Shanghai and thirteen other major cities in China. Three colour feature films, "*Oak Tree*" *Very Urgent*, *Operation "Bus"* and *The Escape* were shown, reflecting the struggles of the Romanian people for national liberation and building socialism in their country.

The film week was sponsored by the Ministry of Culture.

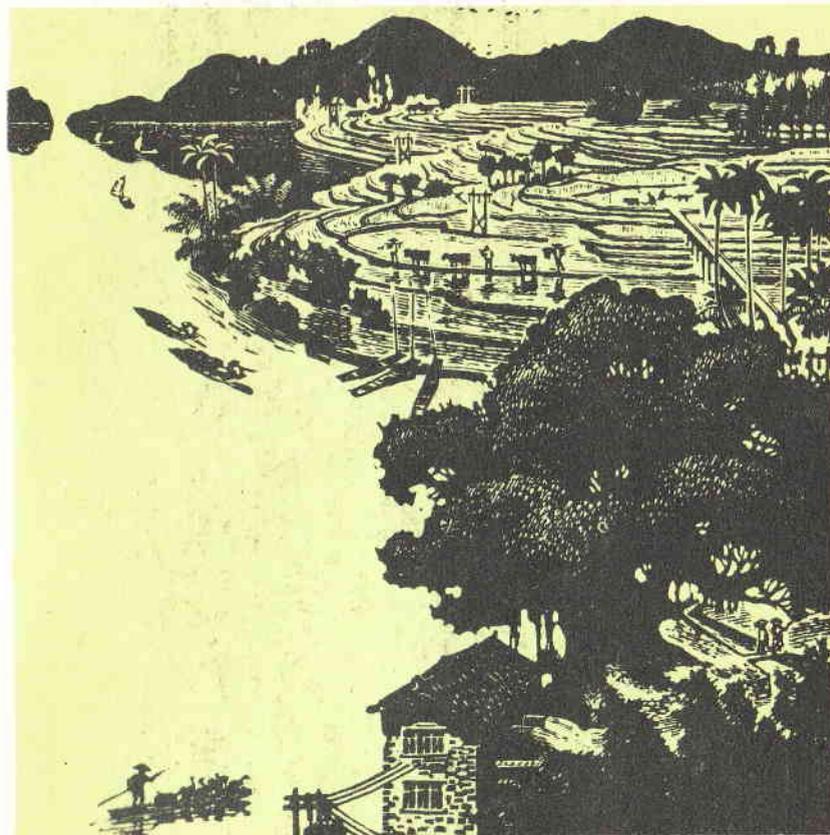
Three Thousand Years Old City Site Excavated

A three thousand years old site of the ancient city of Chufu has been excavated in Shantung Province. Chufu was the capital of Lu State from the eleventh to the second century B.C.

Located between the Szu and Yi Rivers in present-day Chufu County, the site has a perimeter of 11.85 kilometres and an area of

19.75 square kilometres. Initial excavations reveal that the surface area of the ancient city was fairly flat and rectangular in shape. It had eleven gates and eight main streets.

The remains of Lu palaces, potteries, bronze casting and iron smelting works have been found. Existing for about one thousand years, Chufu was one of the longest-surviving cities in ancient China. It thus has great historical and archaeological significance.





中国文学

英文月刊1978年第12期

本刊代号2-916

DISTRIBUTED BY
CB China Books
& Periodicals, Inc.
2929 - 24TH ST • SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94110
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