CHINESE LITERATURE

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CHINESE LITERATURE
QUARTERLY

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THE TEST

HSIA YEN

TIME: *1953.*

PLACE: *An industrial city.*

CHARACTERS:

TING WEI, *director of Hsin Hua Electrical Machinery Works.*

CHENG YU-CHING, *his wife.*

TING SUNG, *his daughter.*

YANG CHUNG-AN, *vice-director.*

HSUEH WEI-TEH, *chief of a workshop of the Works.*

HSU TA-MIN, *deputy-chief of same.*

CHIEN PEI-CHIH, *chief engineer of the Works.*

YU CHIA-HUA, *secretary to the director of the Works.*

WANG HUI, *wife of Yang Chung-an.*

FANG KE, *secretary of the Works' Party Committee.*

MA HSIAO-PAO, *leader of a production team.*

HO FU-CHING, *deputy-chief of another workshop.*

CHU FAN, *clerk.*

MESSENGER.

" . . . In particular, since the victory of China's new-democratic revolution, there has grown up among some of the cadres within the Party a most dangerous kind of self-conceit. They become swell-headed over certain achievements they have made in their work, forgetting the modest attitude and spirit of self-criticism which should animate a Communist Party member. They exaggerate the role of the individual and emphasize individual prestige. They think there is no one equal to them in the whole wide world. They listen only to flattery and praise from others, but cannot accept others' criticism and supervision; they suppress and revenge themselves against those who criticize them. They even regard the region or department under their leadership as their personal property or independent kingdom. . . ."

— The Communique of the Fourth Plenary Session of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China

ACT I

It is a Sunday in March, 1953. Late in the afternoon.

SCENE: *the sitting-room (also used as a study) in a two-room flat in an apartment house, with a row of windows at the back. The room is simply furnished with a desk and an old-fashioned easy chair before the windows and a bookshelf and a little tea table to the right. On the left, a second desk stands against the wall, smaller than the first, apparently used by a schoolgirl. A little round table and chairs in the foreground.*

The curtain rises on an empty stage. The evening sun comes through the curtains to fall obliquely on the desks.

A girl is heard singing, off-stage, in a clear, sweet voice. Footsteps.

The train is running,
The wheels are singing,
Food and timber,
And metals without number,
To the cities are rushing.

She comes in with a bunch of peach blossoms in full bloom. The singing is kept up:

Load more, run faster,
Run faster, load more,
Carrying ores to factories,
And machinery to villages

as she puts the flowers into a vase. A man comes in after her. He puts his coat, which he has been carrying on his arm, on the back of a chair.

TING SUNG, *the girl, is fifteen years old. She wears a white shirt, a pale-green woollen sweater and a navy-blue skirt. She has two short pigtails. A robust, straightforward, warm-hearted girl.*

The man, TING WEI, *is her father. He is in his early forties, of medium height, has heavy eyebrows and large eyes. He is clean-shaven, but his chin still looks blue.*

The girl sings again:

Smoke-stacks rise like a forest,
Molten iron is boiling,
New records keep occurring,
For brains our workers are best.

TING [*sitting down and lighting a cigarette, interrupts her*]: Where's your mother got to all of a sudden?

SUNG: She's taking brother back to the nursery. [*Takes some little bottles of insects and specimens of plants out of a string bag.*]

[*A messenger comes in with a note, which is immediately grabbed by* TING SUNG.]

MESSENGER: Department Head Li just called and left this note. [*Exit.*]

[TING SUNG *opens the note.*]

SUNG: Let me read it to you. It's nothing confidential. [*Pushes her father back into his chair, leans on it and reads.*] "Comrade Ting Wei: Just dropped in, but found all of you gone to the park. Glorious weather for a Sunday, isn't it? I came to let you know that your request for a transfer to a factory job is granted. The City Party Committee's official notification is on the way. If the Cadres Training School winds up soon enough, it is expected that you will report for duty at your new post within the next week."

[TING WEI *snatches away the note and reads it eagerly, his face flushed with excitement.*]

TING [*speaking to himself*]: Run a factory!

SUNG: You run a factory?

TING [*looking at her and thinking it over*]: What's wrong with that? Think I'm not capable of doing it, eh?

[*But the girl has gone back to her own desk, where she is busy sorting out her specimens.*]

TING [*to himself*]: Application approved! How quick!

SUNG [*to father, complaining*]: I told you to use the net but you had to go and do it with your hand! Now look what you did. Such a beautiful big butterfly and you crushed its wings!

TING: But you didn't get a thing, you with your net, and all that running and sweating too! I used my hand all right, but I caught a butterfly the first time I tried. [*Looking at her.*] These butterflies look all the same to me. Why do you want so many?

SUNG: The same? Not at all. This is the powdery kind, with oval wings. And this one has got two little feet attached to the rear wings. It's called a phoenix butterfly. [*Retorts like the spoiled child she is.*] How can you say they're the same?

TING: Oh, I didn't know there was so much scholarship in it.

SUNG: Well, there is, I can tell you.

[*Finding her absorbed in sorting out her specimens, he returns to his own desk, opens a book, and reads. But only for a minute, for the girl, suddenly finding herself hungry, goes off and enters with biscuits, some of which she hands her father.*]

TING: You shouldn't eat with those dirty hands of yours. They have just touched insects.

[*Laughing rather foolishly, the girl starts wiping her fingers on a tiny handkerchief.*]

TING: Sung-sung.

SUNG: Um?

TING: Let me have a look at your algebra exercise book.

SUNG [*laughs*]: Ha, ha! Can't work out algebra problems, I see!

TING: Nonsense. I finished all twelve problems last night.

SUNG: Then what do you want my exercise book for?

TING: Oh, just to check up the answers, that's all.

SUNG: You are kidding me. There's nothing easier than working out these quadratic equations. Substitute the answer you got for x and see if it works out. [*The naughty girl again.*] I know you haven't been able to work out your x's and that's what's bothering you, isn't it? Well, well, try again before I teach you tonight.

TING [*with a wry smile*]: You are a bad girl.

SUNG [*as if it had suddenly occurred to her*]: But Dad, why should you study mathematics too? Mother's been laughing at you. She said it's like taking up the violin at the age of eighty. A silly old man's eccentricity.

TING: You don't know what you are talking about. Mathematics is the key to any branch of science. And, mind you, it's just as important to you as to anybody else. You've got to study it and study it hard, whatever you want to be in future, a biologist or, as your mother would have it, a singer. Mathematics renders the most important service to all branches of technology. It helps one systematise knowledge and sort out one's ideas. If one doesn't have a firm grounding in mathematics while young. . . .

SUNG [*pouting*]: But I just can't learn it. At the last examination —

TING [*teasing her*]: You didn't pass, was that it?

SUNG: Who told you that? I got a 4.

TING: Work harder and get a 5 next time.

SUNG: Yes, but. . . .

[*People are heard talking in a loud voice downstairs.*]

TING: Mother's back.

SUNG: Who is she talking to, I wonder? [*Opens the door and exit.*]

[CHENG YU-CHING *enters with* YANG CHUNG-AN. *Dressed in the grey uniform of a government cadre, she is in her early thirties, of medium height, and somewhat plump.* YANG *is under forty, liverish, getting fat, rather excitable, accustomed to speaking at the top of his voice.*]

CHENG: Look who's here.

TING [*taken completely by surprise. His eyes lighting up, he rushes forward and warmly shakes the newcomer by the hand*]: Hello, Old Yang!

YANG [*gripping* TING*'s shoulders and holding him at arm's length for a long, searching scrutiny*]: You've hardly changed at all, only —

TING: You are getting fat.

YANG: 10 stone 5. Just right. You haven't changed a bit, look exactly the same. But you've put on some weight, Yu-ching. [*To* TING.] I met her at the door. If she hadn't greeted me first, I wouldn't have dared to. . . .

CHENG: I'm getting on. It's a good many years.

TING: Don't say she's getting fat. After a few visits to the theatre recently, she's been seriously considering returning to the stage. That's where she thinks she belongs.

CHENG: That's pure slander. [*To her daughter.*] Say hello to Uncle Yang. Why, don't you recognize who it is?

YANG: Sung-sung! [*Pats her head.*] How time passes! Grown to be quite a young lady already. Remember I used to carry you about in my arms? [*Laughs.*]

[*The blushing girl can't for the life of her remember who it is.*]

YANG [*very much at home now, pulls a chair and sits down*]: Have you been here all these years?

TING: Not exactly. I stopped here for about a month when I came south with the People's Liberation Army. Then I got switched to the Revolutionary College, where I worked two and half years. Came here only last year. Still the old line, education. The Cadres Training School, you know.

YANG: Imagine being in the same place without knowing it! It all comes from doing a different sort of work.

TING: But tell me all about yourself. Since you came south with the army, you stayed. . . .

YANG: Yes. After the take-over of the factory, I was appointed military representative. Then vice-director.

TING [*elated*]: So you are running a factory too!

YANG: Why, don't I look it, or what?

TING: Oh yes, every bit of it. Yang, what a bit of luck that we old pals should come together again!

CHENG: Excuse me. I'll go and make some tea. [*Exit.*]

YANG: I only learned you were here yesterday, and wanted to come right away. Lucky today's Sunday. Well, old man, when will you report to duty?

TING: What's that?

YANG: What! Don't you know? Or are you only pretending?

TING: No, no. You mean. . . .

YANG: The appointment is already announced. You're to be the director of our factory. So you see we'll be together again. [*With real joy.*] It's taken a weight off my mind, to know that you are coming.

TING: No, really. What are you talking about?

[CHENG YU-CHING *enters and pours out tea.*]

YANG: I am not like you. I don't like pulling people's legs. [*Speaking to* CHENG.] So he hasn't given up his old habit of pulling people's legs?

CHENG: Well, he is getting middle-aged; you can't expect him to drop old habits. [*Laughs.*] During one of the mass movements, he was criticized for not being serious enough for a person on the staff of the Cadres Training School. Not half serious enough. In fact, he's rather frivolous. At home he loves to joke with the girl, he's always making faces and all that sort of thing.

YANG: Bravo! He's one of those cheerful revolutionaries.

TING: But to come back to the factory, old man. The one you've been talking about is. . . .

YANG: Hsin Hua Electrical Machinery Works. It makes generators, motors, transformers. . . .

TING: So that's it. How is production?

YANG: You don't need to worry about that, so long as I'm on the job, old man. I heard about the City Party Committee deciding to send a director along last month. I was a bit worried at first, wondering who could it be. You know the sort of person I am. I was afraid that I might not get along with him. You can imagine how happy I was yesterday when I got the official notice and it turned out to be you! It's really splendid! An old comrade-in-arms, an old colleague—what more could one want? The factory is all right. Don't worry. I have been feeling my way for three years and I think I have just about got my bearings now.

TING: Of course there couldn't be anything better than to work with you again. But I know nothing at all. I'm not psychologically prepared. Could you tell me a little. . . .

YANG: What's the hurry? I'll make a detailed report to you in a day or two and after that I'll have the heads of the various sections report to you.

TING: But I want you to brief me a bit now. You know how I can't bear waiting.

YANG: Righto. Can't sleep unless you've got to the bottom of things, is that it? But where shall I begin?

TING [*picking up* DEPARTMENT HEAD LI*'s note from the desk and handing it over to* YANG]: You see it was only five minutes before you came that I knew about the decision at all. The official notice hasn't come yet. They must have sent it to the school. Department Head Li only told me this much—a factory job. [*Pauses.*] Factory! And I don't even know what factory it is. Now the one you mentioned, how big is it?

YANG: Compared with the factories in the First Five-Year Plan, it isn't particularly big, but still, it's got more than a thousand workers.

Besides, it's one of the special concerns of the City Party Committee, which takes a direct hand in its affairs.

TING: But what about its production?

YANG: It's very much better now. At the take-over, it was a wreck of a factory. Everything was in a mess. Things began to change only after several big campaigns—campaigns to root out corruption, waste and bureaucracy, to introduce democratic reforms, to carry out production reforms. Now look at me, old man, and see how grey my hair has become in the last three years. Not an easy job, I tell you.

TING: No, I can see how tough it is. You are simply wonderful! But tell me, where did you learn the whole secret? [*Affectionately thumps him on the shoulder.*]

YANG [*laughing with great satisfaction*]: Praise from an old comrade is praise indeed. My hair has not gone grey in vain. But you know others don't see it your way. Work is full of difficulties these days. Your work's checked from above and criticized from below. You are expected to outdo yourself every time. When you have fulfilled the production targets, they demand that you carry out what's known as balanced production. And everything has to be done democratically. I believe I'm not a particularly un-democratically-minded person—anything but that! But all the same at the last conference of Party delegates I came under rather strong fire. So, before you come, old chap, you must be psychologically prepared. [*Abandons himself to loud laughter.*]

TING: But there's criticism and expression of opinion everywhere, as there ought to be. . . .

CHENG [*enters with a plate of biscuits and pours more tea*]: Help yourself. Just biscuits. Comrade Chung-an, how is Young Wang?

YANG: Young Wang? Well, she's no longer so "young" now, but getting middle-aged. Mother of five children. What can you expect?

TING: Five?

YANG: Yes, three boys and two girls. Four of them in the three years we've been here.

CHENG: Four kids in three years?

YANG: Number Four in January, '52, a boy, and Number Five in December, same year, a girl.

CHENG: Where is she working?

YANG: Also in the factory. Still the old line. In charge of education and recreation in the trade union committee. Far too many kids for a job like that. So I said, "You'd do better to clear out, stay home and be a model mother." But she won't listen to me. She chooses to stick to her job.

TING: Four kids in three years!

YANG [*with a wry smile*]: If only the factory's production figures could rise like that, doubled in the space of a year!

[*Exit* CHENG YU-CHING.]

TING: But didn't you say that production was going on very well, that the targets were all reached? . . .

YANG: By ordinary standards it should be all right. Even with our old equipment and old staff, production has risen steadily from year to year. I dare say that would be quite all right for other factories, but the snag is, ours happens to be an electrical machinery works.

TING [*to whom everything is new*]: How does that change the picture?

YANG: Electrical machinery is one of the focal points of production in the first year of the Plan. [*Takes out a notebook from his pocket, and turns over the leaves as he speaks.*] It is earmarked for the biggest increase over last year's figures. To be specific, generators by 119 per cent and motors by 41 per cent. Of the eighteen main products of the factory, these two are to have the highest percentages of increase.

TING: Certainly not an easy matter.

YANG: No, it isn't. But apart from the size of the jobs, the chief difficulty lies in personnel. Of course in appointing you director the City Party Committee shows that it's really giving the factory a lot of attention. However, I did a little stock-taking and found that not a single addition had been made to the original team of five sent along to take over the factory; that is, not a single new cadre in three years. And of the five that came with me, there's not one left, either. Some were switched to other jobs, the rest have gone under.

TING: Gone under?

YANG: That's it. Two of them, to be exact. You probably still remember Young Chiang. He worked under you in East Shantung. Well, he went under during the campaign against corruption, waste and bureaucracy.

TING: Oh yes, I seem to have heard about him. [*After a pause.*] But surely, young cadres must've come forward?

YANG [*shakes his head*]: Fresh from school. No good.

[*It is getting late. The stage looks darker.*]

TING [*suddenly recalling something, casts a glance back-stage and calls out*]: Ching! [*No answer. Turns to his daughter.*] Go and get your mother.

YANG: Still the same old way—"Ching!"

TING: How can there be any new way? To address her as Comrade Cheng Yu-ching would sound like giving directions in an office. To call her Sung-sung's mother would smack of feudalism. And to greet her as "sweetheart" or "my love" is too much for a middle-aged man. [CHENG YU-CHING *enters and* TING WEI *speaks to her in whispers.*]

TING: This is a rare occasion. I want you to stay for dinner. Let's talk over the old times over a bottle of wine. Ching remembers your favourite dishes. You used to take a glass or two at dinner. I don't suppose you've dropped the habit?

YANG: No, thanks. Not tonight. I've still got some business on hand.
CHENG: Do stay. It'll only be a simple family meal.
YANG: I know, and I certainly wouldn't stand on ceremony here with you. But honestly, I've got a meeting to attend. [*Looks at his watch.*] And it's about time for it, too.
TING: Meetings on Sunday too?
YANG: Yes, and you might as well be prepared for that too. Running a factory is not like teaching: We don't keep Sundays.
TING: I see you haven't changed a bit. Still the same old habit of attending to everything in person. Don't spare yourself—or others. All right, let's say you won't stay for dinner. But can't we have a little more of a chat? It's still early.
YANG [*looking at his watch again*]: No, I am afraid I've got to go now. That's what comes of having a busy job. Some other day, eh? And it will be on me too.
TING [*rising*]: All right, I won't insist, since you are busy. Do bring over Young Wang and your Numbers Four and Five. Let's have the date fixed. When will it be?
YANG: Difficult to say. In any case there will be plenty of time. Ha, ha! I'll be seeing you.
CHENG: Too bad that you can't stay longer. . . . [*To her daughter.*] Shake hands with Uncle Yang and say good-bye.
SUNG: Good-bye.
[TING WEI *and* CHENG YU-CHING *see* YANG *out.*]
SUNG [*to mother, just returned from the door*]: Who's that person?
CHENG: You still can't remember?
[SUNG *shakes her head.*]
CHENG: Why, he's the person your father's always talking about. Yang Chung-an, your father's best friend. He's the one who dashed out of Kuomintang encirclement with your father on his back. That was in Southern Anhwei in '41.
SUNG: Really! Is he the one?
CHENG: Of course, you silly girl. [*Exit.*]
SUNG [*quickly makes for the window, looks down and calls*]: Uncle Yang, good-bye.
[TING WEI *enters.*]
CHENG [*just back from the rear room*]: Sung-sung, you've taken my eggs again?
SUNG [*putting up two fingers*]: Only two.
CHENG: Hand them over. They are such big eggs. . . .
SUNG: Sorry, they are in the electric incubator in the Pioneers' Palace. They've been there the last two days. I'll give you the chicks soon. [*Walks over to the desk, turns over the pages of a book, and switches on the desk lamp.*]

TING [*too excited to sit down, paces the room and then looks at* CHENG]: It's all so sudden! And what a rare piece of luck!
CHENG: Rare?
TING: Yes, I mean my relationship with Yang. Just imagine. We were at the same school, I was a few years his senior. Then came days of intense revolutionary activities. We were on the same Party paper, I the director and he the business manager. In the army, I was political instructor and he my assistant. And now here we meet again, to run a factory together!
CHENG [*smiling significantly*]: But you'd better be careful of his fiery temper. You two are rare company indeed. You meet like brothers, each striving to outdo the other in kindness, but wait until you fall out, then neither will give the other quarter. . . .
[TING *simply grins at her.*]
CHENG [*tenderly*]: It's time you mended some of your old ways. You haven't seen each other for some years, and neither of you is exactly the same. Remember he's been the virtual head of the factory for three years and you're just a newcomer.
TING [*nods*]: I think you are right there.
SUNG [*suddenly calling out*]: Dad! [*Turns back to face him.*]
CHENG: What's the matter? You gave me such a fright.
SUNG [*triumphantly*]: I've got it. X equals 1/2. Come and see.
[*Exit* CHENG YU-CHING.]
[TING WEI *goes over to* SUNG, *father and daughter eagerly pore over the textbook together.*]
[*It is darker outside.*]

[*The curtain falls slowly.*]

ACT II

A week later. Late March. Early in the morning.

In the Director's office of Hsin Hua Electrical Machinery Works.

Two men are moving a desk into the office for the new director under the direction of CHU FAN, *a clerk of the General Affairs Section.*

YU CHIA-HUA, *secretary of the Director's office, is helping them put things in order. She is 23. Though wearing a cadre's plain uniform, there is something of a college student about her.*

At the back of the stage, a row of large windows open on the factory compound, through which the audience can see smoke-stacks, factory buildings and a water tower. Before the windows two big desks (one of which has just been moved in) stand facing each other, complete with swivel chairs. A door on the left. Further left, there are filing cabinets, a safe and other office furniture. At right foreground a smaller desk, used by the secretary.

Sounds from afar. Someone is making a speech through a microphone.

CHU [*having arranged everything, including the stationery on the director's desk*]: Comrade Yu, see if there's anything missing. [*Without waiting for an answer, to the two men.*] That will do, thank you. [*They exeunt.*]

[YU CHIA-HUA *gives the articles on the desk a last once-over and checks up on the keys to the drawers.*]

CHU: The two desks are same size, only this one [*Pointing to the one just moved in.*] looks older. But it wouldn't really be right to buy a new one. [*Looking at* YU.] Is the new director coming today?

YU: Vice-Director Yang said he was.

CHU [*getting ready to go*]: Do you mind checking up everything again? If anything's lacking, just let me know.

[*She nods. Exit* CHU. YU *sorts out the papers and puts them on* YANG'S *desk. Out of habit she tears off a leaf from the large calendar on the wall behind her desk, which now tells the audience that the day is March 25.*]

[*The telephone rings.* YU *picks up the receiver.*]

YU: Hello. Yes. Vice-Director Yang isn't in. . . . [*Getting tense.*] What! An accident? Electric shock again! The Transformers Shop,

I see. Is it serious? Rather bad, did you say? Who? . . . An old skilled worker, already being rushed to hospital, case not fatal. [*She notes the details on the back of the torn leaf of the calendar with a pencil.*] Yes. Pardon? Oh, I see. Same cause as yesterday's accident in the Heavy Machinery Shop—failure to notify the switch man before the machine was started. . . . Vice-Director Yang is in the small conference room, speaking to the leaders of the shock teams. All right. See if you can't find him there.

[*While* YU *is talking,* CHU FAN *ushers in* TING WEI.]

CHU: Vice-Director Yang is speaking to the workers. He won't be long now. [TING WEI *listens attentively to what* YU *is saying on the phone.*] This is the Director's office, with a small reception room at the back. Oh yes, this is the office secretary, Comrade Yu Chia-hua.

YU [*replaces the receiver and comes forward*]: You must be Director Ting?

TING [*shakes hands with her. Then, he asks straight away*]: That phone call—was it about an accident?

YU: Yes, it was. Another old skilled worker in the Transformers Shop got a bad electric shock.

TING: Was it serious?

YU: They said, serious but not fatal. [*She has hardly finished when the telephone rings again. She answers it.*] Hello. Speaking. Vice-Director Yang isn't in. Who is it speaking? Heavy Machinery Shop? What can I do for you? All right. Hold on. [*Writes on a pad.*] A consignment of coils rejected by the inspectors. Can you ring again, say, in ten minutes' time? Vice-Director Yang will be back by then.

CHU [*to* TING]: Today's the 25th, and there is usually quite a lot to do near the end of a month. But by the beginning of the next month things ease up again. Won't you sit down till Vice-Director Yang comes back? He won't be long now. [*Exit.*]

[YU CHIA-HUA *takes up the apparently newly-bought tea cup and thermos bottle.*]

YU: Comrade Director, will you have tea or just water?

TING [*smiles*]: Is there tea? [YU *nods.*] Tea, then.

[*A gust of south wind carries into the room snatches of the speech now being delivered over the microphone.* TING *listens to it as his eyes sweep the room.*]

[*Voice: . . . This is the task assigned by the higher leadership, a difficult but glorious task. Let us put in that extra ounce of energy to fulfil and over-fulfil the glorious task, to keep up the good name of the factory. Comrades, there are only six days to go before the month ends. We've got to finish all the work of the whole month, in fact, of the whole quarter within these six days. Comrades, let us look upon the shop as a battlefield. Let us all work with redoubled effort. Let*

us resolutely fulfil the task assigned by the higher leadership like the masters of the country that we are. That's all. (*Scattered applause.*)]

TING [*finding everything fresh*]: Yes, rather like a battlefield.

[HO FU-CHING, *the deputy-chief of a shop, comes banging in. He is thirtyish and wears a dirty overalls.*]

HO: What, Vice-Director Yang not in yet?

YU: He is expected here any minute now.

HO: Then I'll wait in the office. [*Full of grumbles.*] I'll see what the vice-director has to say about it. Absolutely unreasonable!

YU [*softly*]: What is it this time?

HO: Old trouble. The inspectors finding fault with us again. And how they have timed everything! Kept mum until the last minute and then, just when there are only six days to go, they come out with the same old stuff about specifications. Iron wastage too high. Temperature too high. Failure to meet the requirements. How in the hell can iron wastage be low when that shipment of silicon steel is inferior stuff in the first place! You can't have your cake and eat it! It's too much of a good thing. . . . [*Quite carried away by his own outburst, he suddenly finds* TING *listening to him and stops short.*]

YU [*taking advantage of the break to introduce him*]: This is Director Ting.

HO [*rather regretting his letting off steam*]: I am sorry. My name's Ho Fu-ching, of the Transformers Shop.

TING [*shakes hands with him*]: I've just come. Besides, I know nothing about transformers. If you don't mind waiting until Vice-Director Yang comes back.

HO: No, of course. I'll wait here. [*To* YU.] Has the vice-director seen that report of mine? It's a big problem, I tell you. If it's not solved today, there's no hope of reaching this month's production target!

TING [*remembering*]: Was there an accident in your shop just now?

HO: Yes. It was an old skilled worker. We have been pretty busy these last few days. Rush work day and night. Over-fatigue leads to carelessness, and that causes accidents.

[YANG CHUNG-AN's *voice outside*: *Send someone to see* CHANG's *people. Tell them not to worry.*]

[*He enters with* CHIEN PEI-CHIH, *chief engineer,* HSUEH WEI-TEH *and* HSU TA-MIN, *chief and deputy-chief of the Light Machinery Shop.* CHIEN *is fifty-six, greying, but in quite good health, with nothing at all senile about him.* HSUEH *is in his early forties, slightly grizzled, in a cadre's dark uniform, in which he still manages to look neat and smart.* HSU TA-MIN *is a tall, gawky young man of twenty-eight. He speaks with an earnestness that doesn't match the boyish look on his face.*]

YU: Vice-Director Yang!

YANG [*seeing* TING, *very happy indeed*]: Hello! So you've come at last. [*Warmly shakes hands with him.*] Wonderful! But look what a wretchedly busy person I've been reduced to! Come on, everybody, let me introduce you to Director Ting, Ting Wei, my old comrade-in-arms. We two worked together from 1938 until the army crossed the Yangtse in 1949. [*Emphatically.*] A very good comrade. This is Comrade Chien Pei-chih, our chief engineer. Comrade Hsueh Wei-teh, chief of the Light Machinery Shop, and Comrade Hsu Ta-min, deputy-chief. [*Looking at* YU.] You must have introduced yourself. Oh yes, this is Comrade Ho Fu-ching, deputy-chief of the Transformers Shop. Well, let's all sit down.

HSUEH [*eager to please, very attentive and respectful*]: Director Ting, this is a pleasure indeed. All of us in the factory have long been looking forward to it. Please sit down. [*Suddenly he turns to* YU.] What! This old desk? Can't we do better than that?

[YANG CHUNG-AN *takes a look at the desk and is about to say something.*]

HO [*unable to wait any longer*]: Vice-director, has any decision been made about that question I took up with you yesterday?

YANG [*asking* YU]: Haven't I already taken action on it?

YU: No, that was the one submitted by the Heavy Machinery Shop. [*Takes out a piece of paper and hands it over.*] You haven't seen this one.

HO: It was about the specifications of that consignment of coils.

YANG: What do the inspectors say now?

HO: They still won't sign the certificate. That means we can't assemble and deliver the eight 1000 KVA transformers in time and we'll be a long way short of our target.

[TING WEI *listens quietly. Out of habit he takes a package of cigarettes from his pocket. But he is forestalled by* HSUEH, *who quickly offers him one of his own and lights it for him.*]

TING [*casting a glance at him*]: Thank you.

[HSUEH, *diplomatic, eager to get along with everybody, forms a striking contrast to the cautious, strait-laced* CHIEN.]

YANG: Well, what do you think?

HO: The specifications are simply unrealistic. That's the root of the trouble. They don't fit in with the requirements of actual manufacture. And that is a problem that affects the whole factory.

HSUEH [*nodding*]: Exactly. My shop also comes in. . . .

HO [*continues*]: The matter must be settled. However, to meet the present emergency, my shop proposes that we first dispose of the order on hand and fulfil this month's quota. The question of specifications can be left for next month.

YANG [*without thinking twice about it*]: All right, do as you suggest,

then. In the meantime, assemble the transformers as quickly as possible.

HO: But the inspectors are sticking to their guns. They won't sign.

YANG: If they won't, I will.

HO: Then that's that. [*Turning to go.*]

HSU [*rises, unable to contain himself any longer*]: Vice-director, I am afraid we ought not to do that.

YANG: Why not?

HSU: It may lead to serious trouble. [*Pauses.*] The specifications will be there on the name plate: the transformers are supposed to be 1000 KVA, and yet we know the iron wastage is high. . . .

YANG: I have consulted Comrade Hsueh. [*Whereupon* HSUEH *nods.*] He is no layman, you know. I have also consulted Chief Engineer Chien. He also says there is a safety margin in any design, in other words, one can always go a little beyond the specifications on the name plate. So it won't really matter.

[*All this time* CHIEN *is in a bad fix. He wants to say something and yet, thinking better of it, checks himself.*]

HSU: That's true. But the margin is what guarantees safety. If this narrow margin goes, the machines will be dangerous to operate.

YANG [*disregards him and nods to* HO]: All right, you go ahead. [*Then, turning to* HSU.] My dear fellow, don't you know what day of the month it is? It's the end of March, and the target for the first quarter of the year. . . .

HSU: Yes, I know. But from the technical point of view, Vice-Director Yang, this is dangerous. . . .

YANG [*quickly taking him up*]: How you people all love to parade your technique. You all talk about science, science, as though I was the only one that did not care about it! But the point is, we're not working in an academy of sciences. [*Raising his voice particularly for the benefit of* CHIEN, *who remains silent.*] We're in a factory that's got its monthly and quarterly quotas to fulfil! Who is to answer for it if the Transformers Shop fails to fulfil the monthly quota of ten thousand KVA?

HSUEH [*seeing how determined* YANG *is, quickly follows his lead*]: Yes, of course, the quotas come first. They are particularly important just now. If we fail to fulfil the quota for the first quarter of the year, the higher leadership will certainly blame us for not having gone all out.

YANG: Now, Comrade Chien, what are your views on the matter?

CHIEN: Well, it's rather a complicated matter. . . .

HSUEH [*chipping in*]: It's all right, I've talked it over with Comrade Chien. We think probably it won't matter very much. But of course. . . . [*Appealing to* CHIEN *with his eyes, trying to get him to say something.*]

CHIEN: Ah, well. Strictly speaking, there may be. . . .

YANG [*without waiting for him to finish*]: But the point is, we can't afford to be too strict when the higher leadership demands so much. [*To* HO.] All right, go ahead as I said. [*Exit* HO. YANG *feels relieved, rubbing his hands. To* TING.] Now, old man. . . .

[HSU TA-MIN *wants to speak again but is stopped by a slight gesture from* YU CHIA-HUA. *To further ease the tension, she steps forward to speak to* YANG.]

YU: Vice-Director Yang, how do you like the way the desks are placed? This one will be Director Ting's. There is good light for both of you.

YANG: It's all right with me.

HSUEH: You have thought of everything, Comrade Yu! This seat is by the window. There will be a delightful breeze from the door over there. Very cool in summer. [*Laughs ingratiatingly.*] I know our vice-director will appreciate it. He's put on a bit of weight lately and hot weather doesn't agree with him.

YANG: Now, now! Let's talk about other matters. [*Takes his own seat at the desk.* YU *puts a sheaf of papers before him.*] What, all this pile again! Just look at this, Ting! What on earth am I to do with it all! [*Turning over the papers one by one.*] Purchase lists, vouchers, notes asking for leave. The same every day—all these papers for one to look at and sign. Far too many even to glance at. However, [*Laughs.*] it will be all your headache from now on. Running a factory is not at all easy, I tell you. No end of bustle and hustle. But what can one expect? [*To* YU.] Have you sorted them out?

YU: Yes. These are urgent and require action immediately. These can wait. [*Handing him the day's newspaper.*] And this is today's news.

YANG [*turning over the papers casually after putting the newspaper on the bookshelf behind him without so much as a glance*]: Signing papers all the day. No time even for a newspaper. If you'll excuse me, Ting, I'll attend to the urgent ones first. [*To* YU.] This whole lot for my approval? [YU *nods.*] Complete with the signatures of all those in charge? [YU *nods again.*] No mistake? [YU *only smiles.*] If they've all signed, I'll do it too. [*He takes up his writing brush and writes "Approved," "Leave granted," etc.*]

CHIEN: Excuse me, vice-director, I've got some business to attend to.

[YANG *nods.* TING *shakes hands with* CHIEN.]

[*Exit* CHIEN.]

[HSUEH, *as courteous and solicitous as ever, engages* TING *in conversation.*]

[*The telephone rings.* YU *answers it.*]

YU: Hello. Yes. Just a moment. Vice-director.

YANG [*taking up the phone*]: Hello. What is it? Speaking. What? Not enough spare parts? Where are all the spare parts then? All used up in rush work last month? Then why didn't you take stock before you started? Or do you expect me to prepare everything for you, down to

the last nut? What? What new development? You don't have to come over, just tell me everything on the phone. People making cynical remarks? [TING *listens attentively.*] Tell the team leaders to take down their names. What? [*With vehemence.*] Never mind that. Tell them today's the 25th and it will be April in six days. The quota for March must be fulfilled before then, even if we have to sweat blood. In a situation like this, there must not be too much democracy! [*Hangs up.*]

HSUEH [*to* TING]: Frankly, I don't see how this factory could fulfil its task if it weren't for the correct leadership of Vice-Director Yang. He has determination and a lot of push.

TING [*after pondering the matter*]: Is it always like this, always so busy?

HSUEH: No, but you see today's the 25th, near the end of the month. We are usually busy at this time, but by the beginning of the next month. . . .

TING [*pacing the floor slowly, speaking to* YU]: Comrade—er—sorry, I didn't quite get your name. . . .

YU [*with a smile*]: My name is Yu Chia-hua.

TING: Oh yes, Comrade Yu Chia-hua, have you got the data about the rate of production month by month?

YU: Yes, I have. [*Very expertly producing a sheaf of papers.*] Here they are. Data for January and February this year. [*Walks to* TING*'s side. Reads the figures.*] First ten days of January, 9 per cent of the month's plan fulfilled. Second ten days, 21 per cent. The rest of the month, 62 per cent. [*Pauses.*] For February. . . .

TING: Just a moment. 9, 21 and 62. [*Adds them up on his fingers.*] That makes only 92. That means that the month's plan was not fulfilled. And February?

YU [*reads*]: February, first ten days, 4 per cent. Second, 9 per cent. The rest of the month, 77 per cent. Total, 90 per cent. [*Explaining.*] The Lunar New Year fell due in February. So there were more absentees and that hit production.

TING [*absorbed in thought*]: I see.

HSU [*unable to remain silent any longer*]: But this is only one side of the picture, the quantity percentages. The quality situation is even worse.

[YANG CHUNG-AN, *having disposed of his papers somehow, now throws a glance at* HSU *and rises.*]

YANG [*speaking with a lot of feeling*]: That's just how it is running a factory, especially one like ours. A variety of products. A variety of specifications. Very big tasks handed down from above. You'll find out soon enough that it's no joke to shoulder all this responsibility. [*To* HSUEH.] Well, now about the urgent matters you want to take up with me.

HSUEH: I think you know the situation very well, vice-director. I submitted my views on the question yesterday and have nothing to add. I subscribe completely to the instructions you gave yesterday. I don't think we can go far wrong if we carry them out. As to what the trade union thinks . . . [*Here he hesitates a little before he turns to* HSU.] will you tell the vice-director, Comrade Hsu?

HSU: It concerns the two old problems. First, further delay on Comrade Ma Hsiao-pao's rationalization proposal for avoiding short circuits in the coils will arouse a lot of unfavourable comment from below. Second, the workers are saying that the usual end-of-the-month shock work is simply overtime in disguise. I agree with Vice-Director Yang about putting off discussions on the first question until early next month. But the second question is urgent. If it isn't settled at once, not only will it be impossible to fulfil our plan, but more and bigger accidents will occur.

YANG [*retorting*]: Who said it's overtime?

HSU: The workers, though of course the leadership calls it shock work.

YANG: I know there are people complaining. But let's be clear about one thing: that sort of view is held by only a handful of backward people. What shall we do with them? Well, criticize them, teach them to behave, talk them around ideologically, ask them to think things over. Ask them to compare life before liberation with life after. If they complain when they are only asked to work a little harder, what sort of workers are they? Backward, that's all. [*His voice rises as he gets keyed up, very much the able leader now.*]

HSU: I wouldn't say it's only a few backward people. I heard Chang Ta-mei's comments while she was listening to your speech. She said, "If machines don't want to sleep, human beings do." And she's the most active member of Ma's team. [*Looks at* HSUEH *for confirmation.* HSUEH *nods from force of habit.*] No one can say she's backward.

YANG [*cutting him short*]: There you are! If even active workers are complaining, that shows what poor political work you people have been doing! The Party branch, the trade union group, yes, and your Youth League branch—are you all on the job? I wonder! [*Rubbing it in.*] And isn't the shop leadership partly to blame for this ideological confusion?

HSUEH: Of course it is. In that respect our work *is* very poor. The responsibility is mainly mine. [*To* HSU.] What about calling all team leaders and active workers to a meeting tonight? Perhaps we might also ask the two directors to give them a pep-talk.

HSU [*bluntly*]: No good. Too many meetings and talks already. Better let them go home and have a bit of rest. Fact is, our men are suffering from over-work these few days.

YANG: Our men are suffering from over-work! Who isn't? Who isn't busy? Or perhaps this is what you call looking at things from the point

of view of the masses? [*Sneering.*] So the shop's chief is concerned about workers' health, but the factory's is not, I suppose?

HSU [*trying very hard to keep his voice low*]: No, that's not what I mean. But I know for a fact that many of them are laid up because of over-work.

YANG [*exploding*]: Now let me tell you, my lad. You are over-simplifying matters. You see only a team, a work section, a shop. But I don't. Yes, you have to see things from the point of view of the masses, but you have to see them from the point of view of the state, too. All right, say that workers must have eight hours' rest. But how many hours' rest do you think I get as a factory director? Don't I work overtime every day? After all, my lad, I've been in the revolutionary movement some sixteen years. Do you think that I don't care about the masses?

[*The telephone rings.*]

YU: Hello. Speaking. [*Getting tense.*] What? Another accident? Light Machinery Shop? Yes, they are all here. [*To* HSUEH *and* HSU.] Your shop. [*Speaking into the phone again.*] Pardon? Don't speak so fast. Got a hand injured? I see. And there are people making trouble? . . .

HSU [*greatly agitated*]: What are we waiting for? Come on, Comrade Hsueh. [*Exit in a hurry.*]

YU [*speaking into the phone*]: Comrade Hsueh will be there in a minute.

YANG [*also feels the situation is serious*]: I'll go too. [*To* TING.] Excuse me, Ting, will you take charge here. [*He goes off with* HSUEH.]

[*The sound of an ambulance rushing by.*]

TING [*looks anxiously out of the window, then, turning back, paces the room*]: Is it like this every day?

YU: Being busy is normal. But there's been an exceptional number of accidents this week—five in three days.

TING: Hasn't there been a safety campaign?

YU: Yes, but at the time—[*Interrupted by the phone again.*] Hello. Who's speaking? Oh yes, Secretary Fang. Vice-Director Yang has just left; there was an accident in the Light Machinery Shop. Yes. Director Ting is in. Yes, he came this morning.

TING: Who is it?

YU: Comrade Fang Ke of the Factory Party Committee. [*To the phone.*] Hello. Did you say you'll come? [*To* TING.] He says he's coming to see you right now.

TING: It's all right, I'll go and see him.

YU: Director Ting would like to come to see you. Certainly, of course. Just a moment. [*Handing over the receiver to* TING.] He wants to speak to you.

TING: Hello. Comrade Fang Ke? Very well, thank you. Yes, I only came this morning. I went to your office, but you weren't in. No,

let me come. What? You're in the Light Machinery Shop too? Yes, I heard about the accident—Yang's gone there. All right, as you like. Be glad to. [*Hangs up.*]

YU: Are you old friends?

TING: No. Just knew each other, but not very well. Met at meetings and so on.

[*After a moment's silence,* YU *brings out a sheaf of papers.*]

YU: Director Ting, you'll find all the important data about the factory here. This is the summing-up report of our work for the past three years. This is the D. R. report—democratic reform, that is—approved by the City Party Committee. These are some of the original records. I thought you might like to have a look at them.

TING: Very good of you. I was just going to ask for them. You certainly think of everything. [*Turning over the papers. As if to himself.*] It won't be easy to get to the bottom of things. These papers'll take a lot of reading.

YU: You should also talk things over with Comrade Fang Ke. He has a wide grasp of things.

TING: Yes, I will. [*Sits down to read the papers.*]

[*A moment later, there is a gentle tap at the door.* FANG KE *enters. He is just over forty, strongly built, calm and collected on all occasions.*]

FANG [*warmly*]: Welcome! Comrade Ting Wei! I'm so glad you've come. We've been looking forward to this day for a long time. [*A prolonged handshake.*] You are doubly welcome for coming just now.

TING: Thank you. Have you been here all this time?

FANG: Since winter, '49. [*He nods and sits down. Reminiscently.*] In '50, the factory's old director, who had been here since the Kuomintang days, was transferred to another job. Since then we've been shouting ourselves hoarse to the authorities for the appointment of a really capable director. Now we've got you at last! Comrade Ting, you've come at the right time, you know. [*With a bitter smile.*] Just at the busiest, the most difficult time. I am sure you've already noticed the mess we are in.

TING: When I heard that the Party had appointed me to this job, I was very glad but rather worried, too. In fact, I felt quite jittery. I don't think I'm really equal to the job. I'm afraid it's beyond me.

FANG: No, I don't think so. I'm sure you'll do very well. Everybody expects you to.

TING: Well, you'd better not expect too much. I know it takes more than loyalty and resolution to run a factory today. One must also understand the technical side. I'm fully determined to get down to business and dig into things. But it takes time.

FANG [*nods repeatedly with great emphasis*]: Yes, that's it. We must dig into things. The determination to do that will carry us through. I don't mind telling you what a comrade said at the last meeting of

the Party Committee. According to him, to run our factory successfully, we must have a director who is capable of forming strong ties with the masses and at the same time knows the technical side. [*After a pause.*] I am sure Department Head Li has given you some idea about the state of affairs here.

[YU CHIA-HUA *goes off with the papers just signed by* YANG.]

TING: Yes, he did. That makes the job seem all the more difficult to me.

FANG: Perhaps you know already. . . .

TING: You mean [*After a little pause.*] how things stand between the vice-director and the Party Committee?

FANG [*nods*]: Yes. To be frank, it's not so much what you'd call a relationship between the two as an ideological estrangement. [*After a moment's silence.*] As a matter of fact there are a number of problems and serious ones at that. Frequent accidents. Low quality of products. Unbalanced production, and so on. Actually these can all be dealt with—[*Emphatically.*] provided the leadership takes production reform firmly in hand—for that is the core of the matter. And provided it is determined to rely on the masses and believes in the working class. Then solutions can be found for everything.

TING: Surely Comrade Yang Chung-an must have thought about these things.

FANG: You know him better than I do. In these three years he has done a lot for the factory and it must be said that he rendered valuable service in the take-over period and immediately after. He is loyal to the Party and serious-minded about his private life. Nobody has anything to say against him on those grounds. During the campaign against corruption, waste and bureaucracy, he was one of the military representatives about whom there was relatively little criticism from the masses. That was proof enough, though, of course, the emphasis then was on bureaucracy that led to corruption and waste and not on all the forms of bureaucracy. [*After a pause.*] But today things are different. As you said, loyalty alone won't do. [*Seeing that* TING *remains silent,* FANG *smiles rather uneasily.*] Still, I shouldn't be talking about these things the first day you arrive! You might think. . . .

TING: No, not at all. We are both old Party members. [*After a pause.*] Besides, this is precisely what the City Party Committee wants me to find out from you. They want me to get to the bottom of things.

FANG: I might say there has been rather sharp conflict since last year. At first, he was concurrently Party secretary and, of course, took everything into his own hands. Then the new arrangement was agreed on. He was to concentrate on factory management, leaving Party affairs to me. But the situation remained very much the same. I'm sorry to say that I haven't been able to do very much, or rather I should say I lack the true qualities of a really good Communist. I failed to

stick to strict principles on several important issues, I haven't been able to help Comrade Yang Chung-an to correct his mistakes. . . . [*Looking at* TING.] That's why I said you'd arrived in the nick of time. Certainly no better person can be found for the job. In the first place, you told me just now that you have the determination to dig into technical matters. In the second place, you know him well, his strong as well as weak points. So you are the ideal person to help him and correct him.

[TING, *silent, rises and walks about a little.*]

[*Just then the loudspeakers outside blare out again. It is clear at once that* YANG *is making another speech.*]

FANG: Listen. He is pep-talking again. It looks as though speechifying and what he calls "talking the workers around ideologically" is the only method of leadership that he has to make the workers fulfil their targets. But it so happens that three years after the liberation the workers are politically much more awakened. If you don't actually solve their problems but just indulge in pep-talks, in efforts to "talk them around," you can't get anywhere with them now. On top of that, his approach is far too subjective. The workers say that by "talking you around" he means "I do the talking, and you come around, whether you like it or not." They say that's what his political work really amounts to. And that's not "cynical talk" at all. The workers have really hit the nail on the head.

TING [*with a rather heavy heart and after a moment of silence*]: Comrade Fang Ke, I know what Comrade Yang Chung-an is like. Rather subjective. Now it appears that he is also rather complacent.

FANG [*nods*]: You are right. And there is nothing surprising in that, either. He enjoys a certain amount of prestige among the cadres. Many of them admire him for his push and his determination.

TING: It might be a good thing for you to talk things over with him more often, and not necessarily at meetings. . . .

FANG: We've had plenty of private sessions and at quite a few of them we argued until both of us were red in the face. [*With a smile.*] It may sound silly, but on one occasion, in the presence of several others, he blurted out the accusation that I was trying to undermine his prestige so as to build myself up. Wasn't that—[*However, he checks himself.*]

[TING *remains silent.*]

FANG [*rising*]: Well, Comrade Ting Wei, it's my sincere wish that you'll straighten him out.

TING [*after some deliberation*]: Of course. I've accepted the Party's assignment and I will do whatever is required of me as well as I can. But I've only just arrived. I don't know how things are. You must give me time before I can judge things for myself.

FANG: Of course. [*Pause.*] But I'm sure you'll understand very soon. [*Another pause.*] Comrade Ting!

TING: Yes?

FANG: To make it easier for you to find out about things, I feel I must tell you one thing.

[TING *looks at him intently.*]

FANG [*gravely*]: Everybody has been looking forward to the appointment of a director who can really get things done. They have their eyes on you. But since the announcement was made, I've found out from talking with people that some of them have quite unjustified worries.

TING [*rather shocked*]: Worries?

FANG: Yes. Comrade Yang Chung-an has told people on not a few occasions that the new director is an old colleague of his, an old comrade-in-arms, a friend that has gone through fire and water with him. He told how during the Kuomintang ambush in Southern Anhwei, he got you out of enemy encirclement by carrying you on his back. He said he's sure that you support him.

TING [*quickly*]: Did he say all that?

FANG: Yes. And not just once or twice. Of course, he mentioned these things only by the way.

TING: It's all true. I've been in his debt ever since. [*Turns back to face* FANG *and speaks with great sincerity and heartfelt gratitude.*] But, Comrade Fang Ke, I'm grateful to you for telling me about this. [*Shakes hands with him.*]

FANG: I owe it to you to tell you this. I should suggest that you contact all quarters to find out things for yourself. Before you dig into things, a little fact-finding might be necessary. The Party Committee is to meet early next month. There you'll hear more views on the Management of the factory.

TING: Yes, I'm sure I will.

FANG: Good-bye. [*They shake hands again.*]

TING [*calling* FANG *back*]: Oh yes, I almost forgot. This is the letter from the City Party Committee about the transfer of my Party membership.

FANG: Thank you. [*Exit.*]

YU [*coming back with a bundle of letters and papers, just in time to see* FANG *leave*]: So Secretary Fang's gone.

TING: Yes. [*He takes a few steps and stops.*] I say, Comrade Yu!

YU: Yes, Director Ting?

TING: How long have you been here?

YU: Nearly two years.

TING: Then you ought to know the factory well.

YU [*modestly*]: Not nearly so well as I should, I'm afraid.

TING: If you don't mind, I should like to rob you of a little of your spare time. [YU *is rather surprised and at a loss for an answer.*] That is, I should like you to take me around the factory after office hours or on Sundays. I'd like to see and chat with comrades such as old workers, technicians, and the person whom Vice-Director Yang addressed as "my lad" a moment ago.

YU: That's Comrade Hsu Ta-min.

TING: Yes, him and the management personnel and responsible cadres of the trade union.

YU: Certainly. Any time you say.

TING [*shaking his head*]: No, no, not "any time," but only after office and on Sundays. . . . That's why I said I would rob you of your spare time. [*Laughs.*] I know I am not supposed to do this, especially not to young women comrades.

[YU *laughs too.*]

[*Curtain*]

ACT III

SCENE 1

Sunday morning in early April.

The small conference room of the factory. On the wall facing the audience there is a poster showing Stalin and Mao Tse-tung walking together in front of the Kremlin. Right foreground, a door. On the right wall hangs an oil portrait of Chairman Mao. In the centre of the stage, a conference table with white table-cloth and a dozen chairs of various sizes and makes. On the left, at the far end of the stage there is an inner room with a telephone and a small desk under the window, on which there are a thermos bottle and tea things.

Sunlight coming in through the window on the left illuminates the front part of the stage, leaving the inner room in half light.

When the curtain rises, the stage appears empty. Actually a man is sitting unnoticed at the desk in the inner room quietly reading a book. Only occasionally can the audience hear him pronouncing some of the words in a low voice.

After a minute's silence, YU CHIA-HUA *enters with* TING WEI *in tow through the door on the right. She is in her Sunday best, a sky-blue blouse and a navy-blue skirt.* TING WEI *is carrying his dark woollen jacket, which is apparently too heavy for this time of the year. He wipes his face with a handkerchief.*

YU [*showing him the place*]: This is the small conference room. Usually the director meets the heads of the shops here. It's also used for small meetings.

[TING *nods. He sweeps the room with a glance, taking in the poster and a microphone on a side table by the wall.*]

YU: Yes, it's also used as a broadcasting studio. From here the main office gives instructions to the shops. And the director also addresses the workers from here. [*Pointing to the microphone.*] The P.A. system extends to all shops.

TING: Oh yes, this is where all that noise comes from. [*Laughing.*] To tell you the truth, no one is more afraid of those loudspeakers than I am.

HUANG CHOU: Urgent Call

[*Used to* TING*'s jokes now,* YU *merely smiles, while getting ready to move on.*]

[*Just then the person reading in the inner room, hearing them, stops to listen.*]

YU [*as she is walking out*]: After this we'll see the club, the mess hall, the nursery. [*Looking back.*] You've made an appointment with young Hsu . . . [*Abruptly changing the name.*] . . . er . . . Comrade Hsu Ta-min. Will this place do for you? Hardly anyone comes here on Sundays.

TING: Yes, of course. [*About to leave, when he suddenly discovers the person reading in the inner room. Stops.*]

YU [*walking over to take a look. Surprised*]: Oh, Mr. Chien! Didn't know you were here.

[TING *crosses over.* CHIEN *picks up his spectacles from the desk, puts them on, and rises to greet them.*]

TING: Just the person I want to see. What a piece of luck! I was coming to pay you a visit.

CHIEN: It's very good of you. I know you're a very busy man.

TING: Don't you rest even on Sundays? What problems are you working on at this time of day?

CHIEN: Well—er—er—[*Rather bashful.*]—I'm only doing a little study. Following in the footsteps of young men, you might say.

YU [*seeing the Russian reader in his hand*]: Oh, Mr. Chien, fancy you studying Russian!

CHIEN: Now, now! Nothing to speak of. Hardly begun. However, I don't mind telling you how it all started, only the director mustn't laugh at me. I have a son who's a student engineer in the power plant. He is my eldest. He has studied Russian for two years without being able to read very much, however. So one day I asked, "Is Russian so very difficult to learn, my boy?" What do you think his answer was? Well, the fellow said, "It all depends on whether one's really determined." Quite a sound idea, that. But then he had the cheek to add, "Easy for the young, but difficult for the old." Now, could you expect me to swallow that! If one followed his reasoning, then it would come to this: old men can never be determined. What nonsense! [*Shakes his head vigorously.*] I, for one, will never believe it. [*Confiding in* TING.] So I started learning Russian on the sly, without breathing a word to him. I expect in a little time I shall steal a march on him—I shall translate a passage or two of Russian just to show him! The impudent fellow! [*Showing them the book.*] This textbook is based on the shortcut method. The principles seem sound enough.

TING [*laughing heartily*]: Bravo! You put us all to shame. [*Politely showing him to a seat.*] Won't you sit down? Let's have a chat together.

YU: Oh, Mr. Chien is still going strong all right. He has never yielded to anybody in anything. At the sports meet last autumn, he took part in the tennis tournament.

CHIEN: That was nothing. When I was a young student abroad, I ran the mile against the athletes of Europe.

TING [*taking a seat himself. In a leisurely manner*]: Where were you then?

CHIEN: In France. Studied there and worked there too. Scrubbed floors and washed dishes. Nothing could keep me down. But it was a good many years ago. Then I came back to China. Time passes. Now I find myself a backward old man.

TING: No, you're not old at all. Judging by your Russian studies alone, there is nothing old about you. On the contrary, we younger men must learn from you. What do you think, Comrade Yu, we can't call the chief engineer old, can we? "Old," indeed! We have no use for the word. [*Laughs.*] Now, Mr. Chien, if it doesn't interfere with your Russian lesson, I should like to take up a bit of your time. There are so many things about which I'd like to have the benefit of your experience.

CHIEN: Go ahead. Mine isn't really a regular lesson. Only—[*Here he is speaking to* YU.]—don't you give me away. I've only studied two hours every day for six weeks. [*Pointing to the book.*] However, the book uses an excellent method. So far as being able to read books about electric engineering goes, I think—[*Speaking with pride.*]—I have caught up with that boy of mine. [*Suddenly remembering that the director wants to discuss things with him.*] Oh yes, director, but you are too kind. I—I—

TING: I want to consult you about a great many things—too many. You know I know nothing at all about technology or factory management. I'm just beginning to learn. But I shan't take up production with you now. I'll ask for a special interview for that—after I have sorted out my own thoughts on the matter. This morning, I just want to have the pleasure of chatting a little with you. We can chat about life in general or how you feel about things.

CHIEN [*immediately on the defensive*]: I'm afraid I have very little to say. Certainly not about how I feel about things. Or my views and opinions. I am only an engineer. I am not good at expressing my own views. To me, there is nothing more embarrassing than to be called upon to speak at a meeting. On National Day last year, a newspaper reporter kept chasing me. When he finally pinned me down and insisted on my writing out my thoughts on the occasion for his paper, I still couldn't write a single line.

YU [*with a smile*]: You didn't write, but you gave him an interview, didn't you? And it was later published in the paper. I can still remember one passage. You said, "People say that children of the

Mao Tse-tung era are to be envied for their happiness, I say old men of the Mao Tse-tung era are to be envied for the same reason." You said that, didn't you?

TING: Hear, hear!

CHIEN [*more at ease now and getting more talkative*]: But that was really how I felt. Of course, director, we old men, or men of the old era, who've been left over from the Kuomintang days, aren't any good in most ways and are generally backward; but there is one thing which we see more clearly and feel more poignantly than the young men. We have lived through so much and seen so much, we know how to compare things. I was only a kid when the country was still ruled by the Manchu emperors. But I had personal experience of all the governments and regimes that followed—Yuan Shih-kai, Tsao Kun, Chiang Kai-shek, Wang Ching-wei, the Japanese, the Americans, and the rule of the secret police. I saw them all, I lived under them all. We scientists don't as a rule go out of our way to flatter others, but the point is, even we can't help arriving at a definite conclusion when we compare the present with the past. And the conclusion is: [*Emphatically.*] things are much better. Of course different people may have different views and reactions. I have asked my old wife—[*To* YU.] Don't laugh at me and call me a conservative, I am not used to the new-fangled terms—"sweetheart," "loved one" and what not—

TING: Bravo! I'm completely with you there.

CHIEN: Well, I asked my wife and she, too, comparing the days before and after the liberation, came to two conclusions. [*Putting up two fingers.*] First, prices are stabilized. Second, children behave. [*This makes them all laugh.*] This is the main impression. When things improve in the main, then, [*In an off-guard moment.*] even shortcomings and defects don't matter so much.

TING [*seizing the opportunity*]: Could you tell me, Mr. Chien, what these shortcomings and defects are?

CHIEN [*his cautious old self again*]: Not really prepared to speak on them. [*Laughs.*] I shall wait upon the director again when I, too, have sorted out my thoughts on these matters.

TING [*does not pursue the topic*]: What does Mr. Chien think of this factory of ours?

CHIEN [*after some deliberation*]: Vice-Director Yang is an able man. The factory has good leadership. [*Pauses.*] Only—but perhaps I am wrong, I don't know—only I always have the feeling . . . er . . . that the way you Communists go about things is a bit too quick.

TING [*with a sincere desire to learn from him*]: In what particular respect, would you say?

CHIEN: Take our factory, for instance. What changes it has gone through in these three years! What great changes! It's been simply amazing. When the People's Government first took it over, the factory

was all but wrecked. But now it has advanced so far as to produce giant generators, big motors and 36,000 V. oil-break switches. [*Pauses to make sure of* TING*'s reaction.*] But the leadership seems for ever dissatisfied. There're always pep-talks, there's always shock work. We're for ever urged to develop all our latent powers. All very well in its way, but isn't there some limit to everything? I mean I don't understand.

TING [*after thinking it over*]: There seem to me two questions here. Rash advance of course won't do. It is wrong and should be opposed. But a realistic stepping-up is a different matter. It's just what's needed and shouldn't be opposed.

CHIEN: Quite. The question is whether it's realistic. China must build up her industries and within the shortest possible time. I can fully understand that. We've suffered too much from our lack of modern industries. However, director, isn't our speed a little too fast just now?

TING: Well, if you are talking about our factory, there may be a number of problems to be solved on the basis of mass discussion. However, Mr. Chien, speaking of the country as a whole, I should think industrialization should proceed at a rather fast speed, not slowly.

CHIEN: I don't know. Perhaps it's my own conservatism—but I always feel that we haven't been at all slow in these three years. In fact, we've done in three years what would have taken thirty years in the past.

TING: No, we haven't been slow. But the point is, we stood still too long in the past. We were too backward. Backward people have no choice but to make up for lost time.

CHIEN: May I add, director, that on top of backwardness, there's also been wanton destruction in the past thirty years. For instance, our factory was badly battered by Japanese gunfire in 1937.

TING [*nods emphatically*]: Yes, backwardness and destruction wrought by foreign invaders and civil wars. [*Pauses.*] The Soviet Union was in the same boat after the October Revolution. Backward. The country in ruins. I forget who it was who said that after the defeat of the interventionists the young Soviet nation walked away from the battlefield on a pair of crutches.

CHIEN: The same with China.

TING: The same and yet not the same. The same in that both countries were backward in industrial and agricultural production. Not the same in that China did not walk away from the battlefield alone on a pair of crutches. She was helped and supported by a very strong arm.

CHIEN [*understands*]: Yes, and the strong arm is the Soviet Union.

TING: Precisely. And, Mr. Chien, this is a very important point. This is the factor that makes it possible for China to push on with her industrialization at a fast speed. Indeed, this is the guarantee of our success. Now you've been learning Russian. You told me you did

it because you wanted to hold your own against your son, because you wanted to spring a surprise on him. Well, the way I look at it, there's another reason—you want to use the language to learn Soviet technology and Soviet experience.

CHIEN [*laughing heartily*]: Well, if the secret must out, there is that idea in it.

TING: An excellent idea, too.

CHIEN [*speaking to* YU]: But don't you ever give me away, young secretary.

YU: No, of course not.

[*Just then* HSU TA-MIN *enters. He hasn't expected to find anybody in the room. On seeing* TING *and* CHIEN, *he hesitates a little, looking almost at once at his wrist watch.*]

HSU: Sorry. I am . . . too early.

TING: No, just the right time. The chief engineer's here. Come and join us. [*Pulls a chair.*]

CHIEN [*again the cautious, worldly-wise man*]: We've had enough chat for a morning. Will you excuse me, now that you have an appointment with Comrade Hsu? [*Explains.*] I've promised to go for a walk with my wife and children. Good-bye. [*Puts out his hand.*] I've found your talk very illuminating. Really it's a good thing to get together and talk things over like this. It's an exchange of views, you know. To tell you the truth, this is the first time I've had a chance to chat freely with the head of the Management. [TING *is struck by this remark.*] Can I suggest one thing, Director Ting, now that we've had our first chat together?

TING: Of course. Go ahead.

CHIEN: In my opinion there're too many meetings in the factory and too few informal get-togethers to exchange opinions and to study conditions. Time and again I find the vice-director up to his neck in work and everybody running in circles around him. Time and again I itch to say something—to make a suggestion or two—to help him out. Of course, my views may not be worth anything. For all I know most of them may be completely wrong. But I've never had a chance.

TING: Thank you. You've made an extremely important suggestion and you are completely right. I assure you we will have more get-togethers like this.

[*They shake hands again.* TING *sees* CHIEN *to the door. Exit* CHIEN. *In the interval,* YU *takes out a little pocket notebook, from which she produces two film tickets and gives* HSU *one.*]

HSU [*in a fix*]: Too bad! I may not have time for it.

YU [*reproachfully*]: Didn't you ask me to book them? [*She stops short on finding* TING WEI *back where he was.*]

TING [*to* HSU]: Sit down, please.

HSU [*seated, but rather tense. After a moment*]: Director Ting, I know I adopted a rather unreasonable attitude the other day.

TING [*surprised*]: What's that? What day?

HSU: The day you arrived. I adopted a rather bad attitude towards Vice-Director Yang about shock work and overtime.

TING: Oh, that. But why bring it up now?

HSU [*rather at a loss. After some deliberation*]: I'm sure I've given you a bad impression.

TING [*laughs. Speaking calmly*]: Not at all. On the contrary, you made a very good impression on me. [*Thinking it over.*] So you thought I'd asked you to see me so that I could make you see how bad your attitude was, is that it?

HSU [*embarrassed like the big, gawky boy he is*]: Well, since you had just arrived and I had seen you only once, when I heard you wanted to see me, I thought perhaps. . . .

TING: Perhaps what?

HSU [*unable to dodge any more*]: I find from experience that when the director sends for one, he either asks one to take on another job or gives one a dressing-down. . . . Nothing else.

TING: You are wrong there. Since I've just arrived, I want to have some personal contact with everybody. I wanted to see you—yes—precisely because of your attitude the other day, [*Emphatically.*] the attitude of a man with a high sense of responsibility. [*To* YU.] Well, Comrade Yu, what did you say when you made the appointment for me?

YU [*a little embarrassed*]: Me? Oh, I just said, "Director Ting wants to see you." [*After a little reflection.*] I did mention his bad attitude. But that was afterwards, when I criticized him at the Youth League meeting.

HSU: Director, I admit that I am bad-tempered and very often rude. I am particularly bad in dealing with people. I quarrel with everybody. I fly into a temper the moment anyone in the shop doesn't carry out my instructions. I can't stand people who waste material. And I have no patience with people who crack jokes during work hours. When I see women workers going soft after marriage and failing in their technical studies, I say, "Why work any more? Go home and nurse babies!" You can say all that about me and I freely admit it. But to say that I put forward my opinions just to show off or that it's all a matter of egotism—that's more than....

TING [*to* YU]: Tell me, does everyone think he's bad-tempered—or just you?

YU: Everybody thinks he's bad-tempered. I merely passed it on. But he! [*Looking hard at him, as though she has the right to rebuke him.*] He got the two things mixed up!

TING: All right, we've cleared up the whole thing at last. It's I who asked you to come. [*Pointing at* YU.] It's she who criticized you for your attitude. Two distinct things, see? They shouldn't be confused. However, we won't go into that. [*Pauses.*] I hear you attended an engineering college? [*Seeing how tense he is,* TING *hastens to add.*] I hope our chat this morning will be a departure from your experience of directors. Let's say when a director sends for someone, he doesn't have to hand out a new assignment or give one a dressing-down. Does that suit you? Come on, let's take it easy and talk freely. Or, as the chief engineer just said, let's have an "exchange of views."

HSU [*relieved, but still dead serious*]: I went to the Polytechnic in Shanghai, but didn't take my degree. The authorities expelled me after I had been there two years, for taking part in the student movement. After the liberation I entered the Revolutionary College.

TING [*to* YU]: Were you there at the same time?

YU: He was in the class above me.

HSU: After my graduation from there, I worked for more than a year in the District Party Committee's office. Then the government urged all those who were engineers or technicians by training or experience to go back to where they belonged. So I was sent here to the factory to help with the democratic reform. Actually I was only at the Polytechnic two years and didn't learn very much.

TING [*earnestly*]: But don't underestimate the importance of two years of study. They make a great deal of difference. With the grounding you got in those two years, you can pick up technique easily. It's simply a matter of taking up where you left off. In any case you are much better off than complete amateurs like me. In this job, I feel most keenly what a handicap it is to have been denied a good education in one's youth, what difficulties one encounters for not understanding technology. . . . Are you a Youth League member?

HSU: Yes, only I'm past the age limit. I'm applying for Party membership. [*Hangs his head.*]

TING: Oh, I see. [*After a pause.*] If you'll only keep up your efforts, I'm sure you'll be admitted. In the meantime you should study hard. You have the necessary qualifications to make one of the Party's own experts in industrial construction. We need such experts, we need Party members with an expert's knowledge of technical matters.

HSU: But any mention of technique in our factory only earns rebukes from above. You heard how Vice-Director Yang accused me of adopting "a purely technical approach."

TING [*admires him for his stubbornness and outspokenness, but does not immediately take up his point*]: The purely technical approach? Well, the formulation is ambiguous. It would be better to say we don't want a non-political approach in scientific matters. [*Pauses to enable* HSU *to take in his meaning. Then he resumes the point.*]

Actually technique is important. Comrade Stalin said that in the period of socialist transformation technique decides everything.

HSU: Then you will see that the matter I raised the other day wasn't a purely technical problem, but a serious political one. Just consider. Disorder in production. Blind shock work. Result: many accidents, which could have been easily avoided. Consider again the assembling of sub-standard coils for sale to mills and mines. Can you say these aren't political problems? Not problems that reflect on the ideology of the leadership? [*With a heavy heart.*] Director, I must make a confession to you. I have written to the Party paper about the disorder in our factory's production.

TING [*sensing more keenly that there is something wrong with the factory's atmosphere*]: Why, isn't it a good thing to have written to the Party paper? Why "confession"?

HSU [*letting himself go*]: Because the leadership thinks that any one writing to the Party paper is making some kind of accusation, that he's flinging dirt on the factory's good name.

TING [*solemnly*]: The leadership will think nothing of the sort. You can rest assured.

[HSU *does not say anything to this, but it is apparent that he is not reassured.*]

[*The telephone rings.*]

YU [*answering the phone*]: Hello. Who's speaking? Yes, he's in. And you are—[*Laughs.*] oh, yes, just a moment. [*To* TING.] "Ask Papa to answer the phone." Your daughter.

TING: How could she know I am here! [*He takes over the phone.*] Hello. What is it now? Mother wants me back? No, you silly little girl, don't put that sort of thing over on me. It's not mother who's asking for me, it's you, isn't it? And you remember, little girls shouldn't tell lies. I know. I've booked three seats. Sure, three. What, lunch now? At this hour! [*Hangs up. As though some kind of excuse is called for from an indulgent father, he speaks half to himself.*] Can't help it. The girl has been pestering me for tickets for the film. [*To* YU.] When are you going to the film?

YU [*rather taken aback*]: Pardon?

TING: Haven't you booked seats for the film?

YU: Oh yes. All our tickets are for the third show. The trade union booked them all for the same time.

TING: Splendid. We'll all be there together then. It's a good film. "The Story of the Viborg District." In the series "Maxim's Life." Helpful to our work. The Soviet Union was in the same position that we're in. They had to appoint complete amateurs as ministers, bank managers, factory directors, too. [*Finding* HSU *not attending to him.*] What, still bothering about that old business?

HSU [*giving vent to all his grievances, all his pent-up feelings, which apparently makes him feel good*]: Comrade Director, I really can't stand the whole business any longer. I can't keep quiet. [*Pauses. Then, with agony in his voice.*] I haven't got any bad intentions. I just want to put the shop in good shape. And the factory. Even at the cost of other people's displeasure. [YU *makes a move to stop him, but he plunges in headlong in spite of her.*] Fussy about trifles, careless about big things. Penny wise, pound foolish. One man makes all the decisions without any consultation whatsoever with people below. As I see it, socialism can't be achieved by one person blundering along single-handed.

TING: Single-handed? Who?

HSU [*throwing all caution to the winds*]: Vice-Director Yang.

YU: Hush! Hsu, there you go again!

TING: [*raising his hand to check* YU]: Let him go on. It's a good thing for him to speak his mind freely. But surely Vice-Director Yang—

[HSUEH WEI-TEH *enters. As soon as he sees* TING, *he assumes a very deferential air.*]

HSUEH: Hello, Director Ting. Didn't expect to see you here. A glorious Sunday, isn't it, and at the beginning of the month too. Why don't you have a good rest? [*To* HSU.] So here you are at last, Comrade Hsu. I've been looking all over the place for you.

HSU: Is there anything the matter?

HSUEH: Well, no. It's only that the vice-director rang me up a little while ago. He wants to see you at once in his flat.

[HSU *is somewhat shaken.* TING *also becomes apprehensive.*]

HSU: All right, I'll go at once. [*Picks up his cap. As though to himself.*] I knew this was coming all along. All because I've written to the Party paper. [*Exit hurriedly without even saying good-bye to* TING.]

[YU *is also perturbed. She watches* HSU *go, then turns back to look at* TING.]

HSUEH: Director Ting, you've set an example of hard work for us. All these days—

TING [*not caring what he said*]: Comrade Hsueh, do you know what Vice-Director Yang wants to see him for?

HSUEH [*with a smile*]: I don't know exactly, but I hear that it's connected with some new arrangement about Comrade Hsu's work. [*After a glance at* YU.] I suppose you've already noticed—[*Here he lowers his voice for fear of being overheard by* YU.]—that Comrade Hsu is rather unpopular in the shop. He's on bad terms with everyone. I'm the only one who's been protecting him and patching things up for him with others.

TING: What new arrangement about him?

HSUEH: Well, this is only my guess, and it may be unfounded. However, Director Ting, I see you've noticed him and have taken the earliest opportunity to speak to him. Nothing could have been more timely. Hsu's a good comrade in almost all respects. Very active. Has got good ideas. The only trouble is, he's too young, too green, talks and acts with a perfect disregard of consequences, and so he's liable to get into serious trouble. [*Pauses.*] Director, I suppose you've heard that that consignment of 1000 KVA transformers were rejected by the other party?

TING: What has that to do with Comrade Hsu Ta-min?

HSUEH: Difficult to say. It may not have anything to do with him after all, though of course he talked. However, Vice-Director Yang said he was a little worried, because Comrade Hsu had a quick tongue and liked to broadcast his views all over the place. And you never can tell—[*But he suddenly stops. After a pause.*] That's why I always say we should settle our own affairs within the factory. If you wash dirty linen in public, then everybody's feelings will be hurt.

TING: Is that then what the vice-director wants to see him for?

HSUEH: Perhaps not exactly for that. Vice-Director Yang has always been very considerate to Comrade Hsu. I suppose he's only eager to see that our young comrade doesn't get into trouble, what with his impulsiveness. So....

TING [*questioning him closely*]: So what?

HSUEH: Well, it so happens that the district authorities want to start a technical school for workers. They've asked if we can spare a cadre with a college education to teach there. So the vice-director—er—

TING: Wants to send him to that job, is that it?

HSUEH [*non-committal*]: I don't know. It's not really decided. The vice-director merely said on the phone—[*But he does not go on. Instead, he tries cautiously to sound* TING *out.*] However, what does the director think of it?

TING: I think it's no good. Is Vice-Director Yang in his flat?

HSUEH: Yes. But I can go and speak to him, if you think it's no good.

TING: No. I'll go myself. [*Puts on his jacket.*] This arrangement is not going to do anybody any good. [*Goes out through the door but returns immediately.*] Comrade Yu, will you ring up my wife and tell her that I shall be late for lunch. Ask them not to wait for me. [*Exit.*]

[HSUEH *is rendered speechless. He wants to say something but stops short. Then he goes off in a hurry to try to catch* TING *up.*]

[*At first* YU *is also taken by surprise. But she quickly realizes the situation and there is a look of admiration and gratitude on her face.*]

[*Curtain*]

SCENE 2

Immediately after the time of Scene 1.

Ground floor sitting-room in YANG CHUNG-AN*'s flat. Low windows in the center through which are perceptible a small lawn, a tree, the distant sky and a low fence. On the right, entrance from the front-door. On the left, the door to the bedroom. In the center of the room, a small round table with several chairs, and against the wall on the right, an old-fashioned sofa. A little behind on the left, a small door opens on the yard, and a wicker bookshelf with a few books stands to the left of the door. By the side of the door to the bedroom there is a neglected hobby-horse. A battered kite hangs on the wall. The whole room gives one an impression of neglect and disorder.*

As the curtain rises, HSU TA-MIN *stands before* YANG CHUNG-AN, *who is sitting in one of the wicker chairs drumming the table with his fingers, while scrutinizing* HSU*'s face to see how he reacts to something he has said. It is altogether an awkward situation.*

YANG [*a minute later*]: Sit down please. What more have you got to say?

HSU [*pause*]: I don't want to be given the job.

YANG: You don't want to or you refuse?

[*Silence.*]

[*Quarrelling of the children in the bedroom adds to the general atmosphere of restlessness.*]

YANG [*loudly*]: Heh, I say, send the kids out.

[*Voice of* WANG HUI *in the bedroom: "Be quiet. Father is angry. Go and play outside."*]

[WANG *enters to get the hobby-horse. She is about thirty-two, of average height and looks rather worn-out.*]

WANG [*discovering* HSU, *smiles at him unnaturally*]: Comrade Hsu, why don't you sit down? The kids are so noisy. They get on one's nerves. [*Hurries off with the hobby-horse.*]

YANG [*pressing*]: Well? Have you made up your mind? [HSU *remains silent, obviously preparing himself for the answer he'll give* YANG, *which, as is apparent from his face, is going to be a negative one.*]

YANG [*lowering his voice to persuade*]: The job is a very important one. It is for the training of technical staff from the workers.

HSU: I've not been idle. These last few days there has been progress with the rationalization proposal of Ma Hsiao-pao's team, left over from last month.

YANG [*unable to control himself*]: You are not the only technician in the factory. There will be people enough to examine rationalization

proposals, Comrade Hsu; your appointment has been seriously considered by the leadership.

HSU: The leadership?—Has Director Ting given his consent?

YANG [*caught unawares, rather put out*]: You don't need to worry about that.

HSU: The director has just had a talk with me and he never mentioned it.

YANG: Oh, so you've been to see the director? [*Stands up.*]

HSU: He sent for me.

YANG: Oh, and what did you talk about?

HSU: All sorts of things. [*Pause.*] Including production problems, of course.

YANG [*getting worked up*]: So you've been telling tales again. You might as well realize that there's no hope of a split in the views of the leadership. There's not much chance for you there. Between the director and myself—

HSU: That's not what I mean to do. [*Adding as an afterthought.*] I am not that bad.

YANG [*sneering*]: Not that bad? You'd better think twice. People say you are full of the habits of the old society, love to show off and tell tales—

HSU [*indignant*]: Mustn't one give one's views?

YANG [*loudly*]: Certainly, certainly you can. [*Retorting.*] But why didn't you give them directly and [*Emphatically.*] before me?

HSU: Didn't I do so just now? I object to being appointed to the new position. I want to work on the rationalization proposal on the winding of coils.

YANG [*exerting extreme self-control*]: One may give one's views, but it's up to the leadership to make the final decision. You should have known that. [*Pause.*] You are a League member, aren't you?

[*At this* HSU *is silent.*]

YANG: Well, think it over again.

HSU [*insisting*]: The point is—

YANG: Do you refuse to be sent to the new job? You defy the leadership, eh?

[*The doorbell rings.* WANG HUI *hurries to the door.*]

YANG: My lad, the arrangement is all for your good. Don't—

WANG [*at the door*]: Comrade Ting, what a surprise. Why, you are alone! Why didn't Comrade Cheng Yu-ching come? . . .

YANG [*hardly expecting this, tries to dispose of* HSU *right away*]: Well, we will talk about this later. And be sure to ask Comrade Hsueh's opinion when you go back. Good-bye.

[HSU *readily darts off, but comes back presently to get the cap he has left on the table.*]

[*Enter* TING WEI *and* WANG HUI.]

TING [*meeting* HSU *face to face*]: Oh, it's you, Comrade Hsu. Are you going?

HSU [*mumbling*]: Good-bye. [*Goes.*]

TING [*thinks of stopping him, but gives up. Addressing* YANG]: Don't you go out even on Sundays?

YANG: Come and sit down. [*To* WANG.] Make some tea for us, will you?

WANG: What is a Sunday to him? [*Glancing at* YANG.] Always phone calls and appointments with people. You never know what it'll be next.

YANG [*as if not hearing her at all*]: How are things, Ting? Already got your bearings?

WANG: Look at him. Always the same. Ready to talk shop all the time. He does not even go out to the yard for a breath of fresh air on a fine day like this. Comrade Ting, he simply doesn't know how to live.

YANG: Oh, go on. You seem to be the only one on earth that knows how to live. [*Looking at* TING, *waiting for him to begin.*]

TING [*sits down*]: Everything here is so new to me, I can hardly grasp things yet.

YANG [*satisfied*]: Exactly. Running a factory is certainly different from the general type of work. It's much better now that things have been put on the right track. When I first came. . . .

WANG: Comrade Ting, why not ring up Cheng Yu-ching to come to lunch and then we can go out together. And don't forget to ask her to bring Sung-sung.

TING [*looking at his watch*]: Thanks. I really can't today. But we must do it some other time. [*Smiling.*] Excuse me for breaking in on your Sunday. Just a few words with Old Yang and I'll go.

WANG: Why in such a hurry?

YANG: Well, take a chair. [*Glancing at* WANG. *Sensing the tension,* WANG *goes out to make tea.*]

TING [*in a restrained tone*]: This transfer of Comrade Hsu Ta-min, you have just. . . .

YANG: How did you get to know about it?

TING: Hsueh Wei-teh has just told me.

YANG: Yes. That's just what I had Hsu here for. Your idea is. . . .

TING: It might not be such a good idea.

YANG [*hardly expecting this*]: Why, what's wrong with it?

TING [*still restrained*]: To transfer a man who makes a lot of criticisms might have bad effect on the public.

YANG [*interrupting him*]: It's not because of his criticisms, but he doesn't get along with people. The rascal has very bad habits. He's always quarrelling with people, likes to make cynical remarks, and above all he doesn't get along with Hsueh, the chief of his shop—

TING: I have heard that he is hot-tempered and quarrels with people quite a bit. [*Pause.*] But it seems to me that we should make clear whether he usually quarrels with people for the right or the wrong reasons.

YANG [*laughing*]: Do you really think that's necessary? I know the man inside out.

[WANG *enters with two cups of tea.*]

TING: Comrade Wang Hui, so far as you know, what sort of person is Hsu Ta-min?—What does the trade union think of him?

WANG [*after thinking it over*]: Just a bit irritable. Rather too sharp-tongued. On the other hand, he is enthusiastic about his work and creative. Last year he received special praise from the trade union for his bravery in repairing some live electric wiring at the risk of his life. He gets on well with the workers. And he is well liked in spite of his hot temper.

TING: In that case, then. . . .

YANG: Don't believe her. The trade union's judgment is biassed.

WANG [*retorts*]: Fancy saying that! The union is biassed and you're not, I suppose.

YANG [*impatiently*]: One thing will be enough to prove it. The transfer was originated at shop level. Hsueh Wei-teh, who is usually generous in his opinions about people, is quite insistent this time. Don't you think we ought to listen to the shop chief?

TING: But Hsueh has just told me that it was your idea to transfer Hsu.

YANG [*bursts out laughing*]: Ha, Old Ting, do you think I'd lie to you? We might as well ring Hsueh up to come and clear the matter up.

TING: That's hardly necessary. [*Sincerely.*] Old Yang, of course I trust you, but I don't necessarily trust Hsueh. Lately, I have been poking my nose into things, so to say, and I find that Hsueh is—well, he's not very trustworthy. Comrade Fang Ke shares my views.

YANG [*still laughing*]: Ting, old chap, I have been here more than three years. Hsueh is the one among the old technical staff who's made the quickest progress. He works hard, gets along with everybody, and he's always the first one to respond to calls from the leadership, he never takes exception to whatever task is passed down from above.

TING: Yang, I worked for more than two years in political colleges and cadres' schools. I have rubbed shoulders with quite a few old-type intellectuals. There is a type that's always ready with opinions at meetings and is full of fine words. But it's people like these that often flatter their superiors and suppress the masses. Besides, they frequently play a double-faced role.

WANG: Exactly. [YANG *intervenes as she is about to go on.*]

YANG: Of course there are different ways of looking at a man; however, from a political point of view, Hsueh is reliable.

WANG [*snatches at the chance*]: Comrade Ting, you are quite right. The trade union will definitely object to transferring Hsu to this new post.

[YANG, *displeased, glares at* WANG.]

TING: All right. [*Trying to ease the tension, smiles.*] Let's not indulge in any more character appraisal for the time being. But could we agree that no decision will be made now regarding Hsu Ta-min so that the Party Committee can consider it.

YANG [*displeased*]: If that's your decision, I have nothing more to say.

TING [*soothingly*]: No, that's hardly the way to put it. There should be no difference of opinion between us.

YANG: Ting, let's make it clear. In future, whenever there is a difference, you will have the last word.

TING: No. The point is not which one of us will have the last word. The final word should be left to the collective, the Party.

YANG: That would be making too much of it. Still, I agree.

TING: That's fine. Tomorrow we'll have Hsueh Wei-teh come to discuss it. [*Stands up.*] Comrade Wang, good-bye. [*Apologizing.*] I promised my daughter I'd go back early.

WANG: Must you go—[*Shakes hands with him and accompanies him out.*]

TING [*shakes hands with* YANG *at the door*]: Aren't you going to the film this afternoon?

YANG [*shaking his head*]: I don't take much interest in such things. [*Sees* TING *out.*]

[YANG *returns to the room, walks to and fro, absorbed in thought, and takes a sip of tea.*]

[WANG HUI *comes back with the day's paper. At first she intends to pass it to* YANG *after glancing over the important items, but attracted by a headline, she stands still and reads on.*]

YANG [*discovering that something in the paper had attracted her attention*]: What's the news?

WANG [*reads*]: "Production Confusion, Hsin Hua Electrical Machinery Works.". . .

YANG: What! [*Snatches the paper from her.*]

WANG: There is an editor's note at the end.

YANG [*reading the paper*]: It must be Hsu Ta-min! [*In a rage.*] Nonsense! Twelve accidents in April? The figure is exaggerated, to start with.

WANG [*reading over his shoulder*]: As I see it, the problem. . . .

YANG [*heatedly*]: How do you see it? [*Staring as if angry with her.*]

WANG: After all it may not be only Hsu's personal view.

YANG: There certainly must be someone at the back of it. [*Reads the paper again and then throws it on the table.*] This is no less than a stab in the back. [*To* WANG.] Chooses just this moment, right before

the May emulation drive, to intentionally destroy the prestige of the leadership. [*Can't help taking up the paper again.*] Look, I didn't guess wrong. Just listen to this. "The major cause for the confusion in production is the self-satisfaction and conservatism of the leadership. . . ." Damn it, who is self-satisfied? Time and again I have criticized the idea that the highest productivity had already been attained. [*Pauses, makes a decision, and then says to* WANG.] Ring up Secretary Wei of the general office and Hsueh Wei-teh. Ask them to come at once. We must write to the paper to clarify the situation. . . .

WANG: No, you mustn't do that.

YANG [*flaring up*]: And may I ask why?

WANG: It is the Party paper.

YANG [*still fuming*]: Doesn't the Party paper ever carry wrong information?

WANG: You had better calm down. Since it has already been published, why not get it discussed by the Party, the Youth League and the trade union, and see where it's right and where it's wrong.

YANG [*stops short, stares at the paper, and finally bursts out*]: No! That would cause a hell of a state of affairs, with everybody saying who knows what. It is clearly Fang Ke that wants me to lose face. So he gives support to Hsu Ta-min just when Ting Wei has come here to take charge.

WANG [*expostulating*]: Don't speculate too much. As I see it, it will do a lot of good to take the opportunity of Ting's arrival to make a general appraisal of the past work. That is what the editor says, "We hope that serious investigations will be conducted by the leadership of the factory."

YANG [*at the top of his voice*]: I am not afraid of investigations, no, not even of self-criticism. But I simply can't allow such trouble-makers to meddle with the factory's business. I will not let them do what they please with me. . . . [*Takes a few steps forward and hits upon an idea.*] I say.

WANG [*starts*]: What?

YANG: How about your writing to the paper to explain the real situation. That would make it unnecessary to have a correction in the name of the factory. .

WANG [*astounded*]: I?

YANG: Yes, you.

WANG [*solemnly*]: And who am I?

YANG: You are my wife, I know that. But since Hsu Ta-min didn't use his real name, you might do the same. You can give the views of the trade union.

WANG [*in a sudden outburst of indignation*]: You are out of your wits! I can hardly believe that you could have become so muddle-headed.

Who am I, and who are you?

YANG [*nonplussed*]: I?

WANG: Don't forget you are a Party member.

YANG: Don't I know that?

WANG: If you did, you should not have said that. I see you . . . you are not far from. . . .

YANG: What, you—you mean to insult me? [*Taking a step forward, threatening.*]

WANG [*with vehemence*]: Stop it! How dare you! Did I insult you or are you insulting yourself?

[YANG *is confounded. Breathing heavily, he remains silent.*]

WANG: I want to make this clear to you. I haven't much ability, but I am a Party member too, and can make my own choice. I'm not going to follow you down the blind alley with my eyes closed. I have had enough—all these years.

YANG [*cowed, but still not giving in*]: You, do you also want to take the chance to. . . .

WANG: Don't be a fool. Think it over carefully. Ting was not wrong in what he just said. You have let the flattery of men like Hsueh Wei-teh turn your head. "The vice-director is correct. The vice-director is brilliant"; and these sweet words have knocked you completely off your feet. You no longer know where you are.

YANG [*in a subdued voice*]: What's happened to you today?

WANG: Today? I should have said it much earlier. [*Less severely.*] You must think it over again. Remember what times these are, and the position you are occupying. . . .

[YANG *remains silent.*]

[*Voice of the two children outside: "Uncle Hsueh, Uncle Hsueh."*]

[*Both turn to the door.* HSUEH WEI-TEH *comes in with a big piece of pork and some pig knuckles.*]

HSUEH: Comrade Vice-Director, I know you wanted to get some pork, and at last I've got some for you. Today, the co-op. . . . [*Sensing that there is something wrong.*] Comrade Wang Hui. . . . [*Handing her the pork.*]

WANG: Thank you. [*Taking the pork with a reluctant smile.*]

HSUEH: It's nothing. [*Glances at* YANG, *and immediately takes leave.*] Good-bye, good-bye. [*Exit.*]

[WANG *looks at* YANG *without moving.* YANG *falls heavily into a chair.*]

[*Curtain*]

ACT IV

An evening a few days after.

The stage is the same as in Act 1.

When the curtain goes up, TING SUNG *is pasting specimens of plants on separate sheets of drawing paper. She has stuck some of these on the wall in front of her desk, taking up half of the space. She goes on sorting out the specimens, humming all the while the tune of "The Sun Goes Down."*

In a little while TING WEI *comes in from the factory.*

TING [*to* SUNG]: Had your supper?

[SUNG *nods. Still busy at her desk, she hums on.*]

TING [*glancing at her specimens on the wall*]: What's this? An exhibition with musical accompaniment? [*No response from* SUNG. *He takes off his jacket, puts his brief case down with care, goes behind scenes to have a wash, then comes back to the stage.*] Mother out?

SUNG [*stops humming. Briefly*]: At a meeting.

TING [*walks over to have a better look at the specimens*]: I know this one is dandelion, but what's this one?

SUNG: Burweed.

TING: I know all these, too: turnip, garden pea, crowfoot—right? But why do you want so many specimens of maple?

SUNG: That's not common maple, it's the leaf of a Japanese maple. Count the lobes. Ordinary maple leaves have five lobes, but these have seven.

TING [*nodding his assent*]: Oh, I didn't know there was so much difference. And this one?

SUNG: Look for the explanations yourself. There's a caption under each specimen.

[TING *goes back to his chair, lights a cigarette, looks at his watch, then taking a book out of his desk drawer, he begins to read quietly.*]

[*It gets dark.* SUNG *finishes with her specimens. She counts them, and then turns on the electric lights.*]

SUNG: Teacher told us, reading at this hour of the day is very bad for our eyes.

TING [*with a laugh*]: If I don't read now, when can I read? [*After a minute, seeing that she has finished.*] Sung-sung, come along and

let's have another spell of mutual aid. [*Pointing to the book.*] Look at this equation here: how does it come out?

SUNG: No. Do it yourself.

TING: You refuse to co-operate? All right. Next time you come and ask me about test questions on current affairs, I'll say the same thing to you—"Do it yourself."

SUNG [*laughing*]: All right, all right. Let me look. [*Snuggling close to him, acting the spoiled child.*] Dad, next Sunday. . . .

TING [*laughing*]: I understand. Another set of demands: the park in the morning, the film in the evening. Right?

SUNG: You promise?

TING: Make this equation clear first.

SUNG: This? Don't you see it's derived from the one above it? [*Scribbling with a pencil.*] That's Ohm's Law, you know:—"The intensity of a constant electric current in a circuit is directly proportional to the electromotive force and inversely proportional to the resistance."

TING: Sorry, my dear. Can't you do better than that?

SUNG: Why, when it says the current is inversely proportional to the resistance, it means the greater the resistance, the smaller the current; and the less resistance, the greater the current.

TING: Oh! [*Nods and copies the equation. Gets an idea.*] So the current is afraid of the resistance, it takes the line of the least resistance, eh?

SUNG [*hardly understanding what he says*]: Anyhow, they are inversely proportional. [*Returns to her desk.*] [*A minute's pause. Suddenly she remembers something.*] Dad, Young Wang has just been here.

TING: "Young Wang"? Now who can that be?

SUNG: I've never seen her before. Mother tells me to call her Aunt Yang, but she herself keeps calling her Young Wang. Young Wang indeed! She's even got a few white hairs.

TING [*remembering*]: Aunt Yang. Oh, I know. It must be Mrs. Yang, the wife of our vice-director.

SUNG: That's right. She and mother talked and talked about the factory. Then Young Wang burst into tears.

TING [*somewhat taken aback*]: Why?

SUNG: I don't know.

TING: What did they say? What about the factory?

SUNG: Um. Mother wouldn't let me listen. I only heard Aunt Yang say that people are saying you and Vice-Director Yang are on bad terms and won't pull together.

TING: Is this what Aunt Yang says or what other people are saying?

SUNG: Aunt Yang says she heard other people say so.

TING: Oh.

SUNG [*fixing her eyes on him*]: What do you mean, "Oh"? [*Earnestly.*] No, Dad, it won't do. Everybody must pull together.

TING [*a smile lights up his face, but almost at once it fades away*]: What else did she say?

SUNG: Mother will tell you. [*After a pause.*] They went on talking, and mother burst into tears too. She said—no, Aunt Yang said—Old Yang, Uncle Yang, the one who came to call on you the other day, is coming over this evening to see you.

TING: He's coming here this evening?

SUNG: Uh-huh. Aunt Yang says he didn't want to at first, but Aunt Yang kept at him till he gave in and agreed. [*With childish earnestness.*] Dad, don't you see how good they are? He's coming over to see you, to co-operate with you.

TING [*not paying much attention to her*]: This evening? I think I'll go to see him. [*Looks at his watch.*] Oh, damn. Can't make it. Appointment with someone else. [*Goes to the telephone and takes down the receiver.*] Hello, I want Vice-Director Yang. Not in? Hasn't got back? What about Wang—[*The other side has hung up.*] Hello? Hsin Hua? I want the Director's office. . . . What? Nobody there? . . . [*Puts back receiver, perturbed. Shuts the book. Paces the room.*]

[*His wife,* CHENG YU-CHING, *comes back from the street, with a parcel of fruit, which she opens. She puts the fruit on a plate.*]

TING [*to her*]: Has Wang Hui been here?

CHENG: How do you know? [*Gives* SUNG *a look.*] It must be you, you little chatterbox! [*To* TING, *with more significance than the words show.*] What's the hurry? I'll tell you in due time.

TING: Is Old Yang coming over?

CHENG: That's what his wife says. [*A pause. Then, looking at him.*] Is it true that there is some disagreement between you two?

TING [*after a moment of thinking*]: Yes.

CHENG [*seriously*]: Why don't you thrash it out among yourselves? Why do you want to—

TING: Secretary Fang and I had several talks with him, but it was no use. The thing became very awkward at the meeting of the Party Committee the day before yesterday. I thought of looking him up today, but it happened that the meeting called by the Department of Industry took up the whole day. . . .

[SUNG *comes over to listen.*]

CHENG: Sung-sung, you'd better go in and do your lessons. [*Gives her an apple.* SUNG *goes off pouting.*] I think you ought to have kept more calm. Between such old comrades as you two, there is nothing that can't be straightened out. What's more, you are new to the job and you may not have got a perfect grasp of things.

TING [*with sorrow*]: It's just on account of this relationship, this business of being old friends, old comrades, that the matter is hard to straighten out.

CHENG [*with little understanding of his meaning*]: That's nonsense. [*A pause.*] His wife is very upset. She says Yang loves you like his own brother. When he heard of your appointment as director of the factory he was as merry as a bell for days. But now the news is going round that you and he are at loggerheads. [*Sits down. After a long pause.*] Dear, you must think of the past. Remember how he helped you in moments of the gravest danger, how he saved your life; but now—

TING: That's just it. [*A very brief pause.*] Now *he* is in danger, and I must save him.

CHENG [*surprised*]: He is in danger?

TING [*smoking. Nods several times in confirmation*]: That's right. He is in danger. At first, I thought of waiting a few days till I'd got a better grasp of things before bringing the question into the open, but things have gone too far. When it's become a matter of attempted suppression of criticism, then it's impossible to go slow, impossible to wait any longer. My duty is clear. I'll have to see that things don't get worse. Didn't Wang Hui say anything about all this?

CHENG [*nods*]: But what was it all about?—that letter to the newspaper?

[TING *nods affirmation.*]

CHENG [*beginning to sense the gravity of the situation, but unable to restrain herself*]: Anyhow, it looks bad when it gets talked about. You know the proverb, "One bowl is quiet; two bowls make a row." People will think that the arrival of a new director immediately produced friction in the leadership. Wang Hui mentioned many of Old Yang's faults, but what about you? Can you put complete trust in your own judgment? Remember you are new to the job, while the other man has been at it for three years—[*The doorbell rings.*] It's probably he. [*She is about to go, but comes back once more.*] I can't say much, as I don't really know, but as he has come to see you, you'd better keep cool and open-minded. And not so many of your jokes, either. You know him. He can't bear a harsh word. [*Goes off to open the door.* TING SUNG *sticks her head out of the backroom. She makes a face.*]

TING: Stop your monkeying, Sung.

CHENG [*outside*]: The climate here is really unpredictable. All of a sudden, it's as hot as summer. [*Comes in with* YANG.] He's just got back. [TING WEI *steps forward.*]

YANG [*keeping calm with an effort*]: Been at the meeting all day?

TING [*showing him to a seat*]: Didn't finish till three. On my way back I went to the factory just for a look. You were in the shop.

YANG: Yes. [*An awkward pause.*] Not busy this evening, are you?
TING: No. A good chance for a chat.
YANG [*after a slight pause*]: Rather stuffy in here. Why not have the windows open? [*Goes and opens one.*]
TING [*going over*]: Better open this one. [*Laughing.*] If you blow Sung-sung's bugs and weeds about, she'll raise hell.
YANG: What a good father you are! You think of everything. [*Silence. Neither knows where to begin.* CHENG *comes in with some apples on a plate.*]
YANG: Oh, you are as hospitable as ever.
CHENG: They happened to be on hand. Let me peel them for you.
YANG [*takes the plate*]: No, thanks. Don't bother. [*Peels an apple. Unusual silence.*]
TING [*goes on smoking. After a while*]: I say, about what happened last Sunday. Of course I was too hasty. I shouldn't have rushed in when you were talking to Hsu. And I shouldn't have interfered with your decision right away. It would have been much better if we'd had a chance to talk the thing over beforehand.
YANG: Let's not talk about what happened in the past. Let's talk about what's coming up. Since it's appeared in the papers, we've got to give an account of ourselves. But what's more important is how we are going to overcome our lack of planning in production. [*He has peeled the apple, but is not eating it.*] As to what happened last Sunday, I was hasty too. I was afraid young Hsu was too rash, going about making all sorts of complaints and accusations. In fact, he'd be throwing everything out of gear.
TING [*nods. After a pause, suddenly recalling something*]: I say, Yang, do you remember that affair in the days when we were in Central Kiangsu—when you wrote to the commander of the Army Corps and accused that secretary of the County Committee?
YANG [*taken by surprise. After a moment's thought*]: Of course I remember, but why . . . ?
TING: It came into my mind when you brought up the word "accusations." [*Sunk in friendly reminiscence.*] At the time I was attracted by your youthful ardour. [*A slight pause.*] Do you remember, when you were being hauled over the coals, how the Corps Commander wrote to encourage you?
YANG [*nods. Then speaks with a tinge of emotion*]: Yes. [*A moment's silence.*]
TING: Now, about this young man Hsu Ta-min—
YANG: He's got nothing to complain of. In fact, I've treated him most generously. He was sent here by the City Party Committee to take part in the democratic reform movement. It was understood that he'd leave when that was over. However, I saw he was able, and moved heaven and earth to keep him with us. He was appointed

deputy-chief of the shop on my recommendation. [*Seemingly unaffected by* TING*'s reminder, his words now turn in another direction as his sore spot is touched.*] When the studies for Party rectification began, he was asked to take part and he promptly led the attack on me. But I didn't mind. I'm not so inexperienced in such matters. Every time we have a movement, we're bound to have a few shock-troops. But lately the fellow has gone from bad to worse. Without any grasp of the real conditions, he goes about airing his views. Apparently, he hasn't the slightest respect for the leadership. Take the incident of that batch of transformers. Of course something may be said for outsiders' finding fault with us; but one of our own staff—Doesn't he know what sort of equipment we've got and what kind of technical conditions we're working under? [*Gets worked up.*]
TING [*very coolly*]: Didn't he offer suggestions about bettering the equipment?
YANG [*impetuously*]: "Bettering the equipment!" Such a simple matter! The question was handed to several of our engineers, as well as to an expert from the university, who came down at our special request. They mulled over it at meeting after meeting for several days and came to no feasible conclusion. Do you suppose then a plain workman like Ma Hsiao-pao can succeed where those people failed? I asked Hsueh Wei-teh, and Hsueh asked Chien Pei-chih. Now, you will agree these two are no amateurs; but Chien says no, Ma Hsiao-pao's "way" is not a "way," but merely an idea.
TING: To my mind, we ought to have another look at the suggestions. A couple of days ago Comrade Fang and I had a talk with Ma Hsiao-pao and both of us felt he had something there. Besides, it wasn't just an attractive idea, there were some concrete proposals too. Of course I'm too much of an amateur to claim that I understand all about it. So, before we held any meeting, I went to Chien Pei-chih and asked him. He said the suggestion was worth trying. It was only then that I tentatively agreed to set up a special technical "Study Group" to investigate the problem. And I had a sort of idea to put Hsu Ta-min in charge.
YANG: Have you actually decided?
TING: Not yet. I want to have your opinion. [*After a pause.*] Why not let him have a go at it? You had some idea of getting him out of the Light Machinery Shop so as to have no more trouble there. Why not put him entirely on this problem?
YANG: Old friend, you've got too good an opinion of him. He is a bad egg, a mischief-maker, very hard to get along with. What's more, he's politically backward.
TING [*smiling*]: Well, my opinion hasn't changed much since I talked with you last time. To have a bad temper is one thing, to have a positive sense of responsibility towards production is another. If a

man has a persistent urge to better production and by that means creates more wealth for the people, he must have a considerable amount of political conscience. How could it be otherwise?

YANG: I don't think so. This man is good at empty talk, but when it comes to actual performance, he's no good.

TING [*trying hard to keep calm*]: Look, old pal, what I say is, we ought to look more at the good points of these youngsters. They are the rising force upon which we'll have to base our hopes. Why not give them a chance? [*With a trace of sadness.*] Our generation was born and bred in a world of revolution and war, but now, in the face of new conditions, what we knew so well is of little use, while what we don't know has become our sole concern. Our responsibilities are very great. We'll have to learn—that's very important of course; but what's more important still is a conscious effort to help the younger generation to grow up.

YANG [*somewhat peeved*]: You have too low an opinion of us. That's not my way of thinking. I don't know anything about such things as science and technology. It's people like Chien Pei-chih who understand them. But who's been responsible for things for the last three years? If they'd been in authority, this factory wouldn't have fulfilled its given tasks, and it wouldn't have become a factory of the people. Think again, Ting: you won't have my support in the idea of putting Hsu Ta-min in charge of a special group. That fellow. . . . [*Obviously getting his back up.*]

TING [*silent for a moment. Walks about the room. Then returns to his seat, having apparently come to a decision*]: Look, old chap, we are old comrades of more than ten years' standing. We can say anything to each other. In fact, we ought to. Now will you let me tell you something which won't please you?

YANG: Go ahead.

TING: Well, it seems to me there are two sorts of people about you. One of them is like Hsueh Wei-teh, who agrees with you in everything. If you said the sun today was blue, he would say, "Ah, perfectly right, it's as blue as indigo." If you hinted that the drinking-water was salty he would say that you had such a wonderful palate as to be able to detect the presence of salt even in the most minute quantities. Such men are like velvet, delightful to touch, but very dangerous to trust. If you trusted them, you'd bring ruin to the factory and to yourself. The other sort may be represented by Hsu Ta-min, who seems stiff-necked, thick-headed and perverse. If you say something is good, he'll say that remains to be seen. If you say things are in good shape, he'll say there are still a lot of questions about them. Such people are like rough homespun, irritating to the touch, but good for keeping you alert, for helping you and for the advancement of our work.

YANG [*hurt*]: You've got too good an opinion of Hsu and a very poor one of me. You regard me, Yang Chung-an, as too weak and muddle-headed. So I am a despot and a bureaucrat. That's what you really want to say, isn't it? Well, dear comrade, you are relying a little too much on your own judgment and you are jumping to conclusions. The problems of our factory are very complex, but you regard them as very simple.

TING [*speaks deliberately, trying to calm him down*]: Don't talk like that, Yang. We. . . .

YANG [*rushes on headlong*]: Since you've talked in your way, let me say my say. When you looked up Chien Pei-chih the day before yesterday, you went to his home, is that right?

TING: Yes.

YANG: I know you also went to Ma Hsiao-pao's home and had a talk with him. Very good. But is it wise for the director who's a Party member to go and pay a personal call on an old staff member whose head is filled with purely technical views, with no room in it for any political consciousness? Did you consider what might result from such visits? Since you're new here, you probably wouldn't know the history of these last three years. You wouldn't know either what a time I had putting the old staff in their places. It was no joke trying to instil any respect for the leadership into their minds. Now that you have gone and visited them, they'll get stuck-up again.

TING [*reflects*]: I seem to remember when we were in East Shantung, we studied together Lenin's "Left-wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder."

YANG: What are you driving at?

TING: I got the book out the other day and read it once more. Lenin tells us, "We can (and must) begin to build Socialism, not with imaginary human material, not with human material invented by us, but with the human material bequeathed to us by capitalism." He goes on to say, "That is very 'difficult,' it goes without saying, but no other approach to this task is serious enough to warrant discussion." [*After a pause.*] Of course, our situation today is different from that of the Soviet Union then, because we have the help of Soviet experts. But Yang, we still have to get our technical staff where we can find them or develop where we need them, for we need thousands and thousands of Chinese experts.

YANG: Didn't I keep these people on? But at the same time, don't you have to re-educate them?

TING: You are right. We must re-educate them so as to help them go forward. That's a very important point. But re-education doesn't mean "putting them in their places." It isn't a negative process. Quite the contrary. It means real education; it means real, honest help.

YANG: No. Before you can educate or help them, you must take them down a peg or two, let them cool their heels a bit.

TING: But it's now more than four years since the liberation and we must acknowledge the advance the technical people have made in their political thinking. Well, old comrade, I think the political work we do among these people ought to go hand in hand with their actual work, that is, with the work of production. Just talking theory or repeating rules or principles won't help.

YANG [*seems utterly unable to take in* TING*'s meaning, but is bent on telling* TING *his views*]: Another thing—about Fang Ke—you talk over everything with him first. I have my own opinion about that too.

TING [*surprised*]: Why, he's the secretary of the Party Committee. . . .

YANG: But I've told you how he's been finding fault with me these last twelve months.

TING: Comrade Fang feels very bad about that. He has asked me several times to ask you. . . . [*The doorbell rings.*] Ching, someone is ringing the doorbell, will you go and see who it is?

[CHENG YU-CHING, *with a serious expression on her face, goes to the door.*]

YANG [*peevishly*]: I have done nothing to him I need be sorry for.

TING: That's hardly the way to put it, old man.

[*The two men sit in silence, facing each other.* HSU TA-MIN *comes in with* MA HSIAO-PAO, *both in high spirits.* MA *is a healthy fifty-odd.* HSU *has a roll of blueprint in his hand. Upon their entrance, as soon as* HSU *sees* YANG, *the gladness fades from his eyes.* TING WEI *gets up to shake hands with them.*]

MA [*goes over to* YANG *and says respectfully*]: Vice-Director Yang, how lucky to find you here. [*They shake hands.*]

TING: Let's all sit down.

HSU [*ever impatient*]: You go ahead, Comrade Ma.

MA: No, you'd better do it. I'm afraid I'll make a mess of it.

TING: Did you run into any difficulties?

HSU: No, not a single one. Comrade Ma's suggestion is thoroughly reliable now.

TING: The question is about the short circuit in the coils, isn't it?

HSU: Yes, it is, and it's a key question with the Light Machinery Shop. This has been clear to Comrade Ma for some time. This time, when the Study Group examined the eleven discarded coils, they found a very serious defect besides the question of insulation. When the coils are wound up, the number of turns is not always correct. They are sometimes more and sometimes less. [YANG *shows impatience at this point.*] So we got the idea that to get rid of this defect we'd have to improve the winding machine first. [*To* MA.] Will you take it up from here?

MA: Well, we'd noticed for some time that our winding machine didn't work properly, and that made the windings uneven. But we just couldn't think of a way to make the machine work properly. All the same, since you'd encouraged us to study the problem, we got really keen about it. We tried everything we could think of but nothing would work. I was really worried. I began talking to myself. I said, "Now, what's all this? You've found the disease, but you can't find the cure. So what's the use of your ideas and suggestions? They don't amount to much, do they?" [*A short pause.*] My wife saw I was worried about something—I was getting so I didn't care about food or drink—so she began to ask me about it. She thought I'd made some awful bloomer and had to face the music. But when I'd told her the whole story, she up and told me to go and have a look at her mill.

HSU [*making things clear*]: Mrs. Ma works at the Cheng Hsin Hosiery Mill.

TING [*puzzled*]: Hosiery mill? Where they make stockings?

MA: Yes. When you make those things, you have to wind the yarn. So I thought it was all right to go and have a look. Well, we went, that is, Comrade Hsu here, Chang Ta-mei, and I went. It's odd that at the sight of their machine, our brains began to work. We found the solution right away. We did some more thinking when we got back, and putting our heads together we designed a new winding machine patterned on the hosiery one. [HSU *opens the roll of blueprint and shows it to* TING, *who scrutinizes it with care.* MA HSIAO-PAO *explains things. Then* TING *hands it to* YANG, *who peevishly gives it only a casual glance or two.*]

TING [*takes up the blueprint again and goes to the light. After examining it once more, he hands it to* HSU]: Would it be a lot of work setting up the machine according to the new design?

HSU: Not at all. If we hurry, we can get it done in four or five days.

TING [*returning to his seat*]: How much would it cost to set up a new machine for trial purposes?

HSU: Very little. A lot of the parts are already available. We can make some of the rest ourselves.

MA: We can find something among the discarded stuff, too.

HSU: I've made a rough estimate. If we set up one machine for a try, it would cost something between one and two hundred yuan.

TING: Have you discussed this with any of the other comrades?

HSU: Glad you brought that up. I forgot to tell you that we showed the blueprint to Comrade Chien, the chief engineer.

TING: What did he say?

MA [*laughing*]: After he looked at the thing, he began to beat himself on the head. [*Imitating the gesture.*]

TING: Why did he do that?

MA: He said, "Oh, what a fool I am! It's such a small step, such an obvious thing, and I couldn't think of it!"

TING: Did he approve your way of going about it?

HSU: Yes. He congratulated us and said that we'd got it at last. Then he made a few recommendations. [*Takes out another blueprint.*] This is his idea. His suggestions are all very important.

TING: Excellent.

HSU: Then, we have your approval?

TING: I think so. [*Looks at* YANG.] Yes, I think we should go ahead.

HSU: Then, would you mind approving it in writing?

TING: No, matters of this kind don't need the director's written approval. If the chief engineer approves and signs it, the work can go ahead. I've already made that clear to Comrade Chien Pei-chih.

HSU: That's wonderful. [*In high spirits.*] Comrade Ma, let's get going as soon as we get back.

MA: All right. [*Gets on his feet.*]

TING: Stay and have a chat for a while.

MA: No. The comrades are waiting for the news.

HSU: Old Comrade Ma, you can guess how happy they'll be when you tell them it's been approved. [*Suddenly remembers* YANG's *presence. Goes to him and shakes hands.*] Good-bye.

[HSU *and* MA *go off stage.*]

MA [*outside*]: You ought to be the happiest of the lot.

[*A longish silence.*]

TING: Well, old boy, haven't we solved one problem already? If the coils are all right, the quality of our products—

YANG [*with a dry laugh*]: I think you are too naive. You have too simple a view of the matter. Why, all these years I've seen lots and lots of these inventions and "creative efforts." They are delightful to the ear and beautiful to the eye, but they break into little pieces as soon as you try them out.

TING: I doubt if that's the whole truth. I've read your summing-up report for the last three years to the City Party Committee, and in that report you state that you have adopted over sixty rationalization proposals and that they have proved successful.

YANG [*with no come-back to that*]: Well, I'm not against what you've just done. All I want to say is that such piecemeal measures are of little use in the solution of the problem as a whole.

TING: Of course the problem as a whole demands a solution, but we must also attend to details, and firm support for measures of reform is the key to the problem of improving production. [*After a slight pause.*] Yesterday we discovered some problems and decided on another movement for reforms in our methods of production. But we only scratched the surface of things. I'd really like to have your

opinion on how to solve the problem as a whole. What do you think of. . . .

YANG [*vexed*]: What do I think? As I am full of faults and going to be criticized, what does it matter what I think?

TING: Keep cool, Yang. Why get excited? You and I certainly ought to have the same sort of views. Now, the Factory Party Committee says in its inspection report that the problems in our factory are defective quality in our products, a high rate of accidents, and unbalanced monthly and quarterly rates of production. These three things are all connected with one thing. . . .

YANG [*unable to control himself any longer*]: Well, you needn't hesitate: I'll speak for you. They are all connected with one fact, poor leadership. Is that right? I, Yang Chung-an, am a bureaucrat, an individualist, right? All right. I'm no good. Now you have a try. Cast your stones at me, and carry out your reforms.

TING [*trying his utmost to keep calm*]: Don't talk like that, old man. None of us can claim much experience in these new enterprises, so mistakes are to be expected. At the end of an investigation, if we are found to be free of error, why, that's splendid. But even if we are proved at fault, we should be able to admit our mistakes and be ready to correct them for the sake of the people and the Party. We all made mistakes of one sort or another in the past. . . .

YANG [*breaks in*]: Do your worst and stop beating about the bush. I have been acting these last three years as a good Communist should have. The facts are all there, for everybody to see. My conscience is free. Anyone who wants to investigate me is welcome to. [*Gets up and takes his cap, ready to leave.*]

CHENG [*rushes on to stage and says with emphasis*]: Ting Wei! [*The two men remain silent.*] What's the matter with you two? Aren't you old comrades? [*To* YANG.] Comrade Yang, please don't. . . .

YANG [*bursting with rage*]: If there is any disagreement between him and me, it all comes from his side. What have I got against him? He is the one that's against me. It's just a case of the newly appointed official. As they say, he will start three fires just for the sake of showing off.

CHENG: Ting Wei, fancy treating an old friend like this!

TING: This is not a question of friendship or personal relations. It's a serious matter, a matter of principle. If it were merely a personal matter, I'd willingly give way. I'd yield every inch of the ground until I had no place to stand. But this is obviously a question of how to treat the property of the people and how to treat advanced workers. Upon such matters it is my duty to fight. I must not give way, not even a fraction of an inch.

YANG: All right. You can have your fight. I'm ready for you.

TING [*still calm and deliberate*]: No, the fight can't take place here, it must be in front of the Party Committee. Let our Party and the masses judge. On questions like this we must fight it out until we can get the right answer.

YANG: All right. Let the Party Committee settle it. Good-bye. [*Goes off in hot anger, without shaking hands.*]

CHENG: Comrade Yang. [*Goes after him.*]

[TING *also tries to follow, but seeing that* YANG *has gone without even a backward glance, he retraces his steps and, with his hands behind his back, paces the room.*]

CHENG [*on coming back looks at* TING *and manages to say with an effort*]: You ought to have been more patient with him. You know what he's like? [*Is about to go on, but seeing how unhappy he is, she breaks off and goes in.*]

[*Complete quiet reigns.* TING *paces the room alone. He draws away the curtains, and a bright moon is revealed against a blue sky. He comes back and stands in front of a small round table, slowly sits down, takes up a cigarette, rolls it on the face of the table, and puts it down again. A clock in the room goes on ticking.*]

TING [*stands up, with his mind made up*]: Ching! [CHENG YU-CHING *comes on.*] Would you mind ringing up Wang Hui and asking her to give Old Yang the message that I'll go and see him the first thing in the morning?

CHENG [*nods vigorously, in warm approval*]: Yes, yes. [*Goes to telephone.*]

[*Curtain*]

ACT V

Early morning on the eve of May Day.

The Director's office, same as in Act II.

YU CHIA-HUA *is unfolding the day's paper to read after she has put the documents in order. Outside the window members of the culture and education section of the trade union can be seen passing along, carrying red buntings, paper models, cardboard production charts, etc. On the buntings one can read the words "May First—International Labour Day."*

After a little while, CHU FAN *of the General Affairs Section softly opens the door and pops his head in to look around before he enters.*

CHU [*in a low voice*]: Chia-hua, what has happened?

YU [*at a loss*]: What? Why so mysterious?

CHU: You don't know! You're just pretending.

YU: Know what?

CHU: Well, [*As if imparting a secret.*] it seems something has been decided on since the meeting last night.

YU [*a bit impatient*]: What are you driving at—starting something in the middle like this?

CHU [*glancing about*]: Vice-Director Yang phoned early this morning. I answered it. He told me in an angry voice to send him all the personal belongings he had in the office.

YU: Oh! [*Gradually sizing things up.*] Did he say anything more?

CHU: I asked him if he wanted to speak to you. He didn't listen and hung up with a bang.

YU [*calmly*]: In that case, you'd better do it for him before Director Ting comes in.

[CHU FAN *goes up to* YANG CHUNG-AN*'s desk but he does not quite know what to do with the pile of things on it.*]

CHU: Have you got the keys? [YU CHIA-HUA *hands him a bunch of keys she picks from the drawer. He speaks as he tidies the things up.*] Comrade Yu, this isn't an ordinary storm. Department Head Li was at the meeting last night. Well, someone who used to criticize others was criticized himself. As the meeting went on, Yang Chung-an's voice became lower and lower.

YU: How do you know all this?

CHU: Well, it's the job of people who look after general affairs. Couldn't possibly leave the place before the meeting was over, could I? I had to wait outside till half past eleven.

YU: Eavesdropping and gossiping, eh? That's bad.

CHU: Well, I didn't tell anybody about it.

YU: How about me? Why do you tell me all this?

CHU: All right, I won't say anything more. I'll tidy up the rest of the things after lunch. [*He thinks of going out, but cannot keep back his words.*] Nobody was to blame. So many people wanted to help him, but he just wouldn't listen.

[YU CHIA-HUA *remains silent.* CHU FAN *goes out. After a minute or two,* FANG KE *pushes the door open and walks in.*]

YU [*putting down the newspaper*]: Secretary Fang, can I help you?

FANG: Hasn't Director Ting. . .?

YU [*smiling*]: It's not time yet.

FANG [*taking a glance at his watch*]: Is he in his flat?

[*He takes up the receiver and is going to make a call.*]

YU: He'll be here soon. I think you'd better not disturb him now. He knows how to handle his time. I saw his time-table when I was at his flat the day before yesterday. Besides political study he spends half an hour reading the newspaper and one hour studying mathematics before he comes to the office. After office hours he spends an hour and a half studying physics.

FANG: How can a busy person like him manage all that?

YU: Well, Comrade Cheng Yu-ching says he's very strict. Not even his daughter is allowed to bother him when he is studying. He's just as strict here in the office. He criticized Hsu Ta-min the day before yesterday.

FANG: What, he criticized Hsu Ta-min!

YU [*smiling*]: Of course, the way he criticized Hsu was different. Hsu came to tell him that the workshop was completely changed after the new routine had been introduced. Chang and Chao of the Ma Hsiao-pao team didn't want to leave the shop when the time was up. They worked till seven o'clock without pausing to eat. Hsu thought this would certainly please him. But instead he looked serious and said that wouldn't do. He said, regulations must be strictly observed; no one was allowed to come late and leave before the scheduled time; nor should anyone come early and leave late—that's the only way production figures can be accurately fixed.

FANG: He was quite right. Working beyond the regular hours, even if it is voluntary, is still a form of overtime, a sort of extra shift. Such production figures are not reliable. [*Pointing to the documents on the desk.*] Are there fewer than there used to be?

YU: Much fewer. Only about half as many as there were. Reports have been simplified and ordinary requests are no longer sent here for

approval, since responsibilities at three different levels have been clearly defined and proper division of labour is carried out among the various sections. So now I have some time to spare for books and newspapers.

FANG: Good. Now let's do it this way. Ring me up when he comes in. There's a lot of things to do today. I'll be in the Party Committee office and won't go out anywhere. [*He is on the point of going out.*]

[WANG HUI *pushes the door open and enters in great haste. She looks pale and worn and is panting. As soon as she enters, she faces* FANG KE *who is just going out.*]

WANG: Oh, it's you, Secretary Fang. [*Looking round.*] Director Ting isn't in?

YU: He'll be here in a minute, Comrade Wang Hui.

WANG [*speaking to* FANG KE]: Last night. . . . [*She stops to wipe off sweat with a handkerchief, then, speaking with a great effort.*] Was a decision made?

FANG [*turns round and stops; speaks calmly*]: Yes, it was.

WANG: Is everything finished for him?

FANG: Not if he can realize his own mistakes and tries hard to correct them. . . . What did he say?

WANG: When he came home last night, he looked as if something had gone wrong. The two kids were ill at home. He didn't say anything when I asked him. . . . Later on, he shouted at the top of his voice that factory work was beyond him and he wanted to go to the countryside to work as a schoolteacher.

FANG: He's too impulsive. He was angry when he said that. You must persuade him to calm down.

WANG: Has the punishment been decided on?

FANG: Yes, it has. [*Gravely.*] But, Comrade Wang Hui, that is the only possible way for the Party to bring him under its care, the best way to help him. Nothing else would do him any good. The decision was made after repeated discussion by the Party Branch Committees, the Factory Party Committee and the City Party Committee.

WANG [*painfully*]: I've talked to him several times lately. Before the meeting yesterday I made it clear. . . .

FANG: Comrade Ting Wei has told us all about that. It is very good indeed. The stand you've taken is extremely important. It'll have a great effect on his future. . . . We are glad you're siding with us to help him.

WANG: But what I say. . . . [*She stops, a short pause follows, then suddenly.*] Secretary Fang, the criticisms others made of him. . . .

FANG: They were quite sharp. [*Pause.*] He's made serious mistakes. [*Pause.*] Comrade Wang Hui, Director Ting Wei saved him at the meeting yesterday.

WANG: Ting Wei?

FANG: Yes. [*Pause.*] At the meeting his achievements in recent years as well as the work he did in the past were recognized; but he was also seriously criticized for complacency and the grave mistake of neglecting criticism and self-criticism. . . .

WANG [*wanting to know the worst of it*]: And his punishment is—

FANG: It'll be made public today. But I can tell you this. About the Hsu Ta-min affair, he not only handled the most active workers very badly, but he also made the mistake of trusting Hsueh Wei-teh. And he suppressed and rejected the criticisms of the masses. Therefore, [*With a heavy heart.*] the disciplinary measure within the Party is: public warning, which will be printed in Party publications.

[YU CHIA-HUA *is a bit shocked.*]

WANG: And the Management. . . .

FANG: The Management decided that he be demoted. If he can try hard to correct his mistakes. . . .

WANG [*feels relieved but deeply moved*]: That is too, too. . . . [*She is not able to finish. Suddenly she changes her tune.*] Then why should he. . . .

FANG: Precisely. The Party has given him every help and care. You must make him cool down first. After a while, probably tonight, I'll go and see him. Comrade Wang Hui, I have a big share of responsibility in the matter, for not being able to offer him help earlier.

WANG: No, you haven't. All right, I'll make it clear to him that there's nothing to be pigheaded about when he was given every help. Really, he doesn't know how fortunate he is. [*She turns to go out, but quickly turns back again and speaks with confidence.*] Comrade Fang Ke.

[FANG *stares at her.*]

WANG: You and Comrade Ting Wei can rest assured. I'll see to it that he thoroughly analyses the causes of his mistakes. [*After a short pause her voice becomes calmer.*] Comrade Fang, he's just obstinate and hasn't come to his senses for the time being. But I'm confident he'll change. He's sure to realize . . . [*With intense emotion.*] the care and help the Party extends to him. [*She puts the handkerchief to her nose, wishes to speak but stops, turns and goes out.*]

FANG: Comrade Wang Hui. . . . [*Seeing that she has gone, he stops and also goes out.*]

[*Outside the window a crowd of people pass, discussing among themselves. After a little while,* TING WEI *enters.*]

YU: Director, did you see Comrade Fang Ke? [TING *shakes his head.*] He's just gone. He asked you to ring him up when you come. Shall I get him now? [*She takes up the receiver.*]

TING: Just wait a minute. Has the daily production report come in?

YU [*remembering*]: Oh no, not yet.

TING: Remind them to send it quickly. [*He pours himself a cup of tea, sits down and speaks in a measured voice.*] That's regulation, a regulation that I've laid down for myself. The first thing I do after I come to the office is to read the production report of the previous day. I won't do anything before that.

YU [*smiling and making a phone call*]: Hello! Put me through to the Statistics Section, please. . . . This is the Director's office. That's right. The daily report. . . . Just sent out? Haven't got it yet. All right. [*To* TING WEI.] They have sent it out already.

TING: Well, my young comrade, what are you smiling at? You think I'm too mechanical, don't you? Well, that's not quite true. For people and offices not accustomed to regular work it helps to be a bit mechanical in order to form a good habit. [*Someone knocks at the door.* YU CHIA-HUA *goes to the door and comes back with the daily report which she gives to* TING WEI. *He reads it carefully and with his face beaming takes up a red and blue pencil and draws two lines on a chart on the wall. To* YU CHIA-HUA.] You see, this is what improved planning of work leads to. This line becomes level, no more ups and downs. And this one becomes straight, no more zigzags. Very good indeed. [*He looks at the report again and then speaks to* YU CHIA-HUA.] Now, please ring up Secretary Fang.

YU [*taking up the receiver*]: Hello, put me through to Comrade Fang Ke of the Party Committee, please.

FANG [*opens the door and comes in*]: No need to call me up now. [*To* TING WEI.] Good morning!

TING: Good morning! Were you here a moment ago?

FANG: Yes. I was a bit impatient. I have to do what was decided on last night and I want to talk it over with you first.

TING: I've thought it over and planned a bit since the meeting, too. About the future work, what do you think. . . .

FANG: After this rearrangement, or rather, I should say reform, all possible conditions exist for fulfilling our tasks, bettering quality and lowering costs. Problems that haven't been solved in the past can be satisfactorily solved now, if the masses are mobilized. So I want to talk with you about the future work of the Factory Party Committee.

TING: Yes, that's extremely important.

FANG: I think that even when bureaucracy is done away with, we shall still have a good deal of trouble in matters of production quota, labour discipline, bonuses, etc. In all these, the Party and the trade union will do their best to help the Management out.

TING: There's one favourable factor; that is, the high political consciousness of the masses. In this respect, a lot of work has been done by the Party, the trade union and the Youth League, as well as by Comrade Yang Chung-an. But from now on we won't have any more of that daily lecturing through the loudspeaker. And it's no good just

issuing political calls. What we must do is to get down to production and go to the masses; we must carry on political and ideological work closely linked up with production.

FANG: That's right. Department Head Li discussed the same problem with me last night. [*Pause.*] He criticized me sharply for the work I did in the Factory Party Committee.

TING: I agree with what you said last night—the important thing now is close contact with the masses and collective leadership. [*Pause.*] Comrade Fang, the first thing is to find some practical ways of doing this.

FANG: Very well.

TING [*remembering*]: Yes, and you must find some time today to go to Yang Chung-an's place and see. . . .

FANG: Comrade Wang Hui was here a little while ago.

TING [*with great concern*]: Was she? What did she have to say?

FANG: As we expected, she said he didn't sleep for the whole night, and wanted to change his profession. He said factory work was beyond him.

TING [*remains silent for a while*]: That was only his temper. A person like him can't be expected to come round too quickly. [*Looking at* FANG KE.] And Comrade Wang Hui. . . .

FANG: She's very good and sticks to principle all right. So from this one can see that incorrect working style meets with resistance even at home.

TING: That's true. [*Suddenly remembering; to* YU CHIA-HUA.] Oh, I almost forgot. Don't forget to ask Doctor Huang of the clinic to go to Vice-Director Yang's place; his third child is ill and in a pretty bad state. Tell Doctor Huang that he can send for a pediatrician if need be. [*Pause; then to* FANG KE.] As to the problem we just discussed, you'd better be quick and make the necessary arrangements. You think. . . .

FANG: You needn't worry. When the trade union chairman announced the decision early this morning, people didn't quite believe it at first. But afterwards they all jumped for joy and said that only the Communist Party could do a thing like this. Once the thing is made public and discussed among the masses, it's not difficult for them to see it in the same light. Even those who used to worship Yang Chung-an blindly have to a great extent changed their minds.

[*Someone knocks lightly at the door.*]

TING: Come in, please.

CHIEN [*enters and sees* TING WEI *and* FANG KE *are talking to each other*]: Oh, I didn't know you were busy. I'll. . . .

TING: No, no. Please come in and sit down. I was just trying to find you. I hear Comrade Ma Hsiao-pao has succeeded in the experiment of setting up the machine according to the new design.

CHIEN: Yes. It was excellent. The results are even better than we expected.

FANG [*rising and saying good-bye*]: Well, you two go on talking. I must be going. Got a lot of work to do. [*Shakes hands with* CHIEN, *walks towards the door and stops there.*] Comrade Ting Wei.

TING: Yes?

FANG [*smiling*]: I'm thinking of upsetting your regular habits later on and encroaching on some of your rest hour after lunch. Is that all right? Just for once.

TING [*also smiling*]: Of course it's all right. Do you really think that I'm so mechanical as to be unreasonable?

FANG: Well, that. . . . [*Goes out.*]

CHIEN: Director, I think your way of work is an excellent one. Bring the problems out into the open and make them clear to everybody so that all of us can join in solving them. In this way problems that have long been considered insoluble technically are solved one by one. Besides the problem of coils solved by the Ma Hsiao-pao team, preliminary solutions have been found for the problem of reducing iron wastage, the problem of faulty insulation, etc. I'll report to you on all these later. What I'm going to tell you this morning is much more important.

TING: What is it?

CHIEN: The Technical Group of the Workers' Representative Conference has made a thorough investigation of the factory in the past few days. It may sound ridiculous, but though I've been the chief engineer for so many years, I didn't really know what assets we had. Of course, our factory went through what was called democratic examination into the production management, but it was really just a piece of self-deception. We didn't get to the bottom of anything. [*Explaining.*] This time the check has proved that none of our original records was reliable. Our assets are much richer and much better than we thought and than are on the books. For instance. . . .

TING: That means that last time's "inventory and auditing" was only half-baked.

CHIEN: That's right. A conference was called then, too. But after Vice-Director Yang made his opening speech, only one informal discussion was held between the technicians and the senior workers. Then the reform plan was adopted. Three days later we passed on to the labour emulation campaign.

TING: In that case, we have to make a thorough check this time, Comrade Pei-chih.

CHIEN: This time it's different. Everybody has come in. Nothing short of a thorough check gets by. Take the coil-winding machine for example. What we have at present are all old and superannuated. But among the waste and the stocks lying idle in the warehouse of

the Heavy Machinery Shop alone, we've found several new sets of coil-winding machines. They were still in crates and boxes and not yet assembled!

TING: Hm, that's a discovery. Let's get rid of the real waste and reclassify the idle stock. We can probably find some more useful things. Well, Comrade Pei-chih, let's make up for the inadequacies of the last investigation and dispose of the matter once and for all.

CHIEN: Yes, we must. And for this reason they asked me at the Technical Group meeting to present two requests to you.

TING: Go ahead. What are they?

CHIEN: First, we hope that the present Technical Teams will be made permanent, not be dissolved after the campaign is over. So far we've discovered some potentialities of our factory but we believe that to exploit further potentialities is a long-term job.

TING: Very well. Granted. And quite necessary, too. What's the second?

CHIEN: Second, as matters now stand, the present production quota is much too low, really very conservative. It can be greatly raised. And therefore we all propose that the quota for the second quarter be discussed again.

TING: Is this the opinion of the majority?

CHIEN: Yes, the majority. I may even say the overwhelming majority. One engineer said in a quavering voice that he felt ashamed. He said he hadn't used his head at all. He said everybody was clamouring for water, but in fact we all stood beside the spring.

TING: Well. Then, Comrade Pei-chih, your estimate. . . .

CHIEN: I don't know how to begin. You'll laugh at me when I say it. When we talked about quotas we used to argue on every small detail. An increase of three or five per cent would make us fight tooth and nail. But now, mind you, it's not a matter of increasing just three or five per cent, but thirty or forty per cent. . . .

TING: I know it's as good as settled that the quota should be raised. But aren't the figures you just mentioned a bit too high? Are you quite sure of yourself?

CHIEN [*laughing like a child*]: Ask anybody you like and you'll be told that Chien Pei-chih is a notoriously conservative person. I never say anything if I'm not quite certain about it—to say nothing of reckless adventurism. After the preliminary check, it's clear to everyone that the present quota lags far behind the real creative powers of the workers.

TING: Of course, we'll go ahead when we are quite sure. But there's one prerequisite—if we want to do this, we must make repeated calculations and checks. And [*Emphatically.*] serious discussion must be held among the masses. Decisions should be made only when all the

workers and the technicians have agreed and when the Management has examined and approved them.

CHIEN: That goes without saying.

TING: Any more requests?

CHIEN: No more.

TING: Then, Comrade Pei-chih, I've got a point to raise too. I wonder if you'll agree.

CHIEN [*surprised*]: A point to raise?

TING: Yes. I was thinking of taking Comrade Hsu Ta-min out of your Technical Group.

CHIEN: Well. . . .

TING: Do you agree?

CHIEN: Are you going to send him out of the factory or do you mean to transfer him to another shop?

TING: He'll still be in the factory.

CHIEN: Director. [*Remains silent for quite a while.*] I don't know whether I should say this. The Light Machinery Shop is very important, and the job rather difficult. I'm afraid Hsueh won't be able to manage it by himself. Hsueh is all right of course. But he is rather too easy to prevail on. That's his failing. Technically, too, he's not always dependable. I wouldn't have said these things in the past. But now it doesn't seem right to keep them back.

TING: Hsueh Wei-teh's defect is not that he's too easy to prevail on. He's utterly irresponsible. [CHIEN PEI-CHIH *is a bit startled.*] You say technically he is not always dependable. That's correct. One of the older workers said this about him. He said: that chap Hsueh Wei-teh is an expert in the eyes of an amateur and an amateur in the eyes of an expert. Isn't that true? [CHIEN PEI-CHIH *laughs.*] As for him and others in charge of the shops, we've already done some reshuffling after an overall consideration. I think you needn't worry now.

CHIEN: Well, of course it's all right if things are arranged that way. So it's settled. Good-bye!

TING: All right, it's settled, then. [*Shaking hands with him.*] Yes, there is something else. But there's no time today. I'll talk to you some other time. I have to ask for your advice on several problems.

CHIEN: What problems? May I—

TING: Well, they're problems connected with my own study. I've got a copy of an elementary textbook on electrical engineering. Simply can't grapple with it. I'll come to your place for advice when there's some time to spare.

CHIEN: You're always so modest, director. About these things, you just. . . .

TING: Comrade Pei-chih, even though I find it difficult I've got something out of studying Ohm's Law.

CHIEN: Pardon? Ohm's Law?

TING: Yes. Doesn't it say that electrical current is in inverse proportion to the resistance of the line and that electricity always follows the line of least resistance? I feel that electricity is a coward. It lacks courage and likes to go where there's least resistance.

CHIEN: Yes, that's right. [*He thinks it over.*]

TING: So I think we shouldn't work like electricity.

CHIEN [*in high spirits*]: Well said. But I've an additional point to make.

TING: What is it?

CHIEN: Electricity doesn't follow the line of greater resistance because there's still a line of less resistance to follow. But if there's only one line, then science teaches us that electricity will follow it no matter how great the resistance is, provided there's enough voltage. Moreover, it generates light and heat while overcoming the resistance. The electric lamp [*Pointing to the incandescent lamp overhead.*] is made according to this law.

TING: Very well said, Comrade Pei-chih. This additional point is a very important one. There's resistance in our path, too. Let's create light and heat by breaking and overcoming it.

CHIEN: Right. That's the way we should do it. [*Shows signs of admiration and goes out.*]

[YU CHIA-HUA *seems to want to speak.* TING WEI *suddenly remembers. . . .*]

TING: Comrade Yu, please tidy this desk up a little bit. Comrade Hsu Ta-min will start using it tomorrow.

YU [*taken by surprise*]: What?

TING: He's been promoted vice-director of the factory.

YU [*quite unwittingly*]: Director, isn't it. . . . [*A bit worried.*] He's too young. He doesn't know. . . .

TING: What's the matter? Have you any objection?

[YU *blushes, unable to speak.*]

TING: Comrade Yu, I remember you went together to see a film called "The Story of the Viborg District." Do you still remember what Sverdlov said to Maxim when the Party Committee decided to appoint him manager of a bank?

YU [*in a low voice*]: I can't quite remember.

TING: Now listen. Sverdlov said: "We haven't got special schools for training ministers. But no one is born with ability. Take it up. . . . Listen carefully to what others have to say and study technique. Don't worry. You'll be able to work successfully. That's the only way you can really be worthy of yourself." Do you understand? That's the only way Hsu Ta-min can be worthy of himself, a young technician of the Mao Tse-tung era.

YU [*moved*]: It's true, of course. But. . . .

TING: The promotion is a bit quick according to the ordinary rules. A lot of people feel that way. But to encourage innovators and bring in fresh blood, the City Party Committee has approved the promotion.

YU: But. . . . [*Unable to speak any further and lowering her head.*]

TING: You're afraid for his sake. But I believe you'll be glad. Now you two will work in the same office. Mind you, no quarrelling.

YU [*blushing*]: Director, you. . . .

TING: Don't try to hide things from me. I'm not very understanding or clever, but I've had some experience in these matters. I feel it even if I'm not told.

[YU CHIA-HUA *is shy but happy. She goes to tidy the desk up.*]

TING: Oh, yes. Wait a minute. It's not so busy here, just now. Will you go over to the clinic and take Doctor Huang to Vice-Director Yang's place.

[YU CHIA-HUA *nods and goes out.*]

[*Curtain*]

Translated by Ying Yu

Poems

Written during my recent visit to Latin America

Ai Ching

"HE'S ASLEEP"

In the corridor of the passengers' waiting room in an airport, a young Negro was sleeping alongside the wall. A Frenchman walked past, glanced at him and said, smiling, "Look, he's asleep."

O brother, wake quickly!
How soundly you sleep!
How tired you must be
In the heat of the day.

But it's time to awake . . .
Already it's late;
The sun will soon rise
And the day will soon break.

A BLACK GIRL SINGS

At the head of the stairway
A black girl sings,
Walks to and fro singing,
A picture of grace.

What has gladdened her heart?
Does she sing of her love?
No! She snuggles a baby,
And sings him to sleep.

Not her son is he,
Not her younger brother,
But the "little master"
Of his black nurse.

One is so black,
Black as ebony;
The other as white
As the cotton-flower.

One's lapped in comfort,
But weeps and wails;
The other is wretched,
But sings in despite.

WHERE THE BLACK MEN LIVE

You have your home
And I have mine.
In that clutter of shacks
The black folk live;

Odds and ends of lumber
Ramshackle and crude,
Higgledy-piggledy—
One storm will disperse them.

I wonder how they manage to climb
Or how they come down
These shanties that jostle
In light row on row.

Here live countless Negroes,
Barefoot men, bare-armed girls;
Some curses, some cries,
Though they are equally devout.

Not far distant, beyond them
The white folk live.
Building towers behind building,
Jazz trails in the air.

ON THIS SIDE OF THE WORLD

On this side of the world
People hold us tight and embrace us,
So tight we can scarcely breathe,
And how hard they kiss our cheeks!

Not because we are young
Nor because we are handsome
But because we come from a country
Out of bloodshed born anew.

Not because we have met old friends in an alien land:
Many of us are strangers to each other
But our hearts glowed with noble feelings,
And we met like lovers after long separation.

The Chinese people are welcomed everywhere,
The world knows well our valour and endurance,
The six hundred million people marching ahead
Holding high the mighty banner of peace!

Translated by Yuan Ko-chia

THE LEGEND OF THE ROSE

Wei Chi-lin

Upon a plain girt round with verdant hills—
I sing of days and years long, long gone by—
The peaceful farmsteads of a village stand,
The Fupo's sparkling waters running nigh.

And in that village lives a handsome lad,
Of labouring stock, and Nila is his name,
Lithe as a pine tree rooted in the vale,
His fearlessness no power on earth can tame.
Skilled at the plough and gentle with his beasts,
A doughty hunter he with sword and spear.
His horse's hooves, his bugle's mighty blast
Make the wild forest creatures cower with fear.
At horsemanship is he excelled by none—
"The Hero" is he called by everyone.

And Yina lives there too, a comely lass.
Daughter of honest working folk is she,
Renowned for every form of needlecraft,
Yet no less skilful in her husbandry.
The deer all pause in envy when she dances;
Her eyes are crystal clear, her voice is sweet,
So rich and magical that at its music
The soaring skylark must admit defeat.
In all she does is she excelled by none—
"The Flower" is she called by everyone.

The author is a young poet of the Chuang people, one of China's fraternal nationalities living mostly in the province of Kwangsi. This ballad is based on a Chuang folk tale.

And every youth who once sets eyes on her
His life, his all with her would gladly share;
And as for handsome Nila, half the girls
Would vow they loved him if they did but dare.
But Yina's heart is set on him alone,
While he is bent on making her his own.

And every hour the happy lovers meet,
And every hour together they find sweet—
Whether at early morn with breezes light
Or in the russet of the dying day,
Beneath the shadow of the cypress tree
Or by the creek where moon-flecked willows sway.

And ever as the seasons wax and wane
They tell their passion o'er and o'er again—
Whether it be in velvet-zephyred spring,
In summer when the startled partridge scold,
Or in the autumn of chrysanthemums
Or in the depth of winter's bitter cold. . . .
The sweet affection which these lovers feel
Is pure as jade, unbreakable as steel.

The beauty of the loveliest flower may fade,
The forest's leafy mantle may be shed.
Men tell of Yina's loveliness at court. . . .
The king decrees she with his son shall wed.
The king has spoken: who shall say him nay?
Unhappy lovers! Woe betide the day!

The Fupo sighs its melancholy dirge,
The nightingale cannot express their sorrow;
No grief more bitter than remembered joys,
And they must part upon the dreary morrow!
Tearful and silent is their long embrace.
Then to the court they force the lass to go,
Homesick and racked by bitter memories—
Was never bride afflicted by such woe!
Her heart is full of anguish unassuaged,
And from her eye the blinding tear-drops flow.

With such a mourning bride the prince grows sad,
The king is wroth: his brows contract in rage.
The cause of Yina's grief must be removed:
In cruel plot both sire and son engage.
Naught can bring back the gloomy court's content
But handsome Nila's lifelong banishment.

In durance Nila waits the sentence dread,
And Yina to the audience they bring.
The king, a cruel judge, makes sentence known:
"Yours is the guilt of Yina's languishing.
Hear then my sentence: In a wooden crate
Shall you be prisoned—this shall be your fate—
And cast adrift upon the Fupo's spate."

In the wild flood fall Yina's tear-drops bright
As Nila's fragile craft fades out of sight.

Far down the Fupo in another realm
The golden roof-tiles of a palace gleam.
There oft the princess tarries by the brink,
Her long hair skimming o'er the rippling stream.

One morning early, as the sun mounts high
And songbirds' joyous carols fill the air,
The breeze blows fresh—and there, as is her wont,
The princess by the Fupo combs her hair.
She sings a song would thrill the heart to hear,
When lo! a wooden chest floats into sight.
Amazed she watches, and her hair floats free
And tangles with the crate and holds it tight.

The handmaids, all agog, prize off the lid:
A youth, to all appearance dead, they see.
In haste the tidings are conveyed to court.
"Save him!"—so runs the emperor's decree.

Restored, the lad his sorry story tells
The emperor. The princess weeps to hear;
And guessing well what thoughts invade her mind
The emperor bids Nila tarry there.

The princess ever bears him company,
Yet makes no impress on his constant heart.
What can her flowing tresses mean to him
When he and Yina are so far apart?
Sad and forlorn where Fupo's waters flow,
In plaintive song he voices all his woe:

O Yina, sweetest Yina,
So many leagues divide!
Ah, would that I might see you
And linger by your side!
Ah, would I were a songbird
Unto your cottage flown
To warble at your lattice
A song for you alone!
Ah, would I were the kerchief
That you for ever keep,
Or breeze that steals into your room
Where vainly you woo sleep. . . .

Upon the wind the mournful strain is borne
To Yina's palace chamber far away;
And Yina, by the same emotions torn,
Makes answer in this melancholy lay:

Will you ne'er come, my darling,
And comfort all my fears?
My eyes are sore, and weeping
Has drained the fount of tears.
Where tarry you, my darling—
By river, mount or plain?
My heart is well-nigh broken. . . .
When will you come again?

When Yina's anguish reaches Nila's ear
His love for her will brook no more delay;
Nor prayers nor kindliness nor flowing hair
Can stay his parting for a single day.
Though thwarted in her hopes, a noble steed
The princess gives him, and a trusty bow.
And Nila barely stays to bid farewell:
Forthwith in search of Yina must he go.

And on and on, he traverses the plain,
Untiringly he scales the rugged fells. . . .
One silent, moonlit night he comes at last
Before the chamber where poor Yina dwells.

The bay tree's sombre leaves half hide the moon
As long they tell of sorrows and alarms
And now this joy. . . . They passionately kiss
So tightly clasped in one another's arms,
The world forgetting . . . but new troubles near:
The king, the prince and warriors grim appear.

The arrows that the princess gave are keen,
And dauntless Nila fearful odds must face,
But every arrow finds a cruel heart,
Each arrow gives another moment's grace.
But like the mantis crushed by swarming ants,
The hard-pressed hero desperately fares.
The final arrow's sped. The lovers twain
Batter their heads against the marble stairs.
Red streams of blood gush forth, the flagstones lave,
And both are buried in a nameless grave.

Hushed is the music of the nightingale,
The very moon conceals her pallid face;
The scurrying cloud-banks cover all the sky,
No single star looks down upon the place,
And one sound only marks the fearful deed:
The piteous whinny of young Nila's steed.

Like torrents o'er a cataract, time flies,
Seasons rotate, and then a year is sped.
Over the lonely grave a strange flower grows
With verdant leaves and petals blushing red.
It fills the garden walks with perfume rare,
And folk make pilgrimage from far and near
To marvel at the first-created rose,
The flower to maidens ever after dear.

Translated by Tsao Tun
Illustrations by Chang Kuang-yu

Ssu-ma Chien, Great Historian and Writer of Ancient China

Chi Chen-huai

This year is the 2,100th anniversary of the birth of Ssu-ma Chien, China's great historian and one of her finest prose writers. For centuries his magnificent *Historical Records* has served as a model for Chinese historians and writers and enjoyed considerable popularity with all lovers of literature.

Ssu-ma Chien was born in 145 B.C., during the reign of Emperor Ching of the Han Dynasty, in a village south of Lungmen Mountain on the west bank of the Yellow River (present-day Chihchuan Village in Hancheng County, Shensi Province). His ancestors were official annalists, and his learned father, Ssu-ma Tan, carried on the family tradition when he was appointed imperial archivist during the first six years of the reign of Emperor Wu (140-135 B.C.). Then Ssu-ma Chien, still a boy, left the village in which he had been living to become a student in the capital, Changan (present-day Sian). There he attended lectures on Chou Dynasty annals and earlier history given by the famous scholars Tung Chung-shu and Kung An-kuo, both of whom influenced his theory of history and his writing. Ssu-ma Tan's chief tasks as imperial archivist were to take charge of astrology and the calendar and to collect and preserve historical records. He aspired to write a history himself and in 101 B.C., on his death-bed, expressed the desire that Ssu-ma Chien should take up this work and carry out his wishes. It is possible that during his thirty years as imperial archivist Ssu-ma Tan had already compiled certain materials and made a start on writing. At all events, his lifelong researches in the field of history must have proved of value to his son.

The *Historical Records* could not have been written by anyone without a rich experience of life and unusual determination. At the early age of twenty Ssu-ma Chien appears to have begun to follow in his father's footsteps, when he stopped studying the Confucian classics and started to make a systematic examination of ancient and modern historical records. He travelled widely in China, investigating historical remains, collecting

stories and legends, coming into contact with many people, and learning much of real life and local customs and conditions. This field work undoubtedly helped him greatly in his study of ancient historical materials, and enabled him to give clearer descriptions of the wars at the end of the Chin Dynasty (221-206 B.C.) and the ruling factions headed by the imperial house of Liu at the beginning of the Han Dynasty, to give but two examples. Later, as a minor court functionary and imperial archivist, he had many opportunities to travel, meet people and learn more about history and actual conditions. Once, for instance, he was sent on a tour of the region inhabited by minority peoples in the southwest; on other occasions he accompanied the emperor when the latter sacrificed on Tai Mountain, travelled on a 6,000-mile tour of inspection within and without the Great Wall, and supervised the water conservancy work at Hutzukou. These trips obviously deepened his understanding and served him in good stead when he wrote such well-known sections of his work as *The Merchants, The Southwest Tribes, The Mountain Sacrifices* and *Rivers and Canals.*

Again, Ssu-ma Chien's official position made it possible for him to meet many well-known contemporaries and thus directly or indirectly obtain the stories of numerous celebrities. This was of great advantage to him when he came to write his biographies. For instance, the fact that as a young man he met General Li Kuang and later became a colleague of Li Kuang's grandson, Li Ling, made it easy for him to write the general's life. Similarly, in *The Assassins* he was able to give a dramatic account of Ching Ko's attempt to assassinate the King of Chin, because he had obtained an account of this from someone who had met an eyewitness—the King of Chin's physician.

Since Ssu-ma Chien held minor posts only and was on the lowest rung of the official ladder, while in a position to learn inside stories of nobles and functionaries at court and in the various ministries he was also acutely conscious of the oppressive hierarchy of the nobility and bureaucracy. His personal knowledge of the oppressiveness of the official system, combined with the materials he gathered as imperial archivist and the wide experience he gained in his travels, made it possible for him to understand how heavily the whole feudal bureaucratic structure bore down on the common people. Thus he was not a pedant who simply echoed the ancient sages; he wrote with insight of the society of his time.

In 98 B.C., when Ssu-ma Chien was forty-eight and had been working on his history for seven years, though a minor official, his sense of justice impelled him to speak out honestly and courageously on behalf of Li Ling, who had fought the Hunnish hordes bravely with only five thousand men and been captured. This intercession angered Emperor Wu, who condemned Ssu-ma Chien to castration; and since the historian wished to live to complete his work, he suffered this cruel indignity rather than commit suicide. In 93 B.C., at the age of fifty-three, after unremitting

LU CHIH (1496-1576): A Landscape

labours he realized his lifelong ambition and finished the first draft of his *Historical Records.* This great work is the outcome of the historian's rich and arduous life and his indomitable spirit.

Ssu-ma Chien's lifetime coincided approximately with that of Emperor Wu, and he probably died in the year 87 B.C. After the unification of China into one empire during the Chin and Han Dynasties had ended political disunity and the disputes between various schools of thought, to sum up the culture of the old world and give a philosophical and historical explanation of the new became an urgent need of the ruling class. After the peasant revolts at the end of the Chin Dynasty the Chinese people had gained seventy years of peace and security, during which they restored and developed agriculture, handicraft industries and commerce; and by the reign of Emperor Wu the increased wealth of the country had strengthened the feudal ruling class, enabling it to carry on a long war against the Huns in the north and to extend the boundaries of China to create a great united empire. But as the imperial state developed, so did the rulers' cruel oppression and exploitation of the people and the deep social conflicts of the time; therefore to strengthen the feudal rule at home became an urgent problem for the ruling class.

In accordance with the needs of the empire the Han rulers, and notably their most ambitious and energetic representative, Emperor Wu, became patrons of learning. Emperor Wu instituted a search for lost classics, established Doctors of the Five Classics,* and trained a great number of officials; at the same time, on the basis of memorials received, oral examinations on government policy, and recommendations, he absorbed some of the best minds of the time into the feudal ruling class. Emperor Wu had great faith in the efficacy of "ruthless officials" to enforce the law; and he rigorously suppressed all schools of thought but Confucianism, which he made the official philosophy. He made use of religious ceremonies such as sacrifices to Heaven and Earth, to mountains, rivers and various deities, to deceive the people; and quoted cryptic sayings from the classics to prove that the rule of the House of Han was predestined in the natural order of things. By the time of Emperor Wu China had developed economically, politically and culturally, and this development provided the necessary social conditions for an outstanding historian and writer like Ssu-ma Chien, who became the most representative man of letters of Emperor Wu's reign.

Let us now consider the distinctive features of the *Historical Records* viewed as a historical classic and a great work of literature.

Making use of the different written and spoken legends and accounts current throughout China, taking as his criterion the classics, but verifying the recorded facts wherever possible, and adhering as faithfully as he

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**The Book of Songs, The Book of History, The Book of Changes, The Book of Rites,* and *The Spring and Autumn Annals*—all edited by Confucius.

could to the truth, Ssu-ma Chien embodied a wealth of material in the five sections of his book: *Twelve Dynasties, Ten Tables, Eight Sciences, Thirty Chief Families* and *Seventy Lives.* The *Historical Records* consists of one hundred and thirty chapters, or over half a million Chinese characters, and covers about 3,000 years of Chinese history from the time of the legendary Yellow Emperor till the Tai Chu period (104-101 B.C.) in the reign of Emperor Wu. Of course, in point of form none of these five sections was new; but Ssu-ma Chien was the first to organize these different types of writing into a scientific and systematic history on a grand scale.

Eight Sciences gives a general account of the development of different sciences such as astronomy and water conservancy, describing and summarising the achievements in these fields. *Ten Tables* records important historical events, providing a framework for the narrative and at the same time summarising it. These two sections, arranged in chronological order and divided into several periods, are independent yet inter-related. They form important contributions to historical writing, since they either describe specific natural, cultural, political or economic developments, or set forth the historical events of a certain period, as in the *Table of the Twelve Princes* or the *Table of the Six Kingdoms.* But although these two sections show history as something developing and are not unscientifically written, they occupy a subordinate position in the *Historical Records* as a whole.

The most important sections of the *Historical Records* are the *Twelve Dynasties,* the *Thirty Chief Families* and the *Seventy Lives,* which constitute the foundation of the whole work. They describe the activities of men of every social rank and profession, including kings, emperors, princes, nobles, officials, statesmen, generals, thinkers, writers, scholars, theoreticians, hermits, orators, assassins, gallants, prominent citizens, physicians, soothsayers, merchants and clowns; and this is a clear indication of Ssu-ma Chien's view of society and history. He considers society as consisting of all sorts and conditions of men, not merely high officials, kings and generals; and sees history not as the history of the ruling class but of the whole people. The descriptions of foreign rulers and chieftains in the lives are particularly noteworthy since they prove that the historian was interested not only in the Chinese but in the coexistence of all peoples. Ssu-ma Chien's comprehensive view of society and history is, in a way, a reflection of the unprecedented unity of that period.

The *Historical Records* not only chronicles the activities of various kinds of people, but makes clear the author's attitude towards them. In other words, Ssu-ma Chien is not indifferent to the fate of the historical characters he describes, but praises some and condemns others. He praises heroes of all sorts who oppose tyranny, and ridicules or shows hatred for tyrants and their cruel followers, whom he describes as the "claws and teeth" of the mighty. His intense love and hatred arose from

his sympathy with the oppressed masses, and grew out of his own experiences.

The Gallants describes men of the lower strata of society. We know that by the end of the Warring States period there were many vagabonds with no settled employment, who engaged in lawless activities and valued personal loyalty and the readiness to die for a friend or patron, or to avenge the wrongs of others. In feudal society there was endless injustice and oppression; and, whereas the people longed for the support of upright officials and the law, in actual life they encountered the tyranny of "ruthless officials" and their "claws and teeth." It was only natural that after being disillusioned time and again the oppressed masses who could not right their own wrongs set their hopes on the local gallants who stood to them for justice.

One of the famous gallants of Emperor Wu's reign, Kuo Hsieh, is described in *The Gallants* as a man who championed others and did not boast of his achievements. When government officers pursued him to arrest him, ordinary citizens sheltered him in their homes. This proves that the common folk considered such outlaws as heroes who defended them against tyranny, and in writing the lives of such men Ssu-ma Chien was identifying himself with the people.

In *The Assassins,* Ssu-ma Chien describes for the most part the lives of gallants of the Warring States. He praises men like Ching Ko, not merely for the loyalty which made them keep promises and die for their friends and patrons, but primarily because, single-handed, they dared fight to the death against tyranny. After a vivid description of Ching Ko's attempt to assassinate the King of Chin, he concludes the life of Ching Ko with Lu Kou-chien's remark: "What a pity that he did not make a better study of the art of fencing!" This is an expression of his deep sympathy for Ching Ko, who failed in his task yet died so gallantly.

The modesty and gallantry of the Lord of Hsinling differ from the disregard for their own lives of Kuo Hsieh and Ching Ko; but Ssu-ma Chien thinks highly of such qualities too. *The Lord of Hsinling,* one of the best-known of his lives, is written with deep feeling. It is easy to see that Ssu-ma Chien praises this man not simply for condescending to escort a mere warden of the gate, and to call on gamblers and porridge-venders, but because by such actions he was able to enlist the support of protégés to rescue Chao and Wei and rally the eastern states to resist the aggressive state of Chin successfully. If Kuo Hsieh and Ching Ko performed deeds of gallantry, the rescue of the eastern states by the Lord of Hsinling, so dramatically described by Ssu-ma Chien, can be considered gallantry of another kind, based on the readiness to help those in difficulties, to sympathize with the weak and to oppose all-powerful despots regardless of the danger to oneself. Such actions gave moral support and hope to the oppressed masses; and it is just because these heroes helped to arouse resistance among countless wronged and innocent

people in feudal China that their stories have been handed down from generation to generation.

In general, Ssu-ma Chien eulogizes gallant men and gallantry from the standpoint not of feudal morality but sympathy with the oppressed masses. The famous Han Dynasty general, Li Kuang, is another man whom he singles out for praise. According to the historian, this brave general was a skilled bowman, who shared his soldiers' hardships and fought more than seventy battles against the Huns but was never ennobled for his services; while finally, owing to the selfishness and prejudice of Wei Ching, one of the emperor's relatives, he was forced most unjustly to commit suicide. "All the officers and men of his army wept; and all the citizens of the empire, old and young alike, shed tears when they heard this news, whether they had known him personally or not." Thus when Ssu-ma Chien compares Li Kuang to peach and plum trees, which everybody loves, he is expressing the same affection and sympathy for Li Kuang as the people.

In marked contrast to this is Ssu-ma Chien's attitude towards tyrants and their "claws and teeth," which appears clearly in his comments on the harsh autocracy of Emperor Wu. Much labour and wealth were squandered in Emperor Wu's long reign on extravagant display and luxury, imperial inspections, sacrifices and searches for elixirs, the war against the Huns and the endless campaigns for territorial expansion. As a corollary to this, the emperor oppressed and exploited his subjects more ruthlessly, and enforced severe laws and punishments. In such circumstances, though Ssu-ma Chien dared make no open protest, in *Upright Officials* he writes: "One can govern well simply by doing one's duty and acting rationally. There is no need to overawe people." And it is significant that he describes five good officials of the Warring States, but not one from the Han Dynasty. In *Ruthless Officials*, on the other hand, all his examples are chosen from the Han Dynasty. He writes chiefly about ten men, of whom all but Chih Tu, the "Grey Falcon" of the reign of Emperor Ching (156-141 B.C.), held office under Emperor Wu. They include Chang Tang, who is skilful in devising new laws; savage Wang Weng-shu, who delights in bloodshed; and Tu Chou, who imitates Chang Tang's application of the law and is more cruel than Wang Weng-shu. From these lives we can see the brutality and horror of Emperor Wu's despotic regime, and detect the helpless indignation and disgust felt by Ssu-ma Chien.

The tendentiousness of many of Ssu-ma Chien's lives is very marked. He praises heroes like Kuo Hsieh, Ching Ko, the Lord of Hsinling, and Li Kuang; but censures harsh and relentless officials, showing his hatred for the cruel rule of Emperor Wu and his "claws and teeth." His sentiments spring from his sympathy with the oppressed masses and hatred of all tyranny; and this affinity to the people is his most outstanding characteristic. In his great work he reflects the ideas of the oppressed masses of his time.

The literary characteristics of the *Historical Records* are determined by the fact that it is a work of history. The first biographical history in China, it gave rise to a school of biographical literature. The many lives written by Ssu-ma Chien differ from innumerable later ones, and make excellent reading, because they give lifelike portrayals of various personalities and types, thus reflecting the society of his time in all its complexity and revealing its true nature.

Ssu-ma Chien has his own means of creating lifelike portraits of historical figures. First let us consider his choice of subjects. When describing officials under Emperor Wu, for instance, he selects only the harsh and relentless, not the just and fair. Again, as he writes in *Chang Ch'ang*, if ministers achieve nothing during their period of office, even if they enjoy fame among their contemporaries, he will not write about them. So the men he describes usually represent certain types which he likes or dislikes; and his praise or condemnation, sympathy or hatred, are clearly expressed.

Similarly, he records only a careful selection of the actions of these men. In *Chang Liang* he writes: "Chang Liang spoke with the emperor about many other things; but since these discussions had no bearing on the fate of the empire they are not worth mentioning here." Thus he chooses only important and significant incidents, in order to bring out the salient features of his characters.

Ssu-ma Chien also has his own method of arranging material, omitting or touching briefly on certain incidents in one life to mention them or describe them more fully in another. He does this not merely to avoid repetition, but to make the best use of various incidents, combining or supplementing them in such a way as to make the personalities he describes as striking and complete as possible. Another characteristic of the *Historical Records* is Ssu-ma Chien's method of relating incidents as stories. He often prefers to describe events in vivid detail rather than give generalized accounts, or combines a series of incidents to express one central idea, in the manner of later story-teller. The lives of Kuo Hsieh and Ching Ko, for instance, are related as the stories of two gallant men of different periods.

In such ways as these, Ssu-ma Chien is able to portray highly individual characters who are at the same time true to type. These types not only present very clearly certain important characteristics of particular individuals, but also embody certain important characteristics of the society in which they lived and penetrate deeply into its conflicts. The Lord of Hsinling, for instance, is an example of the class of noble patrons at the end of the Warring States period. The humility which made him willing to pay respect to men of talent reflects one of the conflicts of

that age; for the rulers of different kingdoms were doing all they could to attract talented men of every description in order to conquer other states. Kuo Hsieh is an example of the type of vagabond during Emperor Wu's reign. Because he avenged others, championed the distressed and refrained from boasting, he was loved and protected by the common folk; and his story reflects the sufferings of the people under the cruel officials and powerful citizens of that time, thus exposing the conflict between the unjust feudal rule and the oppressed masses. Herein lies Ssu-ma Chien's realism. And this is the chief reason for the fact that his lives differ from many later biographies and form part of our best literature.

Ssu-ma Chien's use of language is also unique. Studying the *Historical Records* today we sense that, though written in classical Chinese, Ssu-ma Chien's language must have been very close to the vernacular of his time. This is borne out not only by the naturalness of his dialogue, but by the way the narrative passages harmonize with it. It is evident too that he tried to imitate natural colloquial speech to bring out character and strengthen the individuality and typicalness of the men he described. We might quote innumerable examples of this. In *Li Kuang*, for instance, when the drunken warden of Paling station will not let Li Kuang pass at night, Ssu-ma Chien makes Li's follower say:

"This is the former General Li."

But the station master retorts: "Even an accredited general cannot wander about after dusk, let alone an ex-general."

A simple remark like this conjures up a vivid picture of the drunken bully.

Ssu-ma Chien also draws frequently on proverbs, popular sayings and folk songs to illustrate a story or comment on his characters, in order to enrich his writing and deepen the readers' understanding. This use of popular speech was an outcome of his close contact with the people and his respect for the living language.

The *Historical Records*, then, combined past and current historical materials with Ssu-ma Chien's personal investigations and experiences, created the biographical style of historical writing, and gave the first systematic account of three thousand years of ancient Chinese history. The many accounts of historical figures in this work are the earliest examples of biographical writing we possess, and Ssu-ma Chien ranks as one of the greatest historians and realist writers of China.

FOUR BIOGRAPHIES

SSU-MA CHIEN

THE LORD OF HSINLING

Wei Wu-chi, the younger son of King Chao of Wei and the step-brother of King An Hsi, was made the Lord of Hsinling when King Chao died and King An Hsi succeeded to the throne. At that time Fan Sui* had fled from Wei to become the prime minister of Chin; and because he hated the states of Wei and Chi he induced the armies of Chin to besiege Taliang** and rout the forces of Wei at Huayang, putting General Mang Mao to flight. The King of Wei and the Lord of Hsinling were filled with anxiety.

The Lord of Hsinling was a kindly, unassuming man, who showed courtesy to all he met whether they were talented or not, and never appeared proud of his wealth and position. So followers flocked to him from miles around until he had about three thousand protégés; and when the princes of other states saw his ability and the number of his supporters, they dared not attack Wei. Thus more than ten years passed without further alarms.

One day the Lord of Hsinling was at draughts with the King of Wei when word was brought that beacon fires had been lit at the northern border and the King of Chao was invading their territory. The king rose from the gaming table and would have summoned a council of ministers at once, had not the Lord of Hsinling stopped him.

"The King of Chao is out hunting," he said. "This is no invasion."

But while the Lord of Hsinling played calmly on, the king was too worried to concentrate on the game. Presently another messenger arrived from the north to report that the King of Chao had come out to hunt, not to attack them.

*A travelling politician who was humiliated by a minister of Wei.
**The capital of Wei (Kaifeng).

"How did you know this, my lord?" asked the astonished King of Wei.

"Among my protégés are men who know all the secrets of the King of Chao," was the reply. "They tell me in advance of his movements; that is how I knew."

After this incident, the king began to fear his stepbrother and dared no longer entrust affairs of state to him.

There was an old man of seventy in Wei, named Hou Ying, who was so poor that he served as a warden at Yi Gate in Taliang. When the Lord of Hsinling heard of him, he invited him to his house and offered him gifts; but Hou Ying declined.

"I have lived simply for many years cultivating virtue," he said. "Poor as I am, I do not want to accept gifts."

Some time later the Lord of Hsinling prepared a great banquet to which he asked many guests; and when they had taken their seats he drove his chariot to Yi Gate to invite Hou Ying in person, leaving the left seat in the chariot—the place of honour—for the old man. Instead of declining, Hou Ying in his tattered clothes promptly sat down on the left seat, watching the Lord of Hsinling to see how he would take this. The Lord of Hsinling, reins in hand, appeared more respectful than ever.

"I have a friend who is a butcher in the market-place," said Hou Ying. "Would you mind passing that way?"

So the Lord of Hsinling drove his chariot into the market, where Hou Ying alighted to speak to his friend, Chu Hai. He deliberately stood there for a long time chatting to the butcher, stealing sidelong glances at his host to watch his expression; but he saw no sign of impatience. The generals, ministers and nobles of Wei had thronged the Lord of Hsinling's hall, and were waiting for his return to start feasting; everybody in the market was staring to see him act as charioteer; and all his outriders were cursing Hou Ying under their breath. When the old warden saw that the Lord of Hsinling was waiting as courteously as ever, he took leave of his friend and mounted the chariot again. Upon reaching his mansion, the Lord of Hsinling made Hou Ying take the seat of honour and introduced him to his guests, to the amazement of them all. And during the feast he went over to toast Hou Ying.

"I put you to a hard test today, my lord," said Hou Ying. "I am only a warden at Yi Gate, yet you drove your chariot through the crowds to bring me here, calling for me in person though there was no need to do so. And when I put your famous courtesy to a further test by making you wait for a long time in the market-place with your chariot and outriders while I called on a friend, I saw that you looked politer than ever. Then all the market people despised me, but admired you for your great condescension."

After this feast Hou Ying became one of the Lord of Hsinling's most honoured guests.

One day Hou Ying told him, "Chu Hai, the butcher I called on, is an able man; but because no one has recognized his talents he is still a butcher."

Then the Lord of Hsinling called on Chu Hai several times; but to his surprise the butcher showed no gratitude for his courtesy.

In the twentieth year of the reign of King An Hsi (258 B.C.), King Chao of Chin routed the army of Chao at Changping and advanced to besiege Hantan.* The Lord of Hsinling's elder sister, who had married the Lord of Pingyuan, the younger brother of King Huei Wen of Chao, had sent repeatedly to the King of Wei and her brother to ask for aid. But when the King of Wei sent General Tsin Pi with a hundred thousand troops to assist Chao, the King of Chin despatched an envoy to him with a warning.

"The capital of Chao is about to fall," he threatened. "If any other state dares to help Chao, I shall lead my troops against it as soon as I have taken Hantan."

The panic-stricken King of Wei immediately ordered Tsin Pi not to advance any further but simply to garrison the city of Yeh**—that is to say, to pretend to be aiding the state of Chao while actually sitting on the fence. Then carriage after carriage of envoys from the Lord of Pingyuan came to reproach the Lord of Hsinling.

"I was eager to relate myself with you by marriage," said the Lord of Pingyuan, "because you were famed for your gallantry and for helping those in distress. Now our capital may fall into the hands of Chin at any moment; but no assistance have we had from you. Is this your way of helping friends in need? Of course, you may think so poorly of me that you do not care if I fall into the hands of the King of Chin; but have you no feeling for your sister?"

In great distress, the Lord of Hsinling begged the king repeatedly to aid Chao, sending friends and advisers to reason with him; but fear of Chin made the king ignore their advice. Realizing then that his sovereign was not to be persuaded, yet unwilling to live to see the downfall of Chao, the Lord of Hsinling mustered a force of more than a hundred chariots and riders from among his friends to attack the army of Chin and perish with the men of Chao. While passing Yi Gate he told Hou Ying why he had decided to sacrifice himself, and bade him goodbye.

"Farewell then, my lord," replied Hou Ying. "I am too old to follow you."

The Lord of Hsinling rode for several miles with a growing sense of grievance.

"Everybody knows that I have done all I can for Hou Ying," he thought. "Yet now that I am going to die, he has not a word to say to me. Does this mean he disapproves of my plan?"

*The capital of Chao.
**On the border between Wei and Chao.

He drove his chariot back to question the old man.

"I knew that you would come back," said Hou Ying with a smile. "You are famed throughout the world for your generosity to able men; yet now that trouble has arisen you can think of nothing better than to pit yourself against the army of Chin. This is like tossing meat to a hungry tiger—what good can come of it? And what has been the use of making so many friends? You have treated me so well that, when you left and I did not see you off, I knew you would resent it and come back."

When the Lord of Hsinling bowed and begged for his advice, Hou Ying sent everyone else away.

"I have heard that Tsin Pi's army tally* is kept in the king's bedchamber," he whispered. "Lady Ju is the king's favourite; so she is constantly in his chamber and could easily steal the tally. I have also heard that after the lady's father was murdered, although for three years she begged the king and his ministers to avenge her, the murderer was never brought to justice; but when she pleaded with you, you sent someone to cut off her enemy's head and presented it to her. This lady would risk any danger, even death itself, to repay you; so she will certainly consent to get you the tally. And once you have it, you can take over Tsin Pi's troops and go north to rescue Chao and beat back the forces of Chin. This would be a campaign worthy of the famous conquerors of old."

The Lord of Hsinling took Hou Ying's advice, and asked Lady Ju to steal the tally for him. As he was about to leave, Hou Ying came to him again.

"A general at the front need not accept his sovereign's orders if they endanger the state," said the old man. "So though you have the right half of the tally, Tsin Pi may refuse to hand over his troops to you until he has received confirmation from the king; in which case there will be trouble. You had better take my friend the butcher with you, for he is a powerful man. If Tsin Pi agrees, well and good; if not, Chu Hai can kill him."

The Lord of Hsinling was moved to tears.

"Why are you weeping?" asked Hou Ying. "Are you afraid of death?"

"Tsin Pi is a veteran of great courage," was the reply. "I am afraid he will not obey me and I shall have to kill him: that is why I am weeping. I am certainly not afraid of death."

When he asked Chu Hai to accompany him, the butcher laughed.

*A tally consisted of two halves; and the ruler would give one half to the general, keeping the other half himself. When orders were sent to the army, the general could test their authenticity by seeing whether the half of the tally brought by the envoy fitted his own or not.

"I am a butcher who chops up meat in the market-place," he said, "yet you have called on me time and again. I did not repay your calls because such small courtesies are meaningless; but now that you have need of me, I am at your service."

So he accompanied the Lord of Hsinling, who left the city by way of Yi Gate in order to thank Hou Ying.

"I would go with you too if I were not so old," said Hou Ying. "As it is, I will estimate the date on which you should reach Tsin Pi's army, then face north and kill myself to prove my loyalty."

When the Lord of Hsinling reached Yeh, he claimed that he had come under orders from the king to take over Tsin Pi's command. But though the two halves of the tally fitted each other, Tsin Pi had certain misgivings; and raising his hand he looked hard at the Lord of Hsinling.

"As the commander of a hundred thousand men at the frontier, I have been entrusted with a great responsibility by the state," he said. "How is it that you have arrived in a single chariot to replace me?"

He was about to refuse when Chu Hai killed him with a forty-pound iron pestle which he had hidden under his coat. Then the Lord of Hsinling took over the command and announced to his troops: "If father and son are serving here together, let the father go home. If there are brothers here, let the elder go home. And if any soldier is an only son, let him go home also to support his family."

Then with eighty thousand picked troops he advanced to attack the enemy, the army of Chin withdrew, the siege of Hantan was raised and the state of Chao saved. The King of Chao and the Lord of Pingyuan met him in person at the boundary, the Lord of Pingyuan carrying his quiver and arrows and serving as his guide.

"History knows no greater man than your lordship," said the king with a bow, whereupon the Lord of Pingyuan felt thoroughly ashamed.

When the Lord of Hsinling reached the army, Hou Ying faced north and killed himself. Since the Lord of Hsinling knew that the King of Wei was angry with him for stealing the tally and killing Tsin Pi without permission, after the army of Chin had withdrawn and the state of Chao was safe he ordered a general to lead his troops back while he and his protégés remained in Chao. King Hsiao Cheng of Chao was so grateful for his help that after discussing the matter with the Lord of Pingyuan he decided to present the Lord of Hsinling with five cities. And when the latter knew of this, he began to plume himself on his achievement.

"There are things a man should remember, and things he should forget," one of his protégés warned him. "If someone does you a good deed, by all means remember it; but if you do someone else a good deed, then forget it. The fact is that by pretending to act under the king's orders and taking over Tsin Pi's command to rescue Chao, you did a good turn to Chao but proved disloyal to Wei. This is not an achievement of which to be too proud."

Then the Lord of Hsinling stood up in shame and admitted his mistake. When the King of Chao had made ready the palace and wanted to welcome him in by the west steps,* the Lord of Hsinling declined and mounted by the east steps instead, saying that he had injured his own country while doing little for Chao. The King of Chao entertained him with wine till the evening, but in view of his humility did not mention the gift of five cities. The Lord of Hsinling stayed on, however, in Chao, where he was given the district of Huo. And the King of Wei also kept his estate at Hsinling for him.

During the Lord of Hsinling's stay in the state of Chao he heard that there was a retired gentleman named Mao, who lived in obscurity among gamblers, and another named Hsueh, who lived among porridge-venders. When he sought to meet these men, they concealed themselves; but after he discovered their hiding place and called on them they took pleasure in each other's company. This came to the ears of the Lord of Pingyuan.

"I heard that your brother was unequalled," he remarked to his wife, "but now they tell me he is wasting his time with gamblers and porridge-venders. He must be a fool after all."

When his sister told this to the Lord of Hsinling, he asked permission to leave them.

"I understood that the Lord of Pingyuan was a great man," he said, "so for his sake I wronged my own country in order to rescue the state of Chao. Now it seems that he is gathering followers merely to impress people, instead of trying sincerely to find talented men. While still in Taliang I heard of these two good men, and after coming here my one fear was that I might not be able to meet them—I was afraid they might think me beneath them. If his lordship considers such company disgraceful, he can hardly be worth knowing."

He was packing up and preparing to leave when his sister informed the Lord of Pingyuan, who took off his hat and apologized, begging his brother-in-law to remain. When word of this reached the Lord of Pingyuan's protégés, half of them left him and went over to the Lord of Hsinling. Other men from distant states sought him out too; and eventually he won the allegiance of nearly all the Lord of Pingyuan's followers.

The Lord of Hsinling remained for ten years in Chao, during which time the King of Chin took advantage of his absence to send many expeditions eastward to attack Wei. And at last the King of Wei, sore pressed, despatched envoys to beg his stepbrother to return. But the Lord of Hsinling still feared that the king must bear him a grudge, and warned his followers that any man daring to bring a message from Wei would be killed; whereupon all his protégés left Wei and came to

*The west steps were for guests of honour,

Chao, and none ventured to speak to him of returning. One day, however, his two friends, Mao and Hsueh, called to see him.

"You are highly regarded in Chao and your fame is known to all the princes simply on account of your status in Wei," they told him. "Now Chin is attacking Wei, and your country is in danger; yet you appear not to care. Suppose Chin takes Taliang by storm and razes your ancestral temples to the ground, how will you be able to face the world?"

Before they could say more, the Lord of Hsinling turned pale and called for his carriage, then raced back to the aid of his country. At his meeting with the king they both wept, and the king appointed him commander of all the forces of Wei. In the thirtieth year of King An Hsi (248 B.C.), the Lord of Hsinling sent envoys to the different states; and when they knew that he was the commander-in-chief of Wei they sent troops to his aid. Then at the head of the troops from five states he routed the Chin army south of the Yellow River, put General Meng Nao to flight, and drove the enemy before him to Hanku Pass, striking such fear into their hearts that they dared not sally forth again. His military prowess shook the world, and wise men from various states sent stratagems to him, which he compiled in one volume under separate headings. People generally called this collection *The Strategy of the Lord of Hsinling*.

In great alarm, the King of Chin bribed a former follower of Tsin Pi with ten thousand pounds of gold to slander the Lord of Hsinling.

"The Lord of Hsinling has been away for ten years," this man told the King of Wei. "Yet now he is commanding not only our troops but the forces of five states. The kings of these states recognized him alone, paying no respect to Your Majesty; so now he aspires to seize the throne; and the other states, fearing his might, will support him."

Envoys were also sent from Chin to alienate the Lord of Hsinling from the King of Wei by coming to offer him congratulations and inquiring whether he had yet ascended the throne. At last the king, who could not but believe the slander he heard daily, sent another general to take over the command. Then the Lord of Hsinling, realizing why he had been removed from his post, absented himself from court on the pretext of illness, and spent all his time drinking strong wine with his friends or enjoying himself with women. After making merry day and night for four years, he finally drank himself to death; and King An Hsi died during the same year.

When the King of Chin heard that the Lord of Hsinling was dead, he sent Meng Nao to attack Wei again and took twenty towns, out of which he created an Eastern Province. After this Chin continued to seize small portions of Wei's territory; and eighteen years later its army captured the King of Wei and sacked Taliang, putting all its inhabitants to the sword.

During his youth our First Emperor* heard much of the exploits of the Lord of Hsinling, and after ascending the throne he sacrificed at the Lord of Hsinling's shrine whenever he passed through Taliang. In the twelfth year of his reign (195 B.C.), after returning from a punitive expedition against Ying Pu,** he appointed five families to take care of the Lord of Hsinling's sepulchre; and since then sacrifice has been offered to the Lord of Hsinling during the different festivals each year.

The historian comments: When I visited the ruins of Taliang, I asked the whereabouts of Yi Gate and learned that it was the east gate. Other lords have kept protégés too, but the Lord of Hsinling sought out recluses from mountain caves and no one was beneath his notice; so it is little wonder that his fame spread among the states and that the First Emperor, upon passing his shrine, decreed that sacrifice should be offered to him for ever.

CHING KO

Ching Ko was a native of Wei, whose ancestors had migrated to that state from Chi. The people of Wei called him Master Ch'ing; but when he went to Yen he was known as Master Ching. He loved reading and fencing, and advised the Prince of Wei*** on the art of government; but the prince did not take his advice. Later, when Chin attacked Wei and annexed some of its territory as its Eastern Province, the prince's family was banished to Yehwang.

Ching Ko went to Yutsu to discuss the art of fencing with Kai Nieh; and when the latter lost his temper and frowned at him, Ching Ko walked straight out of his house. Someone suggested that he be recalled.

"No," said Kai Nieh. "Just now, when he made a slip in our discussion of fencing, I showed my displeasure; so he must have left. He will not stay here now."

When he sent a messenger to his lodging, the man reported that Ching Ko had indeed called for his carriage and left Yutsu.

"Naturally," said Kai Nieh. "It is because I frowned reprovingly at him."

*Liu Pang, the first emperor of the Han Dynasty, revolted against the Chin Dynasty in 209 B.C., and united the whole of China again after ten years of war.

**One of the many rebels against Chin rule. After the First Emperor of Han united China, he was made the Prince of Huainan; but in 196 B.C. he rebelled, and was defeated and killed the following year.

***The two Weis in this paragraph refer to two different states and are differently written in Chinese. The first Wei was then only a state in name, while the second was one of the seven powerful states. The first Wei was situated in the district of Puyang in the eastern part of the second Wei, and later was removed to the district of Yehwang.

Later Ching Ko went to Hantan, where he fell out with Lu Kou-chien while gambling; and when Lu shouted at him he left without a word, never to see Lu again.

In the state of Yen, Ching Ko made friends with a dog-flesh vender and a cithara player named Kao Chien-li. Ching Ko was fond of wine, and he spent his days drinking with these men in the market-place. When they had drunk their fill, Kao would play the cithara while Ching Ko sang; and so they were merry; but sometimes they became sad and shed tears as if no one else were near.

Though Ching Ko spent much time with drinking companions, he was quiet, thoughtful and studious too, and made friends wherever he went with the gallants and elders. In the state of Yen, for instance, he gained the friendship of a retired scholar named Tien Kuang, who realized that he was no ordinary person.

Just at this time Prince Tan of Yen escaped from Chin, where he had been a hostage, and returned to his own state. This prince had previously been a hostage in Chao, and since the King of Chin was born in that state they had been playmates together; after the King of Chin ascended the throne, Prince Tan went as a hostage to Chin; but, indignant at the rude way in which the king treated him, he fled. He longed to take vengeance upon Chin; but his own state was small and he was powerless. Later the King of Chin launched repeated campaigns eastwards against Chi, Chu and the three states of Tsin,* annexing their territory and approaching nearer and nearer to Yen. The King of Yen and his ministers were anxious because of the impending danger, and Prince Tan, who was especially troubled, asked the advice of his tutor, Chu Wu.

"Chin has expanded its territory on all sides and is now threatening the states of Han, Chao and Wei," said Chu Wu. "To the north it has the strongholds of Kanchuan and Kukou, and to the south the fertile valleys of the Chin and Wei Rivers. It controls the wealth of Pa and Han, has the mountains of Lung and Shu on its west, and those of Hanku and Hsiao on its east. Its population is large, its men well-trained, and it possesses more than enough weapons for its troops. If the King of Chin wishes to extend his borders eastwards, he can take all the land south of the Great Wall and north of the Yi River;** so why risk rubbing him the wrong way just because he once slighted you?"

"What then can I do?" asked the prince.

"We will think of a plan later," replied Chu Wu.

Some time after this, General Fan Yu-chi of Chin offended his sovereign and fled to Yen, where Prince Tan took him in. Chu Wu advised against this.

*The state of Tsin, which lay southwest of Yen, was divided among the three ruling houses of Han, Chao and Wei.

**I.e. the state of Yen.

"The King of Chin is all-powerful," said the tutor. "If he decides to vent his wrath on Yen it will be a fearful thing—enough to chill all hearts—especially if he learns that General Fan is here. This is like setting meat before a hungry tiger: only disaster can come of it. And in such a case even the best counsel will be of no avail. I advise you to send the general with all speed into hiding in the land of the Huns, while you ally with the three states of Tsin in the west, with Chi and Chu in the south, and with the Khan of the Huns in the north. Only so can you take vengeance."

"It would take a long time to carry out your plan," objected the prince, "and I am in too much misery to wait. Besides, General Fan threw himself on my mercy when he had no one to turn to, and I am certainly not going to let myself be intimidated by Chin into abandoning a friend with whom I sympathize, to hand him over to the Huns. I would rather die than do such a thing. Please think again."

"This is a dangerous way of winning safety," replied Chu Wu, "stirring up trouble for the sake of peace. You are devising a short-sighted policy and increasing tension, showing concern for one man's friendship but not for the security of the state. In fact, you are increasing your own difficulties and aggravating your enemy. When you drop a goose feather on burning charcoal, everyone knows what the result will be; and when Chin swoops down like a vulture in all its fury, you do not need me to tell you what will happen. There is an old gentleman in our state named Tien Kuang, who has great wisdom and courage. You might consult him."

"Will you introduce me to him?" asked the prince.

Chu Wu assented and went to see Tien Kuang to tell him that Prince Tan wished to consult him on state policy; and Tien Kuang agreed to call on the prince.

Prince Tan welcomed and led him in, then knelt to dust the seat for him; and as soon as Tien Kuang was seated and they were alone, the prince rose to his feet.

"Our state and Chin cannot exist together," he said. "Please consider the situation."

"When a good steed is in its prime it can gallop over three hundred miles in one day," said Tien Kuang. "But when it grows old, the poorest nag can overtake it. You have heard of the ability I possessed in my prime; but now my strength is spent. However, though I am not competent to advise on affairs of state, I know a man named Ching Ko who could be of service to you."

"Will you introduce me to him?" asked the prince.

Tien Kuang agreed, then stood up to leave, and Prince Tan saw him to the door.

"What I have just told you is of the greatest consequence to our state," the prince cautioned him. "I must beg you not to disclose it."

Tien Kuang lowered his head to smile as he gave his promise, then went to plead with Ching Ko.

"Everybody here knows that we are good friends," he said. "The prince had heard of my ability, but did not know that I am past my prime; so he favoured me with an audience during which he said that our state and Chin cannot exist together, and asked me to consider the matter. I made so bold as to recommend you to him, and hope you will call at the palace."

To this Ching Ko agreed.

"I have heard that a good man's actions should be above suspicion," continued Tien Kuang. "But by warning me that what he told me was of the greatest consequence to the state and begging me not to disclose it, the prince showed that he doubts my integrity. To give rise to suspicion in this way does not befit an honourable man."

Accordingly he decided to kill himself, to spur Ching Ko on.

"Please go quickly to the prince and tell him that I am dead," he urged him. "Then he can rest assured that I will not talk."

Thereupon he killed himself. When Ching Ko called on Prince Tan and told him how Tien Kuang had died and what he had said before his death, the prince bowed and knelt down, shedding tears.

"I warned him simply to ensure that my plan would succeed," said the prince after a long silence. "I did not mean him to die to prove his integrity."

After Ching Ko had taken his seat, the prince stood up and bowed.

"In spite of my stupidity, sir," he said, "Tien Kuang has asked you here so that I can consult you. This shows that Heaven has taken pity on our state and will not abandon us. Now the state of Chin is insatiable in its greed and will not rest satisfied until it has seized all the lands in the world and made all the princes its subjects. It has already captured the King of Han, annexed his kingdom, and sent troops south to attack Chu and north to threaten Chao. General Wang Chien is leading several hundred thousand men against the cities of Chang and Yeh, while General Li Hsin is advancing from Taiyuan and Yunchung. When the state of Chao can resist no longer but surrender, then it will be our turn. We are a small, weak state, exhausted by constant warfare, so that even if we strain every nerve we cannot hold Chin at bay; and the other states are too cowed to ally with us against our common enemy. This, then, is my plan: if we can find a man of immense courage to go as our envoy to Chin and tempt the king with great gain, that avaricious sovereign will certainly fall in with our wishes. If he can be kidnapped and forced to return all the territory he has annexed in the same way in which Tsao Mo* com-

*Tsao Mo accompanied the Duke of Lu to sign a treaty with the Duke of Chi. The powerful state of Chi had been encroaching on the territory of Lu; but by threatening the ruler of Chi with a dagger Tsao Mo forced him to return all the districts he had annexed.

pelled Duke Huan of Chi, it will be ideal. If he does not agree, our envoy can stab him to death. Then with generals commanding armies outside their borders and trouble at home, the rulers of Chin will fall out with each other; and we can seize this opportunity to form an alliance of the eastern states which will certainly defeat them. This is the great desire of my heart, but I do not know to whom to entrust this task. I hope you will consider my plan."

Ching Ko was silent for a time.

"The fate of our kingdom depends upon this," he said at last. "But my ability is of the meanest. I fear I am not fit to be entrusted with such a mission."

But when the prince came up to him and bowed, begging him not to refuse, Ching Ko accepted the task. Then Prince Tan made him a nobleman and lodged him in a fine mansion. He called on Ching Ko every day and presented him with delicacies, precious objects, carriages and beautiful girls, to satisfy his every wish and give him pleasure. This state of affairs went on for a long time, and Ching Ko made no move to leave for Chin. Then General Wang Chien of Chin took the capital of Chao, captured the King of Chao, annexed the whole state, and advanced northwards to occupy all the territory to the southern boundary of Yen. Prince Tan was thoroughly alarmed.

"The army of Chin may cross the Yi River any day now," he said to Ching Ko. "Then I shall no longer be able to entertain you, much as I would like to."

"I was thinking of going to see you about this matter, but now you have mentioned it first," replied Ching Ko. "Unless I take some proof of goodwill, the King of Chin will not trust me. He has offered a thousand pounds of gold and a fief of ten thousand families for the capture of General Fan; so if I can have General Fan's head and the map of Tukang district,* the king will welcome me and I should be able to carry out your plan."

"General Fan came to me to take refuge," said Prince Tan. "I cannot sacrifice him for my own ends. Please consider the matter again."

Knowing that the prince was too soft-hearted to take his advice, Ching Ko went privately to Fan Yu-chi.

"The King of Chin considers you his deadly enemy," he said. "Your parents and kinsmen have been put to the sword, and now I hear a reward of a thousand pounds of gold and a fief of ten thousand families has been offered for your head. What do you mean to do?"

General Fan gazed up at the sky and sighed, then shed tears.

"The thought of this makes me burn with hatred to the very marrow of my bones," he said. "But I cannot think of any way to take vengeance."

*A rich district in the state of Yen.

"I have a plan to avert danger from Yen and to avenge you," said Ching Ko. "Would you care to hear it?"

General Fan stepped forward.

"Tell me what it is," he begged.

"If I could have your head to present to the King of Chin, he would receive me with pleasure; then with my left hand I should seize his sleeve, and with my right hand stab him through the heart. You would be avenged and our prince would pay off an old score. Are you willing to help me?"

General Fan bared one arm and advanced clasping his wrists.

"This is the chance for which I have been waiting day and night, gnashing my teeth and burning with rage!" he cried. "Now you have pointed out the way."

Thereupon he killed himself.

When the prince knew of this, he hurried there to lament bitterly over the corpse; then, since there was nothing he could do, he had Fan's head placed in a sealed casket. He had been searching for a fine dagger and found one made by Hsu Fu-jen of Chao, which cost a hundred pieces of gold. Now he made his artisans steep this dagger in poison, and upon testing it found that if it drew the least drop of blood—enough to stain a thread—the result was instant death. Then Prince Tan helped Ching Ko to prepare for his journey. In the state of Yen was a young gallant of thirteen named Chin Wu-yang, who was so fierce that he killed people at will and no one dared meet his angry glance. He was chosen to assist Ching Ko.

But Ching Ko was waiting for another assistant of his own choice, who lived far away; and while making arrangements for this man to come he delayed his departure. Then Prince Tan grew impatient, suspecting that Ching Ko had repented of his promise.

"The time is going by," he said. "Do you intend to start soon, or shall I send Chin Wu-yang on ahead?"

"Why do you want to send a boy to die?" shouted Ching Ko angrily. "I am going to the powerful state of Chin armed only with one dagger. The venture is fraught with danger, and that is why I was waiting for a friend to accompany me. But since you are so impatient, I will leave now."

Thus he set out, while the prince and those who knew of the plan wore white clothes to escort him to the Yi River. After they had sacrificed to pray for success in this journey, Kao Chien-li played the cithara and Ching Ko sang a tragic air, at which all present wept. Then he stepped forward and chanted:

The wind is wailing over the cold Yi River;
And a hero sets forth, never to return.

After this he sang a martial air, which moved all who heard it to such anger that their eyes nearly started from their heads and their hair stood on end. Then Ching Ko mounted his carriage and drove off, without a glance behind.

Upon reaching the state of Chin, Ching Ko bribed the king's favourite minister, Lord Meng Chia, with money and gifts worth a thousand pieces of gold; and Lord Meng Chia mentioned his mission to the king.

"The King of Yen is awed by Your Majesty's might and has not the courage to oppose your troops," he said. "He begs to become your subject like the other princes and send tribute like your provinces, in order to continue his ancestral sacrifices.* He dared not come in person to announce this; but he has cut off Fan Yu-chi's head to present to you in a sealed casket with the map of Tukang district. The envoy who brought these here is awaiting Your Majesty's orders."

The King of Chin was pleased, and displayed all his royal pomp at Hsienyang Palace to receive the envoy from Yen.

Ching Ko entered first with the sealed casket containing Fan's head, followed by Chin Wu-yang with a case containing the map. When they reached the steps to the dais, the ministers were surprised to see Chin Wu-yang change colour and tremble; but Ching Ko laughed as he stepped forward to apologize.

"This is an uncouth rustic from the barbarous north," he said. "He is overawed by his first sight of Your Majesty. Pray excuse him, so that we can carry out our mission."

The king bade Ching Ko hand him the map which Chin Wu-yang was holding; and when he unrolled it to the very end, the dagger appeared. Then Ching Ko seized the king's sleeve with his left hand, while snatching up the dagger to stab at the king with his right. Before he could strike him, however, the king leapt up in alarm, so that his sleeve was torn off; but when he tried to draw his long sword it stuck fast in its scabbard, and the king in his terror could not unsheathe it. He fled behind a pillar, with Ching Ko in hot pursuit; and the ministers, taken completely by surprise, were thrown into confusion. According to the law of Chin, no ministers could bear arms at court; and the royal guards in the courtyard could not enter without orders from their sovereign; but the king was too hard pressed to call for them. So while Ching Ko pursued the king, the panic-stricken ministers could only try to ward him off with their bare hands; and the king's physician, Hsia Wu-chu, used his medical bag to beat the assassin. Terrified out of his wits, the king was fleeing round the pillar when some attendants called out:

"Put the sword on your back, Your Majesty!"

*The ancient Chinese believed that one of their chief duties was to sacrifice to the spirits of their ancestors. The ancestral sacrifices of the ruler of a state were of particular importance; thus if the ruler's family were wiped out and the sacrifices discontinued, his ancestral spirits would never forgive him.

As soon as the king did so, he was able to draw his sword and strike Ching Ko with it, breaking his left thigh. Since Ching Ko was disabled he hurled his dagger at the king; but missed him and hit the bronze pillar instead. The king struck out again and again until Ching Ko was wounded in eight places. Knowing that all was up with him, Ching Ko, squatting against the pillar, smiled scornfully and swore at the king.

"I failed because I was trying to capture you alive," he cried. "I would have forced you to agree to our prince's demands."

At that the attendants ran forward and killed him. The king brooded in silence for some time, then rewarded some ministers for their aid and punished others, giving his physician, Hsia Wu-chu, two hundred pieces of gold.

"He is loyal to me," said the king, "for he beat off Ching Ko with his bag."

And now the King of Chin, roused to fury, despatched more troops to the east and ordered General Wang Chien to advance from Chao upon Yen. After ten months Chi, the capital of Yen, was taken; and King Hsi of Yen and Prince Tan withdrew eastwards with their best troops to Liaotung. General Li Hsin of Chin was pressing them hard, when King Chia of Tai* wrote to the King of Yen: "Chin is bearing down heavily upon you because of Prince Tan. If you present the prince's head to the King of Chin, he will stop pursuing you and you will be able to continue your state sacrifices."

General Li Hsin pursued Prince Tan to the Yen River, and the King of Yen sent an assassin to kill the prince and present his head to Chin; but the army of Chin continued to attack. Five years later the state of Yen was finally destroyed, and King Hsi taken prisoner. By the following year (221 B.C.), the King of Chin had conquered all the states and styled himself emperor; but he did not cease to persecute the friends of Prince Tan and Ching Ko, so they all went into hiding.

Kao Chien-li changed his name and became a bondslave in Sungtzu. He worked hard for his master until one day he heard someone playing the cithara in the hall; then he lingered there, unable to tear himself away, commenting on the music. The servants reported this to their master.

"That slave understands music," they told him. "He is secretly commenting on what is good and bad in the playing."

Then his master ordered him to come forward to play the cithara, and all the guests marvelled at his performance and offered him wine. Kao Chien-li decided that he had been in hiding long enough and could not continue indefinitely in this way, so he fetched his cithara and good clothes from his baggage; and when he reappeared richly dressed all the guests were amazed and bowed to him. They made him sit in the seat

*Tai was a small state founded after the fall of Chao in what had been the northern territory of Chao.

of honour to play the cithara and sing, and were moved to tears before they left. After that, all the citizens of Sungtzu invited him to their houses, and news of his playing reached the First Emperor of Chin, who summoned him to court. Then someone who knew him reported that this was Kao Chien-li; but since the emperor thought highly of his skill as a musician he did not kill him, but put out his eyes and ordered him to play at court. And the emperor enjoyed his music so much that finally he allowed him to stand close to the throne. Then Kao Chien-li weighted his cithara with lead and, when he was close enough, raised it to strike at the emperor; but he missed him. He was immediately put to death, and never again did the emperor allow followers of the former princes to approach him.

When Lu Kou-chien heard of Ching Ko's attempt on the King of Chin's life, he said to his friends: "What a pity that he did not make a better study of the art of fencing, and that I failed to recognize his greatness! After I shouted at him that day, he must have despised me."

The historian comments: Popular tradition has it that when Ching Ko consented to carry out Prince Tan's request, grain fell from heaven and horses put forth horns; but this is a gross exaggeration. Another tradition, which maintains that Ching Ko succeeded in wounding the King of Chin, is also untrue. Kung-sun Chi-kung and Master Tung Chung-shu, who met Hsia Wu-chu, the physician, and learned the whole story from him, told me exactly what had happened. Of the five men from Tsao Mo to Ching Ko whom I have described,* some succeeded in their missions while others failed; but all were equally determined and loyal to their ideals; thus it is not for nothing that their fame will be known to future generations.

LI KUANG

General Li Kuang, a native of Chengchi in Lunghsi, was descended from Li Hsin, the general of Chin who pursued Prince Tan of Yen and obtained his head. His family originated in Huaili but later moved to Chengchi; and the men of each generation were trained in archery. In the fourteenth year of Emperor Wen (166 B.C.) a strong force of Huns invaded Hsiao Pass. Then, as the son of a good family, Li Kuang joined the army to resist the enemy. With his great skill in archery and horsemanship he killed many Huns, and was made a captain. He and his cousin, Li Tsai, who was also a captain, served as knight attendants with a salary of eight hundred piculs of grain. Li Kuang was part of the

*This life of Ching Ko is part of an account of five men who attempted to intimidate or assassinate their rulers' opponents.

imperial train, and his ability to storm passes and grapple with wild beasts made Emperor Wen remark: "You were born at the wrong time. Had you lived during the First Emperor's reign, you would easily have won a dukedom."

When Emperor Ching ascended the throne Li Kuang was appointed a tribune in Lunghsi, but was soon promoted to the rank of a captain of the cavalry. During the war against the rebellious princes of Wu and Chu,* he served as tribune of the cavalry under High Marshal Chou Ya-fu, and distinguished himself by capturing the rebels' flag at Changyi. But on the return of the army he was not rewarded because he had received the title of a general from the Prince of Liang without the emperor's permission. Instead he was made the Governor of Shangku, a district constantly harried by the Huns. Then the Warden of the Subject Tribes, Kung-sun Kun-ya, pleaded with the emperor:

"There is no braver or more brilliant officer in the empire than Li Kuang; but since glorying in his prowess he loses no chance of engaging the Huns, I fear we may lose him."

Li Kuang was therefore transferred to the governorship of Shangchun and made responsible for various frontier posts including Lunghsi, Peiti, Yenmen, Taichun and Yunchung. And while there he continued to distinguish himself for his hard fighting.

When the Huns invaded Shangchun in great force, the emperor ordered one of his palace favourites to join Li Kuang in order to gain experience in fighting the Huns. One day this noble, at the head of several dozen horsemen, met with three Hunnish riders. As they joined battle the Huns drew their bows so swiftly that soon the noble was wounded and most of his men killed; whereupon he fled back to Li Kuang.

"You must have met some of their best archers," said Li Kuang.

He rode out with a hundred horsemen in pursuit of these three Huns. The enemy had lost their horses and covered about a dozen miles on foot; but Li Kuang ordered his men to outflank them while he matched his skill in archery with theirs. And after killing two of them and capturing the third, he found that these were indeed some of the Huns' best bowmen.

After Li Kuang had bound the captive on his horse, several thousand Hunnish cavalry rode up; but when they saw the smallness of the Chinese force they suspected a trap, and took to the hills in defensive formation. The hundred horsemen with Li Kuang were so alarmed that they wanted to gallop straight back.

"That would never do," said Li Kuang. "We are dozens of miles from our main force, and if the hundred of us try to fly, the Huns will give chase and shoot us down in no time; whereas if we stay here they will think we are acting as a decoy for a great force behind, and will not venture to attack us."

*In 154 B.C. the princes of Wu and Chu rebelled with five other princes; but the rising was crushed immediately.

He ordered his men to advance. When they were within half a mile of the enemy, he ordered them to halt and unsaddle their steeds.

"With these thousands of Huns close by us, what shall we do in case of an emergency?" asked his troops.

"The enemy expect us to withdraw," replied Li Kuang. "But when they see us unsaddle our mounts, they will realize that we intend to remain."

The Huns dared not attack; but one of their chieftains galloped forward on a white horse to reconnoitre. Then Li Kuang sprang into his saddle and charged forward with a dozen men to shoot down the rider; after which he returned to his troops, unsaddled his horse, and ordered his men to let loose their steeds and lie down to sleep. It was now dusk, and the Huns were too bewildered to attack. That night, fearing a Chinese ambush might attack them in the dark, they withdrew. At dawn Li Kuang rejoined the main body of his troops, which had not come to his aid because it was not known where the commander had gone.

When Emperor Ching died and Emperor Wu succeeded to the throne, Li Kuang's fame as a general won him promotion from his post at Shangchun to the command of the imperial guards of Weiyang Palace. At this time Cheng Pu-shih was Commander of the Guards of Changlo Palace. Cheng Pu-shih, like Li Kuang, had served as a governor in the frontier provinces, defending the border and leading expeditions against the Huns. Li Kuang paid little attention to military formation, but would rest his troops wherever he found water and grass and let his men do as they pleased. He appointed no sentries to keep watch, and there was a minimum of bureaucracy in his headquarters; but though his troops often reconnoitred far into enemy territory, they never came to any harm. Cheng Pu-shih, on the other hand, laid great stress on military formation and discipline; sentries kept watch over his camp, and his officers had to keep records and work hard all through the night; but his troops had never come to grief either.

"Li Kuang's army routine is simple," said Cheng Pu-shih once. "But if the enemy launches a sudden attack, he will be taken by surprise. Still, his troops are always fresh and in good spirits and would gladly die for him. Our army routine may be irksome and intricate; but the enemy will never catch us napping."

Although both these men were famous frontier generals in their day, the Huns feared Li Kuang's simple tactics and soldiers preferred to serve under him rather than under Cheng, who had a reputation for harshness. During Emperor Ching's time Cheng Pu-shih had advised the government frankly on certain questions, and had been made a counsellor. He was severe and a strict enforcer of discipline.

Some time later, the government tried to tempt the Huns into the town of Mayi, concealing a great force in a neighbouring valley. Li Kuang was appointed General of the Valiant Steeds under Commander-

in-Chief Han An-kuo; but the Hunnish khan discovered the trap and withdrew, so the Chinese army met with no success.

Four years later Li Kuang, then still a commander of the palace guards, was appointed a general and sent to attack the Huns beyond Yenmen. But his army was outnumbered and routed, and he was captured; for the khan, who had heard of his ability, had given orders that he must be taken alive. When the Hunnish cavalry caught him, he was wounded; so they laid him on a rope hammock between two horses. They had covered several miles when Li Kuang, who had been feigning death, glanced sideways and saw a Hun riding a fine steed. He leapt on the horse and threw down its rider, seizing his bow, then galloped south for some dozen miles until he found the remnant of his troops, whom he led back inside the frontier fortifications. Several hundred Hunnish horsemen galloped after him; but he raised the Hun's bow as he fled and killed many of his pursuers, thus making good his escape. Upon his return, he was court-martialed. Having lost so many men and allowed himself to be captured by the Huns, he deserved death; but he was permitted to ransom himself, his name being struck off the official list.

Li Kuang lived in retirement for a few years near the grandson of the Lord of Yingyin* in the hills south of Lantien, spending most of his time hunting. One day he went out with a follower and accepted an invitation to drink in a farm-house, not returning to Paling station till it was dark. The warden of the station being drunk, shouted at him, ordering him to halt.

"This is the former General Li," said Li Kuang's man.

"Even an accredited general cannot wander about after dusk," retorted the warden, "let alone an ex-general."

So Li Kuang was detained there.

Later the Huns crossed the border again, killed the Governor of Liaohsi and defeated Commander Han An-kuo, who withdrew to Yiupeiping. Then the emperor made Li Kuang the Governor of Yiupeiping. Li Kuang requested the emperor to appoint the Warden of Paling as his escort, but had him killed on reaching his headquarters. The Huns called Li Kuang the Chinese Flying General, and as long as he was governor there they dared not invade the place.

Once during a hunt Li Kuang shot a rock in the grass which he had mistaken for a tiger, the entire tip of his arrow penetrating the boulder. But when he discovered that it was a rock and shot again, he could no longer pierce it. Whenever he heard that there was a tiger in the district, he would hunt it; and in Yiupeiping a tiger which he was hunting leapt up and mauled him; but he finally succeeded in killing the beast.

Whenever Li Kuang received a reward he would divide it with his men. He never

*The Lord of Yingyin was Kuan Ying, a famous general during the reign of the First Emperor.

earned more than two thousand piculs a year, and for forty-odd years saved no money; but he did not care for property. Li Kuang was tall and had long arms like a monkey. His skill in archery can only be attributed to a natural aptitude, for none of his descendants and followers who learned the art from him could equal him. Taciturn by nature, he seldom spoke in company, and his chief amusement with his men was to draw military formations on the ground or compete in archery contests, the losers in which had to drink. Indeed, up to the end of his life, shooting was his only pastime.

When Li Kuang's troops were short of water and provisions, he would not drink until his men had drunk their fill; neither would he eat until his men were satisfied. And since he was not harsh but generous to his troops, they served him loyally. In battle, he would not shoot until his enemy was within a few dozen yards of him when he could be sure of hitting him; so his arrows always found their mark. Thus he was often driven to bay by his enemy just as he was often wounded by beasts in the chase.

Upon the death of the Palace Guardian, Shih Chien, the emperor appointed Li Kuang in his place. In the sixth year of the period of Yuan Shuo (123 B.C.) he served again as Rear General under Commander-in-Chief Wei Ching, advancing from Tinghsiang to attack the Huns. Several generals who killed and captured many of the enemy were ennobled for their services, but Li Kuang's army had no success. Three years later Li Kuang, still Palace Guardian, advanced at the head of four thousand cavalry from Yiupeiping, while Chang Chien,* Lord of Powang, led ten thousand cavalry by a different route. Li Kuang had travelled about a hundred miles when the Eastern Prince of the Huns with forty thousand cavalry surrounded his troops; and seeing that his men were afraid, Li Kuang ordered his son, Li Kan, to break through the enemy's ranks. Li Kan galloped with a few dozen men through the left and right of the enemy's lines, then returned to the camp.

"The Huns are nothing," he said.

At this Li Kuang's troops regained confidence, and he formed them into a circle facing outwards. The Huns attacked in force, arrows rained down, and soon more than half of the Chinese troops were slain, while their shafts were nearly exhausted. Then Li Kuang ordered his men to fit arrows to their bows but not to shoot, while he aimed with his crossbow at the Hunnish chieftains and killed several of them. Thereupon the Huns withdrew. Night was falling, and Li Kuang's officers and men were as pale as death; but he remained as calm and confident as ever and made preparations for further defence. So his troops were greatly impressed by his courage. The following day they fought desperately again until Chang Chien brought up reinforcements and the Huns re-

*Chang Chien was the first Chinese envoy sent on an official mission to Ferghana, Sogdiana and Bactria. He was away for thirteen years.

treated; but by this time the Chinese were too weary to give chase, and Li Kuang's men were well-nigh wiped out; so he returned to China with the remnants of his troops. For arriving late, Chang Chien was punishable with death; but he was permitted to ransom himself, his name being struck off the official list. Li Kuang's achievement was cancelled out by his losses; hence he received no reward.

Li Kuang's cousin, Li Tsai, who had also served as a knight attendant in Emperor Wen's time, was promoted during the reign of Emperor Ching to a post worth two thousand piculs a year, and under Emperor Wu became the minister of the Prince of Tai. In the fifth year of the Yuan Shuo period (124 B.C.), he served as General of the Light Chariots under Commander Wei Ching in an expedition against the Western Prince of the Huns. He distinguished himself in this campaign and was made the Lord of Lo-an. In the second year of the Yuan Shou period (121 B.C.) he succeeded Kung-sun Hung as prime minister. Li Tsai was less brilliant than Li Kuang and far less famous; yet Li Kuang was never awarded a fief nor promoted above the rank of a court official, while Li Tsai became a lord and the chief minister in the land. Some of Li Kuang's former officers and men were also ennobled.

Once in idle conversation with the astrologer, Wang Shuo, Li Kuang remarked: "I have been in every campaign against the Huns, yet while several dozen officers of no more than average ability have been made lords for their services, I have neither been cited for merit nor granted a fief, although I am not inferior to them. Why is this? Am I fated to remain a commoner? Is this my ill fortune?"

"Can you remember doing anything that you later regretted?" asked Wang Shuo.

"When I was governing Lunghsi and the Chiang tribes revolted," said Li Kuang, "I tricked them into giving themselves up. But when more than eight hundred men had surrendered, I broke my promise to spare them and massacred them in one day. This is the one thing of which I repent bitterly."

"That is the reason why you have never been made a lord," replied Wang Shuo. "Nothing can be worse than killing those who have surrendered."

Two years later Commander-in-Chief Wei Ching and Huo Chu-ping, General of the Brave Steeds, led a great expedition against the Huns. Although Li Kuang begged several times to be sent with them, the emperor considered him too old and only after a long time consented, appointing him Vanguard General. This took place in the fourth year of the Yuan Shou period (119 B.C.). Li Kuang was under Wei Ching's command. After crossing the frontier they learned from some Hunnish captives the whereabouts of the khan, and Wei Ching decided to lead his best troops there directly, ordering Li Kuang to join forces with Chao Shih-chi, the Right Wing General, and advance by the eastern route. This route

was slightly longer and little water or grass was to be obtained there; hence the army could not pass that way in force.

"My post is in the vanguard," protested Li Kuang, "yet you are ordering me to take the eastern route. Though I have fought the Huns since I was a lad, this is the first time I have had a chance to encounter the khan himself. I beg to be allowed to ride in the vanguard and be the first to attack him."

Commander Wei Ching, however, had received secret orders from the emperor not to let Li Kuang engage the khan, because he was old and his luck had always been bad, therefore he might easily fail again. Moreover, Kung-sun Ngao,* who had just been degraded to the rank of a commoner, was then serving as Centre General and Wei Ching wanted to give him an opportunity to fight the khan. So Li Kuang was removed from his post. Understanding the reason for this, Li Kuang presented another petition to Wei Ching; but instead of reconsidering his decision the commander despatched an officer to him with a sealed note, who bade him report to headquarters and carry out his orders without delay.

Li Kuang rose up in fury without expressing thanks to the commander, and led his troops to join the Right Wing General and advance by the eastern route. But they lost their guide, could not find the way and fell behind. When Wei Ching joined battle with the Huns, the khan fled; and they had to return without capturing him. Riding southward across the desert they met the troops of Li Kuang and Chao Shih-chi; and seeing that the commander had come back, Li Kuang rejoined the main force. Presently Wei Ching sent an officer bearing food and drink for Li Kuang and Chao Shih-chi to ask how they had come to lose their way, as the commander-in-chief had to make a detailed report of his failure to the emperor. Before Li Kuang had time to report, however, Wei Ching sent another officer to summon him to headquarters for an interrogation.

"My lieutenants were not to blame," declared Li Kuang. "I am the one responsible for losing the way. I shall answer for this before the tribunal."

Then he turned to his followers.

"Since my youth I have fought more than seventy battles, great and small, against the Huns," he said. "This time I was fortunate enough to set out under Commander Wei Ching to fight the khan; but the commander removed me from my post and ordered me to take a devious route, and I lost my way. This is fate. I am over sixty now, and cannot face a tribunal."

Thereupon he drew his sword and killed himself. All the officers and men of his army wept; and all the citizens of the empire, old and young alike, shed tears when they heard this news, whether they had known him personally or not. Chao Shih-chi, the Right Wing General, was court-

*Kung-sun Ngao was Wei Ching's best friend, having once saved his life.

martialed and sentenced to death, but permitted to ransom himself, his name being struck off the official list.

Li Kuang had three sons, Li Tang-hu, Li Chiao and Li Kan, all of whom served as palace guards. One day when the emperor was jesting with his favourite, Han Yen, and the latter took a liberty, Li Tang-hu struck him and made him take to his heels. The emperor was impressed by his courage; but Li Tang-hu died early. Li Chiao, who was appointed Governor of Taichun, also died before his father. A son was born to Li Tang-hu after his death, whose name was Li Ling.

When Li Kuang killed himself at the front, Li Kan was serving under General Huo Chu-ping. The year after Li Kuang's death Li Tsai, the prime minister, was accused of encroaching upon the grounds of Emperor Ching's sepulchre and committed suicide rather than suffer the indignity of a trial. His fief was then confiscated.

Li Kan served as a lieutenant under General Huo and fought the Eastern Prince of the Huns. He fought bravely, captured the Huns' drum and flag and killed many of the enemy. For these services he was made a noble with two hundred families as his fief and succeeded Li Kuang as Palace Guardian. Later, because he hated Commander Wei Ching for the wrong he had done his father, Li Kan struck and injured him; but Wei Ching hushed the matter up. Some time after this, when Li Kan accompanied the emperor to Kanchuan Palace to hunt, General Huo Chu-ping, who was Wei Ching's nephew, shot at Li Kan and killed him. But since General Huo was a favourite with the emperor, the matter was kept quiet and it was given out that Li Kan had been gored to death by a stag. The following year General Huo died. Li Kan had a daughter who was a favourite of the crown prince, and his son, Li Yu, also enjoyed the prince's patronage. But he was a greedy, grasping man. Thus the house of Li gradually declined.

When Li Ling grew up he was appointed Custodian of Chienchang Palace, in charge of cavalry. An expert archer, he was good to his subordinates. Since the men of the Li family had been in military command for several generations, the emperor put Li Ling at the head of eight hundred horsemen. Once he led his troops far into Hunnish territory—about a thousand miles from the frontier—crossed Lake Chuyen and reconnoitred the enemy's strategic points without meeting any Huns. On his return, he was appointed a tribune of the cavalry in command of five thousand men from Tanyang and Chu; and for several years he trained them in archery in Chiuchuan and Changyeh so that they could defend the border against the Huns.

In the autumn of the second year of the Tien Han period (99 B.C.) when General Li Kuang-li, Conqueror of Osrouchana,* led thirty thousand

*Osrouchana was the capital of the ancient kingdom of Ferghana, between present-day Osh and Ura-tyube in Soviet Kirghistan. The city was stormed by Chinese forces advancing from Kashgar in 102 B.C.

cavalrymen against the Western Prince of the Huns at Chilien and Tien-shan, Li Ling was ordered to advance several hundred miles north of Chu-yen with five thousand archers and infantrymen to divert the Huns and prevent them from concentrating their forces against General Li Kuang-li. Li Ling reached his objective by the time appointed; but as he was returning, his troops were surrounded by eighty thousand Huns. He had only five thousand men, and soon their arrows were exhausted and more than half of them had fallen; yet they killed and wounded more than ten thousand of the enemy, fighting as they withdrew and battling continuously for eight days. They were only a few dozen miles from Chuyen when they were hemmed in by the Huns in a narrow glen. All their food was gone, nor was there any help at hand; and the enemy attacked savagely, calling upon them to surrender.

"I cannot face His Majesty again!" cried Li Ling.

Then he surrendered to the Huns. His whole army was destroyed, little more than four hundred survivors escaping back to China. The Hunnish khan, who had always admired Li Ling's family and had been impressed by the fight he put up, married his daughter to him and made him a noble. But when the government knew of this, Li Ling's mother, wife and son were executed, the whole Li family was disgraced, and the citizens of Lunghsi who had connections with him bowed their heads in shame.

The historian comments: We read in the classics that if a man is righteous, people will follow him without being told; but if he is not, then no amount of orders will make them follow him. This is proved by the case of General Li Kuang. I found him as unassuming as an ordinary citizen, with no conversational gifts. Yet when he died, his sincerity and honesty had so impressed men that, whether they knew him or not, all mourned for him. The proverb says: The peach and plum trees cannot speak, yet a path is trodden out to them. And trivial as this remark may seem, it provides an analogy for the great.

KUO HSIEH

Kuo Hsieh, a native of Chih whose other name was Weng-po, was the grandson on his mother's side of the famous fortune-teller, Hsu Fu, and the son of a gallant who was sentenced to death for lawlessness during the reign of Emperor Wen (179-157 B.C.). Kuo Hsieh was short but agile, and never drank wine. In his youth he showed himself suspicious and cruel, and killed several men when his anger was aroused; but he also risked his life to avenge his friends. He sheltered outlaws, conspired against the authorities and proved a constant menace to public order.

He was guilty time and again of minting money and despoiling graves. Apparently he was favoured by heaven, however, for he always contrived to escape punishment thanks to amnesties or other means.

As Kuo Hsieh grew older he became gentler and less arrogant and began to repay evil with kindness, giving much and asking little in return. But he was fonder than ever of deeds of gallantry; and though he no longer boasted of the lives he had saved, he remained as violent and distrustful as before and continued to wreak sudden vengeance on his enemies. The young men who admired him would avenge him too without his knowledge.

Kuo Hsieh's elder sister had a son who took advantage of his uncle's influence. One day while in his cups, this lad insisted that a man who could not drink should drain his goblet, forcing the wine down his throat. In a fury, the man drew his dagger and stabbed the boy to death, then fled. Kuo Hsieh's sister was bitterly angry.

"Who says that my brother is a gallant man?" she demanded. "My son has been killed, yet he allows the murderer to go unscathed."

She left the dead body on the road without burial in order to shame her brother. Kuo sent out a messenger to make inquiries, and soon learned the whereabouts of the murderer. Then, knowing that he could not escape, the fellow came to Kuo of his own accord and told him what had happened.

"You were right to kill him," said Kuo. "The boy was in the wrong."

So he let the man go, declaring that his nephew was to blame, and gave the dead body burial. When this became known, men were impressed by his justice and more admirers flocked to him.

When Kuo Hsieh went out, people usually avoided his path; but there was one man who squatted insolently by the roadside to stare at him, and Kuo told his followers to find out this stranger's name. His followers wanted to kill the man, but Kuo said: "If someone in my own district treats me rudely, it must mean that I am lacking in virtue. Why do you blame him?"

And he secretly told the local officers: "I have a high regard for this man. When it is his turn to be conscripted for labour, let him off."

So every time labourers were impressed, this fellow was surprised to find that the officers passed him by; and when he discovered to whom he owed his exemption, he went with bared back to apologize to Kuo. And the young men, hearing of this, admired Kuo more than ever.

Two men in Loyang had a feud with each other; and although dozens of the chief citizens there had tried to act as peace-makers, these men refused to be reconciled. When the matter was taken to Kuo, he went by night to see the two enemies, and they listened to him.

"I hear that many citizens of Loyang have interceded with you," said Kuo, "yet you did not listen to them. Now, I am glad to say, you

have taken my advice; but it is not right that an outsider like myself should succeed where your worthy fellow citizens have failed."

So he left by night, letting no one know that he had been there.

"Do nothing yet," he told the two men. "Wait till I have gone and the chief citizens of Loyang come again to reason with you; then take their advice."

Kuo always observed due decorum and never rode in a carriage to the district court. When he went to neighbouring provinces to intercede on behalf of his friends, if he succeeded, well and good; otherwise he made a point of satisfying them in different ways before tasting food and wine. Thus he was much admired, and many people were eager to serve him. Often more than ten carriages came to his gate in one night, bringing young men of his district or prominent citizens from neighbouring provinces, who offered to take away some of his outlawed protégés and look after them for him.

When it was decided to move the wealthiest and most powerful citizens of the empire to Maoling,* Kuo's family was not rich enough to be included; but the officer in charge dared not leave his name out of the list. Commander Wei Ching spoke up for him, however, saying that he was a poor man and should not be moved.

"If a private citizen is influential enough to prevail on your lordship to speak for him," retorted the emperor, "he cannot be poor."

So Kuo was forced to move to Maoling, and the friends and followers who saw him off presented him with more than ten million cash. The son of Yang Chi-chu, a native of Chih, was the district officer responsible for Kuo's removal; so his head was cut off by Kuo's nephew, and after that the two families were enemies. The chief citizens west of Hanku Pass either knew Kuo or had heard of his fame; therefore as soon as he crossed the Pass they vied with one another to befriend him. Then someone killed Yang Chi-chu also; and when his family addressed a plea to the government, the messenger bearing the plea was killed before the palace. When this became known to the authorities, officers were sent to arrest Kuo. He fled to Lingtsin leaving his mother and wife in Hsiayang; and since Chieh Shao-kung, the officer at Lingtsin, did not know him, he was able to escape eastward through the Pass to Taiyuan. Because Kuo made himself known to his host wherever he stayed, the authorities were able to trace him as far as Chieh Shao-kung; but when the latter committed suicide the trail was lost, and it was some time before they captured Kuo.

During Kuo Hsieh's trial, it appeared that he had committed no murders since the last amnesty. Someone was putting in a good word for him to a government official when a scholar from the district of Chih, who

*In 96 B.C. the emperor decreed that all rich citizens should be moved to Maoling, a suburb of the capital, so that the government could control them more easily.

happened to be present, said: "Kuo Hsieh has done nothing but break the law and commit crimes. How can such a man be considered good?"

When someone killed this scholar and cut out his tongue, suspicion fell on Kuo, but actually he did not know the murderer, who was never found. The verdict of "Not guilty" returned by the officers in charge was opposed by Kung-sun Hung, one of the imperial counsellors.

"Kuo Hsieh is a common citizen," he said, "yet he is so powerful that he can flout the law and kill people as he pleases. The fact that he does not know the murderer makes the case more serious than if he had killed the scholar himself. This is high treason."

So Kuo and his whole family were put to death. There have been many gallants since his time, but none to be compared with him. However, in Changan there was Fan Chung-tzu, in Huaili Chao Wang-sun, in Changling Kao Kung-tzu, in Hsiho Kuo Kung-chung, in Taiyuan Lu Kung-ju, in Linghuai Yi Chang-ching, in Tungyang Tien Chun-ju. Though these men took the law into their own hands, they were courteous and unassuming gentlemen. But others like the Yao family in the north, the Tu family in the west, Chou Ching in the south, Chao Ta-yu or Kung-tzu in the east, and Chao Tiao in Nanyang were merely brigands not worthy to be mentioned, who reflect shame on gallants such as Chu Chia whom I have described elsewhere.

The historian comments: When I saw Kuo Hsieh, his appearance was in no way striking, neither was his conversation significant; yet everybody in the empire, good and bad alike, admired him and cited him as an example of gallantry. Handsome looks are not what matters, says the proverb, but fame endures for ever. Alas, the pity of it!

Translated by Yang Hsien-yi and Gladys Yang

How Life Unfolds . . .

LAO TAO

HSU KUANG-YAO

Wherever he may be, as soon as he shows up, with his humorous, gentle and smiling face and his short, rotund figure, people can't resist going up to him and addressing him familiarly as Lao Tao—Old Tao. There is invariably an infectious aura of good cheer and friendship about him.

Everyone likes him. Everyone is pleased to work with him, not only because he is so alive, and such good company, but because he seems to carry a special sparkle. When you've been with him long enough, you catch some of this élan: you yourself feel more energetic, and vibrant with life. Even normally strait-laced individuals—who take so much pride in having gone through eight years of the War of Resistance and three years of the War of Liberation that they no longer put much into their work—even they cannot help feeling younger after a few months of being with him.

He throws himself into his job with great fervour and has a genuine love for the people in the district, as well as for the comrades he works with. Of course, there are the best of reasons for this. During those long, bitter years, the long marches and merciless fighting when war, war, was the order of the day, he had struggled shoulder to shoulder with these people; he and they had matured and found liberation together. Now, the way forward illumined by the Party's "general line" — the policy to be followed for the transition to socialism—he sees that his hopes and dreams during all these years of a new Chinese society like that of the Soviet Union will finally be realized. This is what makes his feelings so strong and deep. This is why he never makes heavy weather of his work as district Party secretary.

Still, it is not always smooth sailing for everyone who has dealings with Lao Tao. Take Comrade Li Chin-kai's case, now. He's one of our young intellectuals! Quite new to the job. He had a very unnerving

KO KE-CHIEN: Autumn

experience with Lao Tao. As a matter of fact, he felt very annoyed with him. It fell to him one morning to be sent to Yaochuang to look over the production plan of the Hsiao Fu-ming Agricultural Producers' Co-operative. Lao Tao told him he was entrusting him with an important task. Quite sure that he was going to make a tremendous show of efficiency, Li dashed off on a bicycle, and got back in two hours, in spite of the fact that he had to cover twenty *li*.

Lao Tao was in his office working at his arithmetic lessons. In came Young Li and proudly planted a great thick notebook, with a stiff maroon cover, right in front of Lao Tao. Looking as pleased as anything, he asked if he could make his report back that very moment.

He then began his report: "The Hsiao Fu-ming Agricultural Producers' Co-operative production plan may be said to be as follows:—Item one: The General Situation. There are 12 households in the co-operative, with a total number of 67 people. Thirty-seven of these possess working capacity. The figures may be broken down thus:—Males with full working capacity 13, with half working capacity 4; women with full working capacity 9, with half working capacity 11. . . ."

He went on and on. Statistics poured out of him. The number of Party members, Youth Leaguers, live-stock, farm implements, the amount of land under cultivation. . . . It seemed an endless list.

It was quite obvious that such data was all he'd obtained from his trip. When Lao Tao asked him how the co-operative was getting along with the sowing, he didn't know; when he asked what the members thought of the plan, he had no idea; when he was questioned as to how many labour days were needed to fulfil the plan, what expenditure was involved, and what harvest could be expected, he could only shake his head again and again. He hadn't the remotest notion. Of course these happened to be just the things that he should have found out. . . .

Lao Tao unconsciously knitted his brows. Finally he asked: "Well, what do *you* think of the plan. Is there anything wrong?"

"Anything wrong?" Li hesitated, paused for a long moment to look through his notebook. Then he said, "Everything *seems* to be all right, only the figures aren't quite complete . . . for instance. . . ."

But Lao Tao, stretching out a hand, snatched the notebook right out of Li's hands and locked it into a drawer. Looking him straight in the face, he said (his tone was severe but he still smiled): "I'm glad to see that you are diligent in using your legs, but you are being mentally lazy. You shouldn't learn to be lazy at your age. Work isn't something you can muddle through by digging up a few figures."

Young Li suddenly flushed a deep scarlet. Clasping his hands behind his head in embarrassment, he felt terribly perturbed.

Lao Tao had been upset too. But almost immediately he felt he was being too harsh. He realized that he should have been more patient and helpful towards such an untried youngster. He got up and went over to

Li, affectionately placed an arm around his shoulder and said coaxingly: "Now, now, don't take it like that. Look, time's getting on; give me a hand with this arithmetic. We'll go down to the co-op together this afternoon."

Although it was a very windy afternoon, Lao Tao went off to Yaochuang with Young Li to visit the Hsiao Fu-ming Co-operative. Li was born and bred in Yaochuang, and he couldn't understand why Lao Tao seemed to be more at home in the village than he was. Lao Tao headed straight for Hsiao's tiny cottage, and when he came in even Hsiao's baby son yelled "Lao Tao!" and made for him on all fours.

Hsiao Fu-ming's whole family were seated around the table on the *kang* having a meal. When Hsiao saw Lao Tao, he jumped up to welcome him warmly, forgot how low their ceiling was and bumped his head on the central beam. Lao Tao broke into a hearty laugh, went up to him and pushed him back on to the *kang*. Turning to Young Li he said: "Did you see that? I haven't really started on their grub yet, and look at the state he's in!"

He had already picked up the baby as he spoke and sat down cross-legged on the *kang*. He reached for Hsiao's pipe and thrust it into his own mouth. Spotting that Hsiao's mother was not eating with the family, but leaning back against the stack of quilts pouting, with never a word to say, he asked cheerfully: "What's up, Aunty? Are you huffed because your son didn't serve you dumplings?" But the old lady wouldn't look at him.

Young Li sat primly on a stool near the *kang*. Remembering only too well that he had been there only that morning, he felt ill at ease at being back again the same day. However, he gradually calmed down when he found Lao Tao was not paying him any attention, and carefully noted his every move.

Before long Young Li was both surprised and ashamed because it seemed that lots of things *had* gone wrong in the co-operative. When Hsiao finished eating he took them into the little room where his mother slept. Looking very miserable, he started first with, "Ai, I'm fairly worried to death." What he meant was, as he explained, the members of the co-operative were getting slacker and slacker. Even the hard-working ones were following the example of the lazy ones, and weren't getting out to the fields until the sun was high in the heavens. Those who'd got some cash put by didn't want to invest it in the co-operative; one old chap was going round looking for partners to go to Tientsin with him to deal in dyestuffs, and others, getting the idea from him, were also making similar plans. Some people wanted to turn to petty trading, others wanted to become pedlars of miscellaneous household goods. . . . There was a general tendency to want to make money by going into business. Meanwhile, no one cared to tend the live-stock which the co-operative had bought in from the members. The co-operative was in such

a state that the peasants who weren't in it were casting aspersions: "Call this taking the road of socialism? Ha, ha! The co-op is just a nest of lazy so-and-so's."

These troubles had even ruffled the calm and peace of Hsiao's happy family life. Old Aunty Hsiao noticed how hard her son was working and how he was losing more and more weight. She couldn't help feeling resentful and was dead against his being the co-operative chairman. Hsiao Fu-ming wanted to knock a wall down in his cow-shed, so that he could feed the co-operative's live-stock easily, but his mother absolutely put her foot down at the idea and claimed that such a change would affect the family's "wind and weather" and bring bad luck on them. Today there had been an open quarrel. That was why the old lady would not sit down to eat with the family.

Hsiao buried his face in his hands and lapsed into silence. After a long pause, he said despairingly: "Lao Tao, I'm at my wit's end. Please appoint some one else and relieve me of the co-op."

Lao Tao, standing with crossed arms on his hips, broke into a peal of uninhibited laughter. He looked at Young Li and found him sitting all tensed up, his eyes staring into space, evidently taking Hsiao's troubles very much to heart. Pointing to the thick notebook under Li's arms, Lao Tao said: "Why don't you take notes on these problems? These *are* very important, you know." Then he turned to Hsiao, and said lightly: "Don't be too hasty, Old Hsiao. We're a long way off having to consider replacing you. There's never been a co-op yet without a fair cartload of problems, you know."

The root of the trouble was that the co-operative's production plan was not comprehensive enough; the members hadn't the vaguest notion of what they would be getting in the autumn. Furthermore, the system of computing work days was neither good nor fair. On top of this came the activities and influence of the rich peasants and "business men." All this had shaken the members' belief in co-operation—that was why they were working with less and less spirit. Lao Tao was confident that these problems would be solved in due course; what worried him at the moment was Hsiao's fit of depression. This same man who had declared that he would "scale the hill of socialism and die rather than turn back" when the co-operative was first founded was now as deflated as could be. This was the real crisis. This was something that required Lao Tao's immediate attention.

"Let me ask you something, Old Hsiao." After a short pause, Lao Tao, his eyes twinkling, came out with a very trifling question, "What did you plan to get on with when you'd eaten?"

"What, me?" Hsiao answered without much interest, rubbing his head with one hand. "If you people hadn't come I'd have gone to rake the manure. Tomorrow, we've got to cart it to the fields."

"That's it. Ha, ha!" Lao Tao suddenly gripped both Hsiao's hands and pulled him to his feet. "I knew all the time that you were just talking hot air. You're at your wit's end indeed! Your head's still full of raking manure and carting it to the fields. You may be worried to death but come what may you know very well you'd never give up the co-op. D'you really want to abandon your job as chairman?"

Hsiao lifted his head and stared at Lao Tao. He met the secretary's friendly eyes and a warm feeling shot straight through the whole of him. He realized that, as ever, Lao Tao understood him and believed in him. "But why do you always have to pick on me?" He said reproachfully. "What about the other Party members and the Youth Leaguers, and come to that, some of the other co-op members. . . ."

"Go on! Who should I drive, if not you?" Lao Tao said, still looking him straight in the face. "You're the leader of a Party group, you're a hero of the tunnel warfare days in the War of Resistance. You never thought of giving in when Chiang Kai-shek's reactionaries hounded you within an inch of your life. Now that we are racing towards the beautiful future that we've looked forward to for so long, why do you begin to pull such a long face? Young fellow-me-lad, have you forgotten the past?"

As soon as tunnel warfare was mentioned, Hsiao Fu-ming instantly came to life. That was the time when he had the narrowest escape of his life, and when he scaled the height of glory. Because he triumphantly came through the difficult struggles of those hard days, he had been asked to take part in the conference of model workers and heroes, was decorated, awarded a prize and won the respect of his fellows. His escape came about in June of 1944, when the district was caught in the see-saw warfare between us and the enemy. Hsiao and three militiamen were cornered in the tunnels by Japanese invaders, who left no stone unturned —literally! They tried to blast them out, smoke them out, or drown them out. Finally they resorted to poison gas. Hsiao and his men fought bitterly for three days and four nights and were victorious! When Hsiao emerged from the tunnel, the first thing he said was: "How right the Party is to teach us to hold fast. Without this will to persist we would have been finished, even if we'd had ten lives."

Lao Tao had deliberately reminded him of all this.

"You're right, again, you know!" Hsiao was grinning already and speaking half under his breath. "Compared with what we had to put up with in those days, this spot of trouble is not really worth talking about. All the same, there *is* a difference. Then, we were struggling against an open enemy! It was a question of life and death. Now, my own mother's opposing me."

"This is also a life and death struggle, Hsiao," Lao Tao gripped his hands and said emphatically. "In this struggle, too, you've got to hold fast, hold fast at all costs. But you can't use the same battle tactics.

You have to apply other methods. You must explain things to her so that she's convinced herself."

Hsiao's face lit up. He seemed infused with a new strength. After a pause, he solemnly shouldered a rake and said: "Right you are! It *is* a struggle. Lao Tao, I'll do my best and see what I can do about it. I'm off to work now." He picked up a spade as he spoke and went off to rake the manure.

Young Li was greatly astonished by all this; his admiring glance followed Hsiao as he went out. Then, just like the naive youth he was, he turned to Lao Tao and asked solemnly. "Secretary Tao, how do you manage, with a few words, to make him take heart again?"

Lao Tao smiled broadly when he saw Young Li's childlike wonder. With a friendly arm round Li's shoulder, he said, "After all we *are* good friends, you know." There was a pause. "Young Li, we'll never have too many such friends. We must always work hard and make new ones. But come on! There's work to do!"

The pair spent the rest of the day roaming round the village. They visited nearly every one of the households in the co-operative. Lao Tao found the right word for everyone, be it old men or grannies, girls or teen-agers, and passed the time of day comfortably with them all. His rich, infectious laughter rang out wherever he was, and always evoked an echo from his hearers.

As a matter of fact, they spent half the night talking. There was a highly stimulating membership meeting of the co-operative.

Lao Tao had to go back to his district office early next morning. At his own request, Young Li stayed in the village. As he himself put it, he wanted to cultivate friends anew.

Lao Tao came back within a few days and was met by Young Li. As he took him along to Hsiao's house, he couldn't help pouring into Lao Tao's ears the strange things that had occurred in the village: young chaps in the co-operative getting up before dawn, dredging out the soft rich mud from the pond, despite the biting cold of early spring dawns. They were getting up to eighty cartloads a day—as good as a ton of compost—for the fields. The peasants working on their own were green with envy. Many rushed to the ponds too, to get what they could for themselves. The old man who had nicknamed the co-operative the "nest of lazy so-and-so's" actually stole ten cartloads of the co-operative's mud, but the members only said, "Let him go ahead and pinch our stuff. Come autumn he'll be in the co-op himself." The man who was planning to have a little dyestuff business in Tientsin furtively got hold of Young Li one day and declared that he never had any intention of going to Tientsin, he was never one to think of getting rich by exploitation. On the contrary, in fact, he assured Li that he had made up his mind to invest his money in the co-operative so that pumps could be bought to irrigate the cotton fields. But

he did admit that he and his son had spent half the night arguing and it had nearly come to a free fight. . . .

Young Li talked and laughed at the same time, while his arms flew in all directions as he emphasized his points, so much so that in the heat of it, he dropped his heavy notebook twice. Lao Tao listened, nodded and smiled. Finally he said, "Your report this time is much richer in content. But why is it you don't seem to have entered any of the points in your big notebook?" Young Li was taken aback all over again. "But I wasn't making a report!" Lao Tao slapped him on the back.

At the Hsiao's, only old Aunty Hsiao and the two children were home. Hsiao and his wife were out digging mud. Aunty Hsiao had just finished the cooking and was laying the table. When she caught sight of Lao Tao and Young Li she called out to her grandson, "Watch the pot! Look out that Lao Tao doesn't grab our rice!" Lao Tao, however, was a match for her, and came out with, "Aunty, have you pulled your precious wall down yet in the cow-shed?" As he spoke, though, he jumped on to the *kang*, forgot that the ceiling was so low and got a lovely crack from the low beam himself. He clasped his forehead and grimaced with the bang. But how Aunty Hsiao laughed! "*Ho*, yes, the wall's down all right. But when we get to socialism, mind you don't forget to build me a new house."

Translated by Tang Sheng

SPRING ON THE SUNGARI

LU FEI

River traffic opened on the Sungari right after the thaw had set in. On the first ship, people got acquainted easily, as if it had been a family reunion. There was gay chatter, some groups played cards. . . .

An old woman was lying down on a corner berth, obviously in discomfort. A boy of five or six stood at the edge, sobbing softly, "Granny, Granny. . . ." But presently a young girl came in and, seeing the old woman tossing restlessly, helped to make her more comfortable and spoke cheeringly to the little boy. The girl had an oval face, with cheeks that dimpled. Her eyes were dark and round, and the curve of her lips showed that she could form her own opinions. Her jet-black hair was plaited into pigtails, each about two inches long, that rested like horns on the collar of her brown blouse. This girl's name was Yao Shih-ying and she was travelling from the port of departure to the mining area.

"We'll be in Linchuang in a few minutes," an old man with a goatee came to tell the old woman with the little boy.

Yao Shih-ying helped her down from the berth and to collect her things. Other passengers, too, carried some of the old woman's luggage while Yao Shih-ying led the little boy by the hand down the gangplank.

When the ship resumed the trip, the young girl leaned against the railing, looking thoughtfully at the river below. Thinking of the little boy she had just helped off the ship reminded her of her destination—the school for miners' children. Her father had told her about his experience in the mines in the old days, how horrible and filthy they had been, but also how successfully the miners had struggled against their oppressors. The miners were decent, poor folk who were pressganged for work in the mines. But today everything was different—not only had new shafts been sunk, but the workers had new living quarters built for them. Then a school for their children—life was getting better and better, with people demanding culture as their right. What was the mining area going to be like, an out-of-the-way place or full of noise and people? And the children in the school where Yao Shih-ying was to teach? Would they be as nice as the little boy aboard ship a while ago, or naughty as one of her own younger brothers who had once thrown a brick at her from the roof-top? What should she do if any of her pupils were like that? She looked at the people around her on the ship as if to ask their advice, then turned back and looked at the river a bit helplessly. . . .

Her face bore a very serious expression as she pondered these things, while birds skimmed over the water's surface and the landscape was gliding by, signals along the river banks, flowers on a hill, cows and horses grazing peacefully. . . . The grasslands stretched far into the horizon. What a vast country China is!

The sun was setting now. The river was bathed in gold, the wake glistening silvery-white. A cold wind was rising. Everything was so quiet. . . . The silence was suddenly broken by a voice over the public address system, asking some of the passengers to move forward to distribute the load more evenly.

Yao Shih-ying pursed her lips and looked around somewhat nervously. But all she could see were people moving in compliance with the request, the sailors going about their jobs, two taking the depth of the river and calling out their findings in a monotone. Somehow all conversation ceased as if by arrangement, the sailors' voices and the noise of the screw being the only sounds heard.

Yao Shih-ying had never been out in the world before. To her, life had so far been a cloudless sky. Now there was the first black cloud looming up and she had no idea of how she was to cope with any emergency.

"We're coming to the Three Stones. There are seven shoals and eighteen rapids here. Unexpected things used to happen here formerly

when ships tried to pass!" Nobody knew who had spoken, but the words made everybody uneasy. Yao Shih-ying swallowed hard once or twice. Her heart in her mouth, she was searching the river for shoals.

"The year of liberation, the screw of a ship was broken when she hit a hidden rock here. It took three days for repairs before she could move on." A feeling of terror gripped Yao Shih-ying when she heard this; she wanted to rush below deck, to hide, but there were too many people around to pass. . . . If something really happened, if the ship struck a shoal, she wouldn't be able to reach the mining area on time, the school couldn't open. . . . What would the people there think of her, what would they say about the school where she was educated? At this point, Yao Shih-ying was worried and angry at the same time. So she gave the man who had spoken a furious look. But wasn't he the man who had come to tell the old woman it was time to land at Linchuang? Yao Shih-ying stole another look at him. He was the old man with the goatee. He had a plain face with square jaws, a pair of deep-set but twinkling eyes, high cheek-bones, a red nose and ruddy cheeks covered with wrinkles. A new white fishing net was tied around his waist like a belt; a long pipe was stuck in it in front, with a brown tobacco pouch dangling.

"Look, over there, isn't that a dredger? Yes, this stretch of the river must be dredged. You wait and see—another couple of weeks and you won't need to be afraid of getting into trouble around here! These days, everything, everywhere changes all the time. . . ." The old chap was obviously re-assuring the people now. Yao Shih-ying stood on tiptoe, looking where the old man had indicated. There were two barges, dredgers which dipped into the river like ducks and brought up mud that was then thrown into the barges' hoppers. There were two or three little boats around the barges, and men were sitting in them with flags in their hands. Ah, so they were putting these signals up in the river! The work seemed simple enough, but it did mean a lot for the safety of ships. . . .

The river in front was getting narrower and narrower. "Aya, in such a narrow spot, another small steamer going to pass us? How can it be done?" The man with the goatee spoke again. Others also spoke up, nineteen to the dozen. The voices of the sailors giving the depth of the river had to become louder and louder. Yao Shih-ying, frowning worriedly, looked at the motor-launch coming up. Someone on it was giving signals with a flag and, presently, the bigger ship sounded her siren. The motor-launch came alongside.

"Good, good! It's just the pilot coming up!" Again it was the old man speaking up first. All the passengers felt cheered, too.

Yao Shih-ying gave a deep sigh of relief and relaxed, a big load off her mind. She looked at the lively, talkative old man with friendly eyes now. He was just lighting his pipe by striking a flint, as if he were

well pleased with some piece of work he himself had completed successfully. He was obviously in a very good mood, as he kept nodding and saying to himself, "Travel in the old days wasn't easy. But today, everything is properly organized, everywhere there is mutual aid and co-operation. . . ."

Yao Shih-ying thought the old man talked too much, but on the other hand what he said was true. In a society like today's, everything was well-ordered, there was nothing to worry about. All her anxiety and uneasiness of a little while ago were really quite superfluous. She turned again and nodded to the old man apologetically.

The ship had passed the narrowest part of the river, the pilot boat staying behind. It was time to turn in. Yao Shih-ying felt she wanted to speak to the old man, but he had already gone below. Only a few people remained on deck now. She leaned against the rail, from time to time swinging one leg to and fro. Everything was all right now. Buoyed up with the suddenness of youth, she began to sing to herself despite the presence of strangers around her.

The river had deeper and deeper tints now, and a thin mist was drifting over. Fishermen's lanterns lit up one after another like stars, like precious stones studding a gauze curtain. . . . How beautiful and quiet this twilight was! How different it was from being at school! So many things Yao Shih-ying recalled about the school she came from . . . how one evening, during study period, the class tutor had called her to the dean's office. What could have happened? While she hurried over, she feverishly tried to imagine. . . . The dean had told her that a primary school was just opening in the mining area and needed a teacher badly and couldn't wait. Although there were still four months to go till she finished her course, would she consider going there right now. Should she accept? As a member of the Youth League, there was no question in her mind—the need decided everything. Without hesitation, she said she would. On her way back to the dormitory, she had run into the old man who took care of the fires and hot water in the school, who used to tell everybody, "Yao Shih-ying, she was only so high when she first came to our school. She's grown up on the water I've boiled for her!" Now she had to say goodbye to him, to her teachers and school-mates, to all those who had seen her grow up. Could she help feeling saddened? And while she was getting ready for the trip, when she was returning the books she had borrowed from the library and walking past the youth club, her classrooms, the playground, the tall elm-tree in front of the dormitory, she felt a kind of emotion that she could not put into words.

She hadn't noticed when it started raining. . . . The whole deck was wet. Yao Shih-ying felt a chill, so she headed for the lounge where she could see people sitting together chatting. All eyes turned on her when she came in soaking wet, and a voice which she recognized as that of the

old man with the goatee invited her over to where she could warm herself and get dry. He certainly was kind to her, like her own grandfather!

"I'm all right, Old Uncle." Bending down, she felt her wet trouser legs and looked up at him naively. "The fishermen's lanterns were so pretty, I forgot everything looking at them. . . ."

"So you like them too, eh?" The old man stroked his beard and said to her teasingly, although with a straight face: "You're like the crabs and shrimps then—when they see these lights, they don't move either." And he winked at the others as Yao Shih-ying asked quite seriously: "Really? That's very interesting! Then it means with these lights, the crabs and shrimps come by themselves, don't they?"

And, after only a second's pause, she asked: "What's your work, Old Uncle?"

"My work?" The old man pointed to the new fishing net around his waist as he replied: "I'm a fisherman, of course, how else would I know that you're just like one of those tiddlers yourself?" The group burst into laughter which Yao Shih-ying joined, not minding being teased.

"Where are you heading for?" the old man then asked her.

"I'm going to the mining area."

"What for?"

"Perhaps you can guess that too!"

The old man looked at this very young girl whom he had first seen when she was helping another passenger. As sure as ten comes after eight and nine, she was a member of the Youth League! Besides, her accent was south of the Great Wall. What would she be doing in the mining area? He stroked his beard and smiled at her slowly: "Well, I guess that now the thaw has set in, you're going to the mining area. . . ."

"Aya, how did you guess? Yes, I *am* going to teach at the school for miners' children! It's just opening and they need a teacher badly. I was told to go there even before I. . . . But how did you find out I was a school teacher?"

In her eagerness, Yao Shih-ying had not noticed that she had told the old man herself. But she did leave out the fact that she hadn't yet finished her course because she didn't want the old man to change his opinion of her. No, not exactly, she just thought there was no need to tell him. As a matter of fact, the old man wasn't quite sure of what he had said. It was only when she had finished telling him that she was going to teach that he said with confidence:

"I can tell things like that at a mere glance! The school teacher in our village is a girl just like you and taught my old woman at the winter school. She also said once my old woman finished the school she could help me with writing letters and do a bit of accounting. Ah, school teachers are smart creatures, just like those tiddlers! Teaching's no easy job, say I. . . . Just think of it! All those children, chips off the old

blocks, what a job to knock anything into their heads! Fine, fine, you've chosen the right job!"

Nobody else could get a word in edgewise when the old man was having his say. But since this was her first flight into life, Yao Shih-ying was pleased by his praise, and gave his hand a grateful little squeeze. If the mine was going to run an evening class for adults, she thought, she might have pupils like this old man . . . what fun!

Then he went on with fatherly concern: "How comes it you're travelling alone? Is your father working in the mining area?"

"My father? No, but he used to be a miner long ago."

"So this is the first time you've left home, eh? What did your people think about it?"

As Yao Shih-ying did not answer immediately, the old man answered his question himself: "No, parents never have an easy time of seeing their children go out into the world! Isn't that true?"

"Well, it wasn't too bad," Yao Shih-ying replied, while in her mind's eye she saw the sad faces of her parents again.

"Spring comes early this year. You're going to start teaching, I'm going to start fishing. We all have to start work."

Yao Shih-ying was still thinking over the old man's question. She wasn't sure that all parents were sorry to see their children leave home, so she asked naively: "How about your children, are they staying with you?"

"My children? My eldest—a daughter—was married long ago. Two of my younger children went off to fight the Japanese invaders close on twenty years ago, and I never saw them again till now. I've been paying them a New Year visit."

"None of them living with you, then?" an elderly woman interpolated.

"What's wrong with that? Everyone has his own will. Now that they can fly, let them learn on their own, as the proverb says, to brave winds and waves!"

These words endeared the old man to Yao Shih-ying. Wasn't he just like her own father who encouraged her to go north or south as she liked, while mother fussed and worried herself to death every time one of her children was going anywhere!

"How old are you, Old Uncle?" she asked diffidently.

"Only sixty-five. And the other day, when we elected our people's deputies, they even made me two years younger.* I'm just a youth!" Again he stroked his beard and continued proudly: "My youngest son is more than thirty now. And I don't mind telling you that one of my

*According to old custom, an infant was considered one year old at birth, and two years old the next New Year's Day. Generally speaking, therefore, a Chinese of the old school will give a figure two years higher than his actual age. But in the People's Republic of China, the usual way of reckoning age has been adopted and was first generally applied at the census that preceded the general elections in 1954.

sons and my son-in-law are model workers and have even been to see Chairman Mao! So work hard: a young girl like you has all the future before her."

"At your age, why don't you rest and enjoy yourself?" the elderly woman put in again.

"Yes, it's about time to retire, isn't it? My daughter says the same thing. My grandchildren, when they saw me, they pulled my beard and hung on my neck to tell them a story. Those saucy, little rascals! And my children were even nicer to me. They suggested I should bring the wife along and spend six months or so with them. They want us all gathered happily around their hearth. I was really touched, but then I thought that, after all, they are all busy building socialism, and I myself am not short of an arm or a leg. So why should I let my limbs get rusty with idleness? Nothing doing! One more oar means one more man's strength. I can hop around a few more years. Never mind if I don't get to see our Chairman Mao, as long as we get socialism quicker! That's the main thing!"

Hearing the old man talking about socialism, Yao Shih-ying said, artlessly:

"I suppose, you aren't one of those who still want to 'go it alone'!"

"Haha, you must be a Youth League member, aren't you? But I, as one of the older generation, am that much ahead of you! What kind of a life did we fishermen lead before? Don't let's talk about it! Don't let's even mention the loans we get from the People's Bank now to repair our boats and equipment! All the fish we catch the co-operative sells for us. We don't have to worry—we make a decent living. Our fishermen's co-operative is thinking of using motor boats. Who would stay outside the co-op in times like these?"

The old man grew more and more excited as he talked. But suddenly he lowered his voice and said in a solemn whisper:

"Living in an age like this, everyone is happy. You've a great future before you! Even to me, with one foot in the grave, while the sun is setting, there's still a glow left. Right?"

He gave her a quizzical smile and looked her full in the face, while he twiddled his beard.

"Why didn't you take your wife when you went to see your children?"

"Didn't I tell you she was attending winter school?" The old man lowered his head a bit shyly and fumbled for his pipe; when he had struck the flint, he began to puff vigorously.

"You were afraid your old woman would have a rough time of it at your children's, I suppose?" the elderly woman cut in again.

"Don't misjudge people so quickly! My wife comes from a poor-peasant family, she's very able! It's she who rows the boat and casts the net. She can a'so till the land and goes in for all sorts of side-lines, too. She always finds something to occupy herself even when she is with

relatives. . . . Anyway, it's settled between us we'll rattle around in the co-op for another couple of years. By then the co-op will have opened an old folks' home, and you know as well as I how nice they are nowadays, better than anything my own children could offer me!"

"That sounds nice enough!" Yao Shih-ying smiled shyly at the old man's happy plans. She seemed to see before her an aged couple in nice clothes, in front of the pensioners' home by the river bank, with lots of flowers, trees and goldfish in the garden. . . . Yes, everyone struggled for his own ideals. And even if there were difficulties in the way, everyone wanted to brave winds and waves on his own, as the old man had said. Wasn't this the first lesson she had learnt since leaving school?

A bell rang. The loudspeaker announced the time. Yao Shih-ying followed the others below deck to retire. On the way, the old man asked her abruptly:

"Here I've talked to you all this time, but I still don't know your name!"

"It's Yao Shih-ying."

"Ah, Teacher Yao! Now we're old acquaintances. See you tomorrow!"

Hearing herself addressed like this for the first time in her life, Yao Shih-ying felt embarrassed and yet proud, not knowing quite what to do.

"Till tomorrow then, Teacher Yao!" the old man said again. "I'll be home by dawn. Maybe my old woman will be coming to meet me. . . ."

Yao Shih-ying gave the old man a friendly nod and handshake. She went back to her own berth and opened her diary, meaning to write something about the trip. But suddenly she didn't know what to write. The voice of the old man addressing her as "Teacher Yao" was still ringing in her ears. . . . And presently, she lay down, listening to the sound of the river. Soon she was fast asleep.

Yao Shih-ying was awakened by the noise outside, the clank of the anchor chain, the sound of the gangplank being lowered and a voice announcing that the ship was approaching another port. People were hurrying to and fro, ready to disembark. . . . She had wanted to see the sun rise over the river, so she hastily drew on her cotton-padded coat and went up on deck. Oh! A thick fog which enveloped the steamer was slowly becoming thinner and thinner, as a cold, wet morning breeze sprang up. Farther ahead on the river, several black spots appeared which grew into small boats as the steamer neared the shore.

"Quick, this way!" Yao Shih-ying immediately recognized the old man's voice. She remembered what he had told her last night and wondered whether his wife was actually coming to meet him. She turned around to greet him with a smile, but the old man, with a parcel in one hand, was waving with the other at one of the small boats and pushing to the front of the ship, obviously excited and oblivious of all that was going on around him. Yao Shih-ying's eyes followed the old man as the

black spots came closer and closer. In one of them she saw a woman of about fifty, with both her hands around the long oar, her feet firmly planted against the rush of the waves. Her head was covered with a scarf, but a wisp of grey hair was visible under it. Her small boat was being tossed about, but she rowed steadily on through the wash towards the steamer. As soon as she sighted the old man aboard, she gave a quiet smile of greeting.

The old man left the steamer with the other passengers and followed the shore along a sandbank. When he was still a hundred paces from the boat, he started shouting:

"How did you know I'd be coming home today?"

"Isn't this the time to be home?" the woman replied, still rowing.

"Did you miss me?" he asked again.

"Get into the boat!" She did not answer his question, but raised her hand to push the hair back under her scarf. The fog had cleared. The sun was reflected by the river in a ruddy glow on the woman's healthy, energetic face. As soon as the old man had stepped on to the small boat, she pushed off. When the boat passed the steamer, the old man looked up and saw Yao Shih-ying standing at the railing. He stood up and waved at her gaily. Then he tugged at his wife's sleeve and said something to her. And presently he was shouting again:

"Teacher Yao, come to see us in the summer holidays! Just ask for Cheng Yu-ken's fishermen's co-op. That's me. . . ."

Yao Shih-ying waved back enthusiastically and shouted, also at the top of her voice:

"Yes, I'll come . . . thanks!"

Cheng Yu-ken, Cheng Yu-ken! She seemed to have seen the name in the newspaper somewhere. Oh yes, of course, he was a model worker among the organized fishermen! No wonder that he had described himself as being "the generation ahead of her!" He was the chairman of a fishermen's co-op! But why hadn't he told her his name earlier? Was this the second lesson the new society was teaching her?

Really, although she had left school only a few days ago, she seemed to have learned many things in a hurry and to have grown up with a rush. She felt like writing to her parents, teachers and school-mates about the wonderful people she had met, telling them that everyone, like nature herself, was experiencing a new spring-time after the thaw. How warmly they reacted to the new things around them, how friendly they were to strangers. Yes, she ought to be glad to enter life earlier than her school-mates!

Yao Shih-ying had missed seeing the sunrise. All she saw now was the sky being dyed red by the sun like a great piece of silk. The little boat was gliding away, right into the red and gold of the sunrise.

Translated by Jen Chia-chen

BIRTHDAY GREETINGS FROM THE DESERT

CHING PIN

Standing on the age-old Chiayu Pass and looking beyond the Great Wall, one can see the Gobi Desert, an ash-pale expanse which reaches westward to the horizon, vast, immense. On the north side, a solitary mountain, Mt. Holi, pierces the greyish air with its rocky peaks. Behind Mt. Holi is another seemingly boundless desert. People say that long, long ago, there was a highway which ran along the Great Wall from Tunhuang to Changchiakou (Kalgan), and joined the road to Peking there. Later—nobody knows exactly when—this highway was blocked, and travellers ceased to appear. Since then, for ages, there had been neither the smoke from a camp fire nor the sound of a camel bell. The district had become desolate, and deserted by the travellers.

For how many years has the Gobi Desert been sound asleep! Until suddenly, on an autumn afternoon, the sharp tinkling of camel bells was heard again, and a group of people appeared in the far distance. This was a working unit going out to make preliminary surveys for the railway line that would run from the Yellow River to the Ili. There were twenty-eight members in this unit. Except for the group leader and a few experienced surveyors, they were all youngsters—more than half, in fact, members of the Youth League. The group as a whole could be thought of as a youth group.

It was the seventh day of their journey across this desolation. Because water was extremely scarce in this place, in these seven days they had not passed a single homestead or settlement, nor even seen any wild animals. Water was the most precious thing here.

Evening drew on. In the greyish sky, the sun was setting towards the horizon, and night slowly descended on the Gobi Desert. The surveyors, their boxes of equipment and implements on their backs, trudged heavily along. The group leader and Liu Wu, the Youth League secretary, walked in the lead. They were burning with anxiety. Where was the camel corps which was to have moved their camp to the new site? Nobody knew. Where was the place they were aiming at, Kota Well? Nobody knew.

The most dreaded thing for workers on the Gobi Desert was to lose contact with their base. Yet this was the accident that had befallen them.

Early that morning, with the ingrained, responsible carefulness that is characteristic of surveyors, Liu Wu had gone over in detail the exact directions and lay-out of Kota Well with the comrades who had to move the camp, and had reiterated his standing instructions for setting up a

new site, that is, to fly a red flag at the highest place, and light a signal fire if the surveying team had not turned up at a reasonable hour in the evening, and so on. Yet in spite of this they had failed to meet up. How could it have happened? This setback was entirely due to having tried to accomplish more work in the daytime! But should he have tried to prevent this? The next day was National Day. He knew perfectly well what was in his comrades' minds. Come to that, he himself had fully agreed with them, though he had not said so.

Perhaps now it was his comrades' silence which was affecting him. Perhaps the greatness of his responsibility had overwhelmed him in the darkness. It was difficult to say. But his usual cheerful laugh and his liveliness had disappeared. He kept silent and the expression on his face was severe, even somewhat impatient.

The team walked along moodily. Only the sound of their steps on the stones could be heard. No comments, no conversation. What was there to say? They were all thirsty and hungry. Their lips were parched and cracked and their bodies weak and drooping. None of them felt they had any strength left. Some of them held their empty flasks to their mouths again and again. Not a drop! How could there be!

They came to a stretch of hard ground, with no sign of where the track ran. Liu Wu hesitated, not knowing which way to go. His comrades behind him also stopped.

He turned round and cracked a joke, hoping to enliven the oppressive atmosphere. But, like a damp bomb which refused to explode, his words had no effect and he was annoyed at the unnaturalness and futility of his efforts.

"All right. Light a fire to give the others a signal. You wait for them here. I'll walk on to find the way."

He went on, his electric torch flashing intermittently. Chin Hsi and two other young men followed him.

All those who had dropped behind, except Old Chu, came up one by one.

Old Chu was lying on the ground, moaning and complaining. He was very fat, and it was really very difficult for him to carry on. Little Yo called him by name, urging him to make an effort. When he refused to stir, Little Yo tried to pull him up and drag him on, but he was too heavy for him.

"I can't budge another inch, even to save my old life! Little Yo, you go on quickly. . . ." And back he relapsed into grumbles, blaming the camel-corps comrades who were responsible for moving the camp.

Little Yo pointed to the fire in front and said that the others must have found the camel corps. But Old Chu only shook his head obstinately. These devices having failed, Little Yo resorted to childish coaxing. It was most dangerous to stay behind! What could he do if a pack of wolves should find him? What could he do if some ruffians should come to this

spot? . . . No matter what Little Yo said, Old Chu only muttered, wondering where the damned camel corps could have got to, and telling Little Yo not to bother about him. But how could Little Yo not bother? Could he leave Old Chu behind? He had given the League a written pledge that he would take good care of his older comrades. At the mobilization meeting, he had openly confirmed this pledge. And at the bottom of his straightforward mind, there was this extremely simple but absolutely firm idea—No difficulty is unconquerable. Yet at this moment Old Chu's seeming inability to walk on was a problem he could not solve. In the end, he himself broke down, and fairly cried in distress. Old Chu was deeply touched, and slowly got to his feet again. With what joy did Little Yo snatch the apparatus he carried and shoulder it himself.

They reached the fire just as Chin Hsi came running back, shouting: "Come on quickly! There's a ruined settlement ahead. And Liu Wu has a marvellous present ready for you! Come on!" What a difference these few words made to their spirits!

But when they came to the outskirts of this "settlement" in the dim light, they were dumbfounded. How disappointing! Save for a range of wavy sandhills and piles of willow twigs and dry branches, there was nothing to be seen. No camp. No camp fire. And this was Kota Well, the place where they had agreed in the morning to spend the night!

They had neither courage nor strength to go any further. Without a word, they dropped down where they were, on the sandhills.

From experience they knew it would be difficult to find the camel corps by this hour of the day. Any further effort to look for them would only result in more disappointment; moreover it would make them too exhausted to do a good job the next day. Yet there a fervent wish still remained. They wanted to put a new plan into practice, to celebrate the fifth anniversary of the foundation of New China. This meant that all the comrades must get enough rest now. They decided to spend the night where they were.

"Is there any water?" Old Chu found his thirst unbearable.

Several comrades moved quietly off the sandhills and felt the stones. Absolutely dry! It was still early in the night. The moon had just risen. There was no chance, even of dew, yet.

Liu Wu stood on one of the ridges, his hands behind his back, as though he was hiding something, and spoke loudly.

"Tonight is the eve of our National Day. There's no reason why any of us should be moody or dejected—on the contrary, in fact! I suggest we have a camp feast! Little Yo, light the fire! . . . I, on behalf of the young members of this unit, present a festival gift to our older comrades. And what a gift! Look!" He held up a dead hare. The group began to laugh.

"Don't worry! If this game is not enough, I can treat you to some refreshments. . . ." He distributed some pieces of dry pancake which he had saved. Each of them got a piece as big as a baby's palm.

Then he held up half a tube of tooth-paste: "And here is something to cool you! It will soothe your throat and quench your thirst. An excellent invention of the Chinese People's Volunteers in Korea! Your own tooth-paste is still on the backs of the camels. But never mind, mine's here. There's enough for everyone to have a quarter of an inch. . . ."

They got up from the sandhills. The camp fire was burning. The glowing flames illuminated their drawn but excited faces. Some set to work to skin the hare. Others chewed the "refreshments." Still others were sucking the cool tooth-paste. . . . Liu Wu smiled, satisfied. So far, so good!

To tell the truth, the dry and rather mouldy "refreshments" tasted like nothing on earth. The longer they chewed, the drier it seemed to be, and the more thirsty they felt. Crumbs stuck in their throats like innumerable thorns, and they felt as though their mouths were filled with dry powder which refused to stick together, like the sand around them.

Water! Even a little drop of water would help! They needed water badly. Only nobody would cry for it any more.

Liu Wu asked the group leader for permission to go with some of the other young members to see if they could discover the old well—the villager who acted as their guide had told them that years ago the elders of his village had watered their camels at Kota Well. It was quite possible that somewhere around the place there was a well which had been covered up by sand-storms. With a bit of luck, they might find it and get water. Then they would be able to start their work at the arranged time in the morning. The group leader agreed. "Yes, have a try. I'll stay here to look after the comrades who are resting, and work out our plans for tomorrow."

Liu Wu and his companions came to a ridge which seemed to be dampish and began to dig. They only had their rods instead of pick-axes, and their own hardened hands instead of spades. Their finger-nails broke and tore and their finger tips split. But their hands continued to work automatically, even when their owners sometimes dozed off. They withstood fatigue. They withstood pain. Digging. Digging. . . .

Liu Wu was covered with sand. His hands were black and swollen. Blood dripped from his finger tips. He tore a strip off his clothes and wrapped his hands up with it. The group leader called him back to consult him about their plan. He walked to the fire and saw that all the sleeping comrades were huddled up, and for the first time realised himself that it was now bitingly cold, at this late night hour. The annoying climate of this place increased their hardships. By day the Gobi Desert was like an oven, while the nights were really cold. Obviously working clothes were not enough protection from the cold of an autumn

night here. "Come!" he said. "Let's make a warm bed for our comrades!" They lit a number of smaller fires, and when they were burning well, covered them up with sand, so that the heat was spread around. It was like sleeping on a warm *kang*.

When they saw that their comrades were now sleeping more comfortably, they went over to the main camp fire and discussed the new plan. So far, they had been covering a little over ten kilometres per day. According to the new estimates, they should be able to survey over twenty kilometres a day. That would be a speed worth doing! And to do that for the first time on National Day would be a really significant tribute.

The luminous hands of their watches showed it was midnight. Seven more hours before dawn. . . . What were the people in all the rest of China doing at this hour? Some must have already gone to sleep long ago, and, in their dreams, been planning how to celebrate the birthday of their motherland. Others must still be cheerfully ironing and pressing the festival dresses they would put on for the great day! Oh, motherland! The surveyors on the Gobi Desert, in their special way, were also enthusiastically and cheerfully welcoming your birthday!

They threw some more wood on to the fire and were about to go to join the well diggers when Little Yo, entirely covered with mud, came up, lame and tottering. In a whisper, so as not to disturb the sleepers, he said it was hopeless to try any longer for water. He could hardly speak at all—there seemed to be a ball of cotton in his throat, and he only gasped out his words. "The deeper we dig . . . the drier the earth. . . . Chin Hsi and the others . . . can't stand any more. . . . They have collapsed. . . ."

"They can't stand any more." This was the first time these words had been used, or could have been used about them—usually they were as vigorous as dragons or tigers! Before, if hunger and thirst were consuming the unit, who had heard any of them mention water? Water had become a forbidden word which they ceased to use. But now, at this moment, "They can't stand any more" escaped from Little Yo's mouth!

The sense that he was responsible to his motherland encouraged and urged Liu Wu to make it possible somehow for the unit to start work at dawn. His sense of honour enabled him to persevere until he could somehow manage to do it. He must go to look for water! He must find water somehow, before dawn!

He knew that a settlement existed south of them somewhere, within walking distance, where they could get water. . . . Chin Hsi, who a short while ago had collapsed, asked to be sent to look. The group leader told an active surveyor to go with him. Under the bright moonlight, they set out to the south over the vast desert.

The evening star moved to the west. There was no sign of Chin Hsi

yet. Liu Wu collected all the flasks, took a heavy club and started off himself towards the south together with five other young men.

On their way they met Chin Hsi and the other surveyor, who said that they had found a small stream a little more than ten kilometres away. Liu Wu told the surveyor to hurry back and ask the group leader to bring the whole unit there. Then, with Chin Hsi as their guide, they sped forward, like hunters tracking down their prey, full of hope and joy.

Who would have dreamt that this damned stream could play a trick on them? When they came to it, the water had stopped flowing. They began to curse—they had no idea whom or what they were cursing, but they felt better for it. Some of them blamed Chin Hsi. But what could Chin Hsi do? He was just as badly tricked by the stream! Suddenly one of them discovered there were still some puddles left among the pits and holes on the stream bed and with a shout of joy dropped on his knees and drank. The rest immediately followed suit and buried their heads in the mud. When they raised their heads they could not help laughing at one another, when they saw themselves coated with yellow mud.

Liu Wu had one sip, got up and let someone else take his place. He was too harassed by worry and anxiety.

He saw that Little Yo was still lagging behind. Little Yo had looked after Old Chu all day long, and in the night he had worked hard digging the well. His feet were blistered, and he was lame and tottering. Liu Wu was sorry he had not saved his puddle for Little Yo. And now all the puddles were sucked dry by the others. He didn't say anything, however, but went quickly upstream. He must find some water! He must find some water for Little Yo! After about fifty metres, he saw some water in two little holes, the hoof prints of a wild goat. In ecstasy, he immediately threw himself down and tried to fill the flask. . . . Oh, rot it! The holes were too small and deep. How could he get the water into the flask? He had nothing to draw the water up with. Could he try to sink the flask into the mud beside the holes, and let the water flow into it? No, the flask was too big, and disturbing the mud might make the water sink away. Should he just wait for Little Yo to come up and tell him to drink from the holes? No, what if the water should have all soaked away by then? He shouted to Little Yo impatiently, but Little Yo, stumbling along, could not go any faster. He walked backward and forward anxiously, not knowing what to do. "No, I must get the water into the flask for him somehow!" But how? There seemed to be no way. Yes, there was a way! He could draw up the water with his own mouth! That was it! He could suck up the water with his own mouth! Back he dropped on the ground again. The flask was filled by mouthfuls. He had no time to bother about whether the water he got like this was clear or muddy. He worked at this job as long as possible and tried to get any available drop. Even when there was no more left he still clung to

them, like a greedy baby who has sucked his mother's breast dry, but still goes on sucking hard, sucking very hard indeed!

Fine! he'd got half a flask out of muddy water.

As Little Yo drank, his eyes looked his gratitude. He managed to stop and say, "How sweet the water is! Have some yourself, please!"

But Liu Wu would not accept the offer, saying that he had already had his fill. He decided to go on getting water by his patent method, so that the others at the camp could be sure of some. All six of them ran upstream, till in a distance of some three hundred yards they got ten flasks filled up with water from different places, using Liu Wu's method. Showing their flasks to one another, they were as pleased as children, and fairly jumped for joy.

Liu Wu had been working on this northwest plateau for several years. From experience he concluded that this stream must have been blocked by villagers who wanted to save water at night so as to irrigate their fields, or for some such purpose. From this conclusion he went on to infer that there must be families, there must be a village, further upstream. He could not content himself with ten flasks of muddy water when the possibility remained that there was a greater and better supply. So he suggested that one of them should take the water they had got so far back to the comrades they had left behind, and that the rest should continue the search. In spite of their lack of proper food and sleep, and the terrible strain they had been under for nearly twenty-four hours, they were all willing to go on. Little Yo insisted on being the one to take the flasks back, and Liu Wu had to let him do it. He gave Little Yo the flasks and his club, and told him to be careful. And off he went.

Little Yo ran along the way as if he had had an urgent fighting job to carry out. He was surprised at himself. Where did his strength come from?

Half way, he suddenly became aware that there was something following him. At first, he dared not look back. What could it be, and why should it remain close at his heels? When he could not stand the mystery any longer, he turned to look behind. Oh! A wolf! He cried out and instinctively covered his face with his hands. His heart pounded; fear riveted him to the spot. The wolf also stopped. "When did it begin to follow me? Why doesn't it eat me up at once? Does it intend to wait until I reach some particular place ahead? . . . " A train of such questions haunted him, but, at such a moment, he could not stop to think it out. He raised his club, hoping to frighten the wolf away, but the wolf took no notice. What should he do? It was most unlikely that anyone would come to his rescue, in this wilderness, before dawn. And there were his comrades waiting for water! What could he do? What could he do? . . . "No, I must go on no matter what may happen. I must go on!" He made up his mind, and, clutching the club tightly and waving

the leather belt he had taken off, (who knew where he had learned this trick?) he moved forward. With breathless anxiety, he moved forward.

But the wolf still followed. If he halted, the wolf halted; when he walked on, the wolf walked on; and when he ran, the wolf ran too. Strange to say, Little Yo gradually became bolder and calmer. He thought: "It is a menace as long as it follows me. If I have to guard against it all the way, I cannot go quickly. When can I give my comrades water then? How can I make it go away? . . . " Suddenly, he made a dash forward, followed by the wolf. And as suddenly, he turned round, raised his club, waved his belt, switched on his electric torch, shouted loudly and pounced on the wolf. The flasks he carried on his back clanked and clanged. Like a majestic and fierce deity, he chased the wolf. The wolf fled. He gasped in fatigue. After all, the wolf feared the man!

Now he felt extremely tired and sleepy. All his bones seemed to be falling apart. Oh, how he longed to take a rest! But he again started to run onward. Perhaps he was afraid that the wolf might come back to bother him again. And perhaps he was anxious to take the water to his comrades as quickly as possible.

The moon had slowly sailed to the west. Liu Wu and the four with him continued to walk along the stream bed. They chatted and laughed all the time. Now they were talking about the Chinese People's Volunteers in Korea, now it was the story of the Long March, now a description of the scene in the Tien An Men Square at dawn. Their descriptions of Peking on October the First were most interesting, almost tangible, and vivid. They talked as if they had been there and seen Chairman Mao waving his hand from the platform of Tien An Men in answer to their salutes.

In about an hour cultivated fields appeared in the dim light. And now there was a clear stream flowing! They had at last found what they were looking for! Yet, when their fondest hope became a reality, somehow they felt they had got what they wanted rather easily and quite suddenly.

They never dreamt that so late at night the villagers there would prepare delicious noodles for them to eat, nor that they would light a fire in the *kang* and put warm blankets on it for them to sleep on. . . . In China, everywhere they went, they found their people treating them as though they had been near relatives! From the bottom of their hearts, they were grateful to these villagers for the warm hospitality. But they did not accept it. "Please excuse us, friends! Our comrades are waiting anxiously for us. We must start our work at dawn."

The villagers helped them to carry back six big buckets of water and altered back the water channels, so that the little stream would flow again nearer to their camp.

The moon had set. The sky seemed to brighten up, but it was not really dawn yet. The Gobi Desert was utterly quiet. Suddenly they heard a sound coming from somewhere far, far away. Somewhere people were urging camels forward. Before they could make sure that these people were their comrades, none of them would rashly disclose the joy in their hearts. They just listened quietly and tried to decide whether there were any familiar notes in the voices. After a while, Little Yo jumped up and cried rapturously: "Our men! Our men!"

So, at dawn, the lost camel corps joined them. Together they had some food in great haste. Then they began their work according to the new plan.

On this memorable day, they wanted to cover twenty-two kilometres in their survey. They wanted to send their love to their motherland with this record, the highest one possible under the present conditions!

How are you, Peking?

Please accept our greeting, a birthday greeting from the desert surveyors!

Translated by Tso Cheng

Folk Tales

Ma Liang and His Magic Brush

Once upon a time there was a boy named Ma Liang, whose father and mother had died when he was a child, so that he had to earn his living by gathering firewood and cutting weeds. He was a very clever boy and longed to learn to paint, but he could not afford to buy even one brush.

One day Ma Liang passed a private school while the schoolmaster was painting, and was fascinated to watch the strokes made by his brush. Before he knew it he had slipped into the school.

"I want so much to learn to paint," he said. "Please will you lend me a brush?"

"What!" The master glared at him. "A little beggar wants to paint? You must be dreaming!" He drove the lad away.

But Ma Liang had a will of his own.

"Why shouldn't I learn to paint even if I am poor?" he said to himself.

He made up his mind to learn, and practised hard every day. When he went up the mountain to gather firewood, he would use a twig to draw birds on the sand; when he went to the river to cut reeds, he would

dip his finger into the water and trace fish on the rock; when he got home, he would sketch his few sticks of furniture on the walls of his cave, until soon the four walls were covered with his drawings.

Time passed quickly; and since Ma Liang did not let a single day go by without practising drawing, naturally he made rapid progress. People who saw his pictures almost expected the birds to warble and the fish to swim—they were so true to life. But still Ma Liang had no brush! He often thought how happy he would be if he could have one.

One night, tired out after working and drawing all day, Ma Liang fell fast asleep as soon as he lay down on his pallet. Then an old man with a long white beard came up to him and gave him a brush.

"This is a magic brush," said the old man. "Use it carefully!"

Ma Liang took the brush in his hand. It was of glittering gold and rather heavy.

"What a beautiful brush!" He jumped for joy. "Thank you ever so much. . . ."

Before Ma Liang could finish thanking him, the old man with the white beard vanished. The lad woke with a start. So it was a dream! But how could it be a dream when the magic brush was there in his hand? He was lost in wonder.

He painted a bird with this magic brush, and the bird flapped its wings, then soared up into the sky where it began to sing merrily for him to hear. He painted a fish with this magic brush, and the fish frisked its tail, then plunged into the river and sported in the water for him to see. He was in raptures.

With this magic brush, Ma Liang painted every day for the poor folk in his village: a plough, a hoe, an oil lamp or a bucket, for whichever family had none.

But no secret can be kept for ever. The news of Ma Liang's magic brush soon reached the ears of a rich landlord in that village; and the landlord sent two of his men to seize Ma Liang and force the boy to paint for him.

Though Ma Liang was only a lad, he had plenty of courage. He had seen through those rich people, and no matter how the landlord threatened or flattered him, he refused to paint a single picture. So the landlord shut him up in a stable and began to starve him.

Three days later it began to snow heavily, and by the evening snow lay thick on the ground. Thinking that Ma Liang must have died of cold if not of hunger by now, the landlord went to the stable to look. As he approached the door he saw red firelight shining through its chinks and sniffed a delicious smell of food. And peeping through a crack in the door, what should he see but Ma Liang toasting himself by a big stove and eating hot cakes! The landlord could hardly believe his eyes. Where had the stove and cakes come from? Then he realized that Ma Liang must have painted them. Trembling with rage, he summoned his men to kill Ma Liang and seize the magic brush.

But by the time a dozen of his fiercest men rushed into the stable, Ma Liang was nowhere to be seen—all they found was a ladder leaning against the wall by which Ma Liang had made his escape. The landlord lost no time in mounting the ladder in pursuit, but he tumbled and fell before he reached the third rung. And when he got to his feet again, the ladder had vanished.

After escaping from the landlord's house Ma Liang knew he could not hide in the village, for that would only get the friends who sheltered him into trouble. He must go far away. He waved farewell to the familiar cottages, murmuring:

"Good-bye, dear friends!"

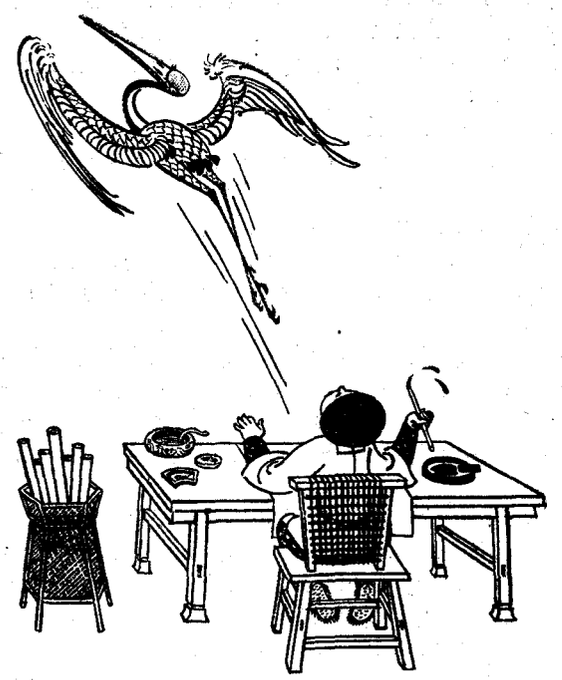
Then he painted a fine horse, mounted it and galloped down the highway.

He had not gone far when he heard a hubbub behind him, and turning his head saw the landlord and nearly a score of his lackeys pursuing him on horseback. They carried bright torches, and a sword flashed in the landlord's hand.

Soon they were quite near. Calmly, Ma Liang drew a bow and an arrow with his magic brush, and fitted the arrow to the bow. "Whiz!" The arrow pierced the landlord's throat and he fell headlong from his horse. Then Ma Liang lashed his own steed so that it flew forward as if on wings.

Ma Liang galloped down the highway for several days and nights without stopping, till he came to a town and decided to stay there; for he was now far, far away from his native village. Since he could find no work in that town, he had to paint pictures and sell them in the market. But in order that he might not be discovered, he took care not to let his pictures come to life by drawing birds without a beak or animals with one leg missing.

One day, after painting a crane with no eyes, he was careless enough to splash ink on the bird's head where the eyes should have been; whereupon the crane opened its eyes, flapped its wings and flew off. At once the whole town was agog with excitement. And some busy-body reported it to the emperor, who sent officers to summon Ma Liang to court. Ma



Liang had no wish to go; but with fair promises and veiled threats they carried him off.

Ma Liang had heard many stories about the emperor's cruelty to the poor, and hated him from the bottom of his heart. He was certainly not going to serve such a man. So when the emperor ordered him to paint a dragon, he painted a toad instead; when the emperor ordered him to paint a phoenix, he painted a cock instead. This ugly toad and filthy cock leapt and flapped around the emperor, leaving dirt and droppings everywhere, till the whole palace stank. Then the emperor, in a towering rage, ordered his guards to seize the magic brush from Ma Liang and throw him into prison.

Now that the emperor had this magic brush, he tried painting with it himself. First he painted a gold mountain. Then, thinking one gold mountain was not enough, he added another and yet another, until his picture was a mass of mountains. But when the painting was finished, what do you think happened to those gold mountains? They turned into a pile of rocks. And because they were top-heavy, they toppled down, nearly crushing the emperor's feet in their fall.

Still the emperor was not cured of his greed. Having failed to paint gold mountains, he decided to paint gold bricks. He painted a brick; but it seemed too small. He painted a bigger one; but still it seemed too small. Finally he painted a long, long golden bar. But when the picture was finished, what do you think happened? The gold bar turned into an

enormous python, which rushed at him with its huge, crimson mouth wide open; and the emperor fainted for fear. Luckily, his officers were quick in coming to the rescue; otherwise he would have been swallowed by this terrible monster.

Finding he could make no use of the magic brush himself, the emperor released Ma Liang and spoke him fair, presenting him with gold and silver and promising to give him a princess in marriage.

Ma Liang, who had already formed a plan, pretended to agree to all these proposals. Then the emperor was very pleased and returned him the magic brush.

"If he paints a mountain," thought the emperor, "wild beasts may come out of it. Better paint the sea!"

So he ordered Ma Liang to paint the sea first.

Ma Liang took up his magic brush; and, sure enough, a clear, boundless sea appeared before the emperor. Its blue surface was unruffled and it shone like an immense jade mirror.

"Why are there no fish in this sea?" asked the emperor, looking at it.

Ma Liang made a few dots with his magic brush, whereupon fish of all the colours of the rainbow appeared. Frisking their tails, they sported merrily for a while; then swam slowly far out to sea.

The emperor had been watching them with the greatest pleasure; so as they swam further and further away he urged Ma Liang:

"Hurry up and paint a boat! I want to sail out to sea to watch those fish."

Ma Liang painted a huge sailing-boat, upon which the emperor and empress, princes, princesses and many ministers embarked. Then, with a few strokes, he drew wind. Fine ripples appeared on the sea and the boat moved off.

But the emperor found the pace too slow. Standing at the bow, he shouted:

"Let the wind blow harder! Harder!"

A few powerful strokes from Ma Liang's magic brush brought a strong wind. The sea grew rough, and the white sails billowed out as the boat scudded towards mid-ocean.

Ma Liang drew a few more strokes. Then the sea roared, big waves rolled, and the vessel began to heel over.

"That's enough wind!" shouted the emperor at the top of his voice. "Enough, I say!"

But Ma Liang paid no attention. He continued to wield his magic brush. The sea was lashed into fury and billows broke over the deck.

The emperor, drenched through, clung to the mast shaking one fist at Ma Liang and shouting.

Ma Liang, however, pretended to hear nothing, and went on drawing wind. A hurricane blew black clouds before it to darken the sky; and angry billows reared themselves higher and higher to crash down one

after the other on the boat. At last the vessel keeled over, capsized and was shattered. The emperor and his ministers sank to the bottom of the sea.

After the emperor's death, the story of Ma Liang and his magic brush spread far and wide. But what became of Ma Liang? Nobody knows for certain.

Some say that he went back to his native village and rejoined his peasant companions.

Others say that he roamed the earth, painting for the poor wherever he went.

Translated by Tso Cheng

Illustrations by Chang Kuang-yu

The Lady in the Picture

Long, long ago, no one knows under which emperor and in which dynasty, there lived a young man by the name of Chu-tze. He was sturdily built and very capable; but although he was well past his twentieth birthday, he had no wife. He never mentioned the matter to anyone, yet in his heart he was none too happy about the situation. And his mother knew what was on his mind.

"Son," she said to him one day, "we are poor folk. What with only two *mou* of poor hilly land and the taxes and levies to be paid to the emperor, there's hardly enough to feed the two of us. Who would marry a daughter into our family?"

About three months after this it was New Year.

"We eat bran and wild greens all the year round," thought Chu-tze's mother. "We *must* have a proper meal of dumplings on New Year's Eve. If we have no wheat flour, we can make do with sorghum flour; if we can't afford cabbage, we can buy a few turnips for the filling."

So she sent Chu-tze to the New Year's market with the last ten coppers they had in the house. Before he got to the vegetable stalls, Chu-tze saw an old man selling paintings; and his eye was caught by a picture of a young woman.

She was so beautiful that no words could describe her loveliness. The more he looked the more Chu-tze was taken by her. He paid the old man all his ten coppers for this scroll; then went straight home with his treasure.

When Chu-tze's mother saw what he had bought, she sighed but said nothing. And he hung the painting in his own room.

That evening, no sooner had he retired to his room and lit the lamp than he heard a strange rustling from the wall. There was no draught in the room, so Chu-tze looked up to see what could have caused the sound. To his amazement, he saw the lady in the picture fluttering her pretty hands as she slowly came to life and stepped down from the scroll. Chu-tze was both startled and delighted. Smiling and full of charm, she sat down to chat with him. They soon became very friendly and Chu-tze no longer felt afraid.

When the cocks crowed the lady stepped back into the picture, to come down again at night; and thus they continued for a couple of months. One evening, however, after stepping down from the scroll she sat with head bent and would not say a word.

After a while she sighed and said: "You're such a good, hard-working man, it breaks my heart to see you going poor and hungry. I have a good mind to do something about it; but I'm afraid of bringing trouble to your door."

"As long as we can be together," replied Chu-tze, "I'm happy and content."

"We can't go on living so miserably," she said. "Here, I've twenty coppers for you. Take them to the market tomorrow and buy me some silk thread. But if anyone should question you, mind you don't mention me."

Chu-tze promised cheerfully and the next day bought the silk thread as he was told.

That night, when the lady stepped down from the picture as usual, she took up the silk thread.

"You go to bed first," she said. "I'll do a little work before I sleep."

Dawn came and the cocks crowed. Opening his eyes, Chu-tze was dazzled by the brilliant silk and satin of every shade and pattern that filled his room.

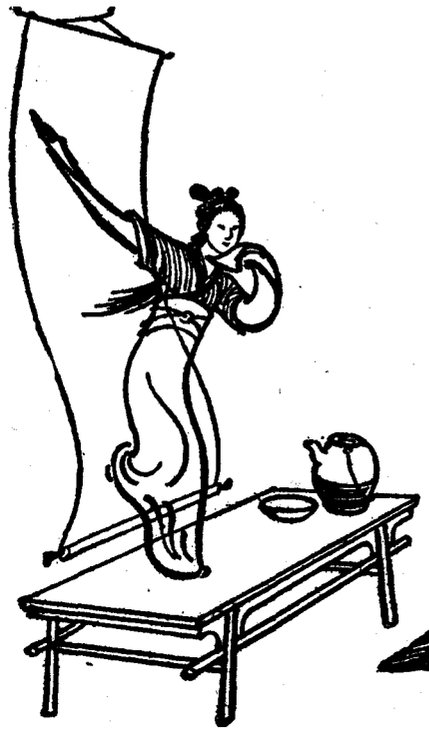
When his mother ran in, she could hardly believe her eyes. And when Chu-tze told her where all these materials had come from she was amazed, delighted, and a little afraid.

Chu-tze took the silk and satin to the market and sold them for a great deal of money, after which mother and son began to live very comfortably.

One day, in the middle of the morning when Chu-tze was out in the fields, an old, itinerant Taoist priest came to their door. As soon as he saw Chu-tze's mother, he cried out in horror:

"I see marks of black magic on your face!"

The old woman of course took fright while the priest went on: "You had better hand over that daughter-in-law of yours who weaves such



beautiful silk and satin; otherwise you and yours will meet with death and destruction."

The more Chu-tze's mother thought about it, the more frightened she became. Hurrying into her son's room, she took down the picture from the wall, rolled it up hastily and started towards the gate.

The lady in the picture sighed.

"If Chu-tze ever pines for me," she said, "tell him to look for me in West Yu."

When the old woman heard this, she became even more panic-stricken. Hobbling as fast as she could to the gate, she thrust the picture into the hands of the old Taoist, who immediately went away.

When Chu-tze came home and learned what had happened, he stamped his foot in dismay. Then he fell ill. His mother called in a physician and brewed herb medicine for him, but all in vain. Soon Chu-tze was dying. His mother stayed by his bedside and wept bitter tears.

"Oh, Chu-tze!" she wailed. "You're my only son, and I've always done my best for you. Whatever you want, you shall have it."

A tear rolled down Chu-tze's cheek. "Mother, I won't keep anything from you," he said. "If only I could see her once more, I'd be all right again."

"Chu-tze dear," said his mother, "I'm sorry too for what I did. When I took the picture from your room that day, she said you should look for her in West Yu. But who knows where that is? And how can you look for her when you're still sick in bed?"

When Chu-tze heard this and realized there was still hope, he began to get better. And as soon as he had recovered, his mother filled a sack with all that was left of the money they had got for the silk and satin. Then Chu-tze set out westward, leading a horse loaded with the sack of money.

He travelled for he did not know how many days until all his money was spent on food and lodgings; but still he had not reached West Yu. Then he sold his horse; but still there was no sign of his destination. And finally he had to take any odd jobs he could find in order to raise enough money to continue his journey westward.

Thus countless more days went by, until there were fewer and fewer villages by the road; and often he could find no lodging for the night. But Chu-tze pushed onwards undaunted, though he often went hungry and thirsty. One day he travelled till night without finding a single village or anything to eat or drink, so the following morning when he spied a little ditch in the distance he ran towards it in great joy. The ditch itself was dry, but by following it he came at last to a tiny pool. Just as he was bending down to drink, however, he saw a little black fish in the water; and this made him pause to think. He was in a quandary.

"Little fish!" he said. "If I drink this thimbleful of water, you'll be left high and dry to perish; but if I don't have a drink, I'll die of thirst."

He thought again, then said: "Even if I don't drink this water it'll dry up in a day or two, and you'd perish just the same."

After standing there irresolutely for a long time, finally he hit upon a way out. He soaked his handkerchief in the puddle and carefully wrapped the fish in it; then drank up what was left of the water and continued on his way westward.

Many more *li* he travelled, but that afternoon his path was blocked by a big river running from north to south. It ran so fast that Chu-tze could not tell how deep it was, and he was sitting in despair on the bank when suddenly he remembered the fish. Peeping into his handkerchief, he was glad to find the little thing was still alive.

"What's to become of *me* I don't know," he muttered. "But I mustn't forget to put you back in the water."

Once in the river the little fish flapped its tail and disappeared. Chu-tze looked up and down the river, but it stretched endlessly away and there was not a boat in sight either. How was he to cross?

While he stood there worrying, he heard someone behind him call: "Chu-tze!"

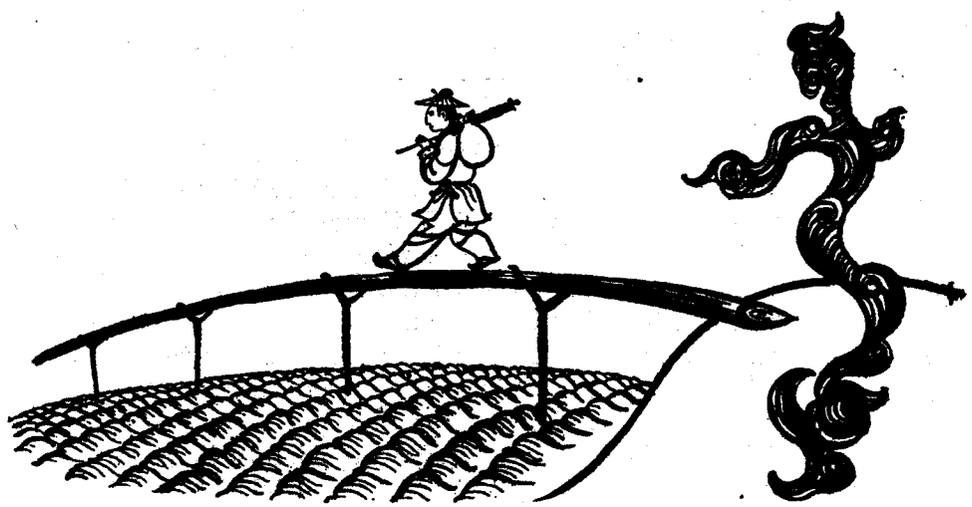
But when he turned round there was no one in sight, and he decided there could not be anyone calling him in such a deserted place. As soon as he turned back, however, he heard his name called again. And this time when he looked around he saw a tall dark man standing beside him.

"Do you want to cross the river?" asked this stranger.

"I do!" cried Chu-tze. "But how can I get across?"

"How would you like me to put up a bridge?" said the dark man.

He turned to a willow tree and broke off a twig which he tossed into the river. The willow twig changed into a single-plank bridge across which Chu-tze strode without hesitation. When he reached the other



bank he looked back; but there was no bridge nor any dark man to be seen. All he could see was the little fish swimming happily in the river.

He went on his way again, and after scaling a mountain saw a village. On the north side of the road a grand gateway led to a big house, and an old Taoist was standing serenely beside the gate. The sun was setting behind the hills so Chu-tze went up to the Taoist and begged to be given a lodging for the night. Frowning slightly, the Taoist consented and led him into a fairly large room in the wing of the house. The room had papered walls but was empty save for a bed and a table with nothing on it.

"You may stay here," said the Taoist before leaving him in this room. "But don't touch anything."

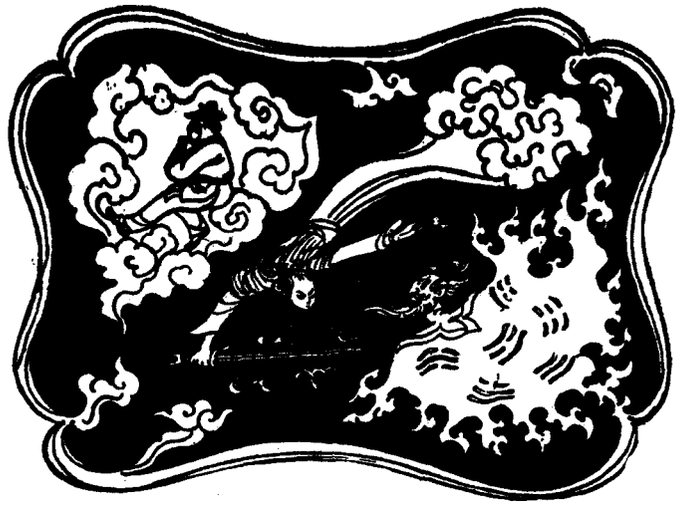
After the priest had left him, Chu-tze lay down on the bed.

"There's practically nothing in this room, so what could I meddle with?" he wondered.

Curiosity kept him awake, and unconsciously he started to peel off the paper on the wall. Then to his amazement he found behind the paper not a brick wall but a small door, through the cracks of which moonlight was streaming. Opening it, he saw that it led into a garden in which was a two-storey pavilion with lights in the windows upstairs. A few minutes later a woman came down the stairs. Chu-tze was just thinking he should go away from the door when an exclamation of joy and amazement escaped him.

"So you are here!" he cried.

Under the moonlight, Chu-tze could see clearly. The woman coming down the stairs was no other than her he was looking for—the lady in the picture.



Motioning him to be silent, the lady walked to his side and whispered: "This is West Yu. I have stolen the old Taoist's sword; now let us escape quickly."

So saying, she slashed off a piece of her skirt, and told Chu-tze to stand on it. The piece of skirt turned into a rainbow-coloured cloud which floated up into the sky; and Chu-tze, feeling as if he were riding in a sedan-chair, began to enjoy himself. Just then the lady counted something on her fingers. "Here comes the Taoist after us!" she cried.

As she unsheathed the sword, the sound of thunder, wind and rain broke out behind them. "He has overtaken us," said the lady. "But don't be afraid. Just close your eyes."

Chu-tze heard a tremendous crash which seemed to shake both heaven and earth; but he could not make out what was happening.

After a long time, the noise died down. The lady told him to open his eyes. Then he found that without his knowing it they had already alighted on the ground and before them lay a huge monster with its head chopped off.

They made their way joyfully home.

Translated by Tang Sheng

Illustrations by Chang Kuang-yu

New Novels

"SANLIWAN VILLAGE"

Sanliwan Village is the first novel written since the liberation by Chao Shu-li, author of *Rhymes of Li Yu-tsai* and *Changes in Li Village*. This novel, which first appeared serially in the monthly, *People's Literature*, and was printed in book form in May 1955, has aroused a great deal of interest among the general reading public as well as among writers and critics.

Sanliwan, where the story takes place, is a mountain village in one of the early liberated areas in North China. The Communist Party and the Eighth Route Army started revolutionary work and established the people's administration here as far back as in the days of the anti-Japanese war; and during the last ten years many villagers distinguished themselves by their good work in the struggles to eliminate traitors, reduce rent and interest, carry out land reform, and in the movement for mutual aid. Consequently, Sanliwan became the model village of the county. Its agricultural producers' co-operative, organized in 1951, brought about further changes in the peasants' life. Since this village was remote from the city and lacked water, in 1952 the co-operative resolved to carry out an irrigation project to improve conditions, and called on everyone in the village to lend a hand in this work. It was over the question of land for the irrigation channel that the struggles started which are described in this book.

These struggles involve a great many people and extremely complex contradictions and difficulties. Only with the leadership of the Communist Party and after careful thought and painstaking work are the peasants able to overcome the difficulties in their path and succeed in the first stages of their irrigation project. In the course of this work, the villagers also learn a vital lesson about socialism; and many of them join the co-operative which thus becomes larger and stronger.

Wang Chin-sheng, vice-chairman of the co-operative and Party secretary of Sanliwan, is the man who gives the day-to-day leadership in the main struggle in this novel. He is an honest, single-minded man, modest, cool-headed but full of determination. He has a deep understanding of the situation in the village and is devoting all his energies to improving the livelihood of the peasants by building this irrigation channel and enlarging the agricultural producers' co-operative. Never lenient with him-

self, he is tolerant of others on questions where no principles are involved. It is only with those who hinder the advance of Sanliwan towards socialism —especially with their representatives inside the Party—that he joins issue ruthlessly and uncompromisingly. Moreover, the best of the old revolutionaries and new activists who rally round him in this contest form a strong detachment for the building of socialism.

The dispute begins like this: The irrigation channel which the co-operative plans to build will cross the "hilt land"—so called on account of its shape—owned by Ma To-shou, a middle peasant commonly known as Muddle-head Ma. Now Ma has joined the mutual-aid team not through any faith in mutual aid and co-operation, but because he wants to make use of the team to cultivate his own land. He wants to exploit its labour. That is why he tries so hard to sabotage the co-operative's campaign for increased membership, and absolutely refuses to make over his "hilt land" to the co-operative.

Ma To-shou's manoeuvres happen to coincide with the selfish interests of Fan Teng-kao, the village head and a Party member. Fan was once a hired-hand to Liu Lao-wu, landlord and Japanese quisling. After taking part in the revolution he joined the Communist Party; and during the agrarian reform, because he was a very poor hired-hand, he was given a piece of good land. Now he too is reluctant to let his land be pooled with that of others in the co-operative. That is why, in more ways than one, he subtly supports Ma To-shou. For instance, when Ma's daughter-in-law Chen Chu-ying, a progressive young woman, can no longer stand the ill-treatment she receives from her in-laws and asks for a division of the family property so that she can live separately, Fan Teng-kao as the village head comes out to mediate. He is anxious to prevent any change in the Ma family, because he knows that Chu-ying is a progressive young woman and if the "hilt land" falls to her share she will certainly let the co-operative have it. Just as under the pretext of supporting the Party's "voluntary principle" he opposes the co-operative's campaign to enlarge its membership, so Fan now opposes Chu-ying's request for a division of the family property on the grounds that they must "consider the effect on the masses." When Chu-ying, backed by public opinion in the village as well as by the Party and the Youth League, insists on a split, Ma To-shou and his fellow conspirators—his wife and eldest son—are compelled to resort to other means to keep the "hilt land" in their own hands.

It happens that some ten years ago when Sanliwan was drawn into the movement to reduce rent, apprehensive lest the villagers should turn against him, Ma secretly arranged with his wife, who is nicknamed "Always Right," for a nominal division of the family property. In this way he could tell anyone who raised awkward questions that his land had been divided between his four sons. The peasants did not touch him in the rent reduction movement, however; so Ma had no reason to show the settlement papers he had drawn up and simply kept the whole affair

dark. Now he makes up his mind to bring out these old papers, since according to them the "hilt land" goes not to Chu-ying and her husband, the third son, but to Ma's second son, Yu-fu, now working in the county government.

Chu-ying is prepared to fight at all costs for the possession of the "hilt land" so that she may bring this piece of property into the co-operative. But the Party organization realizes that the land has been divided fairly between the four brothers, and therefore advises her to abide by the settlement in spite of the old plot. As for the ownership of the "hilt land," a better solution is found. A letter is written in the name of the co-operative to Yu-fu, the second son, informing him that the three *mou* of "hilt land" now belong to him and asking him to sell or rent them to the co-operative, or exchange them for another plot elsewhere. Since Yu-fu is in charge of mutual aid and co-operative affairs in the County Party Committee, he is naturally familiar with the government's policy in the co-operative movement, and he also takes a personal interest in his home village's progress towards co-operation. Therefore in his reply, he presents his "hilt land" to the co-operative as a gift. And so all the plots of Fan Teng-kao and the Ma family over this question are thwarted.

While the preparatory work for the opening of an irrigation channel is going on, the campaign to enlarge the co-operative's membership is also being carried out. Temporary publicity groups are organized in the village to explain to those still in mutual-aid teams or working singly why it is to their advantage to join the co-operative. But no sooner do the publicity workers open their mouths than they are told: "Don't waste time explaining to us why we should join the co-op. You had better talk the Party members into joining first."

In this way, the peasants express their dissatisfaction with Fan Teng-kao and Yuan Tien-cheng, who have been influenced by corrupt bourgeois ideas. Fan lets the mutual-aid team cultivate his land while he hires a man to drive his mules and engages in private trading. Yuan, although he has joined the co-operative, can hardly be considered a real member as he has listened to the selfish promptings of his wife and kept back a large tract of land, nominally belonging to his brother in the army, which he cultivates as his own. The villagers are sharp in their criticism of these two men.

"Is it taking the road to socialism to buy two mules and hire a man to drive them?" they ask.

"What kind of ideology is it to keep land out of the co-op in your brother's name, but to take the grain reaped from it to your own home?"

At this juncture, the main obstacle to enlarging the membership of the co-operative is not so much the peasants' lack of political consciousness as the very bad influence of a couple of Party members. In other words, Fan Teng-kao and Yuan Tien-cheng are holding up the village's

advance towards socialism. It is necessary for the Party to clear away this obstacle without delay.

The Sanliwan Party branch calls several meetings, which are attended by Liu, deputy secretary of the County Party Committee, to discuss the question of Fan Teng-kao and Yuan Tien-cheng. In these meetings, Fan is severely criticized by his comrades for his conceit and for his corrupt bourgeois ideology. His arbitrary interpretation of the Party's "voluntary principle" to disguise his reluctance to join the co-operative is also exposed.

"In the past," old Chang Lo-yi reminds him, "you drove mules for Liu Lao-wu while I tilled his land. . . . We have been friends for more than twenty years; and now both as a comrade and an old friend I don't want to see you turn into a second Liu Lao-wu yourself."

Another comrade criticizes Fan's interpretation of voluntariness.

"The voluntary principle means that we can't compel the masses but must wait for them to gain sufficient political consciousness," he says. "Now are you a Party member or one of the unawakened masses? If you haven't political consciousness, the Party is willing to wait for you. But we won't let you call yourself a Party member any more."

And thus, helped by his comrades' criticism and elucidation of Party principles, Fan Teng-kao begins to realize his mistakes. His daughter, Ling-chih, also does her best to make him see light. In the end, Fan decides to join the co-operative with his two mules.

As for Yuan Tien-cheng, his chief mistake was listening to his wife, "The Shrew." Now he criticizes himself and promises to mend his ways; and he is as good as his word. By threatening "The Shrew" with divorce, he manages to bring her under control and even succeeds in getting her out to the fields to do her share of work with their daughter. This domestic revolt not only takes "The Shrew" by surprise, but causes a sensation throughout the village.

As a result of these struggles, socialist ideas triumph over bourgeois ones; and the peasants begin to see that co-operation means more crops and better living conditions. They have caught a glimpse of how good life will be under socialism and are beginning to understand the Party policy better. They no longer hesitate because of one or two backward Party members, but rally closely around the Party.

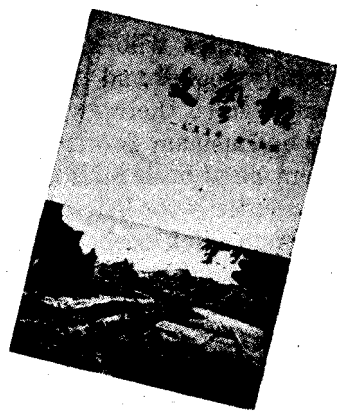
The novel ends with the chapter "The Eve of National Day." All preparations for opening the irrigation channel are complete, and the co-operative, with a greatly increased membership, has just finished the draft of its new constitution. So we leave Sanliwan ready for the great movement to expand co-operation that will sweep the village immediately after National Day.

This novel of more than 150,000 Chinese characters describes a number of people and events, yet covers only one month in time. But although the author creates many different characters, each is a vivid and life-like individual with his own personality and distinctive ways. For example,

we find "those who did better than most during the land reform," "the big families who have many shares of land," "those whose land is unusually good," and "those who still go in for a bit of exploitation." These people have their own interest at heart, and although they show little or no enthusiasm for the co-operative, it is for different reasons. Some of them have been middle peasants, others poor or hired peasants who have now come into their own; yet others are Party members. A few of them want to stick to individual methods of farming simply because they are unaccustomed to working collectively; others engage in trading—that is to say they actually set out on the road to capitalism. Against such a complex background, we can see the difficulty and scope of the Party's task in the countryside. But the eventual victory over all difficulties shows clearly the correctness of the Party's policy as well as the peasants' joyful confidence in the socialist transformation of China's agriculture.

In this novel, the author praises the enthusiasm and creative spirit of his advanced characters and criticizes the bourgeois and feudal ideas of the backward ones. With great vividness, he describes the struggles between the new forces and the old in the course of the socialist transformation in the villages. This novel gives us a true picture of Chinese peasants today as they begin their advance towards socialist co-operation.

Introducing



"WEN YI PAO"
—LITERARY GAZETTE

Like all other newspapers and periodicals in the People's Republic of China, *Wen Yi Pao* has a clearly defined place in the country's task as a whole, which is: to be instrumental in bringing about socialism.

Wen Yi Pao is the organ of the All-China Federation of Writers and Artists, but its patrons are not limited to people in the literary field. Its achievements are constantly commented on favourably by all sorts of people throughout China and, by the same token, its editorial staff receives letters which are sharply critical of one thing or another not only from writers and artists, but also from workers, soldiers, engineers, people active in the economic life, students, etc.

Wen Yi Pao is a comprehensive publication on literature and art. It contains chiefly criticisms on literature and art, but it also reports and comments on the cultural life of the people. Every aspect of human life, from the international situation to the industrial and agricultural reconstruction of our country, down to daily events, comes within the purview of literature and art. Therefore, while watching what is being done in the field of literature and art, *Wen Yi Pao* keeps its eye open to all other happenings as well.

Wen Yi Pao came into existence in 1949, after the First National Conference of Writers and Artists. At that Conference, writers and artists who had scattered over the liberated areas and the areas formerly controlled by the Kuomintang triumphantly joined forces. A new people's literature and art were flourishing. But a number of new tasks had cropped up: the bad influence of feudalism, imperialism, and the bureaucrat-capitalists represented by Chiang Kai-shek had to be criticized and eradicated from literature and art, as well as from other phases of Chinese life; the urgent need for writers and artists to arm themselves with Marxism, so as to better serve the people, had to be considered and satisfied; methods had to be found and discussed to make literature and art more militant in the complexities of the new situation, when many writers and artists had come to the cities from the villages, when the army of writers and artists had grown in strength and their readers had grown

immeasurably in number. All these problems have found their reflection in *Wen Yi Pao*. Its very first issue carried an article by Mao Tun, vice-chairman of the All-China Federation of Writers and Artists, entitled *Unanimous Demands and Wishes*. The first of these demands mentioned was for more study of political theory on the part of writers and artists, in consonance with the needs of the times.

From its beginnings, *Wen Yi Pao* realized that its main job was to explain and spread Mao Tse-tung's theories on literature and art. In a number of articles on Mao Tse-tung's classic *Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art*, the fundamental lesson of these talks was pointed out: that writers and artists should learn to serve the people, primarily the workers, peasants and soldiers, immerse themselves in the struggles of the masses, learn from their knowledge and experience, and share their new ideas and new feelings.

To this end, *Wen Yi Pao* initiated sharp criticism on many wrong attitudes towards aesthetics growing out of the bourgeois way of idealist thinking. It criticized views that ran counter to Marxist thought in that they regarded literature and art as separate from politics. By well-directed criticisms the magazine introduced and explained the scientific theories of Marxism on literature and art.

In 1951, discussion of the film *The Life of Wu Hsun* became an important event for Chinese writers and artists. This discussion had the closest connection with the continued development of all branches of learning in China; through it, China's writers and artists went another step in making Marxism-Leninism their armour. Within six months, *Wen Yi Pao* carried a dozen articles which submitted the dubious ideas spread by this film to a close scrutiny.

Wu Hsun was thereby seen to be one of the ugliest, most hypocritical lackeys of the reactionary feudal class in the latter part of the nineteenth century. In the hair-shirt of a penitent and ascetic, he lent money to the peasants at exorbitant interest, while grovelling to big landlords, begging for money to establish schools which propagated feudal ideas and virtues, so that the resurgent peasant revolts of that time might be crushed and the tottering feudal regime saved. But the film made about Wu Hsun in 1951, and many articles written about the film, praised him as a revolutionary hero! An editorial in the *People's Daily*, which *Wen Yi Pao* reprinted, pointed out that the writers and makers of this film saw "historical developments not in the replacement of the old by the new, but in the preservation of the old through all sorts of efforts to save it from passing into limbo; not in the overthrow through class struggles of reactionary feudal rulers who should be overthrown, but in the deeds of people like Wu Hsun who ignored the class struggles waged by the oppressed, and capitulated to the reactionary feudal rulers."

Wen Yi Pao also published an article by Chou Yang, noted critic and another vice-chairman of the All-China Federation of Writers and Artists, entitled "Ideas That Offend Against the People and History, Art That Offends Against Realism." The central problem raised by the controversy about the Wu Hsun film is seen to be "whether the path followed by the Chinese people has been the path of revolution or that of reformism and capitulationism." The film's description of Wu Hsun's capitulationist activities as the surest path for the labouring people towards liberation was obviously a monstrous distortion of Chinese history. Thus, the film was actually an expression of the reactionary, reformist ideas of the bourgeoisie in art.

New China's literature and art have developed through struggles, in which literary and art criticism is used as a weapon to bring about the flourishing of literature and art. In the few years since its first appearance, *Wen Yi Pao* has given its readers analyses of works that won Stalin Prizes, like *The Sun Shines over the Sangkan River* by Ting Ling, *The White-haired Girl* by Ho Ching-chih and Ting Yi, and Chou Li-po's *Hurricane*. The magazine has also introduced many new works which are welcomed by a wide reading public; for instance, *Defence of Yenan*, a novel by Tu Peng-cheng, *All for the Party* by the worker-writer Wu Yun-to, and a number of films, plays, operas, paintings and songs. On the other hand, it is also through criticism that errors are disclosed and defects rectified, to enable literature and art to develop healthily in accordance with socialist realist principles.

In his *Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art*, Mao Tse-tung emphasized the importance of popularizing literature and art. He asked writers and artists to pay the closest attention to this activity because of its direct connection with the basic problem of making literature and art serve the workers, peasants and soldiers, and the problem of what to write about, and where to find it.

From its beginning *Wen Yi Pao* has attached great importance to the cultural life of the mass of people, and reported and commented on their spare-time activities and creations in the literary and artistic field. The magazine devotes regular space to correspondence from various areas on what has been done in these lines among factory workers, peasants and soldiers. Close attention is also paid to problems arising from such activities by bringing them up for discussion.

Wen Yi Pao also watches with great concern over a group of new writers and artists who have appeared among the workers, peasants and soldiers in various parts of the country since the liberation, men and women who have enriched China's literature and art with their special contributions. Comments on their achievements and descriptions of the difficulties they encounter in the process of literary or art creation often appear on the pages of the magazine.

Lament for the Victims of Hiroshima

By Hsiao Chuan-chiu, Su Hui and Fu Tien-chiu

Wen Yi Pao has also tried to give serious consideration to letters from its readers, acted upon their suggestions, and drawn lessons from them. For instance, the discussion on China's literary tradition, begun in the first year of the magazine's existence—a highly fruitful discussion and welcomed by the people—was really started by a letter from a student in a municipal secondary school in Peking. Whenever the editorial staff made conscientious efforts to keep in close touch with the masses, *Wen Yi Pao* retained its freshness and vigour, and its discussions on problems of literature and art were lively and practical.

However, *Wen Yi Pao* does not limit itself to reports and comments on conditions and problems in the field of literature and art. It endeavours to reflect actual life, the source of literature and art. It calls upon writers and artists to enter deeply into the struggles waged by the masses, and publishes their reportage. Such writings mirror the great political, economic and military achievements of the Chinese people. *Wen Yi Pao* also has a special column devoted to short, lively and militant comment on the various manifestations of present-day life and conditions both inside and outside China.

The Chinese people love peace. They love the good and happy life they now enjoy. To them, nothing is more important than the defence of world peace and opposition to the imperialists' aggressive war. *Wen Yi Pao* has joined the ranks of those who are struggling for the defence of world peace, and has taken an active part in unmasking imperialist intrigues and machinations for aggressive wars. *Wen Yi Pao* was one of the initiators and organizers of the signature campaign for world peace among writers and artists in 1950, and of the recent campaign for signatures against the use of atomic weapons. *Wen Yi Pao* also reports on the struggles of the peoples in Europe, the Americas and other parts of the world in defence of peace, publishes the calls that come from the conference halls in Stockholm, Vienna and wherever else the world peace congresses meet, the poems and articles of famous peace fighters of all countries and introduces the life and work of the great men of letters whom progressive mankind solemnly commemorates every year.

In 1950, U.S. imperialism started its aggressive war in Korea and occupied China's territory Taiwan. *Wen Yi Pao* published many protests from well-known Chinese writers and artists. This is how Kuo Mo-jo, writer and chairman of the All-China Federation of Writers and Artists, characterized the U.S. warmongers in an article entitled "Uglier Than Puppets": "(They) found that their puppet show wasn't running smoothly, so they dispensed with the puppets and jumped upon the stage themselves; but their own acting is even uglier than that of their puppets." During the Movement to Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea, *Wen Yi Pao* did its share in publicizing the atrocities which the U.S. aggressors and their puppet Syngman Rhee committed. The magazine also reported

on the amazing feats of heroism achieved by the Korean people and the Chinese People's Volunteers in that war against U.S. imperialist aggression.

The whole development of literature and art and the forming of theories about them are inseparable from a study of the literature and art of the Soviet Union and the people's democracies, as well as of the progressive literature and art of capitalist countries, just as China is learning from these countries in all other fields.

The efforts made by *Wen Yi Pao* to introduce Soviet theories on literature and art to its readers should be specially mentioned here. Besides publishing the writings of Soviet scholars on Marxist aesthetic principles, close attention is paid to important activities and debates among Soviet writers and artists. Shortly after its first appearance, *Wen Yi Pao* introduced to its readers the struggle waged by Soviet writers and artists against reactionary cosmopolitanism. In 1951, the Congress of Young Soviet Writers was fully reported. In 1952, *Wen Yi Pao* acquainted its readers with criticism of the "No Conflict" theory by Soviet writers and artists in articles that started a discussion on this theory on the basis of China's actual conditions. Late in 1954, the Second Congress of the Union of Soviet Writers was reported. *Wen Yi Pao* also called upon Chinese writers and artists to study the most important reports made at the Soviet Writers' Congress and later gave space to expressions of what they had learned from these reports. Soviet experience is referred to as an aid for solving questions that might arise also in China's literature and art. Many analyses of important Soviet works have also appeared in the pages of *Wen Yi Pao* which were very helpful to Chinese writers and the magazine's readers alike.

Wen Yi Pao also uses many ways to bring to its readers the literature and art, and controversies in these fields, from countries other than the Soviet Union.

When writers, artists and art organizations from foreign lands come to China—as they now do every year—*Wen Yi Pao* welcomes them heartily, as do the Chinese people as a whole. International cultural exchange is bound to bring about better understanding between the peoples of the world and thus enable them to join efforts in defence of world peace.

But there are also defects in the work of *Wen Yi Pao* during the past few years. At the end of 1954, these problems came to the surface when China's writers and artists criticized the mistakes made by Yu Ping-po in his research on the *Dream of the Red Chamber*. In *A Study of the "Dream of the Red Chamber"* and in many articles on the same subject, Yu Ping-po had grossly distorted China's classical literature and propagated the bourgeois idealist views held by the school of Hu Shih.* But *Wen Yi Pao*, instead of taking him to task for his erroneous ways of thinking, recommended his writings, while articles which criticized Yu Ping-po from a Marxist point of view were either rejected or published with editorial notes that played down the significance of such criticism. This was a grave mistake committed by *Wen Yi Pao*. It showed that its editorial staff not only tolerated but had capitulated to bourgeois ideology, while slighting the new forces for Marxism. And not only was this tendency shown in this one instance, but in some others too. Its literary and art criticism was sometimes offhand and given to sweeping condemnation of new literary works. On December 8, 1954, a joint conference of the presidium of the All-China Federation of Writers and Artists and of that of the Chinese Writers' Union passed a resolution pointing out the mistakes made by *Wen Yi Pao*. The main source of the mistakes made was found to be the fact that the editors of the magazine had not yet freed themselves entirely of their bourgeois ideology and style of work. The resolution also decided on reorganization of the editorial staff. Accordingly, a new editorial board of seven was formed, consisting of the novelists Liu Pai-yu, Kang Cho and Chin Chao-yang, the critics Feng Hsueh-feng, Huang Yao-mien and Hou Chin-ching, and Wang Yao, specialist in the history of literature. The new board started functioning in January 1955.

Writers and artists, as well as the magazine's readers, had been very sharp in their criticism of *Wen Yi Pao*. But when the publication admitted and rectified its errors, they were ready to stand by it much more solidly than ever before. From its mistakes in the past, *Wen Yi Pao* has learned a profound lesson: that it must constantly criticize bourgeois ideas in literature and art. Only in this way can it mirror the actual struggles in the present period of socialist construction and socialist transformation of our country. Only in this way can it effectively popularize Marxism.

In this spirit, *Wen Yi Pao* has undertaken a campaign of criticism against the bourgeois idealist ideas of the counter-revolutionary Hu Feng* who had infiltrated into the ranks of progressive writers and artists. This campaign is still going on at present, but it is already clear that it will have far-reaching effects on the development of Chinese literature and art as a whole. Our country has developed in the course of struggles to overcome, one by one, all retrogressive manifestations that are still extant from the past. In the same manner, *Wen Yi Pao* is progressing by active participation in the struggles against reactionary and generally wrong tendencies in the sphere of literature and art.

*See *Chinese Literature*, No. 2, 1955, p. 170.

*See *Chinese Literature*, No. 3, 1955, p. 164.

Cultural Events

The Indian Cultural Delegation in China

On the invitation of the Chinese Government the Indian Cultural Delegation, led by Mr. Anil Kumar Chanda, Deputy Foreign Minister of India, visited China in June this year and gave performances in various parts of the country till their departure in August. The Delegation included forty-seven of India's foremost dancers and musicians, whose superb performances not only stirred the hearts of Chinese audiences everywhere and gave them the greatest pleasure, but also deeply impressed all Chinese artists, who felt that they had much to learn from the fine tradition and great achievements of Indian art.

During their tour of China the Indian dancers gave demonstrations of the four main schools of classical Indian dancing as well as folk dances. The *Bharat Natyam*, which is popular in southern India, still preserves in comparative purity the traditions of the earliest dancing. It is a temple dance performed throughout the ages by women during temple festivals or rituals to show their reverence and love for the gods. Beautiful Indrani Rahman, one of the foremost exponents of this traditional Indian dance, has mastered the impeccable style and complex techniques of the *Bharat Natyam* and given full expression to the fine and lovable character of the people of south India. One of the dances she performed was in praise of Shiva, Lord of the Dance, and is also a lyric expressing the love of a girl for the god. Indrani Rahman's expressions and hand movements brought out the full meaning of the song of praise. Her folding of hands in prayer and many other eloquent gestures were like a visible language which made us hear the nightingale singing, and sea waves tumbling in the ocean, bees hovering among lotus flowers and fish swimming in the water.

The *Kathak* dance is popular in northern India. Since Indian dancing originated in the south of the peninsula and gradually spread northwards, we can see in the *Kathak* dance poses similar to those of the frescoes and sculptures of southern India. This dance is graceful and intricate, with swift rhythmic footwork.

Young Anuradha Guha gave an enchanting performance of the *Kathak* dance. We saw her standing quietly at ease in the dim lamplight when the curtain rose; then she stirred so gently that you felt a goddess was coming slowly to life in the hazy moonlight. With her ankle bells tinkling she came floating towards us, only to recede again before we were aware of it. Her arms quivered like gossamer, while the rhythm and harmony of her every movement and expression extended to the tips of her fingers and her eyebrows. Through her movements and rhythmic beats she could regulate the tinkle of her ankle bells, to make them sound now like crickets, now like a thunderstorm, sometimes tinkling one single bell, sometimes hundreds at a time.

The *Kathakali*, which is popular along the southwestern coast of India, is a dramatic dance in which one or two dancers perform a play with an intricate plot. The Chinese audience loved this dance, because its movements, gestures, and facial expressions are so similar to those in Peking opera.

Krishna Kutty and Shirin Vajifdar, outstanding exponents of the art of *Kathakali*, gave a wonderful performance of "The Boon," a classical ballet having as its theme the triumph of good over evil. The story is as follows: The demon king received the terrible boon that whosoever he touched on the head should die. While he was spreading havoc, Vishnu took the form of a beautiful girl, won his confidence and made him kill himself. Krishna Kutty played the role of the demon king, and Shirin Vajifdar that of Vishnu. After seeing their performance Mei Lan-fang, China's outstanding stage artist, said: ". . . It reminded me of the opera 'Chou Tsang Kills the Fox' played by two famous Chinese actors, the late Chien Chin-fu and Fu Hsiao-shan. In that opera the story is also unfolded by two actors dancing together; and the way in which they imitate each other's movements and express their ideas through miming resembles the method used in 'The Boon.' . . . When the demon enters concealed behind a red silk curtain, and coming to the front of the stage shakes his hands and slowly lets fall the red silk to reveal himself and strike a pose, he is using a mode of expression very similar to that in Peking opera when a devil enters the stage. . . . The lowering of both arms with all five fingers of each hand extended to show ferocity is also to be found in Peking opera."

The ballet "The Boon" moved the audience not only because of its theme, but also because of the virtuosity of the two performers. Krishna Kutty is an artist with great creative imagination. In the role of the demon king, he succeeded in making himself the object of laughter, mockery and horror. Shirin Vajifdar, in her role, gave expression to the wisdom and courage of Vishnu and conveyed vividly to the audience the intensity of her hate for the demon king.

The *Manipuri* dance combines the grace of the classical style with the vigour and vitality of folk dances. It reflects the spirit of the sturdy hillfolk inhabiting the northeastern corner of India, depicts the peasants' love and labour, and portrays romances from Indian mythology. *Manipuri* dancers usually play musical instruments as they dance; and Singhajit Singh and Nadiya Singh, exponents of this art, are outstanding musicians. Together with

Scene from "The Boon" Sketch by Li Ke-yu

several girl dancers, they performed the "Dance of the Lovers," the "Dance of the *Holi*" (Festival of Colours), and the "Drum Dance." After seeing this last Wu Hsiao-pang, Chairman of the Union of Chinese Dancers, wrote: "I greatly enjoyed the Drum Dance, in which Singhajit Singh and Nadiya Singh gave such a virile, mettlesome performance. The drum beats, like the trampling of ten thousand horses' hooves, reminded me of our own *yaoku* (waist drums)."

In addition to classical Indian dancing, the Indian Cultural Delegation performed folk dances imbued with all the vitality of life. Gul Bardhan and the other members of the Little Ballet Troupe, while continuing the national tradition of folk dancing, have made new experiments in this field. Their performances not only gave us an insight into the achievements of the Indian people in the past, but also introduced us to what Indian artists are accomplishing today along a new line.

The Little Ballet Troupe presented puppet-shows, a "Scarf Dance" which is popular among the people of Gujarath of western India, and a folk dance of the Lambadi people of Hyderabad in south India. Puppet-shows have a long history in India and are very popular there. Great credit is due to the members of the Little Ballet Troupe for the skill with which they have reproduced the movements of puppets and combined the art of the dance with that of puppetry. The performances of *Ramayana* and the "Art of Intelligent Living" by the Little Ballet Troupe were greeted by thunderous applause.

With regard to the musical items of the Indian Cultural Delegation, it is necessary to explain why Chinese audiences enjoyed them so much. As early as the Sui Dynasty (581-618 A.D.), Indian music was formally recognized by the Chinese government as one of the chief categories of music. Later, during the Tang Dynasty (618-907 A.D.), the tune of a Brahman dance which was introduced to China from the northwest became after a certain amount of modification the melody of the celebrated Rainbow Garment Dance. This melody was so popular with the Chinese of the Tang Dynasty that the famous poet Pai Chu-yi wrote a poem in praise of it. As the music of our two countries began to influence each other over a thousand years ago, it is little wonder that when a Chinese audience today hears Indian music, they feel that while possessing a piquant Indian flavour it has a remarkable affinity with Chinese music.

Of the vocal music, the chorus "*Hindi Chini Bhai Bhai*" (The Indian and Chinese People Are Brothers) was one of the most inspiring items. The leader of the chorus, Debabrata Biswas, has a resonant voice, and the natural way in which he sang made a strong appeal to the audience. Debabrata Biswas also sang the "Songs of Tagore." The music of Rabindranath Tagore has combined many of the best elements of both classical and folk music, thereby greatly enriching the expressiveness of poetry and music.

Drum Dance Sketch by Li Ke-yu

The "Song of the Rains" by D. V. Paluskar was thoroughly delightful. With great vocal skill, D. V. Paluskar succeeded in suggesting the dark clouds, the thunder and lightning, and the people's joy at the coming of the spring rain. The singing and instrumental accompaniment blended naturally and harmoniously to form a perfect unity.

The "Song of the Punjab," with its simple and stirring melody, reflects the love of the Indian people for their country and their readiness to serve her best interests. The combination of this sonorous singing and dancing conveyed a sense of great vigour to the audience.

The instrumental music was also outstanding and distinctive. Indian stringed instruments like the *sarod, sitar* and *sarangi* have a large number of understrings which vibrate when the principal strings are sounded, thereby enriching the tonal colour. Abdul Halim Jafar Khan, who played the *sitar*, and Radhika Mohan Maitra, who played the *sarod*, impressed everyone with their great skill and the lyric quality of their performance.

It is impossible to describe in a few words the superb performances of the Indian Cultural Delegation. We know from historical records on Chinese music, dancing and drama that since the Northern and Southern Dynasties (317-589 A.D.) we have absorbed much from Indian dancing and music, and remoulded it according to our own art forms until it has become an integral part of our distinctive classical opera. And Chinese artists today, following the example of their ancestors, are doing their best to learn from Indian artists.

Though this is the first visit to China for most of the members of the Indian Cultural Delegation to China, we have not the least sense of being strangers to each other. During their days in Peking, Mr. and Mrs. Chanda visited the home of the late Hsu Pei-hung, a famous Chinese painter, and met Mrs. Hsu and her two children. The late Hsu Pei-hung was an old friend of the Chandas, and once stayed with them in India for more than a year. Members of the Indian Cultural Delegation saw a performance of "The Nymph of the Lo River" by Mei Lan-fang, the famous exponent of Peking opera who was seen thirty years ago in this same role by Rabindranath Tagore during the latter's visit to Peking. After the performance, Tagore made some valuable suggestions with regard to the costumes; he also wrote a poem and made a painting in Chinese ink and water colour, which he presented to Mei Lan-fang. On the basis of Tagore's suggestions, Mei Lan-fang made some changes in his costumes; so when Mr. and Mrs. Chanda presented him with flowers after his recent performance, Mei Lan-fang asked them: "Do you notice anything Indian in the style of my costumes?"

The Chinese call their best friends *chih yin*, which means "one who understands my music." The Indian and Chinese people can truly call each other *chih yin*. In a broadcast over Radio Peking, Mr. Chanda said that with the emergence of a new India and a new China, the threads of old friendship were being picked up again. "But our present task," said Mr. Chanda, "is by no means one of revival only. It is not even to build on past traditions. Conditions have changed and circumstances have changed along with them. Today, we believe more than ever before that culture has no barriers, and both India and China, in attempting to project their respective achievements and standards to each other, realize that they do so in the new setting of a modern world."

The Indian Cultural Delegation has done much to enhance the mutual understanding and friendship between the people of our two countries. The Chinese people are confident that, in the years to come, this mutual understanding and friendship will continue to grow.

Szechuan Opera Festival

There are many types of traditional opera popular in various parts of China, each possessing its own special features in acting, singing, dancing and music. Thus traditional dramas are often presented in scores of forms. But whereas the contents in each case are fundamentally the same, the librettos vary; for we often find great differences in the adaptation of the plot, depiction of characters and other artistic methods.

Szechuan opera, which is popular in Szechuan Province and the surrounding districts, is one of the most important of the many types of local opera. It has a long history, deep-rooted tradition and a mature artistic form. Its large repertoire includes a number of famous classical plays which are closely linked with the people and reflect the thoughts and feelings of the people of feudal China in their pursuit of freedom, justice and happiness. As an art form, Szechuan opera makes such frequent use of realistic analysis and description in character portrayal that one cannot fail to be struck by its descriptive power, truthfulness, and abounding vitality. The polish, conciseness and humour of its language are another of its distinctive features.

According to recent investigations, Szechuan opera has a repertoire of over 1,900 plays, many of which still preserve both in form and content the excellent tradition of the classical Chinese opera of the Yuan and Ming Dynasties. In recent years, the great efforts made by those concerned with Szechuan opera to collect and edit traditional plays have been crowned with success. The audience at the First National Opera Festival held in Peking, 1952, gave an enthusiastic reception to *Footprints in the Snow*, adapted from one act of the Ming Dynasty opera *The Scholar's Cave in a Snowstorm* by an anonymous writer, and *The Autumn River* adapted from another classical opera *The Jade Hairpin*, by Kao Lien of the Ming Dynasty. Both these adaptations won prizes. Soon after, the two full-length operas of which these scenes were extracts, *A Girl Chooses Her Husband* (the new name for *The Scholar's Cave in a Snowstorm*) and *The Jade Hairpin*, were also staged.

Veteran performers in Szechuan opera also collected and studied different versions of another Ming Dynasty opera, *The Red Plum Blossom*, by Chou Chao-chun, then produced an authentic text. This libretto is now being edited and improved.

In the days of reaction, many of the operas performed were feudalistic, superstitious, vulgar and debased; and actors were subjected to all manner of insults and persecution. A number of them were forced to leave the stage, with the consequence that Szechuan opera declined more and more under the Kuomintang regime. Though there were nearly 2,000 operas, very few of them were regularly produced. The great majority were staged only occasionally and quite a number had not been performed for many years. Printed or handwritten scripts of some of these operas can still be found, whereas others have been handed down orally and are remembered by a few artists only. Undoubtedly there are both gold and dross in these plays, which are like treasures which have lain hidden and forgotten at the bottom of a chest for many years. But today enthusiasts of Szechuan opera are making a thorough search in this chest, to unearth these hidden plays and present them in their original form to experts and ordinary playgoers, in order to have their advice as to what to discard and what to preserve. It is planned to devote a fairly long period of time to this work, for we must not allow any of the masterpieces created by our forefathers to be lost or destroyed. We must see to it that they shine with a new lustre in the people's theatres.

To facilitate the discovery and editing of traditional operas, two festivals of Szechuan opera were held not long ago in Chungking and Chengtu under the guidance of the Bureau of Cultural Affairs of Szechuan Province. Committees set up in these cities to organize and judge the performances included old stage artists, members of local literary and artistic circles, the heads of the various government departments concerned, and a number of playgoers. The Ministry of Culture, the All-China Federation of Writers and Artists and the Union of Chinese Stage Artists and Playwrights also paid special attention to this project, sending a group of dramatists, producers and musicians headed by the famous writer Chao Shu-li from Peking to render assistance. Everybody connected with the drama in Szechuan looked forward to this occasion with incomparable eagerness. Veteran actors produced scripts which they had kept hidden for years, or introduced operas which had been jealously guarded and handed down orally to chosen apprentices only. They saw that at last Szechuan opera was coming into its own, and celebrated the great occasion by putting up lanterns and decorations. The many famous stage artists who took part in the performances did their best to keep as close as possible to the original scripts; and the vast opera-going audiences in Szechuan gave the festival their closest attention. Hundreds of opera fans wrote to the Festival Committees to express their opinions. At the revival of excellent plays which had not been performed for years many of them shed tears of joy.

During this festival, performances were given of operas adapted from such famous classical works of the Yuan, Ming and Ching Dynasties as *The Thorn Hairpin, The White Hare, Wang Chao-chun* and *The Palace of Eternal Youth*, and from folk stories including *Mu Kuei-ying, Cloud Brocade Cloak* and *A Single Shoe*.

The Thorn Hairpin, written by Ko Tan-chiu of the Ming Dynasty, tells the story of an engaged couple, Wang Shih-peng and Chien Yu-lien. After Wang Shih-peng passed the imperial examination in the capital with honours, the prime minister offered him his daughter's

Scene from "Footprints in the Snow"

hand in marriage; but the young man firmly refused to break his engagement with Yu-lien. Then the prime minister had him exiled to a distant and desolate place. Yu-lien's step-mother also tried to force her to marry someone else; but rather than do this the girl jumped into the river. She was saved from drowning, however, and after a series of adventures was united with her true love. This realistic opera extols the loyalty and courage of two young lovers and their revolt against the old feudal society.

Wang Chao-chun is adapted from *Autumn in the Han Palace* by Ma Chih-yuan of the Yuan Dynasty, and *The Verdant Tomb* by an anonymous Ming Dynasty dramatist. It tells the tragic story of Wang Chao-chun, a beauty of the Han Dynasty. Chao-chun was a peasant girl whose extraordinary beauty attracted official notice, so that she was sent to the palace to be a court lady. But because she refused to bribe the artist ordered to paint the girls thus selected, he deliberately distorted her

beauty; and the emperor, believing her to be quite plain, had her shut up in a deserted wing of the palace and never summoned her to his presence. Later, when the emperor sent her north to marry the Khan of the Huns for the purpose of appeasing the latter, she threw herself into the Black River to end her unhappy life. Wang Chao-chun is a historical figure, and the story of how she was sent north to marry the Hunnish Khan has been told in almost every household in China for over a thousand years, and adapted into many operatic forms. *Wang Chao-chun*, through the fine descriptive language characteristic of Szechuan opera, gives vivid expression to the grief and indignation of this ancient beauty.

Mu Kuei-ying, adapted from the well-known folk story *Generals of the Yang Family*, tells of the daughter of a bandit chief who lived near the border of the Sung empire. Because she hated the foreign invaders of the time and was moved by the patriotism of the men of the Yang family, she surrendered to General Yang Yen-chao of the Sung army, and fought under his command against the invaders. This entire opera is pervaded by the spirit of patriotism and optimism, and the heroic figure of Mu Kuei-ying is very convincingly presented.

Scene from "The Autumn River"

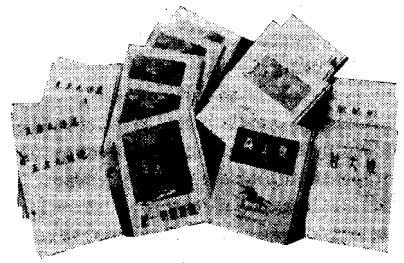
Cloud Brocade Cloak is based on a legend about a poor man named Wei Hua-lung, who lived during the period of the Warring States, and a girl called Li Ching-ching, who kept a tea-house. The opera shows how they helped people in distress in those troubled times and struggled against injustice and vice. One of the distinctive features of Szechuan opera is its vitality, which enables it to present the life of our ancient forbears to modern audiences.

A Single Shoe is based on a popular folk story. It describes how a country doctor and his wife who set up practice in a mountain village cured not only human beings but a tiger. When some villains accused them of a crime of which they were innocent, the tiger saved their lives. This opera combines folklore and comedy in a manner distinctively its own, and is thoroughly dramatic.

The recent festival of Szechuan opera demonstrated yet again what a wealth of Chinese opera we possess. Since the liberation, the operatic workers of New China, under the leadership of the government and with the help of literary and art workers, have followed Chairman Mao's policy—"Let all flowers bloom; let the new emerge from the old"—and devoted all their efforts to the reform of the Chinese opera. They want to preserve and develop the excellent traditional opera which forms such an important part of our cultural heritage, and on this basis create more and better operas to meet the needs and wishes of our people. The discovery and editing of the best traditional dramas are important factors in this great task of operatic reform, and all those concerned with Szechuan opera will continue to work along these lines. Since actors and producers in other types of opera will do the same, we should, in the near future, see still greater achievements in this field.

Worker, Peasant and Soldier Authors

An autobiographical novel, *Kao Yu-pao*, recently published by the China Youth Publishing House, is attracting wide attention. It is one of the books being especially recommended to young readers for the summer vacation and has had a first printing of 250,000 copies.



Kao Yu-pao, the author, is a soldier. He was born twenty-nine years ago of a poor peasant family in Northeast China. A swineherd for a landlord at the age of eight, he later took a job as farm hand, became a carpenter, worked in a factory and also a coal mine. Japanese invaders, Chinese traitors, landlords and rural tyrants made his childhood a misery. In 1947 he joined the People's Liberation Army and the following year became a member of the Communist Party.

His novel deals with the terrible conditions of oppression under which he and his family lived during enemy occupation and puppet rule; it is a scathing denunciation of the whole horde of oppressors and their savage treatment of the Chinese people. At the same time the book affectionately describes the honesty and courage of China's workers and peasants, their warm friendships and humanity and their bitter struggle against their enemies. In simple and expressive language, the author creates many characters true to life.

Kao Yu-pao had only a little over a month of schooling as a child in the old society. It was only after joining the PLA that he learned to read and write. He decided to attempt to write this novel one day in August 1949, though at the time he could hardly pen his own name. The task he set himself seemed an impossible dream. But his stubborn determination turned the dream into a reality. He stuck doggedly to writing the novel while struggling to overcome his illiteracy. He drew symbols for words he couldn't write and filled them in later, after others showed him how. Many a time he skipped a meal or worked far into the night while painfully groping for a suitable phrase to express a particular thought.

With the encouragement and assistance of comrades of the People's Liberation Army and the Communist Party, Kao Yu-pao finally completed his 130,000-word novel.

It is only since the Chinese people gained the mastery of their own country that it has become possible for a talent as Kao Yu-pao's to blossom and for such books to be published.

In the past few years the people's government and organizations have taken measures to find and develop writers among China's workers, peasants and soldiers. Cultural departments of the government and the army, local literary associations and trade unions pay particular attention to the development of creative writing among workers, peasants and soldiers as a spare-time activity. There are worker writer groups in factories and the cities; there are soldier writer groups in the army. Professional authors conduct discussions on literary works and literary problems to help members of such groups develop their creative ability. Various organizations hold frequent classes on creative writing for the benefit of budding worker and peasant authors. Every provincial and municipal spare-time school of arts offers a course in literature. Famous writers give personal and practical assistance to workers, soldiers and peasants making their first attempts at writing. Literary periodicals and publishers encourage

them by such means as competitions on set themes, and publish and pay for successful works. Promising writers are often sent to school to get a general education. In some cases, they go to the Central Institute of Literature for special training.

The Central Institute of Literature is sponsored by the Chinese Writers' Union. Its primary function is to develop young writers, including worker, peasant and soldier authors. In the past few years it has produced several dozen excellent writers, a few of whom are now devoting their full time to writing.

For example, Chen Teng-ke, author of "Living Hell" and "Sons and Daughters on the Banks of the Huai River," began life as a peasant. He became a professional writer after graduating from the Central Institute of Literature and is now vice-chairman of the Federation of Writers and Artists of Anhwei Province.

There is a steady stream of works by new writers reflecting different aspects of the life of the people. Tsui Pa-wa, a soldier writer whose exploits are comparable to Kao Yu-pao's, has produced short stories like "The Dogs Barked" and "Selling a Son to Pay a Debt." From Fan Ping, a male nurse in the army, has come "The Heroes of Snowy Mountain," a short novel. A collection of the verses of the peasant poet Wang Lao-chiu has been published. The mountain ballads of the peasant Tu Lai-sheng are now available in book form; so is the collection of short stories "Happiness All About Us" by the woman worker Kuo Ting-hsuan. From Chin Yun, also a woman worker, we have "Mutual Friendship and Love," and other short stories. Wei Lien-pao, a railway worker, has written a play "Not a Cicada." Transport workers in the city of Wuhan have collectively produced an operetta called "Thousands of Skilled Workers All of One Mind". . . .

The well-defined working class standpoint and revolutionary enthusiasm of these works, their truthful portrayal of life, their clear language and simple style, have endeared them to the great body of Chinese readers. They demonstrate what a wealth of literary talent is waiting to be tapped among China's workers and peasants. In the old society this talent was buried and had no opportunity to flower. Today, however, with the success of the revolution, in spite of the heritage of illiteracy left us by the old society, the brilliant literary promise of the masses is already manifesting itself in new and original work. As the peasant poet Wang Lao-chiu puts it:

> Beneath the dust the brilliance of the pearl
> Is hidden from our eye,
> Till suddenly its lustre shines
> When thunder rends the earth and sky.

Wang Lao-chiu is testifying from his own experience, typical in many ways of the experience of most peasant writers. Over sixty today, more than thirty years ago he began composing "clapper ballads" —a form of folk verse recited to the rhythm of wooden castanets and known in Wang's native province of Shensi as "easy talk." Using the local vernacular and speaking of the things that were in the peasants' hearts, Wang's verses were immensely popular.

Before liberation another ballad maker recorded the people's feeling about Wang in the lines:

> A tough old chap is Wang Lao-chiu,
> His "easy talk" has an easy flow,
> If we couldn't hear his talk, I'm sure
> We'd all feel low.

The things that the people loved in Wang Lao-chiu were, of course, the things that made the gentry hate him. His verses reviled and satirized the evils of the old society, and for this he was constantly persecuted. Once, because he refused to compose verses in honour of the birth of a landlord's son, the landlord robbed him of his wheat and farm implements and had him severely beaten.

This imaginative songster was almost forced into silence and hounded to death.

Liberation freed Wang's clapper ballads too. He has found limitless inspiration for creation in the new life and new events he sees all around him. Says Wang Lao-chiu:

> I've tales that are long,
> No end to my song. . . .

He has written many ballads in the past few years, skilfully patterned verse that trips lightly off the tongue. Rich in imagery and the atmosphere of peasant life, his poems are militant and forceful. His stirring ballads "When I Think of Chairman Mao" and "On Entering Peking" have become very popular. Wang Lao-chiu's poetic genius has been given full rein at last.

The most noteworthy of the worker writers is Wu Yun-to, author of "All for the Party." Since its publication in 1953 it has sold nearly three million copies.

Originally a coal miner, Wu Yun-to became a technician after joining the PLA. During the War of Resistance to Japanese Aggression and subsequently during the War of Liberation, under extremely difficult conditions he and his comrades improvised many weapons that the army then lacked. Wu risked his life several times in testing them. In the course of such experiments, he injured both legs, broke four fingers and lost the sight of his left eye. He studied and practised writing while in the hospital, and finally produced "All for the Party."

The story movingly describes the development of an ordinary worker under the leadership of the Communist Party. This is no mere factual account of a life; the book gives a deep insight into the hero's thoughts and emotions as he grows into a staunch working class fighter. He is revealed as a simple man, an individual participating in a great collective effort, who gradually matures, tempered in one ordeal after another. Not only is the reader inspired to emulate the hero; he is convinced that it is quite possible to do so. This is the reason for the book's tremendous popularity.

Differing in content and in form, these works by workers, peasants and soldiers reflect revolutionary China's yesterday, today and tomorrow through their simple, lovable working class heroes. They manifest the literary talent of Chinese workers, peasants and soldiers in the service of the nation.

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THE PLAINS ARE ABLAZE

This long novel, a true, intimate and illuminating picture by one of the guerillas, describes the exploits of a local guerilla unit in its fight against the Japanese invaders during one of the latter's "mopping up" campaigns in the plains of North China in 1942. It tells how they first retreated under the pressure of the Japanese troops and took cover in the villages, and how, after training and regrouping, they turned to the offensive and achieved final victory.

Reflecting the extensive resistance put up by the guerillas at the time, this novel unfolds in vivid details the intense struggles of the Chinese people against the aggressors.

Illustrated with woodcuts *280 pages*

FORTHCOMING

THE PALACE OF ETERNAL YOUTH

THE PALACE OF ETERNAL YOUTH is an opera by the well-known Ching Dynasty poet and dramatist Hung Sheng (1645-1704). Taking as his theme the tragic love story of Emperor Ming Huang and Lady Yang of the Tang Dynasty, Hung Sheng has not only created two unforgettable lovers but shown us the luxury and licence of China's feudal rulers and the hard lot of her people. With penetrating insight he pillories the high officials who corrupt the government and become turncoats, and at the same time reveals the splendid integrity of the musicians, peasants and other humble folk for whom he has deep sympathy. Written in 1688, this opera with its magnificent language and beautiful melodies soon became popular throughout China, where it has never ceased to be performed. An attractive feature of this edition are the illustrations and musical scores.

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